Right-Wing extremism in unified Germany

Unified Germany in Perspective
Outline

Background
  Theory
  Germany before 45/49

The first two waves of Right Wing extremism
  The Post-War years
  The Second Wave

The Third Wave
  Modern Right Wing Extremism
  Recent Developments
  Voters
  Violence

Class questions
What is ‘right’, what is extremism?

- Left-Right dominated by class conflict
- Second dimension: Authoritarian vs. libertarian
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  - Individual vs. collective
  - Collective decision making vs. ‘leader’
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- Extremism
  - Directed against liberal democracy
  - (Within democratic context)
  - Traditional right often pretty undemocratic, too
What about right-wing extremism before 1933?

- Largely cultural ‘völkisch’ (national) movement emerges in 1880s/90s
- Racist, social-darwinistic currents everywhere in Europe
- Anti-semitic parties emerge very late (during 1890s) and lack support
- First World War and its outcomes fuelled extreme right thinking
  - Rise of Fascism in Italy (‘Third Way’)
  - Rise of ‘National Socialism’ in Germany; DAP/NSDAP founded 1919/20
  - Similar and related tendencies in many European countries
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▶ But...  
  ▶ Fascists not concerned about race but culture, paternalistic attitude
  ▶ Generally, much lower level of political violence in Italy
  ▶ Nazis willing and able to use war and genocide as means for realising their ‘vision’
Who supported the Nazis?

- A fail in terms of mass support until 1930s
- Backed by heavy industry and conservatives
- Hitler a household name as (failed) revolutionary

- NSDAP polled 6.6/3 per cent in 1924, 2.6 in 1928
- but 18.3 in 1930, 37.4/33.1 in 1932
- (43.9 in 1933)
Who voted for the Nazis?

- Difficult to tell (aggregate data)
- Rise in votes not directly related to rise of unemployment
- All social groups more or less susceptible (including workers and middle-class)
- But Catholics least likely to support Nazis
- Nazis rather successful in rural, protestant areas
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- Allies and surviving German elites determined never to let it happen again
Nazi strongholds in 1930

Kreisunits with NSDAP percentage between 24.61 and 58.5

Diagram showing the distribution of Nazi strongholds in 1930 with percentages between 24.61 and 58.5 across various regions of Germany.
Which parties did exist?

- Licence
- Many small, sect-like groups
- Most important and successful: Sozialistische Reichspartei (SRP)
  - Founded by former members of DKP-DRP in October 49
  - All founders involved in National Socialism; rank within NSDAP/SS/Army criterion for appointments
  - Supported NS ideology, denied legitimacy of FRG
  - Up to 10,000 members (mostly in Lower Saxony)
  - Federal government takes legal action but electoral success in Lower Saxony (11 per cent) in May 1951, coalition talks, eight per cent in Bremen (October)
  - Moderate success (four percent) in Baden-Württemberg immediately before ban in October 1952
- Devastating effect, but yet single successes
Extreme Right voting 49-04
Where did the NPD come from?

- Founded as a merger of diverse forces right wing groups in 1964, broad appeal
- Former SRP members influential
- BTW 1965: 2 per cent; more than 5 per cent in Bavaria, Hessen, Bremen, Rheinland-Pfalz, Niedersachsen and Schleswig-Holstein (1966/67)
- Baden-Württemberg 1968: 9.8 per cent; thousands of party members, student associations
- Law, order, nation (‘Deutschland ist größer als die Bundesrepublik’); foreigners not yet a big issue
- Rural protestant areas, alienated workers
- But failure in BTW 1969
- Irrelevant through the 1970s and most of 1980s
Extreme Right voting 49-04
New kids on the block: REP

- NPD increasingly outdated
- ‘Republikaner’ founded in 1983 by CSU dissidents, 85 taken over by controversial Schönhuber (‘Ich war dabei’)
- Moved party to the right; coup in 1990; finally left the party in 1995
- Replaced by Schlierer – ‘modern conservatism’
The new kids on the block: REP II

- Schönhuber moved further to the right and finally ran for the NPD in 2005
- Party most successful during late 1980s/early 90s
- Seen as more moderate, but still linked to Nazi past
- At the moment, no delegations in Land parliaments (failed to field candidates)
- Still active at local level, probably approaching bankruptcy
The new kids on the block: DVU

- Frey made a fortune with war-time novels, brochures, video tapes & memorabilia
- Sold up to 44,000 copies/week of his weekly papers
- Only in it for the money?
- Founded DVU as a club in 1971 to distribute publications
- Became party in 1987, dominated by & dependent on Frey
- A ‘virtual’ or ‘phantom’ party with less than 10,000 members
- Over the years successful time and again if they ran
The new kids on the block: DVU II

- Official platform was only six pages, oath on democracy and constitution
- Articles in Frey’s newspapers are more revealing
- Protection for ‘honour of German soldiers’
- Welfare state for Germans; law & order, immigration issues
- Germans pictured as an endangered species, more aggressive and racist & more references to German past (compared to Republicans)
- Many racist ‘faux pas’ committed by party officials
- Merged with NPD after Frey’s death
What happened to the NPD?

- Party more aggressive since the early 1990s
- Udo Voigt took over in 1996: ‘Kampf um die Straße, die Parlamente, die Köpfe’
- Headquarters moved to East Germany, party forged links with neo-nazi and skinhead groups; increase in membership, youngsters
- Elements of ‘National Socialism’ & anti-globalisation
- After the ban-failure, NPD *electorally* successful for the first time since 1969
What happened to the NPD? II

- 9.2 per cent in Saxony, four per cent in Saarland (2004), 7.3 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (2006)
- Party strong and deeply rooted in some parts of East Germany (and Hessen)
- Strategic alliance with DVU (‘Deutschlandpakt’, 2005); REP activists joining NPD
- But failed in recent state elections and federal elections
- Massive financial problems, leadership crisis, new attempt to ban party
Who votes for the extreme right?

- Very clear social profile
  - Men
  - Workers and petty bourgeoisie
  - Low level of formal education

- Very clear attitudinal profile
  - Dissatisfaction and protest
  - Distrust
  - *plus* xenophobia, racism, welfare-chauvinism
  - Lack of traditional social ties (unions, churches)

- Content, integrated racists vote SPD or CDU/CSU

- Success apparently dependent on external factors (agenda, coalition format etc.)

- Will AfD benefit from NPD/REP decline?
How can we explain extreme right party success?

1. Macro-Factors:

2. Meso-Factors:

3. Micro-Factors:
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Right-wing violence

- Violence against asylum-seekers, “foreigners” during 1990s and early 2000s, with East German regions as hotspots
- Sometimes on a large scale, semi-organised
- But allegedly less of a problem in last decade
  - BfV, state offices for protection of constitution, police restructured after 9/11
  - Right-wing extremism confined to “propaganda crimes” and violence against left-wing extremists?
- “Informers”
  - *Not* secret service officers/employees
  - Active right-wingers who sell information (?)
  - Recruited by various branches of secret service/police
The “NSU”

- Roots in the 1990s, links to various right-wing/skinhead organisations, NPD, “informers”
- Various convictions, but managed to go off the radar (?) from late 1990s until 2011
- Probably responsible for killing at least 10 people + various other crimes
- Police and secret services did not pick up racist motive, missed several opportunities to arrest them
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- So . . .
  - Unknown right-wing terror group operative for a decade
  - Forces unwilling/unable to identify problem
  - At least some of their (known) supporters on payroll
Class questions

1. How can we explain extreme right voting in unified Germany?
2. Why are Extreme Right parties in Germany so weak (compared to France, Austria, Norway . . . )?
3. How is the Extreme Right in Germany different from
   3.1 The Extreme Right of the 1920s/30s
   3.2 The Extreme Right in other West European countries?