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## From Fascism to Post-Fascism

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**VIGNETTES D [SECTION NO.]**  
**AUTHORITATIVE RESTORATIONS [SECTION HEADING]**

**Chapter Ten [CHAPTER NO.]**

**From Fascism to Post-Fascism [CHAPTER HEADING]**

**Wiebke Keim [AUTHOR NAME]**

**Introduction [A-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Authoritarians are back: demanding the restoration of community against formalized society and of tradition against the stranger; asking for strong states enforcing law and order, closing borders, preventing dark men from threatening white women; defending traditional family models against individualism and gender pluralism; claiming to represent ‘the people’. Today many, denounce the new authoritarians as ‘Fascists!’.

Where do these ‘fascists’ come from? Why are they successful today?

I will take up the argument from the conclusion to my contribution to Volume I. In our first volume, we had defined the 1920/30s as an anomalic phase. In the chapter on colonialism, national socialism and the Holocaust, the fascists (or Nazis, for that matter) had risen in power to become the fixers of that anomalic phase. The whole argument, starting from Cesaire, was around transferring discourses, techniques and practices to identify, classify, administer, re-educate, repress and ultimately exterminate deviants from the colonies into Europe. The end of fascism in Europe was not the achievement of emancipatory struggles but of military defeat. The post-1945 democratic dispositions nationally and internationally turned fascists, the former fixers, into special kinds of deviants by law. The measures to deal with them were denazification, demilitarization, re-education, democratization and reintegration into the international community. Indeed, the few remaining who openly declared their indebtedness to Nazism and fascism were mainly represented as a law-and-order problem. In this sense, they could be considered at first sight as deviants. On several occasions, the readers of our first volume questioned our approach to fascists. The critique was that we dealt only with the sympathetic deviants and relegated fascists to a different category. This corresponds to a tendency, erroneous and dangerous in my view, to lend credibility to the fascists’ self-declared victimhood of discrimination, witchhunts and restrictions to their freedom of speech and thought. There is a paradox in this self-reclamation as deviants with democratic rights of organization and expression, although their own relationship with democracy and constitutionally guaranteed fundamental rights is highly problematic. This chapter deals with the dark side of scripts of defiance, contributing to the full picture of their multivocality.

More than that, the conclusion of my first chapter outlined continuities and connections between interwar fascists and Nazis post-1945 at the level of foreign relations, administration and bureaucracy, intelligence services and academia that represented continuities of national socialist ways of handling deviance in the post-1945 period. Networks of people who preserved and spread fascist ideology through sustained circulation of ideas and who maintained a certain level of organizational capacity persisted. In parallel to the public condemnation of fascism, supposed liberal democrats relied on their special competency and ideological influence against communism. Despite post-1945 dispositions to prevent a re-emergence of fascism, fascist thinking and action remained, although in non-dominant, idiomorphic ways. It adapted to varying conditions and contexts, omnipresent as an ideology with differing degrees of political influence and practical action.

Today, figures, movements and regimes demanding authoritarian restoration of alleged past glory and 'pure' communities are on the rise in many places. A thorough comparative analysis of their resemblances and differences awaits realization

<sup>1</sup>. This chapter is focused on the two countries that I know best: my country of origin, Germany, as the direct heir to National Socialism and in continuity with my contribution to Volume I; and France, my country of work, as the country that has today, as far as I know, the biggest and one of the most continuous far right parties of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

In both cases, a diachronic comparison seems tempting. Are the 1930s ahead of us (Granel, 1995: 71–74)? *Récidive: 1938* (Foessel, 2019) invites us to rediscover the year 1938 in France through its print press, to read in a non-teleological way the rising extremism to revisit how a democracy degenerated at the time. There, authoritarian voices that demanded a stop to welcoming refugees, that argued that the welfare model could not be upheld any longer, that justified violent repression of strikes were on the rise. The three elements – questioning the state of law in the face of a perceived refugee crisis, questioning social policy and increasingly authoritarian institutional practices – appear similar to the current state of affairs in Western Europe. History is not finished, Foessel argues. The philosopher bases his argument on the idea of an epoch that is not finished and that therefore harbours similar potentials as 1938. The task here is to put the philosophical perspective to a sociological test. That we are still in the same epoch appears, sociologically, as a rather imprecise argument. Which elements allow us to determine the extent and impact of the fascist legacy in the post-fascist society of today? Which actors are working on authoritarian restorationist visions of society and what underlying causes explain their success?

The post-authoritarian approach in global sociology that Hanafi calls for (2019) comprises at least three levels: a regime-level (brutalizing authoritarianism); the level of the political-economic system (neoliberal authoritarianism) and the individual level of the 'authoritarian citizen'.<sup>3</sup> I see this chapter as a complementary contribution, in the sense that it addresses the organizational forms of authoritarian citizens in groups, i.e., collective bottom-up actors of authoritarian restoration (as opposed to the individual, but also to the state and economy levels). In accordance with the idea of scripts of defiance, I will not develop fully insights into the power apparatus of the state and within the neoliberal project that enable continuities in terms of authoritarianism 'from above' or 'from within' – developments in surveillance, biometrics, genetic profiling, methods of data

gathering, repression of public unrest, of lockdowns, curfews and confinement, etc. I also do not take into account the moves and interests of big capital and their links with the current developments.<sup>4</sup> This would require extensions of the project that, though important, I am not able to realize here.

Instead, in accordance with the idea of scripts of defiance, I will focus on the bottom-up mobilizations within the French and German far right. In the context of the technocratic, expert-led, rather conflict-free neoliberal capitalism today, those movements and parties could appear as defiant, in the sense of being dysfunctional and disturbing to the political order.<sup>5</sup> This is different from the interwar period, where fractions of the possessing classes who wanted to secure capitalism betted on fascists as being functional in reducing class conflict and limiting the influence of the radical left within the integral nation state.

I have chosen not to use the term ‘populist right’ as my preferred denomination, first, because it downsizes other very problematic aspects of those groups; and second, because it sounds like a new feature within current politics and like a way to differentiate the current ‘populist right’ from interwar fascism. However, one of the key characteristics of historical fascism was also populism (Griffin, 1991). ‘Populism’ therefore does not appear as an appropriate feature of distinction. In the second section, under ‘Political Crisis’, I put forth another argument against the use of the term ‘populism’, based on Collovald’s critique of the term.

The structure of the chapter includes an elaboration of criteria that allow to qualify the current far right as post-fascist, in contradistinction to interwar fascism; an outline on multilevel crises in contemporary Western Europe; a description of the current far right in France and Germany, focusing on the Front National (FN)<sup>6</sup> and on the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) and their constituencies. If interwar fascism is largely explicable in the context of multilevel crises to which it provided answers that many considered convincing, I conclude that the current strength of the German and French far right is related to a crisis context but is not explicable in a satisfactory way as a response to multilevel crises. Instead, a thorough understanding is only possible by following down the years the deep roots of the French and German far right, something I do in the following chapter. The current far right remains unintelligible without considering it as being in direct continuity with its historical predecessors. As we see regarding its major grievances, it grapples with this past. In this sense as well, it can be considered post-fascist.

## **From Fascism to Post-Fascism: Defining Criteria [A-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Are the current collective far right actors similar to interwar fascists or not? Comparing current cases against historical fascism is in line with parts of public debate about the rise of so-called right-wing populism.<sup>7</sup> In order to tackle this question, we need to define interwar fascism. Based on Reichardt’s literature review (2004), I chose Mann’s sociological framework for this purpose. In Mann’s definition, ‘fascism is the pursuit of a transcendent and cleansing nation-statism through paramilitarism’ (Mann, 2004: 13).<sup>8</sup> The attempt here is to go beyond merely ideological definitions – for instance against Griffin’s (1991) definition of fascism as a political myth – and

to include a clear sense of power – power as being exercised through programmes, collective actions and organizations that account for the impact of fascism beyond the level of ideas. Mann's definition therefore contains five key concepts.

*Nation-statism* corresponds to the exaggeration of two core elements of twentieth-century political ideology. Fascist *nationalism* was grounded in the idea of the organic, integral nation. Obsessed with unity, fascism therefore constructed a clear distinction between the nation and its internal and external enemies. National Socialism added a particular racial dimension to this organicism. *Statism* means the worshipping of state power, of the state as the bearer of a project for economic, social and moral development. A strong, hierarchical and authoritarian nation state representing the organic nation was the ultimate political goal and at the same time the organizational form that fascism took once in power. However, fascists were more radical in the formulation of their ultimate goal than in the actual form they gave their states.<sup>9</sup>

*Transcendence* refers to the goal of transcending class conflict and national divides, in accordance with the idea of the organic nation and its representation by the state. Transcendence would be obtained by repressing or eliminating the revolutionary left and by removing political and racial enemies on the one hand. On the other hand, corporatist institutions would integrate interest groups, different economic sectors and socio-economic classes into the nation state. This ultimate aim of (class) transcendence was not accomplished, however, due to structural weaknesses in ideology (Griffin, 1991: 26–55) and due to change of fascists' strategies throughout various stages until their accession to power (Paxton, 1998). The *cleansing* aspect directly follows from transcendent nation-statism: political opponents as well as strangers within the organic nation could not be accommodated through compromise but were defined as eliminable enemies to be cleansed if the ideal of the transcendent and organic nation was to be achieved.

The cleansing is carried out by bottom-up *paramilitary* organizations. Those militias, structured along male comradeship, represented the key value and organizational form of fascism and often existed prior to political parties. This particular provocative and aggressive bottom-up organization – one of the reasons to consider fascism a populism – was what clearly distinguished fascism within the political arena of the interwar years, and that sets it apart until today from other forms of authoritarian regimes and dictatorships. It involved a tension between its popular aspect on the one hand and its inherent elitism and belief in hierarchies on the other.<sup>10</sup> Paramilitarism represented the key value of fascism as far as it is meant to be exemplary for the organic nation, for the hierarchical state it was supposed to create and for the new man that fascism was to bring about. Paramilitarism was to carry out the cleansing. Militias provoked political street violence and simultaneously presented themselves as the guarantors of law and order who sorted out society in order to achieve transcendence. Mann's criteria of cleansing and paramilitarism redress the major weaknesses of purely ideological accounts of fascism in the way they address fascism in action. Ideology, discourse and political myths only became active and harmful once they were harnessed to power organizations: 'Fascism was always uniformed, marching, armed, dangerous, and radically destabilizing of the existing order' (Mann, 2004: 16). The next steps in Mann's argument are to show why fascism was successful in half of Europe,

offering solutions to multilevel crisis; furthermore, why certain core constituencies were particularly attracted by one or several of the core criteria in Mann's definition.

I will proceed in steps towards a systematization of my argument on post-fascism, with each of the aforementioned five key concepts being my starting points. I have to extend two of them and find it necessary to add a sixth defining key concept: hypermasculinity.

### **From Nationalism to Exclusive Solidarity [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

I start from Mann's concept of nationalism in his study amalgamated into nation-statism. Nationalism is certainly one of the key concepts in order to understand today's European far right. However, today's is a different nationalism from that of interwar fascism. Its addition of statism into "nationstatism" is less obvious (see the next section on statism). More importantly, it seems necessary to extend Mann's concept of nationalism, which is too specific and too narrow for my task, into a broader concept of exclusive solidarity that extends beyond the nation (and in some cases that I will leave out here, also seeks a more reduced frame of reference, such as the regional irredentism of the Vlaams Belang or the former Lega Nord). The more unspecific term 'community', as in Paxton's definition of fascism ("Fascism is a system of political authority and social order intended to reinforce the unity, energy, and purity of communities in which liberal democracy sands accused of producing division and decline", Paxton, 1998: 21), comes closer to this than Mann's nationalism.

'Exclusiveness' is adapted from Jacquemain's discussion of the European extreme right as an 'exclusive identitarian project' (2011: 2). I leave out the aspect of identity since it is not specific to the far right. That solidarity is thought of as something exclusive; in turn, it characterizes the far right's authoritarian restoration as opposed to non-authoritarian and non-restorationist, inclusive narratives of solidarity. 'Solidarity' is adapted from Sitas's idea of the creation of non-class 'horizontal solidarities' through anti-apartheid and anti-colonial forms of nationalism (Sitas, 2015). I leave out 'horizontal' because the self-perception as an elite or vanguard as well as hierarchical models of society prevail.

Sitas's reflections on non-class solidarities also provide a useful analytical and comparative grid. Sitas argues that '[i]n discussing national or class figurations, i.e. the discursive work of nationalism, articulated by people who attempt to create such historical solidarities, it is important to understand that there are five elements that make the "narrative" cohere' (ibid.: 4). I adapt his table that "tries to create a heuristic map of them" (ibd.).

**Table 1: Exclusive Solidarities, Analytical Grid**

<b>Historical subject</b>	<b>Originary trauma/grievance<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>Social foundation of alienation</b>	<b>Out-groups</b>	<b>Meta out-groups</b>	<b>Modalities of legitimacy/veracity</b>
white Europe	postcolonial immigration	miscegenation/ racial decadence	Racialized others		white supremacy (eugenicism, racialism)
the Occident	Islamization	co-presence of Muslims; oppression of and aggression against women	ibid. + Muslims	International communism/ Third World nationalism ->	(Judaeo-) Christian civilization; Reconquista
-> the people of a nation	globalization; subordination under Acquis Communautaire	loss of national sovereignty; Brussel's mandate; 'open borders'	ibid. + immigrants; foreign labour force;	Cosmopolitanism/ the EU political elites 'Lying media'	national priority; integrality of the nation;
-> La Grande Nation	Vichy/Guerre d'Algérie/1968	Cultural heterogeneity and 'anti-French racism'; French Islam	ibid. + communists/leftists	'leftist hegemony'	Cultural particularism against universalism of French republicanism -> Universalism of French republicanism (laïcité) against communitarianism
-> Volksgemeinschaft	Holocaust/1968	Parliamentarism; multiculturalis	ibid. + communists/leftists		1000 years of German history; racial organicism

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m; culture of  
remembrance

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*Source:*  
*author's own,*  
*adapted from*  
*Sitas (2015)*

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The post-fascist far right bases its ideological core on an imbrication of levels of belonging.<sup>12</sup> First of all, there are two slightly distinct invocations of Europe as priority scales of belonging, one of the reasons why 'nationalism' would cut the story short. The first one is the idea of 'white Europe', based on white supremacy, sustained by eugenicist and genuinely racist ideologies and obsessed with the assumption of a natural hierarchy of races and the ultimate ideal of racial purity. Mann's take on nationalism does not represent my insights from Volume I around the colonial mindset of National Socialism and its imperial outlook. The legacy of white Europe, however, lives on. It had been invoked in the past, as the section on 'Black Disgrace' in my chapter to our last volume illustrated, where defence of the white race had become a major European-wide issue. An articulate denunciation of racial miscegenation and decadence related to postcolonial immigration remains limited to small circles of the extreme right. Moral panics around sexual aggression of Muslim refugees against white women, however, echo such historical memories and fears of the dark stranger. In the broader public, what disturbs people is rather the idea of cultural heterogeneity. This makes them call for an exclusive solidarity of white Europeans, across nation states within Europe. This seems all the more logical since the issue of migration is in itself also a transnational phenomenon (Bauman, 2017: 17; Sebaux, 2016: 387).

A slightly different shade is contained in calls for solidarity at the level of a civilizational 'Occident' (in French), or 'Abendland' in German. The grievance here is the alleged ongoing Islamization of Judaeo-Christian civilization. This relates to the vision of the Muslim as being highly reproductive, conveying fears of a Muslim settlement and 'takeover' of Europe (Zúquete, 2008). The invocation of Christian identity is one of the connecting zones between the conservative, centre-right and factions of the extreme right:<sup>13</sup>

The increased perception of Muslims, and Islam in general, as an ominous threat to the native communities is in no small part responsible for this evolution. In a few cases, such as that of the National Front, the attention paid to Christianity is an intensified continuation of a previous ideological stance. Thus, when [JM] Le Pen defends outlawing large mosques on the grounds that they constitute 'buildings of political-religious conquest' and 'threaten the Christian identity of our country', he is by and large reiterating a familiar theme. (ibid.: 324-325)

The French President Emmanuel Macron's most recent advances to regulate Islamic life in France, such as his bill against separatism, clearly indicate how such visions dominate large parts of French politics, following the far right's determined strategy to place them on the agenda.



The idea of a civilizational Occident that needs to be defended against Islamization or even the assertion of a necessary re-Christianization of Europe is behind the calls for 'Reconquista!' voiced by identitarian groups today (Keim, 2017). They invoke historical antecedents as a legitimate source to eternalize the supposed conflict between Europe and Islam and steer fears that the decadence of Christian Europe is imminent. This version is obviously close to the idea of 'white Europe'. The accent is, however, more on the co-presence of Muslims and on European values than on racial aspects. In France in particular, both combine in specific ways. Colonial thinking is deeply ingrained into far-right discourses about Islam, where the widely held perception is that any Muslim is Algerian and any Algerian a Muslim. In this sense, moral panics around sexual aggression against French white women are not only related to fear of miscegenation but seen as a threat to civilizational achievements of emancipation. As various feminist groups have pointed out, this argument of Muslims being oppressive against women sounds rather ironic in the sense that the advocates of this version of the Occident otherwise often hold rather patriarchal views. Interestingly, references to the Occident as the historical subject to be defended reaches out beyond the current EU, including Russia. I will discuss below the supposed and known interferences of Russia with the European far right. The Russian philosopher Alexander Dugin features as one of the key ideologues on the continent for the theorization of white and Judaeo-Christian Europe.

We could apprehend those developments beyond nationalism in Mann's sense as emerging post-nationalism in the current far right. I find it more adequate to think about it as intersecting levels of exclusive solidarities. Below the European level, there are calls for solidarity amongst the people of one nation. They vary from country to country. I will develop in more detail on the French and German versions below. They share a series of meta-outgroups. In comparison with the interwar years, we observe substantive shifts.

Historically, the originary grievance here was the threat of international communism as well as Third World nationalism during the Cold War and decolonization. Currently, the major perceived threat is the alleged ongoing Islamization of 'Judaeo-Christian' civilization. While historical fascism was decidedly anti-communist (and could therefore gather support from the possessing classes), the consequence of the dilution of communism, class struggle and the workers' movements is that post-fascism has lost this anti-communist outlook. The energetic impetus oriented against the Bolshevik threat has given way to a more conservative and reactionary orientation that has lost its attractiveness to wealthy elites who find their interests better protected by the EU and international organizations. Another important transformation concerns the move from imperial aggressiveness towards a defensive anti-immigration stance. Decolonization has thus 'post-colonised' original fascism (Traverso, 2015).

Another substantive shift regarding the outgroups is the progressive inclusion, at least in several official discourses of established far-right parties, of the arch-deviance of the Jew (see Keim, 2014) into the idea of a Judaeo-Christian Europe.<sup>14</sup> This applies to Western Europe only<sup>15</sup> and has intensified massively with migrations resulting from wars and conflicts in the Middle East and, most importantly, since the series of violent attacks within Europe claimed by or attributed to the Daesh and related groups. Since then, the deviant figure of the Muslim has been fused with the deviant figure of the terrorist. The discourse and desperate agitation around 'international

terrorism' reveals how poorly equipped all concerned nation states are to even intellectually face a non-state transnational army carrying out non-state violence. This call for exclusive solidarity is based on an assumption of national priority<sup>16</sup> and the need to maintain the integrality of the nation. Simultaneously, it inhibits addressing the matter in terms of a class question.

In this sense, exclusive solidarity translates into a 'right to stay amongst us'. Combined with calls to limit or 'inverse' immigration flows, this right to stay amongst us also translates into policies for spatial segregation and avoiding closeness between supposedly culturally different and incompatible population groups. New Right intellectual accounts serve to justify this view. According to Jacquemain, far from an outward-looking rhetoric of sovereignty, from assumptions of racial superiority, from the ideal of an organic nation or from aggressive or imperialist nationalism, nationalism has been re-elaborated to fit better the rising fear of heterogeneity and cultural friction within European societies: "The question is not any more to dominate, or to reject domination, but to organize segregation, to refuse cohabitation. The extreme right's new project responds to globalisation with the vision of some generalized form of apartheid" (Jacquemain and Claisse, 2012: 22).

Europe as the level of identification and belonging does not contradict the national framework as another level for exclusive solidarities. From there, we can identify another shared outgroup. Again, in our days, cosmopolitans are viewed as opposed to patriots. The calls for a European front against the debilitating effects of immigration, outbreeding, globalization or cultural mixture are still expressed under the umbrella idea of solidarity amongst sovereign nations, the 'Europe of fatherlands'.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, the political and administrative framework of the EU functions as a key projection, including the political and bureaucratic elites and experts, the new cosmopolitans, that sustain and support it nationally as well as at the European level in order to destroy the nation (d'Appolonia, 1992: 23). This is what AfD-Member of Parliament Alexander Gauland expressed when he said 'It is time that we take the destiny of the German people [Volk], in order for it to remain a German people, out of the hands of our Chancellor' (quoted in: Borcholte, 2015). Far rightists voice conspiracy theories against a political establishment that sells out its populations and that aims for their nation's decadence through Islamization and racial mixing in order to further US dominance. The Eastern European version is more confident in adding that the US are led by Jewish capital (George Soros). The EU appears here as the opposite of the vision of a 'Europe of fatherlands'. The shared concern about the subordination of the nation under the European *Acquis Communautaire* or 'Brussel's Mandate', including loss of national sovereignty and implementation of the Schengen agreement, i.e., supposedly 'open borders', are but another declination of loss of national sovereignty and specificity.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from the Muslim and the cosmopolitan elites embodied in the EU, the 'lying media' are another meta-outgroup, as it is supposedly under the influence of 'hegemonial leftists'. In Germany, in particular, reference to *Lügenpresse* clearly is in continuation with NS-vocabulary and discourse. Not an outgroup, but another common object of outrage is political correctness. This does not only refer to supposed 'anti-national racism' (i.e., affirmative action and non-racist language, for example.) but also to what is perceived as a 'gender ideology' (*genderwahn*, *idéologie du genre*), where 'gender mainstreaming' is understood as eliminating gender identities. This has debilitating effects on the healthy development of masculinity and femininity

amongst young children, on the reproduction of traditional family models and ultimately of white Europeans – some put forth rather intellectual or cultural arguments, a few insist on the eugenicist implications. The AfD's family policy,<sup>19</sup> for instance, is clearly oriented against the recognition of LGBTQIA+-rights and towards the traditional family model as the 'germ cell of the nation' (Herkenhoff, 2016b: 205–06). According to this author, the arguments of the AfD youth league Junge Alternative (JA) are in continuation with 'core ideologemes of völkisch-nationalist traditions of thought' centred on the idea of the 'Volkskörper' and eugenic aims of breeding the German people (ibid., referring to Kellershohn 2013). Breeding national Germans is also related to countering 'demographic aberration' in Germany, in direct relation to migration. The aim is to achieve a result where birth rates rise and immigration ceases (Oppelland, 2017). In France, the *Manif pour tous* movement against same-sex marriage has been a major mobilizing moment in which the centre-right and extreme right connected.

Apart from these major sites of struggle, sideshows are taking place in domains where the far right is slowly gaining ground as well. This is the case, for example, in the animal rights and alternative nutrition scene. Far-right activists have been participating in the *Nuit debout devant l'abattoir* movement (standing up against slaughterhouses) as a means of countering not only animal suffering but halal slaughter in French public slaughterhouses. In Germany, a new trade union close to the AfD questions scientific approaches to climate change to accommodate and mobilize workers in the traditional automobile industry. The pandemic context of 2020/21 has again facilitated the profiling of far-right actors in opposition to government policies. On the one hand, they have questioned policy measures and the vaccine strategy based on conspiracy theories and staged important street protests where they could connect with priorly non-rightist groups. On the other hand, growing nationalist discourses about 'each country first' in accessing the vaccines have severely criticized the EU strategy for obtention and distribution of the medication.

Against this background of shared themes, I will look more closely at the two national cases. In France, the appeal to the people of the nation is expressed in terms of the *grandeur de la France*. The specific originary grievances here are the collaboration under the Vichy regime as a consequence of German occupation that discredits the aspirations of the far right within broad segments of the population; the Algerian war and independence, representing the loss of empire as the prime expression of France's 'grandeur'; as well as 1968 and the supposed 'leftist hegemony' that followed and against which the far right re-established itself as a counter-force. While earlier far-right orientations insisted on cultural particularism against the universalism of French republicanism, current proponents base their claims on the chauvinist assumption of the universalism of French Republicanism against communitarianism (French: *communautarisme*, Stora, 1997). The nationalism of today's French far right is hardly distinguishable any more from the mainstream concept of the French nation since, as opposed to former French fascist thinkers who relied on the German idea of *volk*, the current representatives refer to the republican heritage and to the political concept of 'the people'. The social foundation of alienation experienced by the French nation is postcolonial cultural heterogeneity, i.e., the presence of 'dark strangers', especially French Islam. This key outgroup is closely related to French colonial history, a chapter that stretches into the metropole and has not been adequately addressed by means of a conscious

politics of memory or any reconciliatory attempt. Jean-Marie Le Pen himself declared that ‘[t]he fight for a French Algeria has prepared the fight for a French France’ (cited in Stora, 1997: 24). Colonial assimilationist logic has entered the French mainland and set the bar so high that integration is rendered impossible, justifying measures of social segregation between incompatible population groups.<sup>20</sup>

Those threatening people can rely on the *droit du sol*, i.e., the French Nation grants citizenship to those who are born on its soil, leaving no room of manoeuvre in legally handling those people different from the ‘true French’ (*Français de souche*). Proponents of this version of exclusive solidarity agree that assimilation has largely failed, in particular with regard to Muslims. Since strangers who hold citizenship can and do claim all sorts of rights and gain support in rejecting racism and discrimination, far-right actors perceive ‘anti-French racism’ as being on the increase and feel ‘like strangers in their own country’. The latter adds the political left (in prior decades, communists) to the already mentioned outgroups. Their inclusive solidarities are accused of backing claims by undeserving groups. In the end, they are seen as allies to jihadism, as the most recent accusation of *Islamogauchisme* that allegedly dominates French universities, insinuates. Those proponents base their claims on the chauvinist assumption of the universalism of French Republicanism against communitarianism (French: *communautarisme*). This is particularly evident in recent times in the debate around *laïcité* (see below). While in former times assimilation was the corresponding policy, the French far right today rather argues in terms of multiculturalism. The intellectual New Right, realizing the limited chances for racial thinking to gain support, has managed to re-elaborate racial thinking in such a way that cultural differences are supposed to be accepted and are granted a right to existence but under the condition of remaining within bounded entities, calling for segregation of diverse population groups. This is but a thin veiling of the underlying racism (Shields, 2007).

In the German case, the historical subject of the national people would be the *Volksgemeinschaft*. There is asymmetry in my categorization since ideas of the greatness of the French nation are much more broadly accepted in France than ideas of *Volksgemeinschaft* in Germany. However, if the aim is to understand national specificities, I believe this distinction still makes sense. I have elaborated on the German concept of Volk at length in my contribution to Volume I. Suffice it to say here that after a period stretching into the recent past where NS-vocabulary had been banned from public space but subsisted in rather hidden ways,<sup>21</sup> the AfD has led a strategic struggle to reintroduce NS-laden terms into public debate.<sup>22</sup> This concerns in particular the adjective *völkisch* that clearly conveys historical connotations.

The originary grievance of the *Volksgemeinschaft*-ideologues is paradoxically, but without any doubt, the Holocaust, or more precisely, its undeniability. This is what delegitimizes within broad segments of the population any call for the greatness of the German nation and constitutes a major disadvantage in comparison with the far right in other countries. AfD-politician Gauland clearly expresses this: ‘Hitler has destroyed much more than cities and humans, he has broken the German’s spine’. Or again: ‘At least in one point we have more difficulty: The British need not struggle with Auschwitz’ (quoted in: Ulrich and Geis, 2016). Since the Holocaust cannot be denied, the far right plays around with ambiguous references to this past, partly to provoke attention, partly to banalize the facts, partly to express their frustration as being strongly

disadvantaged with regard to other national far-right movements. While the early post-war far right in Germany opposed parliamentarism and multiculturalism as the main sources of alienation of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, nowadays the German culture of remembrance, in AfD member Björn Höcke's view a 'shame culture' or 'culture of disgrace' (quoted in Kamann, 2017), is seen as the basic social foundation that inhibits national pride. Björn Höcke's agitation against the German disgrace in terms of its memory politics echoes Joseph Goebbels' outrage against the 'disgrace of Versailles'.

Outgroups are similar to the French case. The modalities of veracity, aiming to overcome the grievance of the undeniability of the Holocaust, is the invocation of 1,000 years of German history, within which the NS-years appear as no more than 'a bird's shit' (Gauland, quoted in Hebel, 2018). Within those parts of the German far right that are intellectually versed, racial organicism remains another source of legitimacy of *Volksgemeinschaft* (d'Appolonia, 1992: 21, see also Kemper, 2016a).<sup>23</sup>

In framing calls for diverse forms of exclusive solidarities, the French and German far right have found their most promising response to ideological crisis (see below). In placing exclusive solidarities above the individual, they aim to transcend internal conflict and to close up spaces of privilege. They represent 'displacement ideologies' that give the illusion of solving social conflict along lines of race, culture or creed (Hammerschmidt, 2005). Because exclusive solidarities are essentially based on the exclusion of others and enemies, the potential for violence and coercion is inherent to them.

### **Statism [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

In Western Europe, the neoliberal turn, with the increased individualization of economic success and material risks, has caused a discursive shift. Against materially based inclusive solidarity, visions of culture-, nation- or race-based exclusive solidarity, until then rather marginal, have gained ground (see below the sections on crises). Whereas the FN, for instance, was largely Reaganist in orientation throughout the 1980s and had fully assimilated neoliberal ideas (Shields, 2007: 192 ff.), the current far right could capitalize on this inversion of trends that has accompanied the retreat of the state from its post-war welfare and social security functions in order to attract new voter bases. The trend towards cultural exclusivity and national closure that the far right proposes as a response to the economic and ideological crises of neoliberalism also has another, more macro-level reason: the fact that no state can claim to control its national economy (see below, economic crisis). With the ascent of neoliberalism and global capitalism, statism in terms of the state as an economic actor itself has been in crisis. The state has appeared as weakened within Western Europe not only in terms of its economic agency but supposedly because of the superimposed EU framework. The 2008 economic crisis and the fact that the state has re-entered the economic field as a major political actor has led to partial reconfigurations within the far right. In addition to cultural exclusivity and various taints of nationalism, some parties do reaffirm a strong state against the EU and against globalization. Beyond calls for 'Make X great again' or the metaphor of the closed border, certain economic imaginaries take shape that do not resemble the FN's economic orientation of the 1980s. In their view, a strong state is a free state, where free means mainly free from the subordination of national law and

action under the EU treaties but also free from international legal dispositions and from US domination. The key features of this statism of the current far right, realized differently by different far-right groups and parties, are at least six: regaining control over the economy, guaranteeing law and order, bearing national values, guaranteeing true democracy and providing exclusive public services.

### **Reinforcing the State's Control over the Economy [C-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

At the national level, the FN<sup>24</sup> demands a strong interventionist state that would reindustrialize the country and renationalize some important companies. Regarding the international sphere, the FN favours protectionism. It has campaigned in 2017 with the project of France's exit from the Eurozone – reflecting the party's strong anti-EU stance – and bringing back the national currency, until Marine Le Pen shipwrecked the TV duel with Macron when explicating the concrete realization and full impact of such measures. The current evolution of Brexit has made EU exit options less popular and, therefore, electorally unwise. Furthermore, the FN asks for stronger taxes on imports to boost national production and for a strong state against the power of finance and speculation.

### **The State as the Guarantor of Law and Order [C-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Statism plays a role at the level of the largely authoritarian calls for law and order that the far right shares, although often in more exaggerated yet somehow pioneering expressions with the conservative right. Faced with moral decadence, deviance of all kinds, immigration and the most diverse illegal and illicit activities threatening the security and well-being of spotless citizens, leaders call for more police, more prisons, the introduction of the death penalty, among others. Echoing the moral panic around the Black Disgrace (Keim, 2014), any incidence of aggression or violence committed by dark strangers against white women becomes a key event of mobilization (see below the section on hypermasculinity). The state as the guarantor of law and order applies in particular to the call for reinforced border and immigration controls. Global migration flows that even the sophisticated investments into “fortress Europe” could not stop is represented as a state failure. Far-right thinkers and leaders favour the idea that the legitimacy of the state depends on its capacity to ensure the level of law and order that citizens demand (Quent, 2016a: 21). The authoritarianism involved is largely directed towards measures against ‘insecurity’ as represented by migrants/terrorists, not against economic or material insecurity of citizens in the first place (see, however, public service below). In order for the state to be able to guarantee law and order for its citizens, and reflecting the anti-EU position of far-right parties, a related request is to make national law supreme to the *acquis communautaire* or to any international law. As former Italian Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini from the far-right Lega Nord calls for a census of Roma people within Italy in order to be able to more easily expel Roma who are not Italian nationals – whereas ‘unfortunately’, as he said, Italian Roma will have to stay in Italy (The Local Italy, 18.6.2018; Kirchgaessner, 19.6.2018)– he still has to realize that Italy cannot expel EU citizens to other EU countries. Nationalist accusations against the EU's vaccine strategy during the 2020/21 pandemic follow the same logic.

### **The State as Bearer of National Values [C-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Faced with cultural heterogeneity and cosmopolitanism, the far right is putting more emphasis on the state as being the bearer of national values and national identity. In France, a strong state is perceived as the only protector of Republican values, and the FN represents itself as the only party that unflinchingly upholds them (Perrineau, 2016: 65). In particular, and this is where the far right has gained large sectors of public debate, the state is supposed to implement laicity (*laïcité*) at all levels. Through the ideological renewal initiated by M. Le Pen, the FN has imported Republican values like *laïcité* and public service (see below). It reinterprets ideas that have been upheld largely by the left and centre left in authoritarian restorationist garb. In the case of *laïcité*, ‘that could be understood as a logic of individual emancipation but also as a logic of injunction to conformity’ (Jacquemain, 2011: 2–3, translated by the author), the aim is clearly to demonstrate that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with French Republicanism (Perrineau, 2016: 65). In order to give shape and visibility to the state as bearer of national values, M. Le Pen has called repeatedly for the creation of a “Ministry for the Interior, Immigration and Laicity (*-Ministère de l’Interieur, de l’Immigration et de la Laïcité-*)”. In Germany, reflecting the growing hegemony of far-right discourses into the political centre, the former Ministry of the Interior has adopted an additional task, named now Ministry of the Interior, Construction and Homeland (*Ministerium des Inneren, für Bau und Heimat*). The corresponding current minister Horst Seehofer is from Bavaria, where the regional government has had a ministry for *Heimat* prior to the federal one. Similar to the inversion of the formerly liberal left concept of *laïcité* into an authoritarian one, feminist issues are also instrumentalized. Reinforcing national values is supposed to benefit women: emancipated amongst us as opposed to their oppression under Islam. Another claim of the far right is to stop affirmative action which is seen as anti-national racism.

### **The State as the Bearer of National Solidarity and Morality [C-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Related to the issue of values is the idea of a strong state that is united. This combines with the refusal of ‘national repentances’, in Germany epitomized in what the far right calls ‘shame culture’. In France, furthermore, Florian Philippot, for instance, stressed that the republic is indivisible. A strong state leaves no room for strong regionalisms. The Catalanian conflict has increased concerns in this sense regarding, in particular, Corsica. This aspect shifts the far rights’ approach to the state closer to Mann’s originary meaning of nation-statism.

### **The State as Guarantor of Democracy [C-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Historical fascism was deeply anti-democratic and anti-parliamentarian. Today’s context of established liberal democracies is fundamentally different. Berman draws an optimistic conclusion from this assessment:

But if the similarities are striking, the differences are even more so. Most obvious, today’s extremists claim they want not to bury democracy but to improve it. They critique the functioning of contemporary democracy but offer no alternative to it, just vague promises to make government stronger, more efficient, and more responsive. Current right-wing extremists are thus better characterized as populist rather than fascist, since they claim to speak for everyday men and women against corrupt, debased, and out-of-touch elites and institutions. In other words, they are certainly antiliberal, but they are not antidemocratic. This distinction is not trivial. If today’s populists come to power –

even the right-wing nationalists among them – the continued existence of democracy will permit their societies to opt for a do-over by later voting them out. Indeed, this may be democracy's greatest strength: it allows countries to recover from their mistakes. (2016: 43)

However, this might be a short-sighted assessment of the current situation, and one with a brief memory. That the far right calls for more, better or true democracy sounds paradoxical only at first sight. There is a legacy of claims to 'true democracy' within the extreme right reaching back into NS-ideology (Botsch, 2017). This does not mean to say that the relationship of the far right with fundamental democracy is not highly problematic. Regarding the internal functioning of far-right organizations and parties, to start with, it appears that 'politics on the right is characterized by a specific organizational form that builds on strong, personalized leadership rather than citizen participation' (Della Porta, 2017: 34). This relates to the ongoing debate around the populism of the current far right that we cannot reproduce here in full length. According to Della Porta, 'populism is tied to a plebiscitary linkage which does not empower the people as a whole, but rather an individual leader. This plebiscitarian turn can be seen in regressive politics, with leaders appealing to the masses through anti-establishment discourses while manipulating rather than involving "the people"' (ibid.: 36). In this sense, the strategy of far-right leaders, in line with the NS heritage, is directed against representative democracy and oriented towards the ideal of the charismatic leader who embodies the will of the nation. This is what is meant, ultimately, by 'direct' or 'true democracy' within the far right: freeing the direct link between leader and followers from bureaucratic hurdles, democratic procedures and superimposed transnational frameworks. The FN as well favours this direct and exclusive relationship between the public and the charismatic leader (Baier, 2016). Furthermore, at a more abstract level, in line with its Euroscepticism, the far right considers the strong state to be the only 'truly democratic' body as opposed to the EU. The latter appears as subjugated to the power of cosmopolitan elites, bureaucrats and experts, to global finance and to the rules of the globalized economy at large that play to the detriment of nations and their people. The AfD, for instance, suggests that the German people should decide through direct democratic dispositions according to the Swiss model (Oppelland, 2017). This call for more direct political participation appears in line with the critique of the existing political system (Decker, 2016: 11).

Nevertheless, the AfD's claim to represent 'the people' has a different connotation than in the French context. While in France, populism is discursively linked to the *classes populaires*, i.e., the working classes and therefore the former constituencies of leftist politics, the German Volk conveys racial-biological connotations.<sup>25</sup>

### **The State as Provider of Public Services [C-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Finally, capitalizing on the weakening of precarious classes, the far right also advocates a strong state to ensure better public services for its citizens. Again, this is an exclusive privilege for true nationals. At this level, Herkenhoff gives a precise analysis of the family policies (here as foreseen by the AfD's youth league programme) as one example that ties together the entity of the people, of the German nation and of the state through the 'germ cell' of the family. Accordingly, '[a]s the smallest social entity, only the classic family is able to ensure the survival



of the state and therefore is the only form of cohabitation that deserves financial aid' (quoted in Herkenhoff, 2016b: 205–06). Since the state is ultimately responsible for providing the conditions under which families reproduce, public school education has become one of the major sites of struggle for far-right anti-genderism activists.

To conclude, statism clearly is a feature of the current German and French far rights. It does not appear as a major issue when compared to their blatant racist and anti-immigration discourses. However, their statism does not combine as elegantly as in Mann's account of historical fascism into nation-statism. I have outlined above that exclusive solidarities are articulated within, but also beyond, national frames of reference. The emerging vision of a 'Europe of fatherlands' tries to follow this movement of changing levels of reference and ensures the maintenance of nation-statist ideas.

### **Transcendence [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

The kind of strong nationalism explored here does contain some idea of transcendence, in particular of the divide between 'the people' and the elites. However, the strong sense of transcendence that was tangible in interwar fascisms has become obsolete in a context where class struggle has nearly come to an end. With the bureaucratization and overall weakening of trade unions, the fragmentation and alienation of the working class through the restructuring, transformation and offshoring of production, combined with the neoliberal narrative of individualization, has led to a situation where class conflict, i.e., conflict over distribution, has given way to 'multiculturalism' as the major site of social friction. And racialized 'others' are an outgroup to far-right exclusive solidarities. The same applies to the supposed divide between corrupt elites and ordinary people. Transcendence is not a necessary option for national renaissance and reintegration.

### **From Paramilitarism to Vigilantism and Terrorism [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Paramilitarism, according to Mann, was a key value as well as the primordial organizational form of fascism. During the interwar years, political violence and paramilitarism as a means of political struggle were widely accepted. Every major political party in Weimar Germany had its militia. Today, the political context in Western Europe is fundamentally different and paramilitarism has largely disappeared from the political landscape. In the case of France, this is a more recent evolution: until the foundation of the FN, paramilitarism remained an important organizational form. The diverse fractions of 'French Algeria', through its major armed expression, the OAS (Organisation Armée Secrète), also present in the metropole, revived paramilitarism after 1945 (Renken, 2006; Shields, 2007: 90–117).<sup>26</sup>

If Mann defined paramilitaries as one of two key organizational forms of interwar fascism, in the absence of military crisis and in a context where parliamentary democracy is firmly established, the strategic choice by far-right intellectuals and activist networks to bet on a political party within the current political system as the key organizational form has to be considered an opportunistic choice. A party does not, as paramilitarism did for interwar fascism, correspond to both key value and organizational form. Important fractions of both New-Right intellectuals and

networked activist groups on the ground have no affinity whatsoever with parliamentary democracy.

In the current phase, there have been so-called 'lone-wolf' terrorist acts all over Europe.<sup>27</sup> Those deeds, although acted out by single individuals, clearly had right-wing extremist political motivations acquired through socialization and participation in corresponding groups and networks. In every European country as well, we find organized groups that practice extreme-right-inspired political violence against leftists, migrants and ethnic minorities and, within the last few years in Germany, increasingly against representatives of established politics and the state.<sup>28</sup> Because they remain small in size – at least the visible part of them – do not control territory and do not wear uniforms, we cannot consider them paramilitary. Because organization happens underground and because traditionally state organs are slow in reacting to right-wing violence, it is often difficult to say whether a violent act was carried out by a single individual or by an organized group of people. However, against the commonly held assumption, often expressed in court procedures against perpetrators, that right-wing violence is essentially a spontaneous law-and-order problem involving drunk, jobless and not especially bright youth 'without any definite political orientation' (Oberländer, 1993: 177), we can assume that more often than not violent acts depend on some form of organization. In addition, close contacts between state organs and right-wing terrorism had also seriously troubled the public with regard to the series of murders by the group National-Socialist Underground (NSU).

Another type of violent organization that often involves far-right motivations are vigilante groups. Rather small in scale, they attack supposed deviants in order to protect the population. In some cases, they do control certain areas but next to police and state organs that are perceived as deficient. Vigilantism gives shape to the 'dark side' of civil society (Roth, 2003). This seems to represent a truly mobilizing activity. According to statistics in Germany, for instance, alongside committed neo-Nazis and right-wing extremists, individuals without prior political experience have joined such vigilante groups in recent years to practice violent self-justice against refugees, as a result of civil society's interpretation of rising numbers of refugees as state failure. The motivation of vigilante groups is not a radical change of the system but rather a stabilizing of the system by defending the old order through exercising self-justice. This can involve, in their view, momentary suspension of the state's monopoly of violence (Quent, 2016a: 20). The German group Bürgerwehr Freital/360, for example, pursued the aim of creating 'national liberated zones' until its members were condemned for the creation of a terrorist association in 2018.

If those groups and actions cannot count as paramilitary and remain marginal to the political game, in all the mentioned cases, organized violence is a means to claim agency, to take concrete measures in order to put order into a social world that is perceived as anomic. They all enact the claim that the state does not sufficiently guarantee the security of its legitimate citizens, defined according to an exclusive identitarian conception. Often, this assumption is combined with conspiracy constructs of an external manipulation of the state. Despite their own illegal action in terms of the state's monopoly of violence, their aim is to reinforce a strong, authoritarian state (Quent, 2016a; Waldmann, 2011). In many cases, police have not intervened to prevent their actions. This includes refusing a postulate of fundamental equality between humans to the point where they can legitimately – yet not legally – be intimidated and attacked physically. This

violence helps to restore some sense of coherence and expresses claims to privilege. It also has a fundamentally socializing aspect (Roth, 2003), as Mann (2004) confirms with his concept of the socializing micro-cage of paramilitary groups.

An interesting additional observation refers to the nearby complete ‘speechlessness’ of right-wing violence. This sets it apart from left-wing violence that has always sought to provide verbal, elaborate and often strongly theorized justifications of its actions. Right-wing violence, however, hardly provides official justifications, ‘because the inferiority of certain groups of humans is regarded as *natural*. [. . .] Theoretically sustained avowals are not deemed necessary in order to legitimate violence, because in their own view, the perpetrators execute the *natural* order and the *true* interest of the people [Volk]’ (Quent, 2016a: 24, highlighted in the original).

### **Cleansing [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Cleansing in the sense it acquired in interwar fascism has not appeared as a palpable characteristic of far-right parties. There has been extreme right physical violence and murder of migrants within every single European country. Left-wing locals and activists, at times even established politicians, have also at times been victims of aggression. In some cases, those were individual actions, in others armed organizations were behind the deeds (see the section on paramilitarism). In Germany, some neo-Nazi groups are proud of announcing ‘national liberated zones’, small territorial entities supposedly cleansed off anyone not considered truly German. However, even the broader far-right movements and official parties have not publicly endorsed those actions. It would be counterfactual speculation to try and guess how far far-right parties would go in their intentions of promoting an exclusive solidarity based on the ideal of a pure and integral nation if they arrived in power.

If there has been cleansing, we could almost argue, somewhat ironically, that it has happened within the ranks of the far right. Marine Le Pen and the French Front National are known to have silenced their connections with violent extreme-right groups and to have expelled them from marches and public demonstrations (Fourest and Venner, 2011). Similarly, the AfD has spent considerable amounts of time with internal disputes around the exposure of overtly Nazi attitudes by some of its key representatives and the necessity to avoid any overt connections. A veritable detective’s work even finds out how Björn Höcke, one of AfD’s chief politicians, has carefully hidden his intellectual contributions and political activities for the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) (Kemper, 2016a). In the political sense, we could debate whether a different form of cleansing has happened within the far right that tries to blur its lineages with interwar fascism, in accordance with its originary grievance, the undeniability of the Holocaust.

### **Hypermasculinity [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

To the five criteria put forth by Mann, I add the far right’s vision of gender that largely overlaps, although updated, with that of historical fascists. The gender dimension has not been included prominently in theoretical approaches to fascism but I consider it to be an additional key point. I therefore put forth the sixth key concept of ‘hypermasculinity’ as an extension of Mann’s initial framework. Male bonding appears as a key organizational principle regarding extreme-right politicization<sup>29</sup> in the past as well as in the present. To start with, the widespread literature on

political far-right parties agrees on the persistence of a gender gap among members as well as among voters (Dubslaff, 2017: 160–62; Harteveld et al., 2015; Oppelland, 2017). This is all the more true for extreme-right fringe groups that were for a long time ‘considered as “male” practically by definition’ (Blum, 2017: 322). Their ideal of masculinity occupies a central place in their world view and so has to be considered as constitutive.<sup>30</sup> Within the far right, this warrior image corresponds to a ‘right’ or ‘true’ masculinity within an ordinary natural order, in the service of the nation and race. Being a ‘real man’ as insinuated by such visions of hypermasculinity, seems to be one of the key motivations for young men to join the scene. Male aggressiveness is strongly associated with the will to dominate in perceived competition with foreigners for women. The control of women’s relationships with unwelcomed outsiders, in particular of their sexuality and potential reproduction, corresponds to defending the nation and the white race. This has no parallel amongst women. It foreshadows an ambiguous vision of those same women.<sup>31</sup>

Hypermasculinity is embedded in the vision of ‘gender complementarity’. Gender complementarity is used to mobilize against gender equality and to restore the original meaning of the family against feminism and gender pluralism. The idea of gender complementarity is often religiously grounded, as is demonstrated in the Vatican’s reaction to the 1994 United Nations conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994) and on women in Beijing (1995). The Catholic Church, in alliance with Protestants, Muslims and Jews, fought the international advances in terms of sexual and reproductive rights as a first step towards international recognition of abortion, as a threat to traditional motherhood and as a legitimization of homosexuality (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2017: 263). Alongside the religious justification shared across creeds, within other fractions of the far right, biologicistic legitimations of hypermasculinity and gender complementarity prevail (Villa, 2017: 104).

In the mobilizations against gender equality and gender pluralism, variously termed ‘gender ideology’, ‘*idéologie du genre*’ or ‘*Genderwahn*’, political extremisms effortlessly overlap with much wider and more moderate constituencies, including conservative parties, conservative Catholic or broader Salafist constituencies, men’s rights movements and homophobic circles. In those mobilizations, gender functions as a ‘symbolic glue’ ~~or the empty signifier~~ that allows the ~~emergence-formation~~ of ~~such broader~~ coalitions, especially when actors do not share the same ideological framework<sup>2</sup> (Kováts and Pöim, 2015).<sup>32</sup> All across Europe, anti-gender movements also address the issue as one of imposition by force through outside, imperial forces – the EU or the UN, for instance.

Furthermore, hypermasculinity clearly opposes the legacy of 1968. The publication by identitarian author Willinger, *Die Identitäre Generation. Eine Kriegserklärung an die 68er* (‘The Identitary Generation. A Declaration of War on the Generation of 1968’, published in 2013), expresses this clearly: ‘You have deprived men of their masculinity. Reduced them to feeble teddy bears, with no energy, no courage or strength, in short: no will to power’ (quoted in Blum, 2017: 326). Opposition to 1968 includes anti-authoritarianism (conceived of as ‘re-education’), feminism (and related calls for gender-sensitive language and ‘political correctness’) and sexual liberties, regarded as the foundation of the current dilution of gender roles and family models and therefore representing a ‘threat to social order, shared values and the moral integrity of German

society' (Villa, 2017: 105). Education is a crucial battlefield. Gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive education are accused of inhibiting the healthy development of masculinity and femininity amongst young children. As outlined in the section on exclusive solidarity, alongside cultural arguments, we also find more eugenicist visions (Herkenhoff, 2016b: 205–06). As a consequence, homophobia is the counterpart to hypermasculinity and is equally shared by both forms of authoritarian restoration (Claus and Virchow, 2017: 310–11).

Gender complementarity involves the ideological construction of normative male and female bodies, as well as of a normative, child-producing family. Women partake in these constructions of essentialist gender stereotypes.<sup>33</sup> Hypermasculinity is articulated with constructions of 'total femininity', equally found in both cases. In the case of the Catholic Church's mobilizations against gender equality, much of the ideological substance goes back to Pope John Paul's writings laying the foundations of an anthropology of women (Kováts, 2017: 178–79). Restoring the honour of women as mothers, as bearers and educators of the following generation is one of the far right's programmatic ambitions (Köttig, 2017: 225–26).

Hypermasculinity is not without its contradictions, however. Despite the ideological limitation of their roles, women are actively taking part in right-wing movements. A woman now leads one of the major European far-right parties, although she owes her status more to her father's nepotism than to her gender. M. Le Pen plays on her femininity as a strategic resource for de-diabolization. However, it was noted that '[...] she constantly transgresses the "natural" borders of her gender. She uses sexual imagery to defame her political opponents and deny them any kind of masculinity. For her, the former French president, Sarkozy, embodied "hectic impotence" (impuissance agitée) and the new president, Hollande, "flabby impotence" (impuissance molle).' She thus somehow follows the image of a masculine leader, reinforcing visions of hypermasculinity to the point where '[b]ecause of this gendered ambiguity, she is celebrated as a homo-icon in certain circles' (Dubslaff, 2017: 169). In extremist circles, women have the advantage of being less controlled and persecuted because of widespread gender stereotypes within police and security apparatuses and in the media.<sup>34</sup> Gender ideals are also not unequivocal with regard to political demands. While in Germany, far-right women fight against external childcare in order to restore true motherhood, the FN calls for an expansion of childcare in order to further its policies of national preference and imagines behind governments' insufficient commitment to childcare a conspiracy against French birthing and for increasing immigration levels (Dubslaff, 2017).

Regarding the attractiveness of hypermasculinity, recent research shows that the vision of women that the far right propagates accounts much less for their adherence than nationalism, racism and strong conventionalism (Bitzan, 2017). Some confusion of categories is also caused by the participation of openly homosexual men and women in some anti-gender manifestations (Paternotte and Kuhar, 2017). The public image and dominant ideology tend to hide tensions within the far-right scene, especially around gay members. One skinhead explained, for instance, that '[t]he struggle against gays is not a struggle against men who go to bed with other men, but a struggle against unmanliness' (quoted in Claus and Virchow, 2017: 310–311). Such dismissal of unmanliness partakes in the construction of hypermasculinity; that in turn allows for some expression of homosexuality. Finally, although they propagate decisively anti-feminist ideas, in

what can be considered an ‘ethnicization of sexism’, far-right forces often present female emancipation as an achievement of their own country or civilization when it comes to discrediting immigrant cultures or while accusing European Muslims for importing supposedly misogynistic practices (Blee, 2017: 196).

### **Fascism and Post-Fascism: a Certain Family Resemblance [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

The current far right shares a certain family resemblance with interwar fascism. Both adhere to societal visions based on exclusive solidarity. However, in comparison with interwar fascism, the recent versions of those visions are based less strictly on radical nationalism, let alone nation-statism, but comprise a broader, European perspective. In this sense, the current far right is not only post-fascist but also postcolonial. While imperial aspirations are a total taboo in the German case, given the history of the Second World War, the French far right had to fundamentally revise its territorially based concept of ‘grandeur’ after the end of its last colonial war and the loss of ‘French Algeria’. Today’s statism is much more moderate than fascist statism. The state is not seen as integrating society based on a corporatist model or as incarnating the organic nation. Rather, it is put into position as a sovereign state against the EU framework and it has certain functions in the service of national citizens. The criteria of transcendence and of cleansing are not covered any more, although the potential for cleansing is ideologically inherent to far-right societal visions. Paramilitarism has been abandoned as a major organizational form to the expense of party politics out of pragmatic, contextual considerations. At the level of hypermasculinity, both cases overlap to a large extent.

As a result, as well, present authoritarian figures do not appear as innovative, or ‘revolutionary’ as historical fascism (see the discussion in Griffin, 1991). Their programmes are also more limited in scope, ideologically as well as in terms of their potential for political action. The Front National, now Rassemblement National (National Rallye), N and AfD and their surrounding networks appear as a rather poor copy of their historical predecessors. I therefore argue that they cannot be considered fascists. However, we cannot understand their logics, their functioning and their historical lineage unless we agree they are clearly located in a post-fascist legacy. Post-fascism in this sense not only refers to the fact that the current far right evolves within a broader post-fascist society and has to adapt to those circumstances of context. Qualifying the current far right as post-fascist also acknowledges their own internal process of reflection upon their own past and the difficulties they have in tackling it (see the above discussion of their major grievances). Major ideological revisions have taken place and, in many cases, there is an explicitly voiced recommendation not to evoke the semantics of the interwar years in order not to discredit themselves on the political scene. Therefore, although they are not fascists in the sense of interwar fascism, they are not understandable without a thorough following up of their lineages into those interwar experiences. If they are definitely not fascists, they are for sure post-fascists.

### **The Societal Context of the French and German Far Right: a Scenario of Multi-level Crises? [A-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

The question now is to find an explanation for the current relative strength of the French and German far right. We argued in Volume I that the 1920s and 1930s were an anomalous phase. A return to the structural conditions that explain the rise of interwar authoritarianism and fascism might hint towards the kind of questions we should ask for the present phase. In accordance with his theory on four sources of social power – economic, political, ideological and military – Mann (2004) states major crises at all four levels in interwar Europe as necessary causes for the rise of fascism.<sup>35</sup> Fascism was successful because it offered plausible solutions at all four levels. An important weakness in Mann's account, however, is that he conflates fascists' analysis of crisis and the solutions they offered with sociological and historical analyses of those crises. We shall see further below that authoritarians today do offer solutions, but in accordance with the particular, self-tailored analyses of crises they put forth. A rhetoric of crisis is part of their programme.

According to Mann, in the centre, east and south of Europe, as opposed to the north-west, liberal democracy was not entrenched enough to mediate through routine functioning the four-level crises. Instead, these states proceeded to a first-level escalation of nation-statist ideology, leading to a more general type of authoritarian nation-statism across half of Europe. The emergence and success of the second-level escalation, fascism, largely depended on the behaviour of old regime powers in dual states, i.e., capitalists, bourgeois conservatives, the church, high-ranking military and landowners largely controlling the state executive in the face of social unrest and perceived disorder led by peasant and labour movements and the left. In the face of the existing example of the Bolshevik revolution, in many cases they reacted with hysterical, economically and politically irrational behaviour. Favouring a more militarized nation state reinforcing law and order and protecting private property, they would allow the fascists into the political arena. Only weak old regimes allowed for the emergence of fascism. The importance of the conservative parties that, where stable, could ensure government by themselves and thus prevented the coming into power of the bottom-up fascist movements is particularly clear in the works of Paxton (1998) that address fascism praxeologically, as a process in context. Another reason for historical fascists' success was the intensity of their message: fascist militancy. They gained strength in Italy, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Romania, the five countries that Mann studies in more detail.

In focusing on core fascist constituencies in comparative perspective, Mann shows that for many members of fascist organizations, for their followers and voters, fascism represented a reasonable choice. Beyond mere ideological accounts on the one hand and broad class theory on the other, both unconvincing, he distinguished specific social constituencies that particularly favoured nationalism and statism because of their closeness to the nation state: soldiers and veterans, civil servants – in particular teachers and university-based academics, public-sector manual workers, the church and clergy in cases where the church was central to the imagined nation and, finally, populations in threatened border territories after borders across Europe were redrawn following refugees regaining national territories as a consequence of the Versailles and Trianon treaties. Second, there were core constituencies that favoured transcendence, namely people in those economic sectors that were removed from class conflict: again, civil servants, employees in the public sector and in state-led industries, as well as workers in the service sector and in

agriculture. At the margins of urban industrial conflicts, they felt it threatened their social order and divided the nation. Finally, there were two generations of young men who felt attracted by the organizational forms of paramilitaries as total socializing institutions and by their cleansing tasks. These young men included those enjoying considerable levels of secondary and higher education in state institutions preaching morality and national values on the one hand and those who had been socialized in the armed forces and were therefore familiar with militarism and violence, on the other hand.

From the theory so far, we deduce the questions that we have to ask for the current phase: Do we have similar broad crises at various levels today? Does the far right address those crises and offer solutions to them? In the following section, we should also find out which particular constituencies find their programmes appealing.

Globalization theorists, like the ones who contributed to *The Great Regression* (Geiselberger, 2017), attribute the current situation to the neoliberal policies of the last decades. Neoliberalist deregulation has increased inequalities within and between countries (see the contributions to Wallerstein, 2016). The 2008 economic crisis was indeed global in extension and repercussions. The realities of migration that worry the rich parts of the world and which the far right capitalizes can be considered – apart from being a reaction to violent conflict, war and climate change – as a major outcome and manifestation of economic crisis. The most promising option for economic upward mobility is migration from poor to rich countries (Korzeniewicz and Moran, 2016). Boatca (2015) interprets migration as a manifestation of and strategy within global economic inequality.

Furthermore, at an abstract level, the weakening of political state apparatuses in the face of economic neoliberalism can be considered as a feature of global political crisis. The spread of paranoid reason in times of terrorism everywhere (Schneider, 2010) has furthermore led to a securitization of (international) politics. While it is difficult to assess current potential for a global military crisis, we certainly can state, again at a very abstract level, a global ideological crisis in as far as neoliberal globalization and its premises are increasingly criticized. This ideological crisis is framed as a variety of perceptions of threat, chaos and instability causing moral panics everywhere: around terrorists and refugees, around Western decadence and ‘gender ideology’, around all sorts of unfaithful and therefore dangerous populations. Such a global outline, however, necessarily remains very abstract. It does not allow for understanding the particular circumstances within specific contexts that refracted the global trends very differently, and in which authoritarian restoration has flourished recently. Let us focus on Europe.

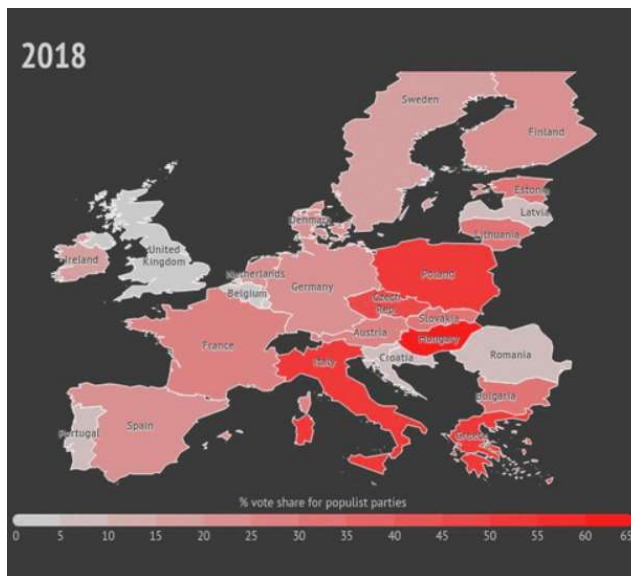
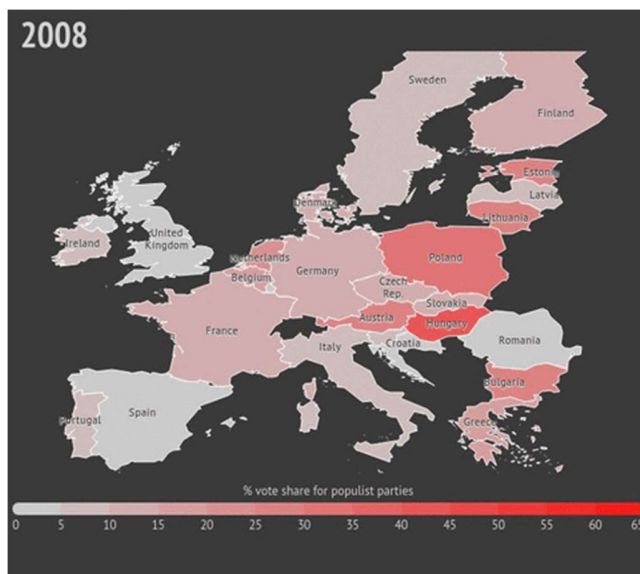
The year 2015 was a dreadful one for Europe in general and for the EU in particular. It started with the terrorist attack against the magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris and ended with an even more deadly jihadist assault in the same city. In between, the EU battled an economic crisis in Greece, which threatened the entire eurozone, and endured a staggering inflow of refugees from the Middle East and other war-torn regions. The year 2016 has not been much better. More terrorist attacks have shaken the continent. The refugee crisis has abated slightly, but only because the EU has outsourced the problem to Turkey – a country that is itself experiencing a bout of instability. And for the first time,



the EU is set to lose a member, the United Kingdom, as a result of the so-called Brexit referendum. All these developments have helped push populist movements to the center of European politics. The threat of terrorism and anxiety about a massive wave of immigrants from the Muslim world, coupled with the widespread belief that the EU hinders rather than helps when it comes to such problems, have created a perfect storm for populists, especially enhancing the standing of right-wing populists in many countries. (Mudde, 2016: 25)

The following two maps give a first impression of the growing strength of what is now called ‘populism’ in Europe over the last decade.

Graphs 1 and 2: Vote share of so-called populist parties across Europe<sup>36</sup>



Source: Harris, 2018

It shows that in a number of countries,

parties that centre their ideological constructs on the apotheosis of (national or local) identity, on xenophobia and authoritarianism, represent political forces that are rooted in and superior to 10 per cent of the electorate. The other aspect of this implantation is probably more worrying still: It is the way in which the extreme right could impose its agenda in the heart of political debate everywhere in Europe, partly vampirizing the classical right and, favouring ideological recompositions, sometimes reaching out into parts of the left. (Jacquemain, 2011: 1)

Mann's convincing argument for the interwar period was that fascism could rise in contexts of multilevel crises in dual states where democratically elected governments were too weak to absorb and refract those crises. Furthermore, he argues that fascism offered solutions to multilevel crises that were appealing for certain fragments of the population, its core constituencies. In the following section, I will outline an assessment of the past years in Europe as years of multilevel crises – economic, political and ideological. There are no indications of a military crisis in Western Europe today. The military crisis right after the Second World War certainly has played a role in the German context, as the reconfiguration of the far right in the immediate post-war years shows (see the following chapter), where the disorientation of former high-placed members of the NS-army played a role in their newly founded organizations that struggled, among others, for the rehabilitation of the honour of German soldiers. Their competency was also useful for the creation of stay-behind armies and for parts of the national intelligence services. The history of the Front National, in turn, is rooted in France's history as a colonial power and the resulting ideology of 'declinism' of France's grandeur. Similarly, the military expertise and experience of anti-communist members of the resistance and of soldiers and high-rank army officials mobilized in colonial wars (Indo-China 1946–54, Algeria, 1954–62), connected with the most radical civil nationalist fractions of 'French Algeria', formed one of the core constituencies of the French far right. They were also recycled into French stay-behind structures during the Cold War. A more honourable consideration of veterans continues to be part of the FN programme. The military is therefore a reference for the European far right. But its current strength is not a response to any sort of military crisis and paramilitarism has ceased to be important as an organizational form.

My students have suggested adding media crisis as a major context of emergence. However, I agree with Nachtwey that '[. . .] it would be misleading to think of what are – literally – social media as the cause of resentment, rather than as simply the force that gives it shape. To blame the algorithms would be like holding the radio responsible for Goebbels' (Nachtwey, 2017: 131). I agree with my students, however, to add an additional section on the alleged refugee crisis as an important contextual element. The situation during the finalization of the manuscript would

call for more in-depth research into the effects of the Covid pandemic on the reconfiguration of the political scene, something I am unable to realize due to time constraints.

### **Economic Crisis [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

In Europe, the post-war evolutions of the far right occurred in the context of transition from industrial welfare capitalism to post-industrial individualized capitalism. This process went along with the individualization of risks and material uncertainties and with social fragmentation and polarization (Betz, 1993: 665 ff.). Indeed, the strengthening of the far right coincided with interdependent recompositions at the economic, political and ideological levels. Throughout the post-war period and into the middle of the 1970s, welfare statism, social security and state interventions to direct and control market forces ensured relative material certainties to large parts of the population. This empowered inclusive solidarities on a given material basis. In the same period, declericalization and secularization, promotion of sexual liberties and the weakening of nationalisms enabled, through broad-based collective redistribution and reassurance, enhanced individual emancipation, culminating in the 1968 movements and the specific values they conveyed. Indeed, ‘the aspiration at autonomy, the rejection of institutions experienced as too coercive (think of the evolution of marriage), tolerance and the acceptance of difference [. . .] have their roots in the profound collective securitisation at the material level’ (Jacquemain and Claisse, 2012: 23–24, translated by the author). Throughout those early post-war decades, the far right survived in small, radical circles around personalities who ensured, in many cases, direct connections with the interwar and war period, with historical fascisms and, for the case of France at least in pronounced ways, with the colonialists’ experience (see the following chapter on deep roots).

From the early 1980s onwards, the neoliberal turn has inverted the two trends: generalized competition and the advancement of a meritocratic ideology have increasingly individualized the economy, especially the labour market and personal material risks. The individual has become fragile, demanding in turn forms and feelings of collectivization at the cultural and symbolic level. As a result, identitarian questions have gained in importance, a trend on which the far right could easily capitalize (Jacquemain, 2011: 3).<sup>37</sup> These long-term transformations of the economy do not represent a crisis to the same degree as the interwar economic crisis described by Mann. In addition, at least in the case of France where the FN was already a stable political force during the high phase of neoliberal transformations, it followed the new economic paradigm in its economic outlook in the beginning. A more welfarist discourse in favour of the nationals has only recently replaced the Reaganist discourse, a strategy to attract new constituencies amongst the working class and disadvantaged population groups. Today’s far right cannot be regarded as a response to those longer-term transformations and the uncertainties they produce.

At the broadest level, one could speak about a crisis of national economies, as in times of global capitalism the national is interconnected to such an extent with transnational and global economic spheres that the very idea of a ‘national economy’ has become an illusion (Appadurai, 2017: 2). National economies have been largely subjected to foreign investors and their influence over national legislation, to outcomes of negotiations at the global level and to the functioning of

the global financial market. We find contradictory analyses of the impact of the 2007–08 economic crisis on European societies. The global economic crisis did affect Europe; and it did so in context-specific ways. It might even be hazardous to consider a Europe-wide ‘moment’ in as far as each national context refracted the global situation differently.<sup>38</sup> Globally speaking, the 2007–08 economic crisis, ‘with the near meltdown of the global financial order’ (Fraser, 2017: 40) was an impressive illustration of the structural weaknesses of the global capitalist system. It marked a turning point in at least two respects: politically and ideologically (see below). At the economic level, the outcomes are debated controversially.

One consequence of the 2008 crisis was the realization in mainstream debate that austerity doesn’t work (Misik, 2017: 123), unsettling mainstream economists’ ideological certainty of the last decades. Furthermore, the state has re-entered the economy, unsettling another neoliberal certainty. This has led to a schizophrenic situation where a vast array of commentators has criticized neoliberalism politically and ideologically. Economically speaking, however, it continues (Nachtwey, 2017: 134–35). But whereas, in the 1980s and 1990s, a promise of success and prosperity has accompanied and legitimized neoliberalism, in the 2000s and 2010s it is imposed under threat. In the understanding of broad ranges of society, the interpretation of the 2008 crisis is that the state steps in to rescue banks and companies with taxpayers’ money when they fail in times of crisis, whereas the benefits remain private as long as the economy does well. This has contributed to discrediting what is perceived as national and European political elites in the service of global economic players (see below, political crisis). The effect of the global economic crisis in Western Europe is therefore more political and ideological than economic in the strict sense of the word. Another reason why we cannot reduce the strength of the far right to economic turmoil is that countries such as Switzerland and Austria, that largely avoided the fallout of the 2008 crisis, still have a high share of far-right votes (Löwy and Sittel, 2015: 54).

As far as the response of the far right is concerned, their strength has mainly been to redirect grievances at the economic level to a utopia of symbolic exclusive solidarities. In the face of lack of class conflict, the far right reformulates issues of redistribution. Economic relations are translated into an issue of national sovereignty, European integration is re-politicized, a chauvinistic stance calls for exclusion of those who undeservingly profit from ‘our welfare’ and thus reassure identitarian claims for the ‘right to stay amongst ourselves’ as the current expression of exclusive solidarity.

Far-right proponents have always been ambiguous on the economic policy side.<sup>39</sup> The recent experience illustrates once more the incoherence in terms of economic analysis and programmes. M. Le Pen struggled seriously in formulating any meaningful economic policy with regard to France’s relationship with the EU and her plan was to leave the eurozone in the last election campaign when confronted with Macron. She has now retreated from the former strong Europhobia in terms of economic policy, realizing that many potential voters are not as anti-EU as she had calculated. The starting point of the AfD was the articulation of a Eurosceptic economic stance after the 2008 economic crisis (see below). On the opposite side, a key figure like Gianfranco Fini, formerly declared the heir of Italian fascism, has in the meantime abandoned any allusion to corporatism to become a determined neoliberalist. ‘Such evolutions

do not contribute to designing an easily readable landscape' of economic orientations within the European far right (Jacquemain and Claisse, 2012: 21).

To sum up, the success of the far right is a reaction at the political and ideological levels to processes that have important economic reasons. 'The "anti-system" rhetoric is not aimed against capitalism, which is taken as a given objective, but against the system of liberal representative democracy' (Baier, 2016: 51). It is also directed against perceived outsiders in national economies – migrants as well as 'foreign finance capital', an idea with a similar flavour as the NS-idea of 'Jewish exploitative capital' (*raffendes Kapital*, see Keim, 2014). This corresponds to the second feature of economic crisis: 'the loss of economic sovereignty everywhere produces a shift towards emphasizing cultural sovereignty' (Appadurai, 2017: 5). Within the European context, the submission of national politics and economies to the 'dictate of Brussels' represents a particular feature, taken up in the so-called 'Eurosepticism' of most far-right parties.

In contexts where the collective systems of material security have been dismantled, many citizens feel the need for moral reassurance. This may explain partly the support for far-right parties: 'may they give us, at least, the impression that our symbolic order still holds' (Jacquemain and Claisse, 2012: 23–24). This is how individualism at the material level combines perfectly with calls for the defence of identitarian values, while this prevents in the same run collective struggles for redistribution. In this sense, economically speaking, the far right does not offer meaningful solutions. It is a particularly weak alternative, if it is even one, economically speaking. The highly theorized economic analyses put forth by the AfD in its founding phase did not characterize the party for long and do not account for its subsequent electoral successes. Rather, on the contrary, far-right programmes transpose economic frustrations and material uncertainties into the political and cultural domains and thus combine perfectly well with economic neoliberalism (Jacquemain, 2011: 2). They try to dissolve the left/right dichotomy, not only by mixing up neoliberal and leftist economic policies but also by highlighting cleavages between elites and the people, between outsiders and the people. This goes hand in hand with important parts of scholarly analyses of the 'populist right' that similarly distinguish between educated expert elites as supposed 'guarantors of liberal democracy' on the one hand and uneducated, authoritarian popular masses as a threat to democracy on the other hand (Collovald, 2004). I conclude that the current strength of the far right is related to long-term, profound transformations of Western European societies at the economic level.<sup>40</sup> However, it does not offer meaningful economic solutions to economic problems. Instead, its success amongst new electoral constituencies can partly be explained by its capacity to translate them into cultural ones.

### **Political Crisis [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

The material impact of the 2008 economic crisis in European societies has remained moderate in comparison with the situation in other parts of the world but its political and ideological impact was profound. Throughout the past decades already, while class conflict has largely disappeared, social and economic inequalities deepened in the most affluent societies of the globe, combined with the erosion of the welfare state and financialization. The ensuing constant climate of

economic panic (Appadurai, 2017: 6–8) has catalysed a malaise of European liberal democracies at various levels. The term ‘malaise’ serves to distinguish the depth and degree of problems at the political level from full-fledged political crisis: so far, the basic structures and functioning of the liberal democratic parliamentary systems have not been fundamentally put into question. However, we observe several dynamics that undermine parliamentary democracy from within.

First, in the course of restructuring the economy and the meltdown of trade union organization and labour protest, distributional conflict largely disappeared from European societies despite economic polarization. Instead, it has been ‘replaced by a technocratic search for the economically necessary and uniquely possible; institutions, policies and ways of life were to be adapted to this end’ (Streeck, 2017: 158). This has led to the rise of political, bureaucratic, academic and technical elites and experts as key agents of politics. Reliance on expert knowledge has largely depoliticized many controversial questions, from health and education to the administration of national budgets or European integration.

Second, while experts have taken over and managed issues that should have been subject to major political dispute, the big mainstream parties of the moderate right, left and centre increasingly resemble each other in terms of their external image. Mudde dates the starting point of these transformations back to the 1960s’ post-industrial transformations.<sup>41</sup> As governing parties or broad opposition parties, they have also increasingly retreated ‘into the machinery of the state as “cartel parties”’ (Streeck, 2017: 158), acting in a distinctive, narrow arena disconnected from the broad public. Popular criticism suspected they were obeying big global business.<sup>42</sup> This state of affairs is often described as an ‘elite consensus’, i.e., ‘a common agenda that called for integration through the EU, multiethnic societies, and neoliberal economic reforms’ and ‘a vision of Europe as a cosmopolitan, business-friendly technocracy’ (Mudde, 2016: 27). Third, this perceived indistinction of the mainstream parties combined with the impression that the national governing and oppositional parties were largely powerless in the face of supranational (EU) and international (IMF) authorities. Fourth, this has resulted in an overall decline in democratic participation at various levels and in a growing disinterest in politics, in particular at the European level that is perceived as being far more abstract than national politics. Since the 1980s, membership in most established parties has been falling, just as much as participation in elections (Streeck, 2017: 158). Democracy fatigue is one aspect of what is analysed in large parts of the literature as a ‘crisis of representative democracy’.

Fifth, another consequence is that voting behaviours have changed. Analysts observe an increasing detachment from partisanship with the established, traditional political parties, i.e., voter dealignment, leading to voter volatility. This expresses profound changes in the relationship between voters and those who are supposed to represent them.<sup>43</sup> From ‘crisis of representative democracy’ we can narrow the issue down to ‘crisis of representation’. Tony Blair’s and Gerhard Schröder’s policies of creating a ‘new centre’ destroyed the historical party profile of the centre left. Leaving aside politics of redistribution, the centre left has limited itself to agendas in favour of women’s, migrants’, or LGBTQIA+-rights. In France, even the Communist Party, largely fallen out of favour because of its Stalinist orientation and the 1989 turn, has abandoned references to the working class. The lack of a genuine left in the political spectrum contributed dramatically to the current situation (Della Porta, 2017: 36).<sup>44</sup> Positions

rather close to those of the Social Democratic ‘new centre’ were later also adapted by the moderate right, by Angela Merkel and David Cameron, for instance, diluting in turn the classical conservative party profile.<sup>45</sup> The political management of the recent economic crises made things worse:

Neoliberal deregulation and undemocratic decision-making in the context of strategies to overcome the crisis of European financial capitalism have produced fears of social downward mobility and rejection of hegemonic national and European politics. An unequal burden-sharing in the favour of banks and business and at the cost of broad populations have reinvigorated resentment against the political superstructure of a technocratic market regime in Europe. (Häusler, 2016a: 42–43)

As a result, conservative, especially religiously oriented voters and working-class people, have increasingly had the impression that the traditional parties they used to vote for do not represent their interests anymore. This disillusion with the representative link between voters and politicians is highlighted as one of the reasons why the so-called (new) populist right is winning support.

Sixth, all this combines with another more complex process that probably holds the key to understanding an important aspect of the current strength of the far right, and therefore needs to be developed in some detail. Since the 1980s, a specific trend of political alliance has contributed to the particular frustration of conservative and working-class milieus with established politics. The current far right can be interpreted as the rejection of this alliance termed ‘progressive neoliberalism’. Frazer provides an elaborate analysis of this development with regard to Donald Trump’s election in the US, which I believe can hold for the Western European contexts as well:

[t]his may sound to some like an oxymoron, but it is a real, if perverse political alignment that holds the key to understanding the US election results. [. . .] In its US form, progressive neoliberalism is an alliance of mainstream currents of new social movements (feminism, anti-racism, multiculturalism and LGBTQIA+ rights) on the one side, and high-end ‘symbolic’ and service-based sectors of business (Wall Street, Silicon Valley and Hollywood) on the other. [. . .] the former lend their charisma to the latter. (Fraser, 2017: 42)

The rise of ‘progressive neoliberalism’ put forth a reduced understanding of social emancipation:

[i]dentifying progress with meritocracy as opposed to equality, these terms equated emancipation with the rise of ‘talented’ women, minorities and gays in the winner-takes-all corporate hierarchy, instead of with the latter’s abolition. These liberal-individualist views of progress gradually replaced the more expansive, anti-hierarchical, egalitarian, class-sensitive and anti-capitalist understandings of emancipation that had flourished in the 1960s and 1970s. (ibid.)

Furthermore:

By the 1960s those excluded populations [women, minorities, LGBTQIA+] were actively mobilizing against a bargain that required them to pay the price of others’ relative security and prosperity. And rightly so! But their struggles intersected fatefully

with another front of struggle, which unfolded in parallel over the course of the subsequent decades. That second front pitted an ascending party of free-marketeters, bent on liberalizing and globalizing the capitalist economy, against declining labour movements in the countries of the capitalist core, once the most powerful base of support for social democracy, but now on the defensive, if not wholly defeated. In this context, progressive new social movements, aiming to overturn hierarchies of gender, 'race'-ethnicity and sex, found themselves pitted against populations seeking to defend established life worlds and privileges, now threatened by the cosmopolitanism of the new financialized economy. The collision of these two fronts of struggle produced a new constellation: proponents of emancipation joined up with partisans of financialization to double-team social protection. The fruit of their union was progressive neoliberalism. Progressive neoliberalism mixes together truncated ideals of emancipation and lethal forms of financialization. It was precisely that mix that was rejected in toto by Trump's voters. [. . .] For these populations, the injury of deindustrialization is compounded by the insult of progressive moralism, which routinely portrays them as culturally backward. [. . .] What made possible that conflation was the absence of any genuine left' (ibid.: 43–44).

This combination of neoliberalism with the successes of political activism for the democratic rights of new social and political movements and certain minority groups has made stagnating or descending strata and their dissatisfactions appear to be backward. This also explains the particular aversion of today's far right for issues like migrants' rights and cohabitation of culturally diverse population groups, for alternative family models, for female emancipation, for gender-sensitive language or for the LGBTQIA+'s struggles for recognition.

To sum up, mainstream political parties and elites are perceived as being in close alliance with global capital on the one hand and on the other with groups fighting for the recognition of their particularistic identities and rights, perceived as partial, minoritarian and irrelevant since these issues are far removed from the everyday sorrows and frustrations of majority citizens. The above points describe profound long-term transformations within the political arena that have led to a broad-based political malaise. Those observed trends do not yet fundamentally question the structures and functioning of Western European liberal democratic political systems. They cannot be considered a political crisis in Mann's sense.

However, there is another ingredient in the current phase that changes the picture: until recently, in the face of disillusion with established politics, protest was mainly expressed in the form of social protest outside of established party politics. In the meantime, from the margins of society, dissatisfaction has 'spread through society as flickerings of discontent'. Social movements like CasaPound, Pegida or the Bloc Identitaire have expanded 'into potential majorities' that link up with far-right political parties and 'threaten to undermine pluralistic democracy' (Misik, 2017: 118). The assault on the Reichstag at the end of August 2020 by opponents to the governments' coronavirus measures, foreshadowing the assault on the US Capitol half a year later, expressed symbolically the threat to parliamentary democracy embodied by those developments. In France, the *gilets jaunes* movement, courted by the far right and the left alike but refusing to align with either of them, has diversified the picture of popular unrest.



A meta-level reflection complements this discussion. The observed situation combines with hesitant, at times contradictory and at times reactionary, political attitudes towards the far right. The new far right claims to speak for 'the people'. Its scholarly analysis in terms of 'populism' implicitly confirms this claim. In France, the hegemonic analysis of the 'populist' threat to established democracy mirrors the FN's current strength. Collovald provides us with a sustained, historically informed critique of the emergence of the term 'populism' in its association with the French FN and the political effect this conceptual framing has had on debates of its significance. She decidedly denounces the dominant labelling of the FN as 'populist' as a reactionary response to the far right. Not only is the term 'populism' much less disqualifying than the former labels of 'fascism' or 'right-wing extremism', more than that, and escaping general debate, the term 'populism' shifts attention from the party establishment (beyond its personified leader), its relationship with other parties, its local anchoring and distinctive significance for a variety of different voters, to the broad-based category of the 'popular' classes giving their vote to the FN. The term 'populism', in the French context at least, has led to blaming 'the people' for the FN's success – mirrored in the broad debates around its working-class-character (*classes populaires*, i.e. 'popular classes' being the French terminology, corresponding to English 'working class') – and thus conceives of 'the people' as the major problem and as a threat to democracy (Collovald, 2004: 10). On the other hand, the 'populism' talk erects supposedly neutral experts as the only ones capable of correctly analysing this party as a threat to established democracy. Their expert knowledge transforms 'the people' and, in accordance with the French term *classes populaires*, the most fragile fragments of the population, into a problem to be solved. This discredits in the same vein any voices who argue that 'the people' is a political cause worth being defended. Citizens belonging to the so-called 'popular classes' are defined as deficient or bad citizens, epitomized in the frequent talk about their lack of education. This is in line with a long lineage of reactionary responses to democratization since the nineteenth century that pointed to the 'masses', to the uneducated 'majorities' as a threat to political stability. Ultimately, this logic dissolves the left/right divide and therefore suits perfectly our era. It opposes good and bad citizens according to their social, cultural and intellectual levels on the one hand, and good and bad politicians according to their consent to this new technocratic realism on the other hand (Collovald, 2004: 59 ff.).

In Germany, on the contrary, part of the political establishment and the journalistic counterparts believe that it is time to 'take people's fears and sorrows' seriously. Only few manage to underline that those fears are largely prejudiced projections in a context of important power inequalities at the political and discourse levels. The far right only expresses in more radical terms what large parts of the conservative right and left as well as the 'common sense' of mainstream discourse and media already believe. In this sense, taking such fears seriously rather has the opposite effect: 'It creates the impression that the irrational is rational, the illegitimate is legitimate and right-wing propagandists are only the courageous ones who dared address those problems first. It is not understandable why, under those conditions, voters should not vote for the AfD' (Biskamp, 2017: 98).

In this context of political malaise, the frustrated mood amongst voters is partially met by the far right whose ideologues propose a distinctive project in a largely levelled, technocratic political

landscape. It was in particular the responses by established mainstream parties to the economic crisis that had recently alienated many voters and that gave the ‘anti-system’ rhetoric of the far right new momentum (Löwy and Sittel, 2015). Appadurai reminds us that leaders and followers connect only partially.<sup>46</sup> If the leaders ‘are typically xenophobic, patriarchal and authoritarian in their styles’ (Appadurai, 2017: 2), this is not necessarily the political ideal of all those who vote for them (see the section on the constituencies of the AfD and FN below).

Regarding the frustration with elites and experts as key agents of politics, the far right turns the logic around. According to their discourse, ordinary citizens are the only ones who have a sense of reality and are the only legitimate political subjects. This is evidenced in the refusal of far-right representatives to speak to official media, instead directing them towards people in the streets: ‘they will tell you’ (Richard, 2012). As a response to expert knowledge, the far right celebrates the common sense of ordinary people. Furthermore, it voices an anti-elitist, anti-establishment discourse that is directed not only against national elites but also especially against the ‘dictate of Brussels’. The movements and parties’ leaders stage social and political protest as a refreshing alternative against those and aim, at least in their official discourse, at a mobilization of ‘the people’.

As a response to the crisis of political representation, they successfully proceed towards strong forms of representative claim-making (Volk, 2017). In this sense, the designation of those movements and parties as ‘populist’ is justified. Their leaders have managed, despite their own political careers and socio-economic backgrounds, to designate themselves as being the voice of ‘the people’. In the same move, they have redefined, along the lines of widespread racist imaginations, who is legitimately part of ‘the people’ in terms of exclusive solidarity.<sup>47</sup> Obviously, their talk of ‘improving democracy’ follows strategic considerations of not publicly appearing anti-constitutional. On the contrary, many of them still espouse the idea of rule by the people, but with their particular idea of who and what ‘the people’ is.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, as outlined above, political leaders from within established far-right networks with deep roots, under the current circumstances, could hit a sensitive nerve in giving voice to stagnating or descending strata who have been regarded by the rich and beautiful as backward or reactionary, as a bothersome residue of past times. This comes with the revenge of denouncing, in turn, the successes of feminists, LGBTQIA+ activists and the presence of self-confident migrants as lack of common sense, values and morality, decadence, intellectualism and reality-denying political correctness that is not only useless and idle but harmful for the integrity of ‘the people’.

To conclude, the political landscape was transformed as a result of post-industrial social change, of neoliberalism and the rise of technocracy and more recently as a consequence of political reactions by established parties to the economic and Euro-crisis. Mudde puts it provocatively: ‘[i]n essence, the populist surge is an illiberal democratic response to decades of undemocratic liberal policies’ (2016: 30).<sup>49</sup> Instead, the outlined longer-term developments in the political realm, and in particular the so-called crisis of representation, have to be understood as opening up opportunity windows for the profiling of far-right parties as alternatives to the mainstream. Their recent successes can partly be understood as a consequence of and response to the crisis of representation.

## **Ideological Crisis [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

The 2008 economic crisis has had major ideological repercussions. If the economy has taken off again unchanged, the ideological construct that supported global neoliberal capitalism largely unquestioned has been cracking, following a long phase of hegemony. The ideological and cultural response of the far right is not in contradiction with the observed economic trend but thrives on it. Mason illustrates beautifully the ideological shifts through the changing attitudes and actions in his native British working-class town. He shows how ‘[th]e culture of resistance to capital has, for some, mutated into a culture of revolt against globalization, migration and human rights. How we got here is not just a story of neoliberalism’s economic failure, but the collapse of a narrative’ (Mason, 2017: 89).

He outlines, for instance, how offshoring had the effect that ‘place – the key source of our identity – does not matter’ any more. The restructuring of corporations into a value chain of smaller companies had the narrative effect that ‘the firm would no longer carry any informal social obligations’. Cutting taxes and moving towards slash progressive taxation signified that ‘the post-1945 social bargain was over’. The privatization of public services meant that ‘it became logical to plan your life as if only yourself and your close family, not the state and wider community, would be there to catch you if you fell. [. . .] the message to working-class families was clear: You are on your own.’ Similarly, through the financialization of everyday life, ‘Thatcherism would celebrate the egomaniac of the trading floor. And unlike with the mid-twentieth-century bourgeoisie, which was impenetrable, a pushy, egotistical working-class person could become part of this new entrepreneurial elite. By celebrating the financial predator as a new kind of working-class hero, neoliberalism began to repackage “working-class culture” as a pro-capitalist ideology’ (Mason, 2017: 91–93). That every economic restructuring had such ideological effects, especially for the working population, is key to understanding the collapse of the ideological status quo since the most recent economic crises. Since the mainstream conservative and moderate left answers have become discredited in the course of the political transformations described above, and since the radical left remains weak, this has strengthened far-right responses: ‘[. . .] for three decades the function of this was to disrupt and disaggregate working-class resistance to neoliberalism. The problem is, when neoliberalism itself collapsed, it was no longer mainstream conservatism that got oxygenated, but authoritarian right-wing populism’ (ibid.).

At the ideological level, we seem to be again in an anomalous phase, similar to the 1920s and 1930s. This is what Foessel (2019) discovers in reading through newspapers from the year 1938: the choice of terminology, the moral panics and the obsessions with a world in decline, where the worst of all cases is regularly imagined, as well as the calls for more authority and the rise of nationalism, resemble our present to astonishing degrees. Of course, the context and the concrete political events are not the same. But the choice of discourse to interpret them are similar. Similar to the 1920s and 1930s, it is not yet clear who will be the fixers on the horizon, and conspiracy theories of all flavours circulate widely.

The success of the far right is essentially explicable with regard to its responses to ideological crises. Economic and political developments as well as the ideological shifts they have promoted have certainly given way to widespread feelings of uncertainty, that something might be going wrong. Far-right leaders have succeeded in capitalizing on such fears, in ‘activating, bundling, structuring’ them in a process that resembles an ‘inverted psychoanalysis’ (Biskamp, 2017: 94–95). It is this structuring exercise that has helped them gain votes in recent elections all across Europe. As a remedy to ideological crises, the far-right offers the reinvigoration of exclusive solidarities, combined with the idea of a return to a glorious past, to a former, ‘purer’ state of an imagined community. While most far-right parties have been underdeveloped in terms of their economic outlook, all of them have excelled with identitarian themes. The first section of this chapter outlined in detail the ingredients that make this narrative of exclusive solidarity coherent.

### **Refugee Reception Crisis [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

From 2014 onwards, Europe has been bombarded with media outputs, statements by politicians and a generalized societal debate around the assumption, proclaimed as a certainty, that ‘the refugee crisis’ would give momentum to the far right all over Europe. Indeed:

2014 is the year in which Pegida in Germany was born. This sudden emergence of a [. . .] determinedly identitarian movement in the public space is no coincidence. It is in direct correlation with a complex geopolitical constellation, characterized by an ultrafast concatenation of politico-religious, economic and socio-demographic destabilizations at a global scale, in particular in the Near and Middle East (emergence of the Islamic State, civil war in Syria). It is in particular explicable through the first consequence of those destabilizations: the uncontrolled increase (or at least this is how it was perceived) of migration flows into Europe, and more specifically to Germany, the ‘promised land’ of the new migrants. (Sebaux, 2016: 389)

Globally, according to the *UNHCR Mid-Year Report 2016*, 64 million people were refugees, many internal or in neighbouring regions. Germany was among the top ten of receiving countries for the first time. The figures need to be relativized in various ways though. First of all, only three per cent of refugees did arrive in the EU, not least because of sustained efforts to construct fortress Europe (ProAsyl, n.d.). Regarding the war in Syria, for example, compared to refugee figures in Lebanon, Jordan or other neighbouring countries, the few million who survived their journey to Europe remain a marginal figure within the overall populations of Europe.<sup>50</sup>

Also, the imagined figure of the young single male refugee – perceived as a particular threat for the security of German women and children – proved wrong in statistics. More than a third of refugees were female and around 36 per cent were minor in age, many children below the age of 12. Many refugee men were fathers whose hope to have their families follow their trajectory was disappointed with more restrictive handling of family unification. The number of forced expulsions, at 25,000, was also at its highest point in 2016 (ProAsyl, n.d.).

Apart from closing Europe’s border to the outside, there is no sustained European refugee policy. As a consequence exists the saddest record of more than 10,000 documented dead on the

Mediterranean Sea route between 2016 and 2018 (UNO Flüchtlingshilfe, 2019). We need to add another few thousands who had lost their lives on their way towards the coast already. According to calculation by Doctors without Borders, in 2018 one out of forty-one refugees lost their lives in the Mediterranean, four every day (ProAsyl, n.d.; UNO Flüchtlingshilfe, 2019). The figures for the current period, i.e., a relatively marginal number of refugees in the most affluent countries of the world, also have to be relativized with regard to the situation in the immediate post-war years, with much more massive numbers of refugees, homeless, widows and orphans, etc., in an economically and materially collapsed country (see the following chapter on Germany in the 1950s).

Despite these figures, the so-called refugee crisis was a perfect pretext for large parts of the population to fall into states of moral panic. There were cultural fears, especially of that highly deviant religion. There were also more tangible problems. Competition in the labour market was limited because accession to jobs is restricted according to type of residence permit and because more workers were needed. Access to affordable housing was a more serious problem in parts of the country. The policies of downsizing welfare dispositions and social programmes all over were crudely felt at that moment. There has not been much rational debate on the issues at stake, such as labour market and housing policies but also anti-Semitism or gender policies. Instead, xenophobic nationalism transformed rational considerations of unequal competition into a racialized fear and racist hatred against the newly arriving (Biskamp, 2017: 93). This succeeded because dominant discourse and in parts legislation had for long established racial prejudice and discrimination all over Europe.

We shall see below that the far right indeed capitalized on the refugee reception crisis. Fractions of it circulated conspiracy theories about Merkel's government flooding the country with immigrants with the aim of abolishing the German nation and race. However, this cannot be considered the major cause of the strength of the far right that preceded it. Rather, this was a societal context in which it could thrive and flourish and in which it contributed massively to shaping mainstream debate. It was also the context in which organized violence against migrants came to another peak with the creation of vigilante groups as a response to perceived state failure as well as the (re)formation of ultra-right terrorism.

### **Multilevel Crises: Summing up the Argument [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

One of the questions for the following sections will be to evaluate how far reactions to the economic, political and ideological climate of our times are largely emotional, or whether they follow their own rational logic. Emotions have puzzled scholars of historical fascism in peculiar ways. I will outline in the following chapter that the success of the far right is not an effect of pure emotions, although far-right leaders and ideologues have been good in formulating and exploiting sentimental fears about decline, moral decadence and loss of values, *Heimat*, order and direction. Rather, if we consider specific constituencies more closely, it appears that practical, real-world interests do play a role for certain followers. However, while analyses of party programmes and theoretical interpretations and classifications of far-right parties are

plenty, the elements we have employed so far in explaining this attractiveness to broader constituencies are still unsatisfactory.

So far, I have applied Mann's framework of fascism emerging out of and responding to major multilevel crises to the current strength of the far right in Western Europe. This endeavour has generated part of the response to the question of why the far right has recently been successful. As a full explanation, however, the responses remain unsatisfactory. Germany and France today are not faced by anything similar to the deep economic, political, ideological and military crises that characterized the interwar period. A military crisis is inefficient in explaining anything at this point. Furthermore, the strength of the far right is not directly caused by the recent economic crisis. Even in the case of the AfD, a party that in terms of its timing could easily be seen as a consequence of and response to the 2008 crisis, we will see that such an argument holds only superficially if we follow the subsequent development of the party. Rather, political reactions to an economic crisis and its ideological impact, just as in the context of the refugee reception crisis, catalysed longer-term transformations at the political and ideological levels. This allowed far-right networks, groups and parties to capture public attention, influence politics across the party spectrum and attract new constituencies. What can be stated for the current phase are difficulties at the political level, what I have called a crisis of representation. Representative claim-making as speaking the voice of the people accounts for the far right's success amongst new constituencies. We also observe deep ideological uncertainties caused through cracks in the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism, in the context of a missing left alternative. This ideological uncertainty favours a climate of moral panics of all sorts. I would argue that these two recent developments are necessary to explain the current strength of authoritarian restoration in Western Europe. The far right does offer some responses to those problems. For sure, its performance at the ideological level has been strongest, taking up the concerns of citizens around the loss of *Heimat*, the threat of mass migration to the nation and to white privilege as well as the competition of migrants in the domains of cheap housing, education, jobs and women. Qualitative ethnographic studies of the FN-vote below illustrate this point. It has also capitalized politically on the representational crisis, claiming to represent the people against corrupt elites and foreigners. For now, however, this remains a limited agenda in a political landscape where liberal democracy remains firmly established.

### **The Current Strength of the Far Right in France and Germany: an Outline [A-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

We now need to find out what particular constituencies were attracted by the political and ideological offer of the French and German far right. More sustained research would be necessary to uncover all elements we have used so far in a plethora of publications that would have to be assessed still more systematically and comparatively. I will elaborate first on the recent successes of the FN. The following section is dedicated to the rise of the AfD in Germany and its political, intellectual and network surroundings. This focus on parties should not obfuscate that it is a real *nébuleuse de tendances* [[a nebula of tendencies](#)] that composes today's

*fachosphère* or *réacosphère* in both countries (Jacquemain and Claisse, 2012: 21) and that it is difficult, at this stage, to determine with certainty what the alliances and networks are between various movements and actors (Köttig, 2018). Recent research has shown that political far-right parties that have dense connections with non-party nationalist networks are more sustainable than others (Jones, 2016).

### **Recent Developments of the Front National [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

France hosts one of the oldest, most stable and numerically biggest far-right parties of the continent: the Front National (FN, since 2018 Rassemblement National, or RN). The literature on the current far right in France is strongly focused on this single political party. Indeed, the lion share of the multiplicity of voices and organizational forms of the French far right that existed prior to the FN's foundation in 1972 has successfully been federated under this broad-based party (see the following chapter on deep roots).

The group Générations Le Pen, formed in 2002, is headed by J.M. Le Pen's daughter, Marine Le Pen. While her father had enjoyed the role of anti-system provocateur and political outsider, M. Le Pen constructed a strategy aiming at the accession to power from the outset. She competed with Bruno Gollnisch, a former high-ranking official and traditional politician of the extreme right, and with Jacques Bompard, who had maintained a support network to the OAS, had been a member of the Tixier-Vignancour committee, of extreme-right movements *Ordre Nouveau* and *Occident*, and was elected mayor of Orange, with a vision to build up local bases of party power (Richard, 2012).

I will start the story from January 2011, when M. Le Pen was elected second president of the FN as a result of her father's nepotist party politics. Upon her arrival in the party's top position, its membership increased considerably, starting a regular progression up into the current period, from 13,381 in 2009 to 51,551 in 2015 (Crépon and Lebourg, 2015; see also Perrineau, 2016: 63). Ideologically, M. Le Pen started a determined strategy to dissociate her party from its former anti-Semitism and denialism with regard to the Holocaust. The rhetoric around immigration had changed from an argument around cultural and racial difference to one around Islam being incompatible with and antithetical to the values of the French Republic and its fundamental feature of *laïcité*, usurping leftist themes.

Politically, in contrast to her father and with the help of Philippot, M. Le Pen aimed at constructing a broad-based party that could eventually take her to power. Philippot as her chief ideologue in the early years of her FN presidency favoured the elaboration of a political programme that went well beyond the narrow focus on anti-immigration. There should be a renewed sense and pride in the country's history, calling, among others, for a focus on education. Schools also needed to spend more time teaching French. National sovereignty would require renegotiating France's treaties with the European Union, including eventually restoring its national currency and controlling its national borders. For the economy, Philippot favoured protectionism as opposed to the former neoliberal outlook.

M. Le Pen's presidential programme for the 2012 elections still had a strong focus on migration: legal immigration should be reduced from 2,00,000 to 10,000 entries per year. In addition, she

foresaw the suppression of *ius soli* and an in-depth reform of the legislation regarding citizenship. She erected the principle of ‘national priority’ in all fields. For example, private companies should be encouraged to prefer French nationals with equal skills over foreigners. Another strong point of her programme was security, introducing a zero tolerance policy throughout the national territory, restoring the death penalty<sup>51</sup> or life imprisonment. But M. Le Pen was only third in the first round of the 2012 presidential elections (with 17.9 per cent of votes, i.e., 64,21,426 voters, one and a half million more than her father ten years earlier), behind Francois Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy (Perrineau, 2016: 64).

M. Le Pen liked to give the impression that she fundamentally renewed the party not only in terms of ideology but also in its internal organization. Her preferred vision was taken up by the mainstream media who wrote a lot about the party’s ‘new faces’. Indeed, the FN succeeded to recruit a few personalities with the academic credentials necessary within the French political elite (Florian Philippot with diploma from HEC and ENA, Philippe Martel from ENA, Aymeric Chauprade from Sciences Po Paris). However, looking at the organizational structures beyond personalities, its organigram, functioning and overall strategies come to light. Most of the changes were not especially characteristic to the FN but common to the evolution of any political party. A critical view therefore attests that there has not been any clear and fundamental change – neither in the organization nor in the ideology of the FN (Dézé, 2016).

Another account highlights internal contradictions and frictions within the party. While many members accepted that some renewal was necessary to future success, they also realized that the former right-wing radicalism with its identitarian affirmation, nationalism and anti-system attitudes was also necessary to hold back the more extremist members. Furthermore, protected through anonymity, even many newly joined members condemned the sanctions against radicals who had been excluded under M. Le Pen for their openly racist attitudes. For now, the leadership of the president seemed to silence internal criticisms (Crépon and Lebourg, 2015: 450). In May 2015, J.M. Le Pen, until then honorary chairman, was suspended from the party with 94 per cent consent from members and expelled in August the same year. He had refused to attend his disciplinary hearing at the party for describing the gas chambers as a ‘detail’ of history.

From 2014 onwards, the FN has become the leading force in terms of electoral results within the country. The FN has counted more votes than the centre-right *Républicains* and the Socialists in each election (Crépon, 2016: 14). In the municipal elections of 2014, more than 1,000 municipal councillors were elected, and two mayors of big cities, Béziers and Fréjus. A few months later, the FN headed the results of European elections (24.86 per cent, against 20.81 per cent for the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) and 13.98 per cent for the Socialists and their allies). The departmental elections in 2015 confirmed the trend: FN candidates received 25.2 per cent of votes, almost as much as the moderate right and left (Perrineau, 2016: 65). M. Le Pen’s aim to achieve political power had succeeded at various levels of the political system. In the regional elections of December 2015, after the terrorist attacks that shook France in 2015, the FN achieved 27.7 per cent of votes in the first and 27.1 per cent in the second round, reaching 42.2 per cent in the region Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie and 45.2 per cent in Provence Alpes-Côte d’Azur (Perrineau, 2016: 66). Despite these clear electoral successes, the FN still did not have a network of elected representatives and high-level cadres necessary for a real exercise of power.



For instance, in July 2015, it counted 51,551 members, compared with 1,70,000 for the Socialist party and 2,00,000 for the Républicains (Crépon, 2016: 14). At the municipal level, it still held only 11 municipalities out of more than 36,000, 62 *conseillers départementaux* out of 4,108 in 14 out of 1,000 departments, two elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) out of 577 and two senators out of 348. It did not govern any single region of the country. Despite the successes of recruiting some new faces with academic credentials, the deficit in terms of cadres was blatant and the French electoral system clearly detrimental to its realization of political power (Crépon, 2016: 14).

M. Le Pen's programme for the 2017 presidential elections resembled the prior one in many points. After the terrorist attacks, it tailored security concerns still more explicitly than before in Islamophobic terms. The programme foresaw to close all extremist mosques identified by the Ministry of the Interior and to prohibit foreign funding of places of worship and their staff; to prohibit and dissolve organizations of all kinds related to Islamic fundamentalists; to fight against jihadism through deprivation of French nationality; and expulsion and prohibition from the territory for any binational linked to jihadist activities. M. Le Pen arrived second in the first round after Macron (Macron: 86,56,346 or 24.01 per cent; Le Pen 76,78,491 or 21.30 per cent) and lost the second round against him (Macron: 2,07,43,128 or 66.10 per cent against 1,06,38,475 or 33.90 per cent). Still, one-third of voters, more than 10 million French, had voted for the FN candidate. And in the meantime, approaching the next presidential elections in 2022, Macron has pushed many of her points onto the policy agenda to compete for voters on the right.

After her failure in the presidential elections, M. Le Pen aimed at another 'political refoundation', the Rassemblement National, that might mean a return to her father's anti-immigration line while marginalizing the 'Eurosceptic' and social issues, Philippot's preferred strategy to attract different constituencies. In May 2017, Philippot founded the association Les Patriotes within the Front National. Marine Le Pen was critical of this and started to marginalize him from major functions, which led him to declare Les Patriotes an independent party under his leadership. He left with less support from members than Bruno Mégret in 1998, who had taken more than 60 per cent of the FN cadres with him but is hardly remembered today. The FN also lost another one of its important figures, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, M. Le Pen's niece, who has left party politics for the time being to found a higher education institution based on far-right ideas and values. With the election of a clearly right-wing Laurent Wauquiez to the presidency of the Republican party, the stage is set at best for a further absorption of aspects of the FN agenda to the traditional right and at worst a coalition that would catapult the FN to a place of unprecedented influence on the French political stage (Holiday et al., 2018: 38).

### **Constituencies of the FN: Voters and Activists [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Electoral analyses of the progression of the FN hint towards developments within its electoral constituencies over the years. The FN seems to have acquired a more stable and loyal constituency than in its beginnings. It also seems that a move from protest vote to support vote happened in the last years. Attempts to make the FN appear as a class-based party have had very limited success until today. There has been a broad debate among scholars around the question

whether the FN was a working-class party (*classes populaires*).<sup>52</sup> The attempt to build the image of working-class and popular support has largely failed.<sup>53</sup> If we look into several presidential elections, we see progression of the debate over time. In the first poll of the 1988 presidential vote, Lajoinie (Communist) gathered 7 per cent of votes, Mitterand 34 per cent, Barré 17 per cent, Chirac 20 per cent and Le Pen 14 per cent (Lewis-Beck and Mitchell, 1993). Shopkeepers and artisans were slightly more represented amongst FN voters, as well as qualified workers and foremen, leading to the notion of the workers' aristocracy supporting the FN (Mayer and Perrineau, 1990: 166). The hypothesis of a specific working-class support, however, did not hold: only 16 per cent of workers declared their intention to vote FN, a similar percentage as that of the lower middle class and a lower per cent than that of the upper middle class.<sup>54</sup> Workers were therefore not drawn to the FN more than other occupational classes but had predominantly voted for the left candidates Lajoinie and Mitterand.

The Poujadist hypothesis, named after Pierre Poujade's movement in the 1950s, fared slightly better.

Both movements, so the argument goes, have prospered from *les décompositions* (breakdowns). The Poujadists gained from the failure of the 'Third Force' and the general weakness of the Fourth Republic. In similar fashion, the National Front profits from the divisions on the Left and the impotence of Gaullism. The group especially sensitive to these breakdowns is the petite bourgeoisie. That is, the supporters are small business people, artisans, and perhaps other independents, such as farmers. This group largely made up the Poujadist movement. (Lewis-Beck and Mitchell, 1993:116–17)<sup>55</sup>

If it quickly sounds suspicious to anyone familiar with the erroneous, yet still widespread belief that National Socialism was a movement of the petty bourgeoisie, the Poujadist argument is at least interesting in as far as it contains a strong element of continuity: one of those Poujadist deputies was Le Pen himself at the starting point of his political career. However, the analyst himself had to admit that '[. . .] the Poujadist hypothesis can account for some of Le Pen's support, but not much' (Lewis-Beck and Mitchell, 1993: 117). Small business support was far from overwhelming and came from a numerically small population group. As opposed to the moderate left and right who attracted voters with more specific profiles, the conclusion for the 1988 vote was that J.M. Le Pen attracted voters in all population categories, old and young, rich and poor, all religious groups, rural and urban, and across socio-economic groups: 'The Front National disposes of an interclass electorate. This electorate of the FN has no strong sociological specificity' (Mayer and Perrineau, 1990: 168).

The data confirm that Le Pen voters in the 1988 elections were slightly less formally educated and had a higher percentage of technical professions than the average. Many were owners of the real estate they inhabited, of a firm or of fortune (ibid.: 166, confirmed in Girard, 2017a). They were not more unemployed than other parties' voters, and in terms of socio-economic trajectories rather on the rise or stable than descending. They were therefore neither the poor nor those left behind. If there was a politics of resentment and a threat to social decay, it must have been much more imagined than real.

What distinguished FN voters more than the hard variables were indeed specific attitudes – statistically measured as a combination of ethnocentrism and authoritarianism, combined with pessimism. The fact that national identity, immigration and security had become major, overriding issues encouraged the FN vote and is reflected in the attitudes of its electorate (Veugelers, 1997). On the ethnocentrism scale, regarding evaluation of the number of immigrants, the power of Jews in France, the rights of Muslims and the feeling of *Heimat* (*se sentir chez soi comme avant*), FN voters scored particularly high. The same was true for the authoritarianism scale, including adherence to the death penalty, to the primordial role of women as mothers, to discipline in schools and to the societal need for hierarchy and leaders. FN voters most clearly distinguished themselves from other voters by their large acquiescence to reintroducing the death penalty (70 per cent of FN voters fully agree) (Mayer and Perrineau, 1990).

What strengthened the assumption that fears were largely imagined more than real was the fact that rejection of migrants amongst Le Pen voters was not correlated with bad relationships with foreigners in the neighbourhood or with a personal experience of insecurity: ‘The reactions of those voters are rooted in phantasms and fears’, a correlation confirmed again recently for the European-wide far right (Irving Jackson and Doerschler, 2018). More than any other group, FN voters had a strong feeling of insecurity even at home: they closed the door with a double lock and extra security measures before 8 p.m. and overestimated the number of aggressions and criminal acts. More than others, J.M. Le Pen’s voters were anxious. They were amongst the most pessimistic regarding democracy in France or the evolution of living conditions, together with voters of the Communist Party. They were the most numerous in admitting that when thinking about the future, they ‘sometimes felt afraid’ (Mayer and Perrineau, 1990: 175). FN voters were largely pessimistic about the economy, dissatisfied with democracy and expressed a strong anti-immigration attitude. More precisely, unemployment led to high FN vote shares where immigration was high: ‘Constituencies with high crime rates, and a pronounced immigration presence in the midst of elevated unemployment, are fertile ground for FN recruiters’ (Lewis-Beck and Mitchell, 1993: 124). This is taken to be the explanation for particularly high FN vote shares in Marseilles. The colonial connection that I outline in the following chapter is not taken into account here – a large Pieds-Noir population lives in the Mediterranean region, where veterans from the Algerian war are organized in associations and celebrate the memory of their leaders.<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, those negative attitudes correlated with weak social and political resources and networks. FN voters had little trust in institutions, political representatives and administrations, they were reluctant to join civil society groups or collective action such as demonstrations or strikes (Mayer and Perrineau, 1990: 175).

Since the change of party leadership, the FN’s scores have increased continuously. At the occasion of the presidential elections in 2012, one could note slight changes. M. Le Pen was less performant than her father in attracting the votes of white collars of the Mediterranean and southern regions and in Paris. She gained in departments with strong working-class presence (Haute Marne, Pas-de-Calais, Aisne, Meuse, etc.) as well as in some rural areas of the centre. M. Le Pen had thus succeeded in presenting herself as the leader for populations in crisis, in professional or livelihood instability and for those who expressed lack of trust in established

politics (Perrineau, 2016: 64). Again, the working-class hypothesis was revived, since workers did increase amongst her constituency (Veugelers, 1997). However, despite evidence that right-wing radical parties have made advances within the working class, it would be short-sighted to blame workers alone for their progression and not reflect the vote shares in other segments of the electorate (Baier, 2016). The truth was that the FN progressed in all social milieus, even the most recalcitrant ones like practising Catholics, unionized employees (33 per cent within the trade union CGT, 26 per cent within the CFDT, 34 per cent within FO) and state officials (Crépon, 2016: 14).

The regional elections in 2015 reflected the context of the violent terrorist attacks in France. The FN progressed again across all strata and regions. The assumption that it was particularly rooted in ‘an alliance of popular strata and independent workers’ dominated, although figures indicated a strong presence across all segments (35 per cent within the independent professions, 41 per cent employees, 46 per cent workers, 41 per cent unemployed). Again, no socio-professional category was represented with less than 18 per cent. The FN could progress even in milieus that were traditionally rather weakly represented: salaried middle classes (28 per cent, against 25 per cent for the moderate right and 25 per cent for the Socialists), farmers (33 per cent) and public-sector employees (30 per cent, against 26 per cent Socialists and 22 per cent centre right) (Perrineau, 2016: 69–70). The attraction amongst people with no formal degree (37 per cent) and with technical degrees (38 per cent) however was more pronounced, compared with 15 per cent with tertiary education. Maybe most interesting and probably related to the violent attacks was the representation by religious group: not only 23 per cent of regularly practising Catholics, 25 per cent without creed, 26 per cent protestants and 35 per cent of non-practising Catholics but 22 per cent amongst Jews against only 1 per cent amongst Muslims. This is interesting for a party that has open anti-Semitism strongly inscribed in its past, and many of whose members still hold anti-Semitic attitudes. The fact that the FN voiced a loud rejection of Muslims – a jihadist had carried out an attack on a Jewish store – seemed to bear stronger amongst Jews (and Muslims) than anything else (Perrineau, 2016: 69–70).

Apart from imputing the high FN scores on workers or the petty bourgeoisie, the 2014 European and the 2015 departmental elections were also occasions to analyse FN results as expressions of crisis. That voters responded to the terrorist attacks in 2015 by voting for a party with a strong law-and-order and anti-immigration programme sounds realistic. However, the interpretation in terms of FN votes as a response to unemployment is less obvious. The regions that had high vote shares for the FN, i.e., mainly the north and north-east of France, the Mediterranean area and diagonal Garonne/Canal du Midi correspond to the cartography of unemployment in France. Where unemployment was high, the FN scores were high as well (Léger, 2015). However, this correlation was not complete. In Alsace or Rhône-Alpes, for instance, unemployment was relatively low compared to the national average but still the FN was very successful. For the latter, we can advance the colonial heritage as an explanatory factor. Alsace still needs explanation. Eventually, the argument around ‘threatened border regions’ (Mann, 2004) could apply here, although this means reaching back further into the past than when taking into account the effects of the loss of ‘French Algeria’. The influence of the church is also much more

strongly felt in the politics of the region (Boumaza, 2014). In addition, the Alsatian far right is split between the FN and the regionalists of Alsace d'Abord.

The last big electoral event in France, the presidential elections in 2017, confirmed all of the observed trends so far. M. Le Pen arrived in the second round and obtained 34 per cent, about double the score obtained by her father in 2002. More than 10 million French had voted Le Pen. Macron's victory can therefore not hide the sustained progression of the far right. A study realized in the beginning of May 2017 – before the TV duel between Le Pen and Macron – revealed that only 38 per cent of those who intended to vote Macron in the second round did so by conviction, against 57 per cent who declared intent to vote Le Pen by adhesion to her programme (Rouban, 2017). Within the remaining 43 per cent who intended to vote for her by default, a third of those who had opted for centre-right candidate Francois Fillon switched to Le Pen, as well as 13 per cent of supporters of far-left candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon (Rouban, 2017).

The 2017 elections confirmed the trend towards an interclass constituency: While J.M. Le Pen, in 2002, had obtained 11 per cent amongst executives (cadres), and 24 per cent amongst workers, his daughter had doubled the score amongst workers but tripled it amongst superior staff and obtained almost four times as many votes amongst small self-employed (small and middle size farmers, artisans, small shopkeepers – the constituency that had led to the Poujadist hypothesis in former elections). She also doubled the vote share among managers of firms with more than ten employees, within liberal professions and big farmers. Her attraction amongst young people was considerable. Interestingly as well, while 8 per cent of voters with a tertiary education level chose J.M. Le Pen in 2002, there were 21.5 per cent of them who decided to vote for his daughter in 2017 (Rouban, 2017).

Again, the data reveal that the FN vote was not explicable through objective socio-economic distress.<sup>57</sup> Subjectively, however, perceived socio-economic well-being played an important role, confirming the above-mentioned tendency of pessimism amongst FN voters.<sup>58</sup> After synthesizing as far as possible various electoral analyses regarding the FN vote in France with all their difficulties and limitations, the question remains: how to explain the steady progression of cross-class adherence to this far-right party?

Empirical studies that try to qualitatively embed the FN vote into real-world, lived situations, beyond statistical data and beyond the abstract level of political discourse, are rather rare. At least, the French academic landscape has recognized the limitations of purely quantitative electoral analyses with their methodological disconnection of voting behaviour from life circumstances and meaning systems of voters (Collectif Sociologie politique des élections, 2016). We find in-depth accounts of one of the constituencies that seem to have joined the FN electorate rather recently and that has led to lively debate around its working-class character: 'The authoritarian populism that is mobilizing a minority of working-class voters across Europe is essentially, a demand for de-globalization. Its reactionary nature lies not only in its preference for racism, Islamophobia and social conservatism but in its complete ignorance of the complexity of the task' (Mason, 2017: 97–98). As a result of the socio-economic and related ideological transformations described above, the political landscapes of Western Europe have undergone

profound changes that resulted, among others, in parts of the working class becoming one of the new constituencies of the far right. Mason analyses this process out of his own British working-class background. His account sounds similar to what French studies have brought to light:

For neoliberalism this was a battle to impose a new narrative on millions of people's lives. A whole generation of workers was forced to behave as if the logic of the market was more important than the logic of place, or class identity - even if they did not believe this to be true. Wages collapsed. Solidarity was eroded. [. . .] To be frank: it broke us. [. . .] early on, working-class communities adopted a strategy of passive cultural resistance to neoliberalism outside work. In the workplace - where bullying and rampant exploitation now took off - people conformed to the new rituals, language and norms. But in the private and semi-social spaces - the family home, the social club, the pub - they spoke freely and nursed their grievances. In the 1980s there emerged the beginnings of a working-class culture forcibly separated from work. Then, during the 1990s, it became a working-class culture remote from work, indifferent to work, and centred on a world beyond work. (Mason, 2017: 91)<sup>59</sup>

In the same volume, Misik agrees that the traditional working class experiences a lack of respect and points towards Eribon for an adequate analysis of the process.<sup>60</sup> In his autobiographical account, Eribon looks back to his original milieu and interprets how parts of the working class have changed their political orientation. In the course of neoliberal ideological reconfigurations, an important fragment of the working class (*classes populaires*) has shifted from its traditional support to the Communist Party (PCF) to the FN vote. Eribon is self-critical about his own leftist, early Marxist and overall sociological perspective on the working class within which he himself had grown up and from which he had struggled, as an intellectual, to distance himself. In his parents' home, the PCF vote had been the obvious choice. It was about concrete, real-life experience and protest against the powerful. And it was remote from any abstract Marxist category of working-class politics.

As the PCF eroded, in his view as a result of its Moscow-orientation and therefore its incapacity for political and intellectual renewal, important sections of former PCF voters gave their voice to Mitterrand who achieved a victory for the Socialist Party in 1981. However, as described in more general terms in the above section on economic, political and ideological crises, leftist voters were soon disappointed with 'radical transformation' of the socialist left in what 'was a true metamorphosis of its ethos and its intellectual coordinates' (Eribon, 2009, 2017: 120-21). Instead of exploitation and resistance, all talk was about necessary reforms - meaning reduction of legal protection for workers, cutting back social welfare and mechanisms of social solidarity - and individualization, in very similar ways as Mason described for the UK. Eribon also sensed the violence these transformations represented for the working class: 'The left parties and their party and state intellectuals [. . .] took on the standpoint of the governing and disdainfully refuted the standpoint of the governed, and this with a degree of verbal violence that was fully recognized as such by the concerned' (ibid.). However, banning the term 'working class' from public discourse, to speak about mere individuals, or eventually about the socially excluded and victims of precarity, did not mean to eradicate the collective feeling and identity of the

concerned. The above-mentioned ‘representation crisis’ took shape within the French working class and resulted in a reorientation of parts of them towards the FN:

This was the reason why, in the course of a new political dealing out, large parts of the underprivileged turned towards the party that seemed to be the only left to care about them and that at least offered a discourse that tried to attribute some sense to their life reality (and this although its leaders were by no means originary from the working class, as opposed to the Communist Party that had always taken care to recruit its cadres from disadvantaged milieus, so that people could recognize themselves in them). (ibid.: 122)

The FN vote had a very different meaning from the former PCF vote. As opposed to the self-affirmative PCF vote, the FN vote was out of self-defence:

Through the Communist vote, one reassured oneself, proudly, about one’s class identity; one even created this class identity through political support for the ‘workers’ party’. Through the FN vote, one defended silently and secretly what was left of this identity, what the power politicians of the institutional left, the degree holders from ENA and other technocratic elite schools that produced and taught a dominant, transpolitical ideology, ignored or despised. [. . .] The relationship to party structures and leaders, to a coherent party program and to its congruence with one’s own class identity was strong, even determining in the first case, whereas it was secondary, or inexistent in the second [. . .] Whose fault is it, then, that the political rescue option has this face? (ibid.: 123–26)

This erosion of the traditional proletarian cultural and political milieu accounts, partly, for the current multiple, cross-class constituencies of the FN:

One of the heaviest consequences of the disappearance of the working class and of the worker, of the class-concept as such, from political discourse, was the revocation of the old alliance between workers and other social groups (functionaries, public sector employees, teachers, ...) within the leftist camp. This has led to a new, largely rightist if not extreme right ‘historical bloc’ (Gramsci), that unites today large parts of the precarious and vulnerable lower class, merchants, rich retirees in southern France, even fascistic former militaries and traditionalist Catholics. (ibid.: 128)

Girard’s ethnographical and interview-based insights into the logics of households’ strategies and political attitudes in one peri-urban community gives some clues on another constituency.<sup>61</sup> The term ‘peri-urban’ designates formerly rural spaces gradually transformed through their relative closeness to urban centres but remaining within their periphery. In the context of the electoral campaign of 2012, the notion of ‘modest households of peri-urban areas’ appeared in media debates. According to widely held perceptions, modest population groups who had to leave the urban areas because of gentrification of centres and degradation of poorer neighbourhoods typically inhabited those areas. Those predominantly white, working-class households were considered peripheral with regard to the big metropolises that benefitted from globalization and were forgotten by established politics. Supposed to be in deep cultural and identity crisis, they were held responsible for the FN vote. Girard’s study is much more fine-grained than the blunt assumption of *déclassement*, objective or perceived.

The commune near Lyon where she conducted fieldwork with 2,000 inhabitants was governed by a local mayor, a technician by profession and son of an agricultural worker, and by elected city council members who were also predominantly local workers. The in-depth study revealed that many people in the community were politicized on the far right. However, this was not for ideological reasons, i.e., because people strongly believed in far-right ideologies and discourses. It was not out of socio-economic distress either. Most of the concerned did not correspond to the profile of 'losers' or of households experiencing economic decline. On the contrary, since the 1980s, in quite stable ways, many were qualified workers or employees, well-placed in technical professions, few of them in the public sector. They were financially stable, had achieved access to property and to their own housing. Rather than social decline, many had even experienced upward mobility. In their self-perception, they represented an in-between segment of the population and worked hard to distinguish themselves from the 'excluded' and 'socially assisted'. Working hard went without any meaningful reference to a common working-class status, since this category had largely disappeared from political debate. Also, municipal planning had done the necessary to avoid the flourishing of a working-class culture.

The study reveals the historical background of the village. The municipal decisions in land-use planning favoured the development of a local industrial area removed from Lyon's trade union strongholds. Entrepreneurs praised the particularly harmonious social environment, favourable for the establishment of 'excellent social relationships' (Girard, 2017b: 15). The concerned industries – in 2011, a total of 3,700 permanent jobs in more than one hundred firms, from international groups to small and medium enterprises – underwent deep transformations in the worlds of work, marked by the multiplication of employers, subcontracting and temporary work.

Furthermore, the municipality also chose to favour accession to property in small allotments for single family houses. The planning of industrial development was directly linked to land-use planning, the aim being the maintenance of rural social characteristics with a pacified workforce. Households with rather modest incomes had to search for occupational and marital stability in order to ensure reimbursement of long-term loans. This would also keep them away from trade union activity and collective mobilization. Families could apply for financial support from the state in order to purchase real estate, a feature that contradicts the idea of a 'forgotten' population. This was in line with public policies that aimed at the demobilization of trade union and communist strongholds within the context of big social housing complexes in the major industrial cities.

Following the project for local industrial development and the residential scheme, the working population remained alienated from trade union-based workers' culture, as in the example described by Mason above. Instead, their social activities centred around massively depoliticized associational activities. Traditional associations included the club named 'friends of the firefighters', a senior citizen's club, a sewing club, a party committee, a flowering committee and a hunters' society. The only politically meaningful older organization, in line with the village's far-right potential, was the local section of the veteran's federation FNACA (*Fédération nationale des anciens combattants en Algérie, Maroc et Tunisie*). The more recent associations included an aquarists' club, a dog obedience school, a car tuning and a motorbike club, card games, IT, dancing, football, gym, cycling and table tennis. All those associations received



financial support from the municipality and enrolled many of the inhabitants (Girard, 2017b: 134–35). In such an environment, workers did not socially and culturally constitute themselves as forming part of a working class. If this favoured the FN vote in some cases, the major effect was depoliticization and abstentionism within this population.

However, according to national social policy targets, the municipality also had to provide for a certain percentage of social housing. Elected members of the city council agreed with many inhabitants of the commune that it was preferable to reserve the social housing for the children and descendants of ‘originary inhabitants’ of the commune alone. In particular, there was broad-based rejection of ‘socially assisted’ as well as racialized populations. For the municipality, the main concern was to maintain a pacified sociality and the village’s reputation, while for the inhabitants the concern was the value of their private real estate property in the first place that depended, among other factors, on the quality of the social environment as well. Many had left the urban centre to escape ‘dark neighbours’ and were engaged in maintaining their new residential environment closed-up for whites only. The local concern about control of access to housing led the municipality to avoid investments by commercial housing agencies in big social projects. Instead, the social housing apartments were directly owned and administered by the municipality itself (27 per cent of social housing, against 61 per cent of privately owned housing in the village in 2004). Access to those apartments was organized through informal contacts and along discriminatory lines as practiced by the local administration and encouraged by the municipal authorities. The observed ‘racism in action’ was not a strongly ideological racism but one related to immediate material concerns (Girard, 2017b: 226). The elected members of the city council as well as the mayor also served inhabitants’ interests and relied on their proximity to the established households, to which most of them socially and economically belonged, to ensure their re-election. This procedure, and in particular the political attitude of several members of the city council on the matter, gave legitimacy to the political radicalization amongst voters (Girard, 2017a). The hope was that supporting the FN could confirm such practices of giving priority to respected members of the community. In turn, the municipal authorities justified their clientelistic and discriminatory practices with the fact that a high percentage in the village voted for the FN and that they did not want to go against the interests of their inhabitants. Interestingly, the reservation of housing for community members in distress as well as important public subventions in the domain of construction of real estate more broadly – indicating as well that the commune was not just ‘peripheral’ with regard to big cities but received quite some public support – was itself not seen as social assistance, a characteristic that was always projected onto non-welcomed ‘others’.

For many inhabitants, the future of their children, their schooling and possible social trajectory, also played an important role for their political orientation. The aspiration was not higher education but stable employment in industries and commerce, especially for their sons (see also the below section on firefighters with a very similar argument). These trajectories and corresponding strategies of households then met with the political offer of the FN. The FN vote expressed a demand for social cohesion at the community level, related to the ‘right to stay amongst ourselves’ of the white community. The far-right party made such concerns ‘sayable’ and legitimate. Finally, the far-right political offer also coincided with other value orientations of

many households in the commune. National statistics indicate that families originally from the Maghreb, for instance, access real estate property in much less numbers than the French average. Their only chance to access real estate was in the case of rapid compulsory auctions following the separation and divorce of established couples and families. Awareness of this resonated perfectly with the insistence on the value of traditional family models and marital stability on which the housing and loan schemes were based, and which were simultaneously promoted by the far right (Girard, 2017a).

Within this village, the FN vote cannot be taken to be a reaction to objective economic or political crisis. The effects of ideological crisis as outlined above are not abstract but translate into practical concerns. The population of the commune broadly shared feelings of economic and cultural uncertainty regarding the future. They were largely dissatisfied with the moderate left and right who had alternated the country's government for many years. In particular, the radical discourses of Sarkozy that were not followed, according to interviewees, by coherent action aggravated alienation with regard to established politics and their traditional programmes. This combined with a strong desire to maintain and close up an exclusive solidarity amongst historical members of the commune and control access to it in the form of housing policies. Liberal conceptions of society gave way to a strong wish for a community based on exclusive solidarity at the communal level.

Similar to this study on peri-ruban household trajectories, Pudal's (2016) ethnography as a firefighter in the Paris fire brigades generates important insights into the politicization of this particular professional milieu. The number of 50 per cent support for the FN within the security forces circulated around 2016 (Marin, 2016). Pudal's study, although not particularly focused on their potential support for the FN, allows for grasping the logic behind political orientations of firefighters. Here, as in Girard's study, political opinions appeared less as 'a deliberative choice based on free will according to everyday notions of the political game, surveys, and political intellectuals', than as 'variable translations of specific social and professional conditions' (Collovald, 2004, quoted in Pudal, 2011: 76).

Firefighters were socially located 'in between working and middle classes'; put differently, they formed the upper strata of the working class. They were either professional public-sector employees in the fire brigades or, in the vast majority, they were full-time manual workers (skilled and unskilled) or technicians, more seldom unemployed, or students, who acted as voluntary staff for the fire brigades, paid on an hourly basis. The fire brigades were composed nearly exclusively of white men, i.e., in the racial and gender sense it was a largely homogeneous professional group. Many members did not go through a successful schooling experience, resulting in low levels of formal education. Concerning the wider households, '[t]heir wives were hairdressers or salespeople, or worked in the city hall, in banks or insurance companies, or as nurses or primary school teachers'. They had one or two children. Most lived in 'modest homes bought on long-term loans, or rent apartments or modern residences that, though "well-kept", were never far from housing projects and rougher neighborhoods' (Pudal, 2011: 78–79).

As in the sample of peri-urban households, they were not themselves objectively confronted with socio-economic decline. In fact, they were rather proud to earn their living well despite low

educational achievement. However, their perceptions and sorrows resembled those of the population segment analysed by Girard: 'Many worry about the possible decline of their profession, both in terms of income and working conditions. Their fears take the shape of their potential inability to pay back loans, or the disappearance of the status that offers them some amount of protection'. What adds to fears about the future is the constant risk of losing their bodily capital through accidents or injuries specific to their profession. The feeling was, therefore, as one quote expressed it, that "Ok so we're not the worst off, but if we keep going the way this government is headed, it's going to be rough!". As in the above-mentioned study:

[a] particular focus of firefighters' anxiety was what would happen to their children. Parents worried that the public schools that most of their children attended lacked the conditions necessary for academic success, and they often viewed private school as a potential solution. Many of the professional firefighters worked overtime to afford private school tuition, because they did not feel sufficiently protected from the most disadvantaged rung of the working class, composed primarily of immigrants, who were often accused of using the white kids as punching bags. (ibid.: 80)

They thus expressed their awareness of the importance of good schooling. However, apart from investing money, they had no other means to support their children in their school careers.

For the sociologist, taking into account the professional and social concerns of firefighters was crucial to understand the ways in which they were politicized. In this, the in-between situation of their class-belonging was critical to their interpretation of societal developments and for their political orientations:

Thus, the personal life of these firefighters is emblematic of the fragmentation of the working class, of which they compose the upper layer: they remain marked by a (strongly resented) proximity to the most disadvantaged of the working-class population with regards to leisure, residence, and their children's education. A socioeconomic context characterized by crisis, mass unemployment, the devaluation of qualifications, outsourcing, lay-offs, and the changing status and benefits of civil servants fuelled their deep concerns, which they more or less clearly experienced and articulated. Unlike the binary world between 'them' and 'us' described by R. Hoggart, firefighters seem instead to exist in an in-between world. [. . .] And finally, given that their profession is about helping everyone, especially those who have least, it is understandable that they express anxiety, distrust, and sometimes animosity towards those who appear to them to embody this threat. (ibid.: 81)

French fire brigades not only extinguish fire but are also called in case of accidents, suicides or to prevent the homeless from freezing outside in winter. Facing social misery in their everyday activity, many of them were very critical of the political left. Especially after the 2005 and 2007 riots in which many firefighters were called in behind the police ranks to extinguish burning cars, there was disgust with a left that neglected stronger control and that was envisaged as supporting the poor and left-behinds without ever asking anything from them in return.<sup>62</sup> But the centre right was similarly attacked, especially after Sarkozy's election, for not living up to the harsh discourses he had promoted during his campaign: "They act hard on TV, but nothing is

changing in the projects [*cités* in the French version, meaning peripheral neighbourhoods with social housing projects and often bad reputation]. They were supposed to clean up the ghettos with water blasters, yeah right, they're all talk like all politicians; when we go to the projects [*cités*] it's not with 300 CRS [riot police] to protect us" (Pudal, 2011: 82).<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, acting on a day-to-day basis as the state's right hand (order) and left hand (care) at once in a society marked by structural and institutional racism and heavy spatial segregation were important in understanding the firefighters' (self-)critical, profoundly professional and often humorous talk. They were proud of being frank and plain-spoken. This contained a criticism of politicians' and elites' discourse.<sup>64</sup> It is at this level that the FN was attractive to them in its pretension to be pioneering in taking up popular voices, in understanding and taking seriously the logic of ordinary citizens, in 'saying out loud what everyone thinks anyway', more than in its ideological racism (Pudal, 2011: 91–92). Its law-and-order discourse and its emphasis on statism also valued positions like the firefighters'.

Again, the FN vote amongst a fragment of the firefighters cannot be explained out of a concrete economic crisis situation. The perception of political crisis fares better to the extent that many of the concerned intervened in the 2005 and 2007 riots and judged centre-right as well as centre-left politicians for their inability to adequately deal with the social unrest they had to practically sort out. As Pudal illustrated, the professional environment, action and logic alienated firefighters from the political establishment in any case. The tension between the closeness to but will to segregate from 'socially assisted', poor and racialized population groups distinguishes this group from the peri-urban households in as far as the 'right to stay amongst ourselves' would be an illusion, contradictory to the lived reality of the firefighters at work and of their families. Pudal does not give us hints to understanding how the professional corps is maintained so homogeneous in terms of gender and race. The members of the group project their fears and uncertainties in this regard in particular into the schooling experience of their children, socially and academically speaking. This translated into a need to distinguish oneself from those much-too-close 'others'. The FN programme of national priority certainly sounds reassuring under those circumstances. Furthermore, the specific relationship to speech, as opposed to action, is a source of seduction by the populist aspects of the FN discourse. Speaking frankly, non-politically correct, and daring to say things 'as they are', as ordinary citizens see them, probably sounds compelling to the firefighters.

In comparison with the large number of electoral analyses, there are only relatively few studies on the membership and activists base of the FN. In a study inspired by Howard Becker's work on careers of deviant youth, Lafont presented insights from thirty-six biographical interviews with FN activists at the end of the 1990s, i.e., just after the secession with Mégret. Out of the biographies, she chose three to illustrate three different, exemplary trajectories, representative of the 1990s young generation of the FN. Those born between 1970 and 1975 and joining between 1987 and 1995 were expected to impact the party's shape in the following decades. The three interviewees were characterized by profoundly different experiences in joining the FN, representing among others the cleavage between working-class members and members of the bourgeoisie within the party. What united them was their feeling of not being represented in

established politics and a refusal to situate themselves on a left–right political scale, estimating their struggle to be beyond, on top of this classic division (Lafont, 2001: 182–183).

From the outset, the author assumed that a family socialization in milieus close to the FN was expected to be the most favourable factor for a career within the party (Lafont, 2001: 176). This case was illustrated by an activist originally from an aristocratic, land-owning family with many children who was a student at the time of the interview. His father worked as a farmer in a small town in central France. The student had grown up in a Catholic environment and experienced elitist, authoritarian education at home. His biography was essentially about continuity and family lineages within the extreme right. The heritage reached far back to a first ancestor ‘engaged for France’ under Henry IV, through the royalists and Pétainists including remote ancestors, grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles and his brothers. His grandfather had participated in the Vichy government, his uncle was killed by the Résistance. His father actively supported Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour and participated in OAS actions. He told this as his own story: ‘Henri IV [. . .] *we* had, of course, some problems during the French revolution and this is why *we* left for New York to come back at the right moment, so Louis XVIII, Charles X, then still councillors to the king [. . .]’ (Lafont, 2001:185, my emphasis). He inscribed himself into the family tradition, recognizing that it exerted a certain pressure on him to live up to expectations and perform according to the duties his family and religion had imposed on him: ‘It is a tremendous continuity. I am trying to make it mine’ (Lafont, 2001: 186). When he failed to enter a prestigious university, a career within the FN was an option to uphold the family honour. The family had always been politically active, and the only legitimate field for their activism was tradition – the France of the *Ancien Régime*, anti-modern and anti-democratic. Although extreme in this sense, this case was representative of many amongst the thirty-six who followed a continuity of a family engaged on the far right. Another member traces her lineage back to her grandmother who was active against Alfred Dreyfus and Émile Zola. The analysis in terms of continuity has its difficulties since the contexts of society and power have changed radically in the period from Henry IV to the end of the twentieth century, and to meaningfully construct this continuity is no easy task. Since the defeat of Pétain, ‘the family has not had any state responsibility’ any more but had to join groups outside of the established system, the most traditional of which were within the extreme right (Lafont, 2001: 183–87).

The second example in Lafont’s study is one of rupture, one that corresponds to the assumption of a fragment of the working class captured by the FN. This activist interviewee had a first university degree but could not complete the next degree and worked as a warehouseman in a small firm. He came from a workers’ family in a rural area near Paris. His grandparents were Catholic and communists, his parents voted on the extreme right and he was early socialized into the Communist Party environment. He grew up with his grandparents who were not, however, typical industrial proletarians but agricultural workers in the countryside. Then, he moved to Paris with his parents to live in a social housing complex in 1983 and was exposed to a new, urban reality, to delinquent youth in the neighbourhood and to their violence. The Communist Party in the urban setting did not resemble the more traditional, grounded, rural PCF that he had known until then. This provoked in him the feeling of being uprooted and the need to search for his own identity. His political socialization within the PC entered into conflict with his Catholic

and rural socializations. The risk of unemployment for young degree-holders at the time was rather high. He engaged with the GUD (Groupe Union Défense) while at university, then did his military service and then joined the FN, where he later also met his future wife. The FN was attractive because it was engaged for social justice for the ordinary, 'small' citizens. His experience of being a victim of uprootedness in the *cité* resonated within the FN. This is a radical case of rupture from extreme left to extreme right; shifts from the centre left occurred more frequently. Also, the experience of rupture due to moving house or due to rapid change of the living environment was frequent within the sample. Lafont's interpretation is that this corresponded to a social and contextual change rather than to a profound ideological reorientation (Lafont, 2001: 190–192).

The third case is that of a young woman born into a Catholic working-class household in the outskirts of a big city. Her family household was largely politically indifferent. Her mother had been unemployed, the young woman had thus experienced economic insecurity. She had a professional high-school degree in administration and worked part-time as a cleaner after periods of unemployment and different types of small jobs. She had never had the means to leave the parental home due to her economic instability. This raised doubts in her regarding her autonomy, her capacity of being an adult and of being able to found her own family. Her trajectory illustrated the socialization capacity of the FN out of a non-political engagement. In 1995, far from any political terrain, she met her future husband, an FN activist, who was then completing his military service, and engaged in the party through him (Lafont, 2001: 193–94). The interviewee spoke little about politics or ideas but rather about the atmosphere within the group of activists to which her fiancé belonged, where she, as the only female, quickly had the role of a collective 'mother'. This was a radical change with regard to her former social isolation and lack of recognition outside of her family home, coupled with anxieties about being able to be a mother. This trajectory of joining the FN's militant circles out of a need for sociality and conviviality was also frequently present in the thirty-six biographies. Especially after a period of unemployment or after retirement, i.e., at a point of time where social 'utility' was put into question and time for activism was plenty, people had joined the party's ranks. This third case did not mean that politics were not important. If the party was able to harbour a positive affective and socializing experience, it was precisely because of its ideological orientation and the identitarian values it conveyed. This was coupled in those years with the negative image it projected in society at large, leading to a particularly intense experience for those within against a largely hostile environment outside. Lafont compared the FN to a 'total institution, close to a religious sect' which marked the identity of its members more strongly than other parties or associations could have. In the ideological sense, the FN 'offered, in the first place, a place of dreams and a hope for a different, a better future' to its active members (ibid.: 194). In this sense, the integrative function was to transform the group of activists into a 'world by substitution' that allowed 'to compensate desocialising social trajectories and to invert social and political stigmata' (ibid.: 175). This tendency of the FN to provide a space of freedom of expression and for exchange of ideas that were otherwise seen as illegitimate and politically incorrect, as a 'counter-society' where activists created strong social bonds, was highlighted by other analysts as well (Dézé, 2016). One noticeable change in more recent years, however, was the increasing

willingness of members to publicly identify with the party (Crépon and Lebourg, 2015) as opposed to earlier years where this would have been too stigmatizing.

Quantitative analyses have highlighted the cross-class character of the FN's electorate. Qualitative studies, in turn, analyse the significance of electoral support to the FN for different groups of voters and activists. It was with regard to material and social concerns in particular, such as residential and neighbourhood issues, as well as with regard to school education, that the the FN's call for national priority and social closure to protect white privileges appeared attractive. Furthermore, for the younger members and activists as well as for those in rupture with prior leftist political experiences, the bonding and socializing aspect was important. The following chapter will further develop on the issue of family traditions.

### **Germany: The Rise of the Alternative für Deutschland [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

While the so-called populist radical-right parties (Mudde, 2007) had spread over Europe throughout several decades already, in the context of Federal Germany – apart from small attempts at regional levels – no such party had arisen alongside the more old-style extremist NPD until February 2013 when the AfD was formed (Häusler, 2016b; Werner, 2015). From 2014 onwards, the AfD has kept increasing its scores in all elections (Oppelland, 2017). Between 2014 and 2017, it gained seats in fourteen out of sixteen regional parliaments. In 2017, the AfD entered the Bundestag with 12.6 per cent (94 seats) and is currently the biggest opposition party against the great coalition between CDU/CSU (Christian Democrats) and SPD (Social Democrats).<sup>65</sup>

At first sight, it looks like the impressively quick rise of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) was directly linked to two crisis-contexts. It was in direct relation to the 2008 financial and subsequent Euro crisis that the AfD was founded, initially with a decidedly anti-EU agenda, demanding the dissolution of the monetary union and placing restrictions to European integration (Werner, 2015: 35). The management of the Euro crisis was but the culminating point in a series of deceptions with established politics in Germany. Reasons for the foundation and success of the AfD have thus to be sought in the years that preceded it already, and at the level of political transformations rather than in the economic domain proper.

Conservative members of the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) believed that under Merkel, their party had given up on fundamental conservative positions. Among them was Gauland who later joined the AfD (Werner, 2015: 39).<sup>66</sup> The neoliberal fraction was similarly frustrated, since Merkel's CDU had moved from strictly neoliberal towards social-democratic positions in some fields of its economic policy. The 'pain threshold' for liberals and conservatives was attained when the conservative-liberal government coalition agreed to the 'rescue packages' for Greece under the European Financial Stability Facility and European Stability Mechanism (Werner, 2015: 35 ff.). The party's emergence is thus directly linked to the day in March 2010 when Merkel declared to the Bundestag in the morning that European financial aid for Greece would be only a very last resort, and the EU-summit the same evening agreed to the first rescue package to Greece, saying that there was no alternative.<sup>67</sup> The party

name 'Alternative for Germany' is explicable out of this context, reflecting the opinion of leading economists that the European financial and rescue politics was not at all without alternative (Decker, 2016: 14).

The AfD stepped into an arena of public debate where European integration was highly politicized. Opposition arose against Merkel's politics of first refusing, then finally agreeing to the rescue package for Greece. Among the possessing classes, there was widespread fear that the EU would be transformed into a social union with collective liability and redistribution amongst member states. This fundamentally contradicted the ethics of performance of generations of the German middle-size bourgeoisie (Mittelstand). The self-perception of the Mittelstand was to be *Leistungsträger*, the carriers of performance, in the German economy – the ones who work hard, take risks, create jobs, pay taxes, produce wealth. But in the end, as medium-size enterprises, they are too small, not 'system-relevant' enough to 'knock on the door of the chancellery' to ask for rescue packages when they are in trouble (Werner, 2015: 46–49). Those Mittelstand-constituencies diverged from the country's big business, represented by the BDI (Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie, or the Federation of German Industries) that welcomed the rescue packages.

Hans-Olaf Henkel, former president of the BDI, turned his back on the federation at the moment of the Euro crisis and joined the AfD; he later became member of the European Parliament for the party. He became one of the party's 'organic intellectuals':

The manager Henkel cannot let off the steering wheel. Not when the course taken is so wrong. The final break with the established parties happened when the rescue package for Greece was decided. German tax payers' money for Greek banks. He found it immoral. More so since he – the father fell in the war in '45, the mother struggled to make a living for her family – has all built up himself. He always triumphed in direct competition. Competition has made him big. But the EU changes the rules of the game, helps the weak, sacrifices competition for the rescuing of the Euro. (Werner, 2015: 46–49)<sup>68</sup>

It was medium-size and family businesses and their associations that stuck to this kind of argument.

In accordance, the AfD first recruited amongst the middle classes: 'family entrepreneurs, free architects, tax consultants, lawyers, established medical doctors, managers'. They were not driven by fears of immigration but by lack of respect for their performance, by the opposition between those who create wealth and those who spend taxpayers' money (Werner, 2015: 46–49). With its politics at the time of the Euro crisis, the CDU obtained similar results as the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) with the Hartz reforms: it alienated major parts of its member base and electorate. This was the precondition for a successful split and establishment of an oppositional party to its right (ibid.: 49), to the despair of the CDU's Bavarian sister party the Christian Social Union (CSU) that had established long ago that 'right of the CSU, there is only the wall'. Obviously, such interpretations of the Euro rescue policies hold only on the basis of ignoring the results of Germany's export orientation, of the consequences of neoliberal economic, financial and labour market policies and, most importantly, of the dominant role of Germany within the EU. Despite these fundamental aspects of the issue, the AfD could capitalize



on the perception of Germany as a victim of uncontrollable European forces, combined with criticism of corrupted national elites. It was this kind of victimization-thinking that also enabled a coalition of diverging forces within the party, between liberals, national conservatives and more right-wing populists (ibid.: 111).

On top of the anti-EU outlook, the AfD soon established a more fully fledged party programme comprising diverging tendencies into what would be its ‘winning formula’ (Decker, 2016: 13). It managed to combine, in its first phase, the concerns of the liberal economic professors and the particular interests of medium-size enterprises against the CDU’s crisis policy; of national-conservatives who feared the disappearance ‘of cultural institutions considered vital, such as heteronormative marriage and family and the German (mainly Christian) “lead culture” (Leitkultur)’; and the populist rightists’ appeal to racist and homophobic feelings (Werner, 2015: 58–59).<sup>69</sup>

Some further elements are necessary, though, to understand the context of emergence of the AfD. Discursively, the field had been prepared for the emergence of the AfD with the debate around *Leitkultur*. CDU-deputy Friedrich Merz evoked the idea of a ‘lead culture’ in a 2010 speech as a counter-model to ‘multiculturalism’ in the domain of immigration and integration. Simultaneously, in 2010, a book by SPD-politician Thilo Sarrazin appeared, entitled *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany abolishes itself). In his book, Sarrazin conjures the decadence of Germany, due to a combination, according to him, of low fertility levels, a growing underclass and high immigration levels, in the majority from Muslim countries. The socio-Darwinist and racist overtones of the book have steered fierce public debate.<sup>70</sup>

In terms of its organization and networks, the AfD did not start from scratch either. In the context of the Maastricht Treaty (1993), a Euro-critical party, the Bund Freier Bürger, emerged. This small party (1994–2000) was shaped similarly to the AfD in its very beginnings, as a ‘professorial party’, uniting middle class members (it had relatively high adherence fees) and favouring a strongly neoliberal financial, labour market and overall economic policy. Nevertheless, it also favoured a nationalist perspective on Germany on the international scene, contained elements of a revisionist history of the country and was close to Vertriebenenverbände (Associations of Expellees) and to networks of the New Right (Werner 2015: 22). Furthermore, there had been a Hayek Society, an Initiative New Social Market Economy (Initiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft), the alliance Citizen’s Will (Bündnis Bürgerwille), the Electoral Initiative 2013 (Wahlalternative 2013) as well as the Christian fundamentalist network Civil Coalition (Zivile Koalition). All of these earlier initiatives fed into the creation of the AfD in terms of their programmatic agendas and personal networks. Its different predecessors already indicated the mix of liberal-economic, social-conservative and nationalist positions that were to characterize the AfD in its beginnings (Decker, 2016: 14). Furthermore, several of its founding and leading members were dissenters from existing political parties, mostly from the CDU and FDP (Free Democratic Party),<sup>71</sup> reacting to the transformations those parties had gone through recently. Those evolutions within the centre right opened up an opportunity window for the AfD to step in as a more decidedly right-wing party (Decker, 2016: 15).

The initially determining Euro topic started to lose importance in public debate and perception around 2015. This was the moment of the second crisis context that explains the rapid rise of the AfD, but also its internal transformations. Terrorism, jihadism, Islamization and refugees as major threats to the continuity of the country as *Heimat* and to German identity gained centre-stage and the party increasingly radicalized on its internal national-conservative and far-right nationalist fronts (Oppelland, 2017). Indeed, the successes in the eastern regional parliaments, with a very different agenda from the federal level, led the regional leadership to increasingly question Bernd Lucke's domination over the party. The president of the Saxony branch, Frauke Petry, who had been elected spokesperson alongside Lucke and Konrad Adam, was especially in direct rivalry with Lucke in terms of the party's political orientation.

The Pegida<sup>72</sup> movement catalysed internal conflicts. A brief outline of this extra-parliamentary street movement is therefore necessary here. 'Between late October 2014 and mid-January 2015, political debate in Germany was captured by the rapid emergence of a new political movement, namely the so-called "Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West" [. . . .]' (Dostal, 2015: 523). The movement started with a Facebook page in October 2014 and then with a long series of rallies through the city of Dresden on Mondays, to copy the tradition of mass mobilizations that ultimately led to the fall of the wall in 1989. Pegida represented itself as 'evening walks' by 'concerned citizens' (*besorgte Bürger*). It was initiated by a dozen persons, most of them without prior political experience. Three of them had been active in what represented the conservative scene of the region: one from CDU, one from FDP and one from AfD. They claimed to 'defend the mainstream of German culture and traditions against a liberal elite and political establishment that was alienated from its own people' (Dostal, 2015: 524). The rallies grew rapidly, from the first one with 350 participants on 20 October 2014 to up to 25,000 participants by mid-January 2015. Participation rapidly declined afterwards. There were attempts to imitate the movement in other German cities. A 2016 paper counted a total of 239 Pegida marches in 40 cities with around 2,27,000 participants in total. More than two-thirds occurred in Dresden (Korsch, 2016a: 112).

One of Pegida's initial themes was to fight against 'religious wars' on German soil.<sup>73</sup> Another feature was the denunciation of the mainstream media as 'lying press' (*Lügenpresse*), and established politicians as 'traitors of the people' (*Volksverräter*), terms closely associated with national-socialist vocabulary (Kellershohn, 2016: 191). There were also other themes, like the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the fact that the US secret services had spied on German government officials and later the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris that were variously taken up by Pegida. The initial image of anxious ordinary citizens constituting the movement's social basis started to change when a picture of one of the initiators and leaders, Lutz Bachmann, circulated where he appears with Hitler's moustache. There was therefore an observable development of Pegida over time:

It must be stressed that the mobilization was clearly based on right-wing discourses and Pegida leaders frequently stressed that they located themselves to the right of the CDU. One could perhaps go so far to consider Pegida as a kind of prototypical *völkisch* (ethnic nationalist) movement. Yet this alone cannot explain its initial success, which was due to efforts to put forward demands that were shared by many ordinary citizens. This

concerned criticism of the political class for its distance from ordinary people and the voicing of concern about the ongoing refugee crisis in Germany, which derived in turn from the break-up of states in the Middle East and the failure of the European Union to act on this challenge. (Dostal, 2015: 526)

In the local context of Dresden, far-right milieus had been particularly strong. The existing structures certainly worked towards shaping the movement, over time, according to their own agenda.<sup>74</sup> The debate within the party about its relationship with Pegida was a complex one, and it evolved over time (Korsch, 2016a: 112). Pegida, in turn, also kept a distance from the AfD. There were hardly any official connections at the staff level between the organizing team and the AfD. Pegida was determined, from the outset, to present itself as a citizen's movement above party lines. Irrespective of the party's official stance, studies on Pegida's constituencies outlined strong convergences between the movement and the new party.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, other actors on which I will develop more fully below mediated between Pegida and AfD and across the far-right scene in the region and beyond. For instance, the New-Right intellectual Götz Kubitschek spoke at various Pegida demonstrations and expressed his total refusal to establish a 'pluriethnic' state in Germany (Sebaux, 2016: 390). He also lent credibility to the movement by analysing it as 'a revolt of citizens' against the 'system elites' in a special issue of the New-Right journal *Sezession* (Kubitschek 2015, 10 f. quoted in Kellershohn, 2016: 191). Pegida was also accompanied by the Munich branch of Politically Incorrect, a counter-jihadism network (Kronauer, 2016: 37). We can therefore conclude that the Pegida movement 'has given wings to the complete right-wing populist and extreme right scene in Germany. Pegida can be seen as the booster detonation of a protest movement that is hostile towards refugees' (Häusler and Virchow, 2016: 7).

Returning to the AfD, throughout the year 2015, the internal imbalance between the liberal and the national-conservative fraction increasingly swung towards the latter and the more radical right voices gained ground.<sup>76</sup> While the Euro crisis was the context of emergence, the rise of Pegida in 2015 and the refugee reception crisis 2015–16 were the contexts of split and radicalization on the one hand and of a further convergence of several types of forces on the far right on the other hand.<sup>77</sup> The 2018 government coalition endowed CSU-leader Seehofer with the Ministry of Interior and Heimat. From his activities since March 2018, it is obvious that his task within a division of labour is to capture and bring back those voters who have shifted to the AfD in the meantime. While the October 2018 regional elections in Bavaria showed his strategy failed, the far right's ideological struggle is succeeding.

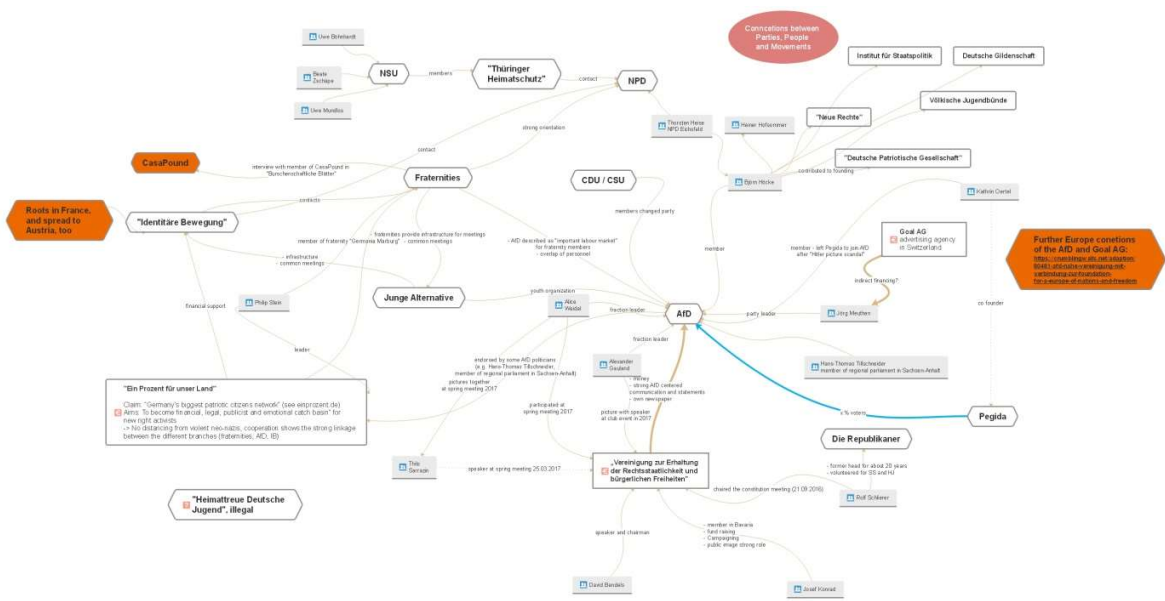
In the context of public debate around the refugee reception crisis, the regional elections of March 2016 confirmed spectacular successes for the AfD. In Sachsen-Anhalt, the party became the second largest fraction in the regional parliament with 24 per cent votes. In Baden-Württemberg it still gained 15 per cent, confirming that the party was not restricted to eastern Germany. When refugee numbers decreased due to the government's more restrictive handling, so did the AfD scores. In three regional elections in spring 2017, it managed to enter the official scene in all three cases, but with less than 10 per cent (Oppelland, 2017).

Since Lucke's exit, Gauland and Petry favoured a politics of radicalization and polarization within the German party system, especially through integrating more extreme voices on the far right, with topics such as immigration, Islam, national sovereignty and family. In 2017, Höcke managed to stage another right-wing radicalization. In a speech to the party's youth branch Junge Alternative in Dresden, January 2017, he made his famous reference to the Holocaust memorial in Berlin. In his words, Germany was the only country that had established 'a memorial of disgrace' in the middle of its capital. He called for a 180-degree turn in terms of the German culture of remembrance with regard to the National-Socialist past, highlighting what I determined as one of the German far right's major originary grievances. Petry, who until then had been a major engine of radicalization against Lucke, initiated a strategy to exclude Höcke from the party but failed and found herself marginalized, while Höcke emerged with renewed weight, strength and visibility within the AfD (Oppelland, 2017). After the federal elections of 2017, Frauke Petry, who had been one of the major actors for radicalization in the early phase, left the party together with her husband Marcus Pretzell, former regional party leader of Nordrhein-Westfalen. The still more radical group around Höcke was to coin the party's image from then on. A comment on the 2017 federal elections concluded that:

With the AfD, for the first time, a flawless right-wing populist party enters the German Bundestag, in terms of its milieu structure just as much as in terms of its staff, its electoral campaign and – apart from a few market-economy-oriented remnants of its liberal founding phase as a Euro-populist professoral party – also in terms of its program, (Vehrkamp and Wegschaider, 2017: 60–61)

This is the connecting point with the country's post-war past. In a detective-like 150-page textual analysis of speeches and writings of Björn Höcke in comparison with those of an author writing under the name of Landolf Ladig in various NPD publications, Kemper presents results that make it difficult to doubt that Höcke had been an active member of the NPD before he joined the AfD (Kemper, 2016a). As a history professor in a public school, he could not engage himself under his personal name and therefore had to choose a pseudonym. Höcke, who calls for 'overcoming the neurotic phase in which we had lingered for the last 70 years' (a phrase that was chosen as the title of Kemper's report), has declared in several occasions that he saw the AfD as 'the last evolutionary chance' for this country.

An important fraction of the party's leadership has decisively reconnected with or shifted into the far right. It still hosts people with diverging views and one cannot speak of a homogeneous party structure or a single extreme right programme. But the reconnection of this newcomer on the German scene in a short period of time after its foundation and the marginalization or split of members who did not belong to the tradition of the German far right is evident. Apart from the diachronic contextualization, the current AfD has to be seen in the broader network structure of the German far right. Graph 3 illustrates the location of the AfD within the overall far-right landscape in Germany. In the following sections, I will develop on Junge Alternative, the New Right and its intellectuals, *Gildenschaft*, *Ein Prozent*, *Identitäre Bewegung*, vigilantism, the Junker's connection and expellee's associations, and how they all connect across the republic.<sup>78</sup>



Source: Baroni et al., 2018

The AfD's youth branch, Junge Alternative (JA) appears as more radical and more clearly linked to radical-right and New-Right circles than the AfD itself. It has exercised a role as 'taboo breaker'. Proud of being plain-speaking and mocking political correctness, it has put forth provocative theses regarding the topics of migration, for instance, but also anti-feminist Facebook campaigns and meetings with far-right actors, like its invitation of the UK Independent Party (UKIP)-leader Nigel Farage to a meeting in Cologne in 2014. In accordance with UKIP, the JA favours the exit of Germany from the EU. More than that, it demands the 'democratic dissolution' of the European Union (Herkenhoff, 2016b).

Not only is the JA compatible at the programmatic level with far-right positions, it is also organizationally connected with fractions of the extreme-right scene.<sup>79</sup> The JA does not hide its affinity with the extremist Alte Breslauer Burschenschaft in Bonn, for instance. This same fraternity had provided space for a fair that the journal *Sezession* organized in 2014, and where New-Right editors and media exposed their activities (Herkenhoff, 2016b: 205). The JA converges in its programme with New-Right discourses and there are personal overlaps as well.

The German New Right was largely inspired by the French Nouvelle Droite. It struggles for a metapolitical, culturally discursive hegemony of *völkisch*, racist and nationalist ideas. The German New Right has invested considerable efforts into overcoming the 'stigma of National Socialism' (Herkenhoff, 2016b: 208). The strategy consisted in rehabilitating the intellectual heritage of the Conservative Revolution during the Weimar Republic, i.e., those thinkers that fed into the creation of NS ideology but preceded it, therefore being exempted from the accusations of directly being linked with the NS crimes.<sup>80</sup> Götz Kubitschek, one of the current key figures, argued that 'with reference to the "Conservative revolution", "the language of the right, under justification constraint since 1945, could be rearmed"' (Kubitschek 2007, quoted in Herkenhoff, 2016b: 208). Kubitschek's ambition is the 'provision of a complete argumentative framework'

(Wölk, 2016: 101). Apart from the literature of the Weimar Conservative Revolution, the writings of the French and Austrian identitarians are important references.

The efforts of the New Right are carried out with the material support of a publicist network, including the journals *Sezession* (edited by Kubitschek), *Compact-Magazin* (edited by Elsässer<sup>81</sup>) and *Junge Freiheit* (edited by Stein), as well as the journals *Blaue Narzisse*, edited by pupils and students, and the Austrian *Die Aula*. *Sezession* has referred several times to the AfD as the ‘party-political brick’ within a ‘milieu of resistance that becomes ever more structurally stable’ (quoted in Häusler, 2016a: 49). The JA entertains ‘privileged contacts’ with *Junge Freiheit* that has almost become the informal party publication (Herkenhoff, 2016b). The AfD itself has no official party publication organ and could thus use existing structures and also reach out to potential new constituencies. The *Junge Freiheit*, in turn, increased its readership and accessed the status of a quotable source (Wölk, 2016: 100–01). For instance, after the regional elections 2015 in Sachsen-Anhalt, regional AfD-leader André Poggenburg gave his first interview to *Compact*. This also obliged mainstream media to refer to the New-Right publication in the first place. The cooperation went as far as authors and editors of the *Junge Freiheit* joining the AfD as functionaries and candidates (Wölk, 2016: 100–101). The French think tank GRECE (Research and Study Group for European Civilization) is one of its key references. One of its chief ideologues is Karlheinz Weißmann.<sup>82</sup>

Höcke enjoys full support from the intellectual circles around Götz Kubitschek and Ellen Kositzka from Schnellroda Manor, where the far-right think tank Institut für Staatspolitik, the editorial *Antaois* and the journal *Sezession* are hosted. He is even considered Kubitschek’s pupil (Kellershohn, 2016). Kubitschek spoke at Pegida demonstrations and cordially invited not only authors from identitarian networks but also Höcke as an AfD speaker to activities of *Antaois* at the 2017 book fair at Frankfurt. We need not look more deeply into struggles between different fractions within the New Right to promote their agenda within the AfD (Kellershohn, 2016). What is important is the fact that the party has been increasingly captured by a far-right scene that pre-existed it for many years and that had been waiting for a political party to carry out their agenda for social and political transformation of the country. In a conversation between Poggenburg, Elsässer and Kubitschek, they revealed that they understood the success of the AfD in the region as a collective achievement.

Another component in the scene is the Gildenschaft. If there is a direct connecting line from the NPD into the AfD exemplified by Höcke, there are also long-term continuities in the attempts of the New Right to provide ideological inputs to the party. Interestingly, most of the intellectuals mentioned belong to the Deutsche Gildenschaft, a corporation of far-right intellectuals. This is the case with Dieter Stein, Götz Kubitschek and Karlheinz Weißmann. The *Deutsche Hochschulgilde*, an academic corporation, since the postwar years, ‘has seen its space of action in this space between the Union parties and the extreme right’. They had observed the failure of the Republikaner and the Bund Freier Bürger. This space is now filled by the emergence of the AfD (Wölk, 2016: 100–01). The Gildenschaft has deep roots right into the anti-republican corporations of the 1920s that combined the cult of youth, students and soldiers. In 1933, the Deutsche Gildenschaft committed itself to serve ‘the national-socialist revolution’ and pledged allegiance to Hitler. Membership in SA or SS became an obligation for its members. Many

members became instrumental in the realization of national-socialist rule, mainly in the universities as anthropologists, racial hygienists or *völkisch* theologians. It was refounded in 1958. The aim of the Gildenschaft had always been to form a national elite with *völkisch* orientation to complement, when time would be ripe, a mass movement. It is a tiny group but its qualitative impact on politics and society cannot be overestimated. It has ‘provided significant ideological and personal mediation in the zone between conservatism and right-wing extremism’ (Kellershohn, 2004: 3).

Out of the New-Right intellectual circles emerged a new broader movement in 2015, the initiative Ein Prozent für unser Land (One percent for our country). The name referred to the estimation that one per cent of the population would suffice to create a massive resistance movement on the right, promoting the vision of a ‘Germany and Europe organized along *völkisch* and racist criteria’ (Herkenhoff, 2016a: 74). Kubitschek defined it as an ‘NGO for Germany’, i.e., a common platform for all those initiatives and networks that had emerged in the course of the Pegida protests and related activities. Underlying the analysis that led to the creation of this platform are conspiracy theory-like assumptions: Germany is supposed to be in ‘lethal danger’ in the face of ‘the mass flooding with so-called refugees orchestrated by Merkel’. Such visions were elaborated by Elsässer, Kubitschek and Karl Albrecht Schachtschneider and published among others in *Compact*. Members of the identitarian movement, such as Martin Sellner, leader of Identitäre Bewegung in Vienna, also formed part of the alliance.

The identitarian movement (Identitäre Bewegung, IB) is another scene to which the AfD, just as the New Right, is linked. It draws on the French Générations Identitaires and on the Austrian IB. The movement appears as a young hipster movement and constitutes the activist branch of the New Right with which it overlaps ideologically. The leading principles of the identitarians are ‘Neither left nor right – identitarian!’, playing again with the fascist motto of neither right nor left; and ‘0% racism, 100% identity!’ (Herkenhoff, 2016a: 77–78). It has gained publicity mainly through its Islamophobic interventions. At the Frankfurt Book Fair 2017, the publisher *Antaios* had organized a book presentation by identitarians Müller and Sellner, authors of the book *Identitär!* (2017). Against protest by the Antifa, the identitarians and their supporters chanted ‘*Europa! Jugend! Reconquista!*’ (Europe! Youth! Reconquista!) (Keim, 2017).

Finally, another scene that needs to be mentioned for the sake of completeness is vigilantism. In the years 2015 and 2016, new vigilante groups emerged, such as Bürgerwehr Hannover, Freikorps Bürgerwehr Selbstschutz der Patrioten und unserer Familien and Düsseldorf passt auf (Quent, 2016b: 84). They engaged in protecting the population, especially German women, against the alleged influx of and aggressions by refugees. This need was based on their analysis of the state’s failure to regulate migration and to deal with migrants’ criminality. Most of the vigilante groups had a mere virtual presence on Facebook. The few that patrolled on a more regular basis were usually built on top of pre-existing networks such as fraternities or NPD groups. Those are classified as ‘vigilantist violent groups’, i.e., groups that ‘use the vigilantist denomination in order to justify violence against social groups that are marked as deviant’ (Quent, 2016b: 92). Many of the vigilantes sympathize with Pegida and the AfD. Furthermore, the recent, highly controversial condemnation of members of the NSU apparently has not put an end to far-right terrorist structures. Ongoing investigations around members of Revolution

Chemnitz, for instance, indicate that a similar network has reconfigured itself that considered the NSU as a mere ‘preschool group’ (Machowecz, Middelhoff, Musharbash, and Stark, 2018).

The AfD’s connections also reach out into the Reichsbürger-movement. The Reichsbürger consider themselves citizens of the German Reich within its 1942 territorial limits, currently occupied by the Federal Republic’s government. They do not respect the country’s authorities and borders, refuse to pay taxes and issue their own identity documents or building permits. Their number is growing. In 2021, around 20.000 people counted as Reichsbürger (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 2021; Rathje, 2014). In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, Reichsbürger have spearheaded protests against government measures to tackle the pandemic. They have taken centre stage in the assault on the Reichstag in August 2020, waving the historical flags of the German empire.

The Junker’s connection and expellees’ associations also merit attention here. In my contribution to Volume I, I had outlined the importance of the German land-owning aristocracy, the Junkers, as one of the constituencies who supported National-Socialism. Interestingly, there is continuity at this level too within the AfD. Beatrix Amelie Ehrengard Eilika von Storch, born Beatrix Amelie Ehrengard Eilika, Duchess of Oldenburg, is an elected member of parliament for the AfD and former member of the European Parliament (2014–17) (Werner, 2015: 54). She started her political career with the creation of the Initiative Göttinger Kreis - Initiative für den Rechtsstaat e.V. This lobbying association reclaimed rights of aristocratic landowners who had been dispossessed under the Soviet occupation. With the 1989 transformations, the Kohl government did not put into question these dispossessions. The Göttingen Circle demands reparations to those who had been dispossessed by the Soviet land reforms, as well as restitution of their land rights to those who then became expellees in Western Germany. This does not only concern aristocratic Junkers but a much broader population group.

Within today’s expellee associations, federated under the Bund der Vertriebenen (BdV, Union of Expellees), although they host heterogeneous forces, nationalist, revisionist and far-right political orientations are still present. These associations have lost in significance and membership in comparison with the immediate post-war decades (membership numbers remain unclear but are estimated at about 25,000; Später & Kotte, 2010). After 1989, they had to accept the European ordering. At the same time, as a result of the subsequent European integration process, expellee associations increasingly practice their own ‘foreign policy’ with Eastern Europe (Salzborn, 2001). While the older NS staff that had worked towards rehabilitating National-Socialist key actors is dying out, the associations persist, funded generously out of the federal budget. Erika Steinbach, president of the BdV between 1998 and 2014, was herself born in 1943 in Danzig-Westpreußen, which had been conquered by the Nazis only in 1939. She had to leave her birthplace in 1945. In her defence of ‘the right to *Heimat*’, Steinbach mobilizes international human rights dispositions and makes the German occupiers of eastern Europe appear as victims of world history. She left the CDU in 2017 following Merkel’s refugee policy and supported the AfD in its electoral campaign. Steinbach is not an AfD member but heads the party’s foundation. The BdV has some personal overlaps with the current far right scene, and the expellees and their descendants represent an interesting voter’s base.



From this localization of the AfD in the wider far-right context, it becomes obvious that the party's programme and strategy have been increasingly captured by established New-Right networks (Häusler, 2016a: 47). The group around Höcke and the Erfurt Resolution has played a crucial role in this sense and has made considerable inroads in pulling the whole party into the nationalist-xenophobic direction. More broadly, the discussion sheds doubts on the term 'populist' in order to adequately characterize recent developments within the AfD, sustained by the Pegida movement during a certain period. Häusler goes far in arguing that we are observing a '*Kulturkampf von rechts*', not limited to the parliamentary activities of the AfD but obeying largely to the New-Right agenda of gaining cultural hegemony.<sup>83</sup> The most recent advances into different sectors of society would need to be interpreted in more detail – such as those networks' exact role in usurping protests against Covid measures; but also their advances in the worlds of work, with the creation of a trade union that denies climate change and seeks to attract workers in the German automobile industry.

### **The AfD's Constituencies [B-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Membership to the AfD increased rapidly after its creation, passing from 10,000 right after its foundation to 17,000 at the end of the year 2013. At the point of time when Lucke and his followers left the party mid-2015, the party had 22,000 members, a number that has remained largely stable since then, i.e., the Lucke split did not affect membership numbers in the long term. The party membership has always been heterogeneous, the only stable characteristic being the strong underrepresentation of women (only 15 per cent, according to Oppelland, 2017), still to be explicated.

If the membership is described as being heterogeneous, this holds still more true for the electorate (Werner, 2015: 65). The radicalization and polarization strategy has seemed to pay off in terms of electoral results.<sup>84</sup> The party has attracted voters from all existing parties as well as from former non-voters.<sup>85</sup> Electoral analyses confirm that the AfD attracts voters from all socio-economic categories. It is slightly more successful among younger voters. In terms of income and education, AfD voters were situated slightly above the average in the European Parliamentary elections and slightly below in the regional elections. The only hard variable that is significant is gender, with 60 per cent of men and 40 per cent of women voting for the party, similar to the situation of other European right-wing parties (Mudde, 2007).

Similar debates to the ones in France focused on the question whether the AfD attracted in particular workers or unemployed or rather the well-situated middle strata (Bischoff and Müller, 2016: 22–23). One opinion research centre declared that AfD voters 'come from a segment of the middle classes that is objectively well-established, but subjectively marked by fears of loss of status and feels squeezed between global capitalism and the proletariat' (Bischoff and Müller, 2016: 25). One wonders what standardized question yielded such results in a country where the proletariat has lost its significance as a reference long ago.<sup>86</sup> Werner is probably right when he states that 'in an early phase of electoral struggle already, a small support basis was identified'. Those persons were attracted to the AfD because 'they recognized the Euro-crisis as the biggest problem of the country, rejected financial aid for indebted EU-member states, saw the future of

the German economy with pessimism and were extremely unsatisfied with the current government' (Werner, 2015: 65). However, he provides no empirical data to confirm which population sections were exactly concerned.<sup>87</sup>

An analysis of the electoral results of the 2017 federal elections divides the overall population into ten socio-economic and socio-cultural 'milieus', combining social status (household income, education and profession) and orientation (values and attitudes, lifestyles) (Vehrkamp and Wegschaider, 2017: 34). The study reveals that the core milieus of the AfD were the precarious, the traditionalists and the bourgeois centre. The precarious are defined as the lower class that struggles for orientation and participation but cumulates factors for social disadvantage, experiences social exclusion and therefore bitterness and resentment. In this milieu, the AfD obtained 28 per cent of votes, its strongest result. This is also where the party most gained support in comparison with prior elections. The party had the merit of strongly mobilizing amongst population fragments that had largely abstained in prior elections. The AfD gained double as many votes amongst former non-voters than amongst former voters. As a result, 'the more social precarious a circumscription, the better the results for the AfD and the higher its increase in votes' (Vehrkamp and Wegschaider, 2017: 19). While this confirms the AfD's claim to be speaking for the 'silent' (not yet 'majority'), the analysis does not give us any explanatory elements regarding this milieu's vote. The 'bourgeois centre' was characterized as the bourgeois mainstream, oriented towards performance and adaptation. It generally agrees to the social order, aims at professional and social stability and at secured, harmonious social relations. Its attitude is characterized as fears of downward mobility. One in five voters pertaining to the bourgeois centre voted for the AfD. The party gained 15 per cent in this milieu in comparison with prior elections, the same percentage that the CDU lost in it. This reveals the competition between AfD and CDU for the population in the centre. It is in line with the founding constituencies of the AfD as outlined above.

The traditional milieu was composed of older generations who strive for security and order. They belong either to the petty bourgeois or workers' cultural milieus and adapt to material necessities through sparingness. Traditionalists feel resigned and left behind by recent developments in society. Amongst these population groups, the AfD gained 16 per cent, 11 per cent more than in the federal elections of 2013. While the authors conclude that the AfD has 'entered the centre from below' and represents the left-behinds and those who feel squeezed in the middle, they also draw attention to the fact that parts of the upper classes also supported the party. In the 'classical establishment' of the conservatives, characterized by an ethics of performance and responsibility, claims to leadership, consciousness as upper class and a desire for order, the AfD obtained 10 per cent of votes. The share was similar amongst the 'hedonists', i.e., the lower-middle and lower-class people oriented towards fun in the here and now and strongly interested in leisure. The 'elevated milieus', however, were represented with only 8 per cent in the AfD (Vehrkamp and Wegschaider, 2017, 25 per cent). Similar to the analyses of the FN's support base, this shows that the AfD draws on multiple constituencies. However, the consulted literature does not provide anything similar to the in-depth qualitative studies on the FN's constituencies and the meaning they attach to the FN vote.

There is one particular constituency that appears to be surprising. Jewish AfD activists, just as the Jewish FN electorate, do support the party out of what they consider a crisis situation, and for what they consider to be rational motives. Fearing the anti-Semitism of refugees from war-torn regions in the Middle East, they consider the AfD's Islamophobia to be confirming their position within German society. Apparently, they hit a sensitive nerve amongst the Russian-speaking Jewish communities – to the despair of the Central Council of Jews in Germany that openly denounced such attitudes. Wolfgang Fuhl, for instance, an AfD-politician in Lörrach, Baden-Württemberg, was a former activist with the Young Social Democrats and former member of the Central Council. Since he is a father and his children experience anti-Semitism in a multicultural schoolyard, he has turned towards the AfD (Rosbach, 2016). The founding of the Association of Jews in the AfD (JAfD) was held in October 2018, with twenty-four founding members. A declaration published beforehand gave two motives for the group's foundation: the 'uncontrolled mass immigration' of young men from the 'Islamic Kulturkreis' with 'anti-Semitic socialisation'; as well as the 'destruction of traditional monogamic family' through 'gender mainstreaming' and 'early sexualisation' ('Juden in der AfD', 2018).

### **Conclusion: The Current Far Right as a Response to Multilevel Crisis? [A-LEVEL SUBHEAD]**

Instead of providing explanations, the party-centred, quantitative analyses of electoral results all across Europe rather provide us with a puzzle. The statistical data reveal a largely heterogeneous constituency in both cases; these results, however, remain therefore unsatisfactory to understand the party's recent successes. A heterogeneous voting base simply corresponds to the shape of any party of significant size in current Western societies, as a result of voter dealignment, electoral volatility and the crisis of representation regarding the mass parties of former times.

The above outline explains how far the AfD fitted the German political landscape at its time of emergence and growth. It also shows how the party was rapidly captured by pre-existing networks that decisively pulled it towards the extreme right. The literature consulted so far does not elaborate qualitatively on the question of how far the AfD programme fit the logics and lives of those who sympathize with it, apart from the extremely minoritarian example of its Jewish voters.

The AfD emerged in a specific situation of economic crisis and its political handling by the political establishment, and soon afterwards got radicalized in the context of the refugee reception crisis. In the initial phase, the AfD emerged as a response to the crisis of representation that affected the German Mittelstand in the face of the political handling of the economic crisis. The 'bourgeois centre' voters correspond to that category. The 'traditional milieus' would rather be those who long for response to ideological crisis and moral panics in terms of the AfD's promise of Heimat and law and order. Regarding the 'precarious', we might assume, based on our insights from the constituencies of the FN, that their affinity with the party's programme turns around closing up spaces of white privilege against competing strangers in terms of access to affordable housing, education for their children, jobs and women. The party could capitalize on the political representation crisis by representative claim-making, and on a climate of

ideological uncertainty and moral panics with narratives of order and security, *Heimat* and the like. Electoral and opinion poll studies with their rather limited explanatory capacity seem to confirm rather superficial, imagined moral panic reactions against sociocultural heterogeneity.<sup>88</sup> However, those references to crisis are not sufficient to explain the subsequent development of the party and especially its quick move from liberal economic origins into the far-right scene. An explanation in terms of consequence of and response to crisis does not explain fully the phenomenon of the AfD. I therefore argue that only long-term continuities provide us with the full picture of what has been happening in recent years right in front of our eyes. This will be developed in the following chapter.

The current strength of the FN cannot be sufficiently explained either as a result of or response to crisis. Statistical analyses fail to give clear-cut responses in terms of the far-right vote in France, just as the one in Germany, as being the vote of the petty bourgeoisie, of a marginalized post-industrial underclass, the result of the politics of resentment of globalization losers, the revenge of the working class or of particularly vulnerable populations. The one feature that all recent constituencies do seem to share is experience of representational crisis:

They all have the feeling that, politically, there is no longer anyone to speak up on their behalf. They all have the feeling that globalization and European integration generate more costs than benefits for them. And in general terms, they are right. [. . .] All these groups sense that the established progressive parties have generally ceased to be interested in them and that their representatives have themselves joined the global upper class. (Misik, 2017: 119–20)

The current strength of the far right is therefore at least partly related to profound socio-economic transformations that Western European societies have experienced over the last decades. Quantitative as well as qualitative studies also indicate that we cannot reduce the far-right vote to any particular constituency. Whether parts of the German Mittelstand, of the French working class, of populations within peri-urban areas or specific professional milieus, they seem to share the experience of representational crisis. Each of them have specific reasons related to their lived experiences. Where we could see beyond opinion polls, it appeared that their far-right vote is not a result of pure emotions of resentment but it makes sense out of particular professional, economic, residential, educational and/or family reasons. This has provided us with a first part of the explanation. It concerns precisely the relatively ‘new constituencies’ that account for the parties’ recent growth and electoral successes.

But I agree that ‘[. . .] although the threats to security and economic stability that have rattled Europe in the past few years may have spurred the current populist surge, they did not create it’ (Mudde 2016: 25). If Mudde traces the origins back into the 1960s, I believe it is necessary to go further back in history. The detailed ethnographic and biographic analyses on FN activists clearly show that the current situation is only understandable if we trace the lineage of the FN back to its deep roots. I argue that the party has remained alive and has managed to attract new members and voters only because it could rely on organizational forms and on an ideological tradition that has been sustained by a small, specific circle of people throughout the decades. In order to understand this, we need to trace its deep roots back into the period before the foundation of the

party itself. These long-term continuities and the important role the FN has played for certain people as a political home explain why the FN has survived ups and downs, although it considerably adapted to changing contexts. The attractiveness of the FN and its availability to larger and also to more recent constituencies were only possible because the FN has survived in the long-term, sustained by the silent or open engagements of committed far-right circles in direct continuity with interwar fascism and colonialism. A fragment of the FN activists that the above-mentioned studies highlight personally trace these continuities in their family biographies. I put forth the same argument regarding the recent emergence and success of the AfD in Germany. How an initially ‘professorial’ party, representing the interests and voicing the grievances of the *Mittelstand* could be captured in a brief time span by far-right networks and actors and become infused with their discourses is only intelligible with a determined focus on long-term continuities. I will outline this in the next chapter on the deep roots of the Western European far right.

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<sup>1</sup> For an analytical basis to such comparative work, see Keim (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> I have chosen the term far right as a concept ‘encompassing figures, movements and currents of thought that display some degree of commonality and a core of shared dispositions’ (Shields, 2007: 10). I prefer ‘far right’ to ‘extreme right’ or ‘radical right’, although those terms might appear at some points in the text, because they situate the phenomenon at the extreme tip of the political spectrum only, whereas ‘far right’ opens up the spectrum to encompass not only individual actors, groups, movements, think tanks and parties as different types of organizational forms but also indicates that the phenomenon does not necessarily exclude parts of the more moderate forces, i.e., it denominates a larger spectrum of ideological and political influence and of personal networks that reach out beyond the extreme. I also avoid the term ‘populist right’ for reasons I will develop in the subsection ‘Ideological Crisis’.

<sup>3</sup> Others have argued similarly: ‘Right-wing radicalism, however, is not the only danger that threatens democracy today. The authoritarian means with which austerity policy is being carried out in the EU, the arming of a security and surveillance apparatus under the pretext of fighting terrorism, the anti-Muslim racism amplified by the media, and borders closed off to immigrants—all not only creates a climate in which right-wing radicalism thrives, but also represents limitations on and threats to democracy and freedom’ (Baier, 2016: 53).

<sup>4</sup> Those were the key points of focus of the workshop ‘Rethinking United Fronts and the Far Right’, held on 20–21 July 2018 at York University, Toronto. The workshop was organized by Raju J. Das and Robert Latham on behalf of the Critical Scholarship and Social Transformation Program. See ‘Critical Scholarship and Social Transformation’, *York University*, available at <http://criticaltransformation.blog.yorku.ca/>, accessed 15 November 2021.

<sup>5</sup> ‘On n’est donc pas du tout dans une montée de la conflictualité mais, à l’inverse, dans l’émergence d’une idéologie consensuelle qui sacralise les opportunités individuelles, associée à un État technocratique qui gère les tensions au nom du ‘bien commun’. C’est, pour faire simple, une techno-démocratie : les décisions vraiment essentielles ne sont pas sous le contrôle réel des citoyens, même si des élections libres permettent de ‘prendre le pouls’ de l’opinion tout en réduisant, par la catharsis, les tensions sociales. Cette pensée techno-démocratique, centrée sur l’idéologie néo-managériale, Jean-François Kahn l’a baptisée avec un certain bonheur ‘la pensée unique’. Or, pour un capitalisme de pensée unique, l’extrême droite est profondément dysfonctionnelle’ (Jacquemain and Claisse, 2012: 17).

<sup>6</sup> The Front National has been renamed Rassemblement National/National Rally (RN) at the beginning of 2018. However, since the chapter follows a long-term perspective and because most of the consulted literature refers to the former FN, I shall use the former name and acronym throughout.

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<sup>7</sup> “Fascist” has served as a generic term of political abuse for many decades, but for the first time in ages, mainstream observers are using it seriously to describe major politicians and parties’ (Berman, 2016: 39).

<sup>8</sup> Another theoretical approach I considered for this study was Paxton’s work on five stages of fascism. According to his definition, ‘[f]ascism is a system of political authority and social order intended to reinforce the unity, energy and purity of communities in which liberal democracy stands accused of producing division and decline’ (1998: 21). The formulations ‘system of political authority and social order’ are less precise than the definition given by Mann but do not contradict it. The idea of ‘reinforcing the unity, energy and purity’ is contained in Mann’s concepts of nation-statism based on the organic nation (unity and purity), in his concepts of transcendence (unity) and of ‘cleansing’ (purity). ‘Energy’ does not feature prominently in Mann’s definition, though one could translate some of his considerations on paramilitarism as socializing institutions for the New Man and as violent actors of cleansing in this sense. What sets Paxton’s definition apart from Mann’s are two elements that could have been interesting with regard to the task that this article sets itself: instead of ‘nation’ and ‘state’ his definition refers to ‘communities’, which is a more broader term. As a starting point, this could be more promising for the analysis of the early, still small-scale developmental phases of authoritarian restoration projects. However, I believe Mann’s definition is more complete and the potentials Paxton offers are also incorporated in my adaptation of Mann (see below).

<sup>9</sup> This corresponds to Griffin’s analysis of major structural weaknesses of fascist ideology (1991: 26–55) as well as to Paxton’s (1998) analysis of fascism as evolving in stages throughout which initial aims were often watered down or betrayed Paxton.

<sup>10</sup> Griffin states the same inherent contradiction between populism and elitism in fascist ideology (1991).

<sup>11</sup> Sitas addresses the various configurations that marked the anti-apartheid struggle as well as political violence and civil war in the KwaZulu Natal-region during the transition period. I am transferring his thoughts to a radically different context. This has led me to adapt the key concept of ‘originary trauma’, certainly justified for the movements and organizations he studies. It does not apply, however, to the European far right, who tries to play on its traumas that are easily revealed to be invented. Speaking about the traumas of the far right would mean taking seriously and lending credibility to their strategy to establish themselves as victims in a national and international political field in which they are clearly rather located on the side of the powerful. Instead, I speak of their major grievances.

<sup>12</sup> We shall consider this against the background of a 1985 commission of enquiry of the European Parliament on the rise of fascism and racism in Europe that declared already that ‘xenophobia’ was the new spectre to haunt Europe, that the risk of violence was a reality and that a ‘war of races’ could break out (d’Appolonia, 1992: 27). We have not yet arrived at that stage but the reworking of exclusive solidarities at various levels in this direction is a fact.

<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, the ‘short-lived political group of the European Parliament, “Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty” (ITS), a coalition of extreme right parties from six member states that lasted from January to November 2007’, that ‘had as a founding principle the “commitment to Christian values, heritage, culture”. Chairman Bruno Gollnisch stated that one of the goals of the group was to go beyond a narrow euroscepticism (limited to attacking a European superstate) that does not “properly defend Christian values”’ (Zúquete, 2008). In terms of religious referents, the extreme right also counts pagan groups as well as Celtic or shamanic orientations.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Marine Le Pen, who vowed to “de-demonize” the image of the party, has made overtures to the French Jewish community and, as a member of the European parliament, has registered with the Delegation for Relations with Israel. She was behind the decision to send National Front members to a demonstration in memory of a French Jew killed in a hate-crime, and told the media that she wanted to put an end to a “number of misunderstandings” between the party and the Jewish community who, Marine Le Pen said, “have nothing to fear from the National Front”. “The French community, who are increasingly victims of attacks by Islamic radicals”, she said on one occasion, “should be able to turn to us for support”. [...] Guillaume Faye, one of France’s New Right main theorists, advocates that those who defend European identity should get rid of an obsessive and “chronic anti-Judaism” because the real danger is colonization from “the third world and Islam”.’ (Zúquete, 2008: 328).

<sup>15</sup> The Slovene far right, for instance, fuses anti-semitism and islamophobia. Quoting from a Slovene rightist weekly journal, Žižek observes the following: ‘[...] it brings together anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: the threat to Europe comes from hordes of Muslim refugees, but behind this chaotic phenomenon are the Jews [Soros in the text]’ Žižek (2017: 187). See also the collective student portfolio on Hungary: Al Hariri, Italia, Kuhlifelt, Olmati, and Yosef (2017).

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<sup>16</sup> This translates into policy programmes such as obliging companies to give priority to nationals in their employment policies, or reserving social housing or family benefits for nationals, etc. propositions that the FN campaigned with, or practical support for the national poor, such as the programmes put in place by CasaPound in Italy, copied in France by Bastion Social.

<sup>17</sup> 'Above all, the FN leader consistently laid out the frame that justifies the union of nationalists wherever they are: a totalitarian ideology, advanced by the winners of the Cold War and international organizations, is sweeping across the world, destroying natural identities, ethnicities, diversities and borders in order to create one homogenous, undifferentiated, rootless, artificial creation that can be easily controlled by a world government. Open borders, massive immigration and birth-rate collapse are all part of this plan designed to uproot national identities and solidarities, with the help of treacherous political classes. Nationalists, the last bastions of resistance, are engaged in an all-out war for survival, and they must withstand the tempest together, in solidarity'. (Zúquete, 2015: 73).

<sup>18</sup> This has taken adverse trajectories in France and Germany. The AfD emerged initially as a Eurosceptic party and was then increasingly captured by far-right actors and voices. The FN, on the contrary, has rather recently experienced a controversy over the traditional xenophobic or identitarian line, represented by the Le Pens, and the more recent sovereignist line represented by Florian Philippot who tried to instal Euroscepticism more firmly as a key orientation of the party but failed.

<sup>19</sup> On AfD gender politics, see Siri (2016); Kemper (2016b); Jentsch (2016).

<sup>20</sup> See the corresponding sections in Shields, 2007 as well as in particular Renken, 2006; more in the next section on the deep roots of the FN.

<sup>21</sup> Botsch traces the term '*Volksgemeinschaft*' throughout the post-war history of the German extreme right as being in direct continuity with National Socialism. While from 1949 onwards *Volksgemeinschaft* formed a counter-model to parliamentarianism and pluralism, in the present, it opposes multicultural society (Botsch, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> See the MA thesis produced by Caroline Luschy under my supervision: Luschy (2017).

<sup>23</sup> I will not have the time to delve deeper into the national cases. From work with my students, it has become obvious that it would be crucial to include Eastern European cases in the overall panorama. The originary grievance for ethnic Hungarians, for instance, were the treaties of Versailles and Trianon – the same that animated German National Socialists at the time – that led to the loss of Greater Hungary. This historical experience of Greater Hungary, however, is seen as being the mode of veracity of the ethnic superiority of Hungarians, justifying expansionist discourse and policy practice – like granting ethnic Hungarians in neighbouring countries citizenship and voting rights in order to increase the country's sphere of influence – in recent years. The major internal outgroups, as opposed to Western European concerns about immigration, are Roma – considered a criminal tribe (Damodaran, 2014), where 'Roma-crime' has become an established term in national media coverage and has legitimized for a certain period paramilitary structures of defence of the ethnic Hungarian population, for example – as well as Jews, epitomized in the figure of George Soros. Furthermore, the country furthers a determined anti-EU rhetoric, criticizing, not without foundation, the subordination of eastern Europe within the EU framework. These are only preliminary observations that would require far more in-depth analysis.

<sup>24</sup> Apart from the literature on the FN included in the bibliography, the 2018 students' portfolio on the FN has analysed the party's 2012 and 2017 electoral programmes with respect to aspects of statism (Holiday et al., 2018: 90–91).

<sup>25</sup> Regarding Berman's optimistic assessment that established democracies will withstand the attempts of assault by the far right at direct democracy, the planned prolongation of this study towards the cases of Turkey and India, eventually in comparison with the US, should allow us to understand what can happen, under varying circumstances, once charismatic leaders do gain state power. Erdoğan, for instance, then mayor of Istanbul, was quoted in the 1990s as saying that '[d]emocracy is like a tram. You ride it until you arrive at your destination, then you step off' (quoted in: White, 2016). This clearly reveals that authoritarians can use democratic disposition in merely instrumental ways.

<sup>26</sup> Absent in Western Europe, we do find truly paramilitary formations in some parts of Eastern Europe. Bulgaria has a strong paramilitary movement, sponsored among others by Russia, to prevent cross-border migration but also to stifle anti-Putin demonstrations (Fromm, 2016). The Hungarian Guard, banned recently, was set up to protect the population against 'Roma crime', the Roma being defined here as a criminal tribe (Damodaran, 2014). László Toroczkai, Mayor of Ásotthalom and vice-president of Jobbik, recently sent out a message via YouTube and social media channels to potential migrants that they should avoid Hungary as a transit country. He proudly

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declared that he had set up his own border militia who, he says, has captured more illegal immigrants than the state police (Gauriat, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> Including, for example, Swedish neo-Nazi John Ausonius who attacked eleven migrants and killed one in 1991/92; neo-Nazi Kay Diesner's attempted murder against book dealer Baltruschat who had his shop in the party locals of the PDS in Berlin and against policemen Grage during his flight in 1997; David Copeland, former member of the British National Party and then of the National Socialist Movement who attacked in a series of actions migrants, Blacks and homosexuals in London in 1999; and Anders Breivik who killed 77 participants of the Norwegian youth organization of the social democratic workers party in 2011.

<sup>28</sup> For example, in October 2015, a candidate for the election of the mayor of Cologne, Henriette Reker, was stabbed down in the street by a right-wing extremist, Frank S., nearby a voting stall of the CDU (Christian Democratic Union, the governing conservative party). She was head of the Department of Social Affairs and Refugees of the city of Cologne. Frank S. claimed that he had to do that to 'protect you all', since the German political establishment was flooding the country with refugees (Pfahl-Traughber, 2015). Reker, who was seriously injured, recovered from the attack and was elected mayor. In the past, the perpetrator used to sympathize with the right-wing extremist Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (FAP), banned by the Ministry of the Interior in 1995 (Stinauer, 2015). Apparently, he had been unemployed for some years and lived on social aid (Hartz IV). Strangely, his Hartz-IV file was declared a secret matter after his arrest, which raised doubts about potential contacts with the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (Wiermer, Meyer and Giesecke, 2015). In June 2019, Walter Lübcke, Regierungspräsident in Nordhessen and CDU-politician, was murdered by a former NPD activist.

<sup>29</sup> This concerns, for instance, the all-male student organizations or fraternities ('Kameradschaften', see Köttig 2017: 229), the 'Gildenschaften' (Wölk, 2016: 100–01; Kellershohn, 2004), the identitarians (Blum, 2017: 327) or the far-right parties' youth organizations (Herkenhoff, 2016b: 205).

<sup>30</sup> Such an exaggerated vision of manhood based on the 'warrior' figure, reminiscent of the interwar years, combines characteristics such as 'heterosexuality, family breadwinner, intransigence [. . .], hardness, strength, willingness to make sacrifices, fearlessness, braveness and service to the people and the nation, to the point of self-sacrifice' (Köttig, 2017: 225–26, quoting Virchow, 2010); or again, 'hardness, power of decision, ability to act following the principles of command and obedience, self-denial and self-sacrifice, and fearlessness in battle as well as heroism' (Overdiek, 2014: 6).

<sup>31</sup> See Keim (2014) for a discussion of gender images in the Black disgrace campaign, a historical forerunner to current moral panics.

<sup>32</sup> In the French *La Manif pour tous* movement of 2013 against same-sex marriage, important fragments of the FN marched alongside conservative Catholics, who sought to hide their religious foundations in order to adapt to a largely secularist context (Stambolis-Ruhstorfer and Tricou, 2017; Dubsclaff, 2017). In Germany as well, anti-genderism has become a common theme around which a multiplicity of collective actors converges, including fractions of the (neo)conservative and of the far right (Villa, 2017: 99).

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, the interview of identitarian Martin Sellner with the blogger of 'Radical and feminine' (Sellner, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> On the NSU, see Köttig, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> In the interwar years, the economy was in crisis. The Great Depression and inflation exacerbated class conflict. In addition, reactions of old regime powers and possessing classes to labour and the left were over-exaggerated in the face of the threatening model of the Bolshevik revolution. At the political level, while the north-west of Europe had stabilized liberal democracies before 1914 so that it could mitigate shocks and crises, the centre, east and south were in a phase of rapid transitions. While installing liberal democracies, old regime powers remained powerful in the executive, leading to dual states with an authoritarian executive alongside liberal-democratic parliaments. The whole of Europe experienced a military crisis after the first total war, with massive demobilization and reintegration of soldiers into societies. The crisis was major in those countries that had experienced defeat and dislocation. Finally, Mann analyses a major ideological crisis all over Europe, with discourses on moral decadence, civil decay and overall corruption through liberalism, secularism and socialism threatening social chaos.

<sup>36</sup> The author of the map speaks of 'populism'. The definition he provides indicates he speaks about right-wing 'populism': 'How did Euronews decide what was a populist party? We used a classification developed by the University of Melbourne. It ranked parties on the extent to which they: opposed the political class, financial institutions, immigrants or ethnic minorities; depended on the personality of a leader; and violated liberal democratic norms' Harris (2018).



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<sup>37</sup> A still stronger statement would argue that the former autonomy of the individual has turned into authoritarian attitudes under the pressures of market logics at play since the 1980s: 'The profoundly authoritarian belief in the market is "an anonymous god who enslaves men" because it thinks that there is no alternative to itself' (zit. Horkheimer, Authority and the family). Horkheimer's interpretation turns out to be hugely productive in enabling us to understand the transformation of autonomy into authoritarianism. The absence of alternatives to the market compels the individual to internalize it. [. . .] The modern individual's naturally acquired autonomy is now tied to his market performance. The winners receive an autonomy dividend; the losers are disciplined and stigmatized. The modern individual is as dependent on institutions as he ever was, but he is now increasingly de-socialized. He is being changed from a citizen integrated in a more or less organized community with institutions of collective solidarity into a market citizen, a customer with rights. However, such disembodied markets produce permanent uncertainty and cause the erosion of many individuals' sense of agency — they no longer believe that they can master current situations, let alone the future' (Nachtwey 2017: 135). Appealing to the critical mind, this hypothesis would need empirical verification, however — just as most other arguments put forth in the consulted literature, it remains largely theoretical so far.

<sup>38</sup> See the country analyses provided by the following student portfolios: Baroni et al. (2018); Holiday et al. (2018); Al Hariri et al. (2017); Berci, Geniola, Page, and Pescara (2017).

<sup>39</sup> Take the FN as an example. Founded in 1972, the rise in unemployment in the wake of the 1979/1980 oil crisis was a first moment for reflection on its economic stance. In those years, the famous slogan '*Un million de chômeurs, c'est un million d'immigrés de trop! La France et les Français d'abord!*' aimed at appealing to the working class while remaining solidly anti-communist, transforming a complex economic issue into opposition to immigration. In this same early phase, the FN's economic policy could be characterized as largely neoliberal. Throughout the 1990s, the official 'Neither right nor left' positioning of the party corresponded to its mixed outlook in terms of economic policy and to the increasing adoption of redistributive, protectionist and interventionist economic principles. This has been further accentuated following the 2008 crisis (Ivaldi, 2015). In the attempt to broaden the FN's appeal, following 2008 the party's economic policy shifted further left, abandoning its original neoliberal programme and formulating an appeal to 'the forgotten' combined with an anti-globalization and anti-EU discourse. This further elaborated the far-right reinterpretation of the capital/labour division into one between elites and globalized cosmopolitans on the one hand and 'France from below' on the other. Considering the inconsistencies of its economic outlook over time and the relatively little importance accorded to economic issues over identity ones, the question is whether this leftward shift is about substance or just packaging (Ivaldi, 2015). In fact, the FN's ideologues seemed to be searching for a new 'winning formula' that would ensure them broad political support. According to students' assessment, 'if we look to the 2017 Presidential manifesto, [there is] a line drawn between the real economy and speculative finance. The rhetoric is not one of overcoming internal division, but fighting back invading foreign control of France. The introductory letter to the 2017 presidential manifesto says the election is a decision between the "globalist" choice and the "patriotic" choice. The goal of the patriotic choice being "la protection de notre identité nationale, notre indépendance, l'unité des Français, la justice sociale et la prospérité de tous". What is of primary importance is not so much transcending difference — though that is mentioned — but taking back control. Reclamation rather than transcendence seems to be the fundamental message' (Holiday et al. 2018, building on Ivaldi, 2015).

<sup>40</sup> This overlaps with Mudde's conclusion: 'Most conventional explanations of this trend emphasize the importance of two factors: globalization and the economic crises in Europe that resulted from the financial meltdown of 2008 and the subsequent Great Recession. But the current populist moment is part of a longer story and is rooted in the postindustrial revolution that led to fundamental changes in European societies in the 1960s' (2016: 26–27).

<sup>41</sup> During those years, deindustrialization and a steep decline in religious observance weakened the support enjoyed by established center-left and center-right parties, which had been largely dependent on working class and religious voters. In the quarter century that followed, a gradual realignment in European politics saw voters throw their support to old parties that had become virtually nonideological or to new parties defined by relatively narrow ideological stances' (Mudde, 2016: 26–27).

<sup>42</sup> It looks like '[a]ll professional politicians together constituted the field of politics and the professional politician's reference system was other professional politicians. In the eyes of the public, they increasingly formed a separate sphere whose members competed for small advantages but who were bound together in a close complicity. Even worse, it looked to ordinary people as if members of the political establishment were striving to accommodate themselves to the new elite of the global economy' (Misik, 2017: 117–18).

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<sup>43</sup> To complement this, see also the overview of the debate on a legitimacy-crisis in Kriesi (2013).

<sup>44</sup> In France, for instance, the high vote share for the FN is among others a result of electoral abstention and demobilization of a left disillusioned by the Socialist Party (PS) and the Front de Gauche (Baier, 2016).

<sup>45</sup> We will see below that in Germany, for instance, the AfD could fill the void on the right the CDU/CSU opened up in the course of Merkel's development of the party. In the course of a gradual evolution, the centre right has given up on several fundamental conservative positions (regarding gender mainstreaming and same-sex marriage, for example). Since the last federal elections in 2017, CDU/CSU Minister of the Interior and Heimat Seehofer tried to gain back the votes lost to the AfD with radical right rhetoric, a strategy that has not succeeded so far.

<sup>46</sup> 'The leaders hate democracy because it is an obstacle to their monomaniacal pursuit of power. The followers are victims of democracy fatigue who see electoral politics as the best way to exit democracy itself. [...] This common cultural ground inevitably hides the deep contradictions between the neoliberal economic policies and well-documented crony capitalism of most of these authoritarian leaders and the genuine economic suffering and anxiety of the bulk of their mass followings' (Appadurai, 2017: 8).

<sup>47</sup> This is the critical point about Pegida taking up the call '*Wir sind das Volk!*' (We are the people!), a legacy from the broad opposition movement in the final phase of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Whereas those opposing the authoritarianism of the former GDR framed 'the people' in terms of inclusive solidarity, the current far right turns the same wording into its opposite, into a call for exclusive solidarity.

<sup>48</sup> On the inherent potential of democracies to reveal their 'dark side' in terms of exclusivist definitions of 'the people', see Mann (2004). See also the section 'The State as the Bearer of True Democracy' above on this tradition within the German *völkisch* right. This seems to be in contradiction with Collovald's critique of the term 'populism' to designate the FN as I outlined it above, i.e., the problematic political consequences of rejecting representative claims in favour of 'the people' (meaning here: 'the popular classes') as opposed to favouring supposedly neutral experts as true guarantors of democracy. A thorough engagement with democracy theory would be necessary to settle this point. The difference between Mann and Collovald, however, is that Mann starts out from the ideologues and their ideological formulation of 'ideal democracy', claiming to embody the destiny and will of a pure, unified people, as opposed to Collovald, who starts out from the popular (in the sense of ordinary or lay) followers and supporters as supposed and feared adherents to 'populist' programmes.

<sup>49</sup> This is not a political crisis in the sense of Mann. My assessment largely coincides with evaluations in the consulted literature, like the following assessment of political crisis today as compared with the 1920-30s: 'But the more important difference between today's right-wing extremists and yesterday's fascists is the larger context. As great as contemporary problems are, and as angry as many citizens may be, the West is simply not facing anything approaching the upheaval of the interwar period. "The mere existence of privations is not enough to cause an insurrection; if it were, the masses would be always in revolt", Leon Trotsky once wrote, and the same logic applies to the appearance of fascism. In the United States and Western Europe, at least, democracy and democratic norms have deep roots, and contemporary governments have proved nowhere near as inept as their predecessors in the 1920s and 1930s. Moreover, democratic procedures and institutions, welfare states, political parties, and robust civil societies continue to provide citizens with myriad ways of voicing their concerns, influencing political outcomes, and getting their needs met' (Berman, 2016: 43).

<sup>50</sup> Germany has never actually practiced the broadly proclaimed 'welcome culture' at the juridical level; even in comparison with other European countries the number of newly arriving refugees in Germany has been highest. In 2016, Germany registered more demands for asylum than all other EU countries put together. In relation to the number of inhabitants, Germany was also in first place, with 8 demands for asylum per 1,000 inhabitants. Although this was higher than in any other EU country, 8 in 1,000 just for demands appears still a rather marginal figure. Furthermore, in Germany, about 3,21,000 refugees were registered in 2016, much less than in 2015. But even for 2015, the initial figure of 1.1 million had to be corrected; we ended up with 8,90,000. In 2016, 65 per cent of them came from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Eritrea, i.e., from countries at war or with massive political persecution. This was recognized in three quarters of cases. The ministry in charge of refugees granted some form of protection, thus recognizing legitimate reasons for asylum. However, the protection levels kept decreasing considerably, often granting only the most basic protection, i.e., non-expulsion, but no right to full-fledged political asylum. This indicated that the decision practice regarding asylum had grown more repressive in 2016 compared with prior years (ProAsyl, n.d.).

<sup>51</sup> In 2015, 60 per cent of FN voters wanted the re-establishment of death penalty, compared to 28 per cent of the voters of the right and 11 per cent of the voters of the left (Mayer, 2017: 70).

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<sup>52</sup> See, for instance, the synthesis in Collovald, 2004; see also Girard, 2017a.

<sup>53</sup> As has been the case across Europe: ‘Surprisingly for many people, the recent successes of right-wing radical parties across Europe have put the working class back into the locus of wide-ranging analyses. The same working class that many political scientists until recently thought had exhausted its role is now being held responsible for the rise of the radical right. [ . . . ] Indeed there is much evidence that rightwing radical parties have made significant advances among the traditionally social democratic working-class electorate. However, these findings remain one-sided as long as the published investigations do not also reflect the vote shares in other segments of the electorate’ Baier (2016: 49).

<sup>54</sup> The class cleavage is here operationalized along broad occupational categories: Small business = shopkeepers, little commercial operations, artisans, farmers; workers = blue collar factory, service workers; lower middle = sales clerks, office employees; Middle middle = teachers, bureau chiefs, technicians, social workers, middle-level managers; upper middle = liberal professions, top executives (Lewis-Beck and Mitchell 1993: 115).

<sup>55</sup> While the middle class had predominantly voted for Mitterrand and farmers for Chirac, about 31 per cent of small businesspeople voted for Le Pen. They were about twice as likely to vote extreme right than workers, for instance, a share greater than that of any other occupational category. This strengthened the hypothesis that it was the petty bourgeoisie, i.e., the group that largely constituted the Poujadist movement of the 1950s, that was especially attracted by the far right. Hence, ‘[t]here appears to be a kernel of truth in the notion that Le Pen, heir to Poujade, finds his natural constituency among the shopkeepers’ (Lewis-Beck & Mitchell, 1993: 117). Why this particular constituency is considered to be ‘natural’ is not clear here. The interpretation that followed was one in terms of politics of resentment, to which the petty bourgeoisie was thought to be particularly vulnerable in the face of government and tax pressures, the emergence of chain stores, alleged attacks on private property that were supposed to threaten their middle-class status.

<sup>56</sup> For a critical account on this, see the insightful film by Richard, 2012, also confirmed in Lafont, 2001.

<sup>57</sup> About 42 per cent of the respondents were economically worse off than their parents, 12 per cent were in a similar situation and 46 per cent were in a better situation than their parents. This did not translate into FN votes, since 42 per cent of those who were worse off intended to vote for Le Pen, against 47 per cent of those who were in a similar situation and 38 per cent of those who had risen above the socio-economic level of their parents’ household (Rouban 2017).

<sup>58</sup> 56 per cent of those who estimated that their situation had deteriorated in comparison with that of their parents when they were the same age had decided to vote Le Pen, against 39 per cent of those who believed their situation was similar and 31 per cent of those who believed their situation was better. It was therefore in particular the pessimists who believed without objective justification that their situation had worsened who had the highest propensity to vote for Le Pen. It was thus again the perception of a given situation more than its reality that counted in order to understand the FN vote (Rouban 2017).

<sup>59</sup> The following is also interesting to note: ‘The 52 per cent vote for Brexit was not driven only by white workers; 27 per cent of black people and 33 per cent of Asians voted Leave according to one exit poll. But the strongest Leave votes took place in small-town Britain, where the residue of working-class culture had now turned into an “identity” whose main characteristic was defiance: not just of globalization but of the liberal, transnational, human-rights-based culture that it had fostered’ Mason (2017: 96).

<sup>60</sup> ‘Traditional milieus have the feeling that the members of urban, cosmopolitan groups look down on them and their lifestyles. [ . . . ] People from cultural milieus that they could think of as conventional – and therefore hegemonic – only a couple of years ago [ . . . ] now suddenly have the feeling that they are no longer respected. And again, they are not entirely mistaken. No one has given such a blunt, unsparing account of these processes as Didier Eribon in *Returning to Reims*’ (Misik, 2017: 121).

<sup>61</sup> Fieldwork was conducted in 2003 and 2012 (Girard, 2017a).

<sup>62</sup> Leading to statements such as the following: “‘In any case, all they have to do is make a mess, burn some cars, and you’ll see the left saying: poor things, it’s not their fault, we need to help them...’” (Pudal, 2011: 82).

<sup>63</sup> The quick answer to the lived experience in the fire brigades would be to take their common talk for expressions of the ethnocentrism and authoritarianism that electoral analyses impute to FN voters. It needed long-term immersion within their workplace culture to understand the subtleties of the humour and cynicism acquired through years of work in the face of accidents, violence, suffering and burning. For example, while showering in the barracks, Pudal confirmed to a colleague that until then the night had been calm but that this could still change. “‘And why is that? he said. I don’t know, but Algeria is playing tonight [in the football World Cup].” “Oh

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shit, well yeah, it's over! Either they win and get wasted (wasn't there something in the Qur'an about alcohol? Yeah, well that, there's always a way to get around it, ha!), or they lose, and people get hurt... either way, they're bound to make a mess! At the end of the day, I'd rather deal with injuries than see Algeria win! (*À tout prendre je préfère les blessés, ça fait toujours ça de moins!* [meaning literally I prefer to deal with injured people, so you have something less to deal with].)" Since it was obvious in the interaction that Pudal disapproved such comments, which encouraged someone else to mock him as a sociologist, the conclusion drawn by his conversation partner in the shower was: "In any case what I was saying has nothing to do with the fact that my wife is a cop and my kid is the only white kid in his class... no really, nothing at all!" Instead of taking this for expressions of blunt racism, Pudal tries to understand what is meant in saying such things: 'What I've written thus far allows, I hope, to reflect the complexity of possible interpretations and offer possible answers: social intermediacy, a desire for social mobility, anxiety about the future, a commitment to public service despite recurrent humiliation, confrontations with urban violence, the underrepresentation of immigrants in the firefighting corps: all of these elements play a role in the development of this kind of political attitude' (Pudal, 2011: 89–90).

<sup>64</sup> 'This dimension of the political discourse of firefighters must be highlighted for two important reasons: on one hand, because mastery of language and rhetoric is undoubtedly the prerogative of the wealthy social classes. Although there may be some admiration for this rhetorical prowess, firefighters are primarily convinced that this skill is used maliciously in the service of a continuous lie, a sort of cheating. Consequently, they award a great deal of credit to other forms of verbal virtuosity like puns, jokes, teasing, etc. It's not the baseness or the unacceptability of the language which is the most important thing, but rather the pride of belonging to a group that speaks frankly and 'tells it like it is'. We can also observe in this a reversal of stigmatism' (Pudal, 2011: 91–92).

<sup>65</sup> In October 2018, despite Seehofer's determined strategy to win back voters on the right of the CSU, after decades of single rule, this regional party lost the absolute majority in the Bavarian regional parliament. The AfD instead (but most of all the Green Party) gained immensely in support.

<sup>66</sup> A 2010 'Manifesto against the Leftist Trend' within the party had already criticized 'leftist' social policies in the domains of gender mainstreaming and establishment of quota for women in business, the recognition of same-sex civil unions, abortion rights and the party's official stance towards multiculturalism, the 'threat of Islamisation' and a possible accession of Turkey to the EU.

<sup>67</sup> By the way, *Alternativlosigkeit*, the fact that there is no alternative, was voted *Unwort* (un-word) of German language later.

<sup>68</sup> Quoting Sydney Gennies, 'Eine Zwischenstation für die AfD. Hans-Olaf Henkels erster Tag im Europaparlament', *Der Tagesspiegel Online*, 7.7.2014.

<sup>69</sup> Having said that, in the early phase there were huge divergences between the electoral programme for the European elections and those of the regional parliamentary elections in several eastern regions: 'The contrast between classical right-wing populist rhetoric and the European electoral programme of the AfD could not be greater. While right-wing populism conjures mythical images of unspoiled "Heimat", the AfD carries a demanding arsenal of macro-economic and economic-political scholarly terms that are completely alien to everyday common sense' Werner (2015, 74 ff.). Not least, the topic of Islam was absent from the European programme. The regional platforms for the elections in Sachsen, Thüringen and Brandenburg, in turn were much more oriented towards a refusal of Islam and 'gender ideology'.

<sup>70</sup> Sarrazin continued to provoke with two further publications on the Euro crisis in 2012 and on political correctness in 2014. 'Insofar, he could be considered a sort of spiritus rector of the AfD and one wonders why he has not shifted from the SPD to the right-wing populists long ago' (Decker 2016: 15). In the first volume that sparked massive debate in Germany, Sarrazin puts forth claims such as: the headscarf is getting more and more popular among young Muslim women; the refusal of many Muslim girls to take part in swimming lessons at school is a sign of refusal to integration; compartmentalization of German society keeps increasing with the formation of 'parallel societies'; many immigrants refuse to learn the German language and they themselves as well as their children fail in the education system; 20 per cent of all violent criminal acts in Berlin are carried out by Turkish or Arabic youth. In the meantime, a systematic study has empirically refuted those polemic statements (Foroutan 2011).

<sup>71</sup> The party's founders in 2013 were Alexander Gauland, Bernd Lucke, Konrad Adam and Gerd Robanus (all previously CDU). Frauke Petry was already one of three of the party's spokespersons. Bernd Lucke, professor of economics at Hamburg University, and the early leader of the party – coining its initial image as a 'professorial party' until he left the AfD in 2015 – had left the CDU in the context of the Euro crisis. Clearly, 'Lucke had nothing in

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common with the deep hatred preached by the NPD. But he sees that a gap is opening up between the blatant right-wing extremism of the NPD and the new, totally modernized CDU of Merkel' (Werner 2015: 54). Alexander Gauland, who had been member of the CDU for forty years, had participated in the Berlin Circle (Berliner Kreis), a group of right-wing members of the CDU in fundamental tension with A. Merkel. The liberal FDP could not capitalize on its oppositional role in the coalition in order to develop an attractive party profile. Among others it failed in obtaining tax reductions. Importantly, 'Eurosceptics' in its ranks were outnumbered when the party's membership basis voted for a support to government's rescue policy at the moment of the Euro crisis.

<sup>72</sup> Pegida is short for *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*, i.e. Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident.

<sup>73</sup> Ironically, the experience leading to the perceived threat of Islamization and religious wars being imported to Germany was caused by a pro-Kurdish demonstration against the Islamic State.

<sup>74</sup> Pegida surfaced in Dresden in October 2014, just two months after the AfD was elected into the regional parliament. The AfD maintained a contradictory relationship with the movement. While Lucke and his followers distanced themselves from Pegida as being xenophobic, the Eastern party leaders opted for taking Pegida seriously (Oppelland, 2017). Gauland considered Pegida 'natural allies', Petry presented herself as a consultant to Pegida. Björn Höcke, party leader of Thüringen, in turn, in an interview with New-Right intellectual Götz Kubitschek (see below), found that 'A state can be happy to have such citizens' (Kellershohn 2016: 191).

<sup>75</sup> Because it was a movement with little formal organization and developing over a short time period only, there is not much data on its constituencies (for the following, see the summary of various studies in Dostal 2015: 527–28). A first study found out that Pegida supporters in the streets were typically well-educated, employed middle-class people with an average income slightly above the average of Saxony. Later studies confirmed the above-average educational level, mainly in technical fields. The average age was 48, the movement was clearly dominated by men. Participants often neither belonged to a political party nor to a religious community. They usually located themselves to the centre right but not the far right of the political spectrum. They participated in elections more than the average population, many confirmed they had voted AfD in the last elections, less though NPD. A subsequent study further clarified the political ties: a majority of two-thirds of Pegida supporters could count as moderate rightists; one-third, predominantly the younger and economically less well-off supporters, as extreme right. The AfD enjoyed most support within Pegida, followed by CDU and NPD. A small fraction had voted for Die Linke, whereas voters of the SPD and the Green Party were not represented. 'Crucially, more than three quarters were disaffected from democracy as practised in the Federal Republic of Germany, and more than 90 per cent felt that they were not served by existing parties and politicians [ . . . ] One must conclude, therefore, that most Pegida supporters are not political outsiders but have some connections with the centre ground. However, they are very dissatisfied with the centre-right parties, namely the Merkel-led CDU' (Dostal 2015: 527–28). Not only did many Pegida supporters confirm they voted AfD, a high percentage of AfD voters also supported Pegida's demands, especially with regard to Islam (Korsch 2016a: 113).

<sup>76</sup> Beatrix von Storch caused public outrage when she declared that in the face of the influx of refugees, border authorities might use their weapons and shoot down migrants. She later even insisted that she included women and children as targets in this call for violence. A strange position for someone who was otherwise active in movements for the right to life and against abortion. The party leader of Thüringen, Björn Höcke, initiated the 'Erfurt resolution', initially signed by himself, André Poggenburg and Alexander Gauland, i.e., the regional leaders in the eastern regions of Thüringen, Sachsen-Anhalt and Brandenburg, in order to discredit Lucke's group (Korsch 2016a: 124). Faced with the decisive rightward shift in his party, Lucke left and many of his followers with him. Five of seven AfD members of the European parliament left the party (Oppelland 2017).

<sup>77</sup> 'The right mobilizes a "national revolt" against immigration and asylum, interculturality and religious diversity. At the same time, populist and extreme right actors find an opportunity for racist mobilization. This mobilisation is the expression and propagandist connecting point of a cultural struggle of the right (rechter Kulturkampf) with the aim of a reactionary-authoritarian transformation of society' (Häusler and Virchow 2016: 7).

<sup>78</sup> The graph also provides some hints at the funding for the party, provided among others by the Verein zur Erhaltung der Rechtsstaatlichkeit und bürgerlichen Freiheiten that provided several million Euro for the AfD's election campaign in 2017. This association was founded in 2016 in a meeting led by Rolf Schlierer, who had led the Republikaner at federal level for 20 years. Much of the association's background remains mysterious. Sarrazin acted as a speaker in 2017, Gauland was present at a meeting in May 2018 (Baroni et al., 2018). I do not dispose of sufficient elements to analyse the funding structure more systematically.

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<sup>79</sup> 'By recruiting amongst fraternities and members of the New-Right "identitarians", the youth organization brings a body of thought into the party that is known from the Republikaner, DVU and partly the NPD' (Werner 2015: 56).

<sup>80</sup> I have dealt with parts of those currents in my contribution to Volume I (Keim, 2014).

<sup>81</sup> Elsässer had been active for the Maoist Kommunistischer Bund but turned into a 'fervent nationalist' in the course of the war in Serbia. 'Elsässer has remained the revolutionary of the time. He just exchanged his revolutionary subject. The nation has taken the place of the proletariat. And Germany was declared the proletarian nation. It is the old turning point that the Israeli historian Zeev Sternhell has described as the ideological hour of birth of fascism. Through this turn, Elsässer has achieved what he most ardently desires: attention and an increase of his print run' (Wölk 2016: 103).

<sup>82</sup> The latter has published in *Junge Freiheit* for many years, co-founded and co-directed (until 2014) with Kubitschek the Institut für Staatspolitik and was editor of *Sezession* for some years.

<sup>83</sup> 'It is obvious that with the electoral successes of the AfD and the Pegida-protests, new opportunities for articulation of a cultural struggle on the right have emerged; apart from the topics Euro, immigration, Islam and national identity politics, they also feed into public discourse questions of family- and gender-politics' (Häusler (2016c: 1; see also Korsch 2016b: 146)).

<sup>84</sup> Decker rightly states that this could also be a risk in the long term, since all former attempts to establish a party right of the CDU/CSU (NPD, Republikaner, Bund Freier Bürger, Schill-Partei) have failed in the long run, a historical lesson that Lucke and his followers had understood Decker (2016: 19–20). In turn, the AfD certainly was an option for voters of formerly existing right-wing parties Häusler (2016c: 1–2).

<sup>85</sup> This is particularly true in eastern Germany. In the 2014 regional elections in Thüringen, for example, more former voters from the leftist parties (Die Linke, SPD and Green Party) voted for the AfD than from the CDU and FDP. In Brandenburg, it was Die Linke who lost most voters to the AfD, indicating an overall rightwards shift within the country's electorate (Decker, 2016: 21). In the Eastern regions, the fact that overall electoral loyalty to given parties has been less stable than in Western Germany also seems to have been in favour of far-right parties. The electorate of the AfD also needs to be analysed in conjunction with the NPD vote, especially in Saxony, the former NPD stronghold. In 2014, the NPD did not enter the regional parliament; with 4,95 per cent of votes (81,051) it had not reached the 5 per cent threshold. In the same elections, the AfD received 9.4 per cent of the votes. They were in clear competition for voters: the NPD lost 13,000 votes to the AfD and 10,000 of its former voters abstained. Nevertheless, together they gathered nearly 15 per cent. The analysis of those votes remains a regional specialty since Saxony had been the traditional stronghold of the NPD (Pfahl-Traughber, 2016). It is interesting, however, as it shows that in the region, NPD and AfD electorates largely converged with regard to their overall characteristics: both parties were strong amongst young voters, and in both men were much more represented than women. In the NPD, voters with high levels of formal education were under-represented, whereas voters with medium or low formal education were over-represented. This was different within the AfD, where those with medium-level education were strongest and those with high and low levels weaker. The NPD gathered a high percentage of votes among unemployed (11 per cent, i.e., double as many as in the overall voting population). In the AfD the unemployed were slightly stronger represented than in the average. Workers were strongly represented in both parties, less so retired people. The regional strongholds largely overlapped: 'At the level of their party programs, one cannot equate both parties; there are better reasons to do so regarding their electoral basis. If one takes into consideration the recent rightwards shift of the AfD, this party will probably increasingly mobilize the electorate of the NPD' (Pfahl-Traughber, 2016). Faced with the threat of prohibition and internal scandals, NPD voters certainly were attracted towards the AfD as a viable alternative (Häusler 2016a: 47–48).

<sup>86</sup> Apart from this methodological concern, this assessment sounds like a reiteration of Mann's analysis of one of the core constituencies of historical fascism, namely those from economic sectors removed from the frontlines of class conflict, attracted by fascism's promise of transcendence (Mann 2004). However, since class struggle has largely disappeared from the current political landscape and transcendence has not been identified as a major feature of the current far right, this parallel appears as merely nominal and the specific motivation of those determined population segments remains unintelligible.

<sup>87</sup> As in France, it was easier to characterize the AfD electorate through opinion polls and studies of attitudes. If the AfD did not appeal neither to any single particular population group in terms of former political affiliation nor to any particular socio-economic group, studies of political orientations and attitudes confirmed more clearly what kinds of people were attracted by it, assuming that the cleavages amongst voters were less material but idealistic. In the 2013 federal elections, it was already evident that a critical stance towards immigration was a strong motive

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for the AfD vote, more than the party's anti-EU stance. Other studies revealed that dissatisfaction with the existing democracy nourished many AfD votes. Half of voters agreed that 'Germany needs a strong leadership personality that can quickly decide everything' (Decker 2016: 18–19, quoting Berbuir/Lewandowsky/Siri, 2015, 168 f.). Although many party leaders had tried to keep a distance towards the Pegida movement, 76 per cent of voters sympathized with the protests, against 22 per cent in the average population (Decker, 2016: 18–19).

<sup>88</sup> Indeed, according to recent statistical research on the far-right vote across Europe, even items like 'fear of crime' appear to be a code word for 'fear of multiculturalism' (Jackson and Doerschler, 2018).