

Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.)

Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe

Contents

Foreword	7
<i>Johannes Meier</i>	
Introduction: European Challenges Call for European Responses	9
<i>Ulrich Kober</i>	
The Radical Right in Europe: Challenges for Comparative Research	13
<i>Michael Minkenberg</i>	
Country Report Austria	29
<i>Anton Pelinka</i>	
Country Report Belgium	59
<i>Mark Swyngedouw</i>	
Country Report Denmark	81
<i>Susi Meret</i>	
Country Report France	127
<i>Jean-Yves Camus</i>	
Country Report Germany	179
<i>Britta Schellenberg</i>	
Country Report Great Britain	249
<i>Christopher T. Husbands</i>	
Country Report Hungary	285
<i>József Bayer</i>	
Country Report Italy	327
<i>Juliane Wetzel</i>	
Country Report The Netherlands	375
<i>Jaap van Donselaar, Willem Wagenaar</i>	
Country Report Sweden	425
<i>Heléne Lööw</i>	

Country Report Switzerland	463
<i>Damir Skenderovic, Vera Sperisen</i>	
Dispersion and Differentiation: The Structures and Trends of the Radical Right in Europe	531
<i>Britta Schellenberg</i>	
Strategies against the Radical Right in Europe	547
<i>Orkan Kösemen</i>	
Appendix: Abbreviations/Translations	559
The Authors	565

Foreword

Johannes Meier

The Canadian city of Toronto has a striking motto: “Diversity Is Our Strength.” This attitude is indicative of the way communities with a long history of immigration view diversity. Yet the motto is anything but common; in fact, it is remarkable. Due to the rapid changes that have accompanied large movements of people across borders in our lifetime, many countries with substantial levels of immigration are experiencing significant social tensions. Integration is not easy or automatic; it is a gradual process that requires financial and social investments, which tend to produce long-term returns that are not immediately tangible. In his essay “E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the 21st Century,” American social scientist Robert D. Putnam presents important research showing how large-scale increases in diversity within communities can initially have a negative impact on social cohesion. According to Putnam, when large numbers of people enter a community to settle within it, a new sense of community has to be generated in order for that immigration to have a positive long-term impact upon the society. A new social climate has to be established in which newcomers are not seen as a social threat and are, instead, given a fair chance to become full members of the society they have joined. Achieving a new climate is arduous—even for countries that have promoted the social inclusion of newcomers over a relatively long period.

Europe has a long history of emigration to the New World and other parts of the globe, and it was only in recent decades that it became a continent of integration. The accompanying transformation in the collective consciousness of Europeans has not yet fully taken hold across the old Continent. On the contrary, in many parts of Europe, a backlash has been seen against globalization, social change and, especially, immigration. In many European countries, social forces have emerged that seek to mobilize the population to oppose immigration and the kind of profound social changes it entails. This sentiment is often exploited by far-right populists who are hostile to diversity and promote the myth of a homogeneous society as the only possible basis for social harmony and cohesion. Far-right populist political movements propagate this myth, as do right-wing extremists and the radical right. Under the cloak of right-wing populist movements, anti-Semitism, racism and fascism are re-emerging and growing stronger to the point that they pose a real threat to pluralistic democracies in Europe.

Europe must address and oppose the threat of right-wing extremism. If it does

not, issues such as diversity and immigration will polarize European societies and will, indeed, weaken their social cohesion. The Bertelsmann Stiftung wants to make a contribution to combating right-wing extremism in Europe. It has been working to oppose right-wing extremism since the beginning of the 1990s, when it initiated a number of projects promoting democracy, tolerance and solidarity. The Foundation's activities were a response to increased rates of violence against foreigners in Germany following the country's reunification. The Foundation implemented so-called "Betzavta" training programs, which originated in Israel, were modified in the United States and have been further developed by trainers for use in schools and as part of extracurricular activities. These programs have proven very effective at promoting tolerance and improving social cohesion among participants, who further disseminate their learning within their communities. Additionally, the Foundation's project entitled "Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Germany" explored the role of the media, schools and early-childhood care in mobilizing democratic societies against right-wing extremism. This project ended in 2006 and has been followed by the Foundation's current project, which is called "Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe." With this new project, we have broadened our focus beyond Germany to include the whole of Europe. The Foundation's current project addresses key questions, such as: What is the situation concerning right-wing extremism like in other European countries? What strategies can European governments learn from the policies of their neighbors to combat right-wing extremism? What strategies are particularly effective, and which of these may be transferable to the German context?

I would like to thank Ulrich Kober and Orkan Kösemen from the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Democracy and Integration Program, who worked closely with Britta Schellenberg from the Center for Applied Policy Research (affiliated with the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich) in producing this book. I would also like to thank all the authors for their high level of expertise and the important contribution that each of them has made.

"Diversity Is Our Strength"—European countries would be well-advised to learn from Toronto's understanding of social cohesion. In order to achieve this, European societies and policymakers must devise effective strategies for combating the threat the far right poses to democracy in pluralistic societies. If they are to succeed, these strategies must be courageous and resolute.

Introduction: European Challenges Call for European Responses

Ulrich Kober

In October 2008, a major public controversy erupted in the German city of Cologne over plans to build a large new mosque. In fact, the dispute grew so fierce that the arguments about it have reverberated throughout Europe. Plans by the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB), a mosque association, to build a highly visible new mosque on the site of an older one met with strong resistance from various quarters and sparked intense public debate. The issue became further inflamed when a German radical right-wing party called Pro Köln (Pro Cologne) sought to consolidate the scattered groups opposed to the building of the new mosque.

The result was the formation of an alliance, or front, that united several disparate groups with varying objections to the plans. Some groups argued that the building was too big and would not fit into the city's skyline, which is dominated by the Dom, the city's famous Gothic-style Roman Catholic cathedral. Others, including a prominent Jewish intellectual, opposed the plans for the mosque on grounds of principle, asserting that Islam was a religion of intolerance. Not surprisingly, Germany's established anti-immigrant groups also joined the Pro Köln front.

Pro Köln then used its representation on Cologne's city council to stir up the row into a Europe-wide controversy. It invited prominent far-right figures from all over Europe, including representatives from Belgium's Vlaams Belang, France's Front National and the Austrian Freedom Party to join in an anti-Islam demonstration in central Cologne. Counter-demonstrations were organized against the planned rally of the far-right groups, and the mayor of Cologne joined forces with the mainstream political parties, trade unions, churches and other organizations to block the gathering of rightists. Likewise, many of Cologne's taxi drivers showed their opposition to the far right's rally by refusing to drive demonstrators into the center of town, and anti-racist activists, including many young people, blocked the roads leading to the venue. Finally, the local police announced a ban on the right-wing rally to prevent violent clashes from breaking out between supporters of the opposing sides.

The story of Pro Köln's anti-mosque demonstration tells us a lot about the current situation of right-wing extremism in Europe and about how it can be successfully fought. It is a very complex and primarily nationalist phenomenon, yet it is a growing force across Europe. Radical right-wing movements are fuelled by broader

anxieties and the profound social change that has occurred in nearly all European countries. In recent decades, Europe has seen economic changes exacerbating social tensions, cultural changes shattering old norms and ideologies, demographic changes and increased immigration.

Scapegoat ideologies flourish in times of rapid change and social insecurity. Immigrants—particularly those with Muslim backgrounds—have frequently become targets of latent xenophobia in European societies. Likewise, right-wing extremists who champion myths of national homogeneity seek to take advantage of growing anxieties. They often unite with other right-wing populists on the radical right, and the resulting far-right movements have become a threat to all liberal European societies.

The growing self-confidence of various far-right groups at the European level is demonstrated by their efforts to join forces in the European Parliament. The first pan-European meeting of far-right political groups, which was initiated by the Austrian Freedom Party, took place in November 2005. Then, in January 2007, right-wing extremist parties in the European Parliament formed a faction called Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty. This new parliamentary group was made up of Belgium's Vlaams Belang, France's Front National, the Austrian Freedom Party, an independent MEP from Great Britain, Italy's Social Alternative party (led by Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of the fascist dictator), and the Tricolor Flame Social Movement. In addition, two parties from Eastern Europe—Bulgaria's National Union Attack and Romania's Greater Romania Party—became members of the faction.

However, less than a year later, in November 2007, this rightist alliance in the European Parliament was disbanded owing to ideological contradictions within its own ranks. The Italian neo-fascists insulted the Romanian members by calling Romanians congenitally criminal, which led the Romanian MEPs to quit the parliamentary group. However, with the next European election scheduled for June 2009, it is likely that the far-right will once again try to create a pan-European extreme right-wing faction in the European Parliament.

Some may argue that the danger right-wing extremism poses to European democracies is still negligible. However, if the radical right gains momentum as part of a backlash against the forces of modernization and globalization, Europe should not underestimate the continued threat it represents. Further modernization and globalization will certainly be an integral part of the future of the old Continent. As a result, it is necessary to carefully analyze and monitor the various far-right movements in Europe and within its member states. European societies and democracies must engage in a sustained dialogue on how to effectively combat right-wing extremism. As the European community becomes more unified, sharing knowledge about existing strategies for combating far-right radicalism is increasingly important. This volume can be a contribution to creating long-term dialogue for addressing the challenges of right-wing extremism.

The first part of this volume sets out a conceptual framework for understanding the current landscape of the political far right in Europe. Michael Minkenberg, one

of the leading comparative thinkers on this issue, proposes a broad concept of the radical right based on a modernization-theoretical argument according to which right-wing extremism is interpreted as a radical attempt to fight social change and modernization. As a political ideology, it is characterized by the myth of a homogenous nation as well as a romantic and populist ultranationalism that is directed against the concept of liberal, pluralistic democracy and its underlying principles of individualism and universalism.

The second part of this volume contains an analysis of right-wing extremism in 11 European countries. These countries were selected to provide the reader with a comparison of right-wing extremism in countries with diverse political systems and immigration policies. Austria, Germany and Switzerland are “consensus democracies” with many political checks and balances as well as restrictive immigration policies. Belgium and the Netherlands are in the same category of consensus democracies, but they pursue different immigration policies. In contrast, the study also examines Great Britain and France, both of which have majoritarian political systems. Still, these two countries differ markedly in their immigration policies: Whereas Great Britain’s are considered moderate, France’s are seen as open. Denmark, Italy and Sweden have “mixed democratic systems” in which the executive is restricted to a certain degree by political or institutional factors. Nevertheless, each of the three employs a different immigration policy. Denmark’s is considered restrictive, Italy’s moderate, and Sweden’s open. Altogether, this 11-country analysis provides the reader with diverse country cases in which both immigration regulations and the number of political actors influencing parliamentary decisions vary. Both factors have an impact on how right-wing extremism is addressed by mainstream politics and society.

The 11 country reports follow a single template, which facilitates a comparative study. The authors of each report analyze the radical right in terms of their history, actors, main traits, socio-political environment and perspectives. The reports focus on how the selected countries are combating right-wing radicalism at the national level. Thus, the evaluation of strategies to combat the radical right addresses, first, the legal order and law enforcement, second, the political actors and institutions, and, third, civil society. Each of these three sections contains a review of good practice and a strategic outlook. The third part of this volume summarizes its findings regarding policy trends and strategies for combating right-wing radicalism.

Although this volume examines how these strategies have worked at the national level, we hope that it might serve as a stimulus for designing strategies against right-wing extremism at the European level. The spread of extremist and xenophobic attitudes and the proliferation of radical right-wing political movements are challenges confronting all of Europe. The European Union must respond in a concerted way to right-wing extremism because European challenges call for European responses. It is not enough to merely protect minorities or fight xenophobia and racism. What is at stake here is democratic values across Europe and the vitality of its pluralist democracies.

The city of Cologne has shown that it understands the true nature of the challenge from the radical right by standing up to the far right in October 2008. Cologne has successfully responded to right-wing extremism. EU member states and the European community should do the same.