The Radical Right

Biopsychosocial Roots and International Variations

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Preface

A specter is haunting the world—the specter of the radical right. The surge of social and political phenomena like xenophobia, racism, authoritarianism, nationalism, right-wing populism, radicalism, extremism, and violence against asylum seekers, migrants and politicians in many countries makes citizens, journalists, scientists, and politicians concerned about the stability of democratic societies. Some authors even consider the possibility of the abolition of democracy as a result of democratic elections.

What happened in the last years? In Hungary, the right-wing populist party *Fidesz* of Viktor Orbán ruled from 1998 to 2002 and again since 2010. In Russia, nationalist propaganda played a role beyond the takeover of the Crimea in 2014. During his tenure, President Vladimir Putin has continued to use increasingly populist and nationalistic rhetoric. In Poland, after being part of a coalition government from 2005 to 2007, Jaroslaw Kaczyński's nationalist party *Law and Justice* has led the country since 2015. In 2016, the world—including political scientists—was surprised about the United Kingdom's nationalistic vote for Brexit and right-wing populist Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election, which was accompanied by a wave of racist and anti-Muslim rhetoric, hate, and violence. In Austria, the presidential candidate of the populist right *Freedom Party of Austria*, Norbert Hofer, won nearly half of the votes. Marine Le Pen's *National Front* (since 2018 *National Rally*) has attracted a large part of the French population. In the 2017 German

federal election the nationalist party *Alternative for Germany (AfD)* was the third largest party and the overall winner in parts of East Germany, where there were also movements like the anti-Islamist *PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident)* with aggressive gestures and slogans against parliamentarians and journalists. In 2017, too, a constitutional referendum in Turkey opened the way for an autocratic system under nationalist President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In 2018, the right-wing populist Italian party *Lega* formed a coalition government with the populist *Five Star Movement* in Italy. In 2019, Brazil's far-right president Jair Bolsonaro took office and several military officers were appointed to his cabinet. In the same year, a right-wing extremist in New Zealand killed 50 Muslim worshippers. This list could be expanded.

The shadow of the radical right haunting the world feels like *déjà vu*. There have been similar specters—from right wing populism to extremism—as parts of the history of many countries. To name but a few: the nineteenth and twentieth century saw battles of the North American right (Protestant groups, *Ku Klux Clan*, etc.) against racial, ethnic, and cultural pluralism as well as against political, economic, and cultural elites. In the twentieth century, Germany's *National Socialists* left blood, death, and devastation in many countries. Even after the Holocaust, racism and nationalism remained strong ideologies in large parts of the world. In recent decades, somewhat more moderate forms of the radical right have spread throughout both sides of the Atlantic—the populist right. In the twenty-first century, in particular, the terrorist attacks during and after 9/11, the financial and economic crises, and the flows of refugees and immigrants to western countries seem to have been crucial events that continue to shape the socio-political landscape on the right side of the political spectrum with radical right-wing parties and movements and influencing the whole political system.

There is a lot of media coverage of populist and radical right parties, movements, anti-Semitism, anti-Islamism, hate speech, and racially motivated crimes. Many scientists from history, political science, and sociology present empirical studies on these phenomena. However, the question remains—does this amount of research in different countries (e.g., in Western, Central, and Eastern Europe and the United States)

lead to converging theories and empirical results to explain these phenomena? Unfortunately, there are diverging results and contradictory theories. This shortcoming was one of the motives for writing this book.

Another motive was that there seem to be two rather separated types of research. On the one hand, research of academic disciplines like history, economy, sociology, and political science focus on historical, economic, social, and political manifestations of the radical right like political parties, movements, and ideologies. They are also interested in possible causes of these political phenomena like nationalist traditions, economic crises, immigration, or the failure of governments. On the other hand, psychologists, behavior scientists, brain researchers, and so forth study pre-political causes, conditions, catalysts, and triggers of radical right-wing phenomena like xenophobia, prejudices, and authoritarianism as well as their roots in personality development, socialization, and evolution. Would it not be helpful to integrate all these findings into more comprehensive explanations of political phenomena? Such *interdisciplinary (biopsychosociological) models* could also disclose strategic factors that could serve as starting points for preventive measures against xenophobia, racism, and violence to make prevention more effective. There is a need for such interdisciplinary, empirically based prevention programs given that most of the existing measures seem to be primarily inspired by folk psychology and an overly optimistic belief in political education and welfare programs—and they are not very effective.

Therefore, this book offers a summary of up-to-date international and interdisciplinary findings on the different forms of the radical right and their (pre)conditions, causes, catalysts, reinforcers, and triggers.

In hindsight, these ideas would make it appear as if I were planning a big publication. In fact, my initial aim was rather modest: when compiling literature lists for my university students I did not find articles summarizing the international *and* interdisciplinary state-of-the-art research on factors causing radical right phenomena and their psychological correlates, that is, combining findings from social sciences, psychology, and the natural sciences. Therefore, I intended to write a journal article. But, alas, I found more and more interesting results of research and I hoped that my effort to bridge the gap between different sciences could be of interest for more readers. As the radical right is found in many countries,

particularly in Europe and the United States, I was very glad to gain the support of experts on these countries. Actually, Britta Schellenberg with her profound knowledge of the European variations of the radical right gave me so much helpful information for the chapter on Europe and comments on other parts of the book that she should have been a co-author. I was also very glad to gain the support of Heather Painter with her first-hand knowledge of the United States. She contributed to the chapter on the United States and improved my English throughout the book.

During the endless process of writing, authors are isolated at their desk using a stack of books, papers, memos, a notebook, and the memory areas of their brains. However, I also received many suggestions: to explore the causes of political phenomena in a *vertical or interdisciplinary dimension*, that is on the different layers of the psyche and societies, in my research in recent decades I have been working with political scientists, historians, sociologists, statisticians, psychologists, educationalists, behavior scientists, brain researchers, and biologists in studies on xenophobic and right-wing extremist violent offenders and on the development of aggression and prejudice among children and adolescents. In addition, in a *horizontal or international dimension*, lots of ideas, questions, and criticism from conferences and discussions with scientists, politicians, ministry officials, police officers, representatives of NGOs, from university seminars, courses for kindergarten and school teachers, and social workers from Moscow to Washington, DC and from Stockholm to Brasília have left their mark on this text. I am deeply grateful to Lerke Gravenhorst, Uwe Haasen, Melanie Rhea Wahl, and the anonymous reviewers for helpful comments on draft versions of parts of this book. Last but not least, I want to thank Sharla Plant and Poppy Hull at Palgrave Macmillan for supporting this project and for helping me throughout the publishing stages from proposal to final publication.

Munich, Germany — Klaus Wahl
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Klaus Wahl sociologist, conducted many interdisciplinary (biopsychosociological) empirical studies on right-wing extremist offenders and the development of xenophobia, aggression, and morality in children and adolescents at the German Youth Institute (Munich), the Hanse Institute for Advanced Study (Delmenhorst), and the Psychosocial Analyses and Prevention – Information System (Munich). He was the head of the scientific department of the German Youth Institute (DJI), one of the country's largest social research institutes. In addition, he taught at the University of Munich and other universities in several countries. Among his most important books are *Aggression and Violence* (*Aggression und Gewalt*, 2013), *Skinheads, Neo-Nazis, Followers* (*Skinheads, Neonazis, Mitläufer*, ed. 2003), *Xenophobia(Fremdenfeindlichkeit* with Christiane Tramitz and Jörg Blumtritt 2001); *Critique of Sociological Reason* (*Kritik der soziologischen Vernunft,* 2000), and *The Modernization Trap* (*Die Modernisierungsfalle*, 1989).

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The Radical Right: More than a Topic of Political Science

1.1 An Interdisciplinary and International Approach: Daring the Impossible?

The surge of xenophobia, nationalism, racism, authoritarianism, right-wing populism, and extremism in many countries aroused the interest of social and political scientists. Even natural sciences' flagship journal *Nature* has expressed worry about the nationalist surge:

> Waves of nationalist sentiment are reshaping the politics of Western democracies in unexpected ways (…) Many economists see this political shift as a consequence of globalization and technological innovation over the past quarter of a century, which have eliminated many jobs in the West. And political scientists are tracing the influence of cultural tensions arising from immigration and from ethnic, racial and sexual diversity." The long-running World Values Survey shows that people are increasingly disaffected with their governments and more willing to support authoritarian leaders. While the Nazis took advantage of the aftermath of World War I and a global depression, today's populist movements are growing powerful in wealthy European countries with strong social programs. "What brings about a right-wing movement when there are no good reasons for it?" (Tollefson, 2016, p. 182)

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Some authors locate the dissatisfaction with the democratic system (Foa & Mounk, 2017) in the larger development of a global recession of democracies since 2006 and a deepening of authoritarianism (Diamond, 2015). Could it be that racist and authoritarian attitudes and political preferences for populist right-wing parties have reached a critical mass in quite a number of countries, a tipping point, whereby sufficiently large minorities can change political cultures (Centola, Becker, Brackbill, & Baronchelli, 2018)? Others criticize this pessimistic view (Levitsky & Way, 2015).

For a long time, political science, history, sociology, psychology, and even biological sciences have tried to find obvious conditions, not so obvious preconditions, and deeper causes of these right-wing manifestations with divergent research paradigms and unconnected findings, which have resulted in questionable proposals for prevention. Therefore, this book has several aims:

- *First*, in view of the terminological confusion in the field of political, public, and scientific discourse on phenomena of the radical right (populism, radicalism, extremism, racism, etc.) will try some terminological clarifications (Chap. 1).
- *Second*, in order to avoid simple theses such as "capitalism leads to fascism" or "Eastern Europe's authoritarian socialism resulted in right-wing radicalism" the book tries to integrate the current findings of the historical, social, psychological, and biological sciences to explore the complex and deep roots of radical right-wing phenomena in a systematic way. Usually handbooks include research results of various disciplines unconnected in separate chapters. In contrast, this book attempts to show some *connections* between political, historical, sociological, psychological, and biological factors and mechanisms. The empirical findings of this *vertical analysis* shall fill a *biopsychosociological model* of the radical right. In so doing, this review not only focuses on the usual suspects like economic, social, and political factors, but also on pre-political factors causing psychosocial syndromes (e.g., xenophobia, authoritarianism) and their evolutionary roots and mechanisms that make people susceptible to radical right ideologies. Some processes between the different factor levels are reciprocal; therefore,

no simple reductionist explanation of "higher" by "deeper" factors is sought. Such methodologically sophisticated studies on the development of right-wing radicalism *in individuals* and *in general* are usually carried out on limited populations in individual countries, cities, or universities. This approach is comparable to the "biopsychosocial model" in medicine (Needham et al., 2016), to evolutionary multi-level sociology (Bühl, 1982) and to the "depth-sociological" vertical integration of multi-level causes, mechanisms, and their interactions in social phenomena (Wahl, 2000). Of course, it is a long route from evolution and genes to political preferences or "the individual steps by which genetics connect to neurotransmitter systems which connect to cognitive and emotional processing tendencies which connect to values and personality traits which connect to orientations to bedrock principles which finally connect to preferences on specific political issues of the day" (Smith, Oxley, Hibbing, Alford, & Hibbing, 2011, p. 388). All these biotic and psychic processes are embedded in socio-economic and cultural environments (and their historical backgrounds), which function as triggers and catalysts of those processes. In addition, this review elucidates the radical right ideologies' attractiveness for different personalities in different socio-economic and cultural situations. A better knowledge of this psychosocial *"demand"* for security and well-being, on the one hand, and the *"supply"* of radical right-wing ideologies and politicians promising security and easy solutions, on the other hand, could also inspire more effective prevention programs (Chaps. 2, 3 and 4).

- *Third*, previous research was focused on political parties of the radical right. Social movements and the interaction between electoral politics and other forms of political mobilization (e.g., racist violence) have received relatively little attention (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). Therefore, this book offers an *international comparison* of various political phenomena of the radical right (political parties, movements, groups, voters, prejudices, violence) in a *horizontal perspective* with foci on Western, Central, and Eastern Europe and the United States, their different histories, probable causes, and current developments. Such international comparisons are based on political opinion polls, election results, studies on the history, political systems, and political

cultures of the countries, but they usually do not cover deeper individual psychological and biological factors (Chaps. 5, 6 and 7).
- *Fourth*, the book will confront empirical research findings with some of the "usual suspects" of the causes of the radical right, which are frequently discussed in public: are the main culprits only *"hard" factors* such as globalization with the consequences of low wages, unemployment, or economic inequality? How important are *"soft" factors* like emotions, views of life, and cultural change? To what extent do objective and subjective aspects affect political processes? In addition, there are some short glances to other parts of the world and to the differences between the radical right and the radical left. Finally, the book offers—along the various levels of our biopsychosociological model—a sketch of possible approaches to political and pedagogical measures for the *prevention* of xenophobia and right-wing ideologies (Chap. 8).

1.2 Problems of Definition: It's All Greek to Me

An initial question is if there is a common denominator or definition of phenomena named right-wing populism, right-wing radicalism, right-wing extremism, or the far right for the past and the present? The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche warned that social phenomena, their interpretations, and definitions are fluid in history, "only something which has no history can be defined" (Nietzsche, 2006, p. 53). Nevertheless, many attempts have been made to define radical right-wing and similar ideologies and social entities. The result is "conceptual confusion" in the "messy field" of studies on the European radical right (Arzheimer, 2019).

1.2.1 Right and Left

Historically, the political distinction between *left* and *right* began with the seating arrangements of the delegates in the National Assembly during the French Revolution. For Lipset, Lazarsfeld, Barton, and Linz (1962,

p. 1135) "*right-wing*" means supporting a traditional hierarchical social order and opposing change toward equality; "*left-wing*" means advocating social change in the direction of greater equality. However, later left-wing governments showed tolerance for inequality as well; many communist countries had hierarchies of privilege (Greenberg & Jonas, 2003).

There was a lot of debate over the extreme forms of *Fascism* and *National Socialism*, their common and their different features. For some authors, National Socialism is a special case of Fascism, others point to important differences like racism or the role of the state. To mention just two ideas characterizing the fascist ideology in the broader sense: "The first relates to the basic nature of the community. Fascism was primarily concerned with building, or reviving the nation (…) The second part relates more to socioeconomic policy (…) a 'Third Way,' neither left nor right, neither capitalist nor communist." Fascists "sought to achieve individual prosperity, but linked to communal goals" (Eatwell, 2003, p. 14).

As for contemporary history, there are difficulties when attempting to classify political positions on the traditional scales of right and left. In *Beyond Left and Right* Giddens (1994) noticed that present-day conservatism became radical and socialism became conservative. Conservatives embrace what they once repudiated: competitive capitalism and neoliberalism stimulating processes of dramatic and far-reaching change. Many conservatives are now active radicals against tradition, which they previously held most dear. Conservatism and neoliberalism are contradictory because, on the one hand, neoliberalism is hostile to tradition as a result of the promotion of market forces and an aggressive individualism. On the other hand, it depends upon the persistence of tradition for its legitimacy and its attachment to conservatism in the areas of the nation, religion, gender, and the family. Without having a proper theoretical rationale, its defense of tradition in these areas tends to take the form of fundamentalism as, for example, in the debate about "family values". In contrast, the left seeks mainly to conserve, trying to protect, for example, what remains of the welfare state (Giddens, 1994, pp. 2–9). Beyond the traditional western classification of the *political right* versus *the political left*, in some parts of the world other differences can be more important, for example religious versus secular political parties or ethnic versus all-encompassing parties.

1.2.2 Populism

Another widely discussed phenomenon or ideology is (right-wing and left-wing) *populism* (from Latin *populus*, people). At first view, populism as such seems to be the idea of the formal nucleus of democracy. It refers to the *people* or citizens of a state in terms of *demos*, a political unit, holding the political power (sovereignty), for example, as a result of a revolution of underprivileged classes longing for equal rights. From this point of view, the raise of political populism in the modern sense could indicate problems of established democratic systems, measured by the degree of "democracy" or political representation of the people's interests, with politicians and political parties alienated from the people.

However, when populism is restricted to an ideological, Manichean and moralizing construction of good and evil in terms of "*we, the people*" against a "*conspiring elite*", many authors described it as a specific way of seeing democracy that exalts the opinion of a romanticized common sense of the majority as a *volontè générale*. This ideology is particularly tempting as long as a populist party is not yet part of a government. Populism is opposed to the pluralism of opinions and treats dissent as suspect and dangerous. Whereas full ideologies like liberalism, socialism, and conservatism were characterized as systems of thought offering specific, practical policy solutions to a broad range of aspects of life, populism was described as a "thin-centered ideology" representing an approach to the political world that has only limited applicability and therefore can be associated with different specific (right, left, etc.) ideologies (Freeden, 1998; Hawkins, Riding, & Mudde, 2012; Mudde, 2004, pp. 543–544, 2015, p. 433).

When the ideology of "we, the people" is restricted to one's own ethnic group (*ethnos*) seen as a homogeneous entity ("*Volkskörper*") and defined by a shared (real or constructed) ancestry or cultural heritage, emphasizing the distance to a "corrupt elite" as well as superiority to other groups, minorities, or nations ("outsiders") and arousing resentment against them, it can be a threat to social and international peace. In this case, it is *right-wing populism*. Figure 1.1 shows the relations in a "populist triangle" based on a suggestion of Berbuir, Lewandowsky, and Siri (2015).

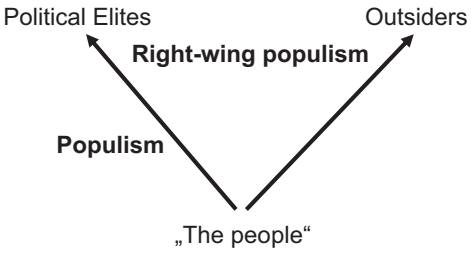

Fig. 1.1 The populist triangle (based on Berbuir et al., 2015)

Populist right-wing parties are a widespread and not overtly violent form of political organizations. They were found to be based on a combination of nativism (nationalism, "own people first", xenophobia), authoritarianism (belief in a strictly ordered society), and populism (antagonistic groups of "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite") combined with antipluralism, with examples including the *Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ)*, the *Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV)* in the Netherlands, and the *Northern League (Lega Nord, LN*, later abbreviated to *Lega)* in Italy (Mudde, 2011, p. 12; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017; Müller, 2016). There is a scientific controversy on the question of whether all such parties embrace market-liberal positions on economic distribution (Kitschelt, 2007). In any case, parties like the *Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP)* and the Austrian *FPÖ* show populism directed against the welfare state (von Beyme, 2015, p. 17).

1.2.3 Radicalism and Extremism

Today, a common element of radical right programs is to establish social inequality in the relations between in-group and out-groups as well as the economic and social exclusion of out-groups. The radical right dramatizes several threats against their nation's identity, first of all immigration, in particular, from Muslim countries (Rydgren, 2018, p. 2). These narratives identify "immigration as a threat to the prosperity, health and cultural integrity of their respective nations" (Hogan & Haltinner, 2015, p. 536). Rydgren subsumed such parties under the label of *radical right-*

wing parties and added emphasis on ethno-nationalism rooted in myths about the distant past and the wish to return to traditional and authoritarian values (e.g., law and order, traditional family). For these parties, individual rights are secondary to the goals of the nation (Rydgren, 2007). Furthermore, they propose ethno-pluralism, the separation of different peoples, in order to preserve their "unique national characters" (Rydgren, 2013, p. 3). There is also significant overlap between populist right-wing and conservative discourses on gender, race, and migration. For these political camps, feminism, gender-equity laws, and multiculturalism are presented as challenging the social order (Blee & Creasap, 2010; Erel, 2018). However, right-wing radical groups are not only reactionary, they are also open to new technologies and sometimes even contain quite progressive social programs. The Fascist regime in Italy and the Nazis in Germany became "the most violent rationalistic modernizers of their respective countries in spite of ideological commitments to an organic society" (von Beyme, 2013, p. 1). Today right-wing radicals extensively use modern social media.

According to Rydgren (2018, p. 2), most of the supporters of the radical right do not usually oppose democracy per se, but they are typically hostile to the way existing democratic institutions actually work. In some countries (and by some authors), *right-wing radicalism* is distinguished from *right-wing extremism*, for example, for state authorities in Germany "extremism" includes positions outside the democratic consensus and anti-constitutional elements (Minkenberg, 2011, p. 40). At the end of the right-wing spectrum, there is *violence* and *terrorism* from the *Ku Klux Klan* in the United States to Breivik's mass killing in Norway or the serial murders of the *National Socialist Underground* group in Germany. There is no consensus of scientists or political institutions about the definition of "terrorism" (Laqueur, 2000, p. 6), but the most frequent elements of many definitions are violence or threat of violence, coercion, intimidation, and so on against governments, elites, or society (Hoffman, 2006, pp. 31–34; Schmid & Jongman, 1988, pp. 5–6; Walter, 1969, p. 7). When nationalism, racism, authoritarianism, and the suppression of human and civil rights are enforced and organized by violent means in all sectors of a society and a state with one strong leader, we could speak of the *totalitarian right* as in the case of the former *National Socialist German Workers' Party*.

1.2.4 Xenophobia and Racism

A key element of radical right patterns of emotions, thoughts, and ideologies is *xenophobia*, but there is also confusion about this term. The English word "xenophobia" originates from the Greek term for the fear of strangers, a compound word of ξένος *(xenos)* meaning "stranger" or "foreigner", and φόβος *(phobos)* meaning "fear". However, in Anglo-American literature "xenophobia" is also used to indicate hostility towards strangers. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion between the opposite emotions of fear and hostility, the latter should refer to Greek expressions like ἔχθρα *(echthra)* meaning "hostility" or ξενοκτονία *(xenoktonia)* meaning "killing of strangers" (Wahl, 2005, p. 59). In this book, the term *xenoktonia* is used to name strong hostility towards and violence against strangers. In right-wing ideologies xenophobia is often connected to the aversion towards groups perceived as different from the own one (in-group) like immigrants, disabled people, LGBT minorities, and the homeless. This syndrome has also been called "*group-focused enmity*" (Zick et al., 2008).

Racism, another term without a consistent definition, could approximately be seen as a social construction or an ideology dividing humans into separate (pseudo-)biological entities ("races"), implying a link between inherited physical traits and traits of personality, intellect, morality, and other cultural and behavioral features. Racism also pretends the idea that some races are innately superior to others (cf. Smedley, 2017). In the last decades, the confusing term *"cultural racism"* was used to describe ideologies that replaced (pseudo-)biological criteria of inequality by cultural ones. *"Othering"* or "cultural vilification" as discrimination of other groups seems to be more adequate terms. Today "racism" is often used indifferently to describe all kinds of hostile or negative feelings and actions of one ethnic group toward another (Fredrickson, 2015, p. 1),

One should also take into account that terms like "race" or "racist" could have somewhat divergent meanings in different languages and countries. For example, in Germany with its Nazi past the term "race" *(Rasse)* could evoke connotations different from those in other countries and in other languages: in Germany, "race" was used by the Nazis in fic-

tional ways to distinguish groups like Aryans, Jews, and so on, and could still influence some peoples' current associations of the word. Unlike the word *"race"* in US usage, the German word "*Rasse*" is discredited in Germany, the category has been disputed as relevant or real. Altogether, in Continental Europe, the word "race" seems to maintain an unbreakable tie to the history of racism, and thus the term as an analytical tool to describe American or other societies would be problematic (Berg, Schor, & Soto, 2014).

1.2.5 Neoliberalism

The economic policy program of the radical right is often associated with *neoliberalism*, a term that has changed its meaning historically. Originally, neoliberalism referred to economic ideas that grew out of debates of French, German, Austrian, and other economists and intellectuals in the late 1930s. They wanted to create a new liberalism in contrast to socialism and laissez-faire liberalism, with free enterprise and competition as well as a strong impartial state. Later this was also called the "social market economy", the basis for the German economic miracle *(Wirtschaftswunder)* after World War II. Since the early 1980s, however, neoliberalism became a term to describe the wave of market deregulation, privatization, and welfare-state withdrawal that swept the world. At that time, Chile's Pinochet regime was influenced by the "Chicago Boys" and became something like the neoliberal laboratory, a test case for policies inspired by radical laissez-faire capitalist ideas that were later reproduced around the third world. Nowadays, the term neoliberalism is used across many social science disciplines except in economics where it has disappeared. Furthermore, it is often used as a pejorative term to criticize many manifestations of modernity or capitalism (Venugopal, 2015) or even as a signifier simply for "things we don't like" (Cahill, Cooper, Konings, & Primrose, 2018, p. xxvii). In the focus of most definitions, at least, neoliberalism seems to be a set of ideas and policies aimed at installing markets as the main mechanism for coordinating societies (Birch, 2015). Such a simple definition should suffice, if one calls the economic-political ideas of the radical right parties "neoliberal", because it allows many vari-

ations. Indeed, the economic policies of these parties have ranged from libertarian to socialist. Nowadays, most populist right parties support a hybrid socio-economic agenda, which combines calls for fewer rules and lower taxes with economic nationalism and welfare chauvinism (protection of the national economy, support for welfare provisions primarily for "natives"). They accept inequality, as a "natural" phenomenon, which should not be "legislated away" by the state (Afonso & Rennwald, 2018; Bobbio, 1997; Mudde, 2017, p. 5).

1.2.6 Typologies and Working Definition

In order to avoid "quasi-Platonic" definitions like the "essence of Fascism" some scientists proposed situational and comparative definitions of the populist, radical, or extreme right (e.g., being more hostile than other political parties) (Merkl & Weinberg, 2014, p. 18). Other authors pointed at the political strategies that appeal to people on the losing side of social processes who are threatened by losses in terms of labor, income, or prestige. Radical right-wing politicians want to act as advocates of these (potential) losers of the globalized economy. Their main target groups in Western Europe are people from the lower and lower-middle class, and, in Eastern Europe, from a broad middle class (Langenbacher & Schellenberg, 2011, p. 13). In the United States, right-wing populist movements historically tried to reflect the interests of middle- and working-class Whites, who were afraid to lose their status and resented the power of elites over them as well as of outsiders of the elite itself who bid for more power (Berlet & Lyons, 2000, p. 2).

All in all, there is much confusion about the terminology. In English literature, we find terms like ultra-conservatism, the far right, the populist right, the populist radical right, the radical right, the extreme right, the violent or terrorist right, and so on. The same political parties are described by some authors as (ultra-)conservative or populist, by others as radical or extreme.

Since the 1970s, Kitschelt and McGann (1995) counted three forms of new radical right parties in Western Europe: *neo-Fascists*, resembling the old Fascist parties, *the new radical right*, and *populist* parties. Going

more into details, Minkenberg (2011) differentiated *four ideological types of the radical right in Europe* since the 1990s:

- An *autocratic-fascist* right wing with racism, ethnocentrism, and an ideological proximity to the fascist and autocratic regimes of the interwar period; for example, political parties like the German *National Democratic Party (NPD)*, the *British National Party (BNP)*, the *Italian Social Movement (MSI)*, or the Hungarian *Jobbik*;
- a racist or *ethnocentric* right wing with an agenda of ethnic segregation, the superiority of their own ethnicity or an "ethnopluralist" argument for the incompatibility of cultures and ethnicities; for example, the French *Font National (FN)*, the Italian *Northern League (LN)*, or the Belgian *Flemish Block (VB)*;
- an *authoritarian-populist* right wing with internally authoritarian structures focused on a charismatic leader and populist discourse that excludes specific groups; for example, the *Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)* or the Hungarian *Fidesz*;
- a *religious-fundamentalist* right wing that uses primarily religious argumentation to defend the "purity" and superiority of its own culture or own people; for example, the *League of Polish Families (LPR)*.

Besides the political parties of the radical right, there are social movements, organizations, and subcultures like groups of neo-Nazis or local movements against mosques (Minkenberg, 2011, pp. 45–46, 2013, pp. 13–16) or the anti-Islamist German *PEGIDA*.

The *Chapel Hill Expert Survey* tried to estimate party positioning on policy issues for national parties in a variety of European countries (Hooghe & Marks, 2017). In a similar way and using proposals from several authors, we suggest *working definitions* for the broad spectrum of ideologies and organizations studied here, which are arranged on a scale of increasing radicalism and violence:

- *Right-wing populist parties* distinguish "we, the people", firstly, from a "corrupt elite" and, secondly, as one's own ethnic group with a national culture ("*Leitkultur*") superior to other groups, minorities, religions, or nations. These parties favor referenda in addition to parliamentari-

anism, economic protectionism, and express skepticism about supranational organizations.
- *Extreme right parties* are characterized by their rejection of liberal democracy, expressed in ideologies, which are anti-pluralist, anti-minority rights, and anti-parliamentary added by a nativist nationalism, an anti-immigrant program, and an authoritarian law and order doctrine. These parties use some democratic means of political participation, for example, contesting elections.
- *Violent and terrorist right* groups and perpetrators use premeditated threats, physical violence, and terrorist attacks against the government, elites, minority groups, political adversaries, or public places to reach right-wing extremist goals.
- *Totalitarian right parties* are nationalist, racist, authoritarian, anti-democratic, and use violent repression. They differ from other right parties because they don't accept democracy and disregard democratic means of political participation, for example, contesting elections (cf. Arendt, 1973; Mudde, 2015, p. 433; Ravndal, 2016; Werkmann & Gherghina, 2018).

Of course, it is sometimes difficult to make a clear distinction between (ultra-)conservatives and the populist right or between the populist right and the extreme right. In Rydgren's (2018, p. 3) terms, many of the "radical right-wing" social movements are situated on the border between the "radical right" and the "extreme right", and several representatives and activists of some "radical right-wing" parties and movements maintain contacts with the "extreme right".

Discussing the *social conditions* in which the radical right appears, for Minkenberg *right-wing radicalism* can be defined as "the radical effort to undo or fight (…) social change by radicalizing inclusionary and exclusionary criteria". The radical right responds to the social differentiation of society in modernization processes by the alternative draft of a national community and confronts the modern individualization (growing individual autonomy, status mobility, and role flexibility) with a return to traditional roles and status. The radical right ideology centers around a myth of a homogeneous nation and is directed against the liberal, pluralistic democracy with its principles of individualism and universalism (Minkenberg, 2008,

pp. 12–13). Other authors add that the main topics of this political camp are the attempts to offer solutions for socio-political crises: first, a crisis of distribution concerning the welfare of the lower and lower middle class; second, a crisis of political representation as a critique of the corrupt political elite by the "man in the street"; third, a crisis of identity in the face of globalization and immigration. The radical right reacts to these crises by making use of social issues, by painting politics as corrupt and by propagating ascriptions of national identity (Langenbacher & Schellenberg, 2011).

We summarize the considerations of many political scientists and sociologists in the following *working definition: ideologies of the radical right* emphasize social and economic threats in the modern and postmodern world (e.g., globalization, immigration). The radical right also promises protection against such threats by an emphatic ethnic construction of "we", the people, as a familiar, homogeneous in-group, anti-modern, or reactionary structures of family, society, an authoritarian state, nationalism, the discrimination, or exclusion of immigrants and other minorities (cf. Wahl, Ottinger-Gaßebner, Kleinert, & Renninger, 2005, p. 19). While favoring traditional social and cultural structures (traditional family and gender roles, religion, etc.) the radical right uses modern technologies and does not ascribe to a specific economic policy; some parties tend toward a liberal, free-market policy, and others more to a welfare state policy. Finally, the radical right can be scaled by using different degrees of militancy and aggressiveness from right-wing populism to racism, terrorism, and totalitarianism.

All in all, the radical right can be seen as a revolt against parts of *social modernity*, but not against all forms of *economic* and *technical modernity*. Seen in this way, it's about a *halved anti-modern ideology*.

1.3 The Spectrum of the Political Right

A typology of right-wing manifestations (ideologies, organizations, groups, actors) from conservative and moderate to extreme, violent, and totalitarian forms with smooth transitions between them is sketched in Fig. 1.2. It must be emphasized that economic policies and welfare policies (e.g., welfare state versus free market economy) of different parties of

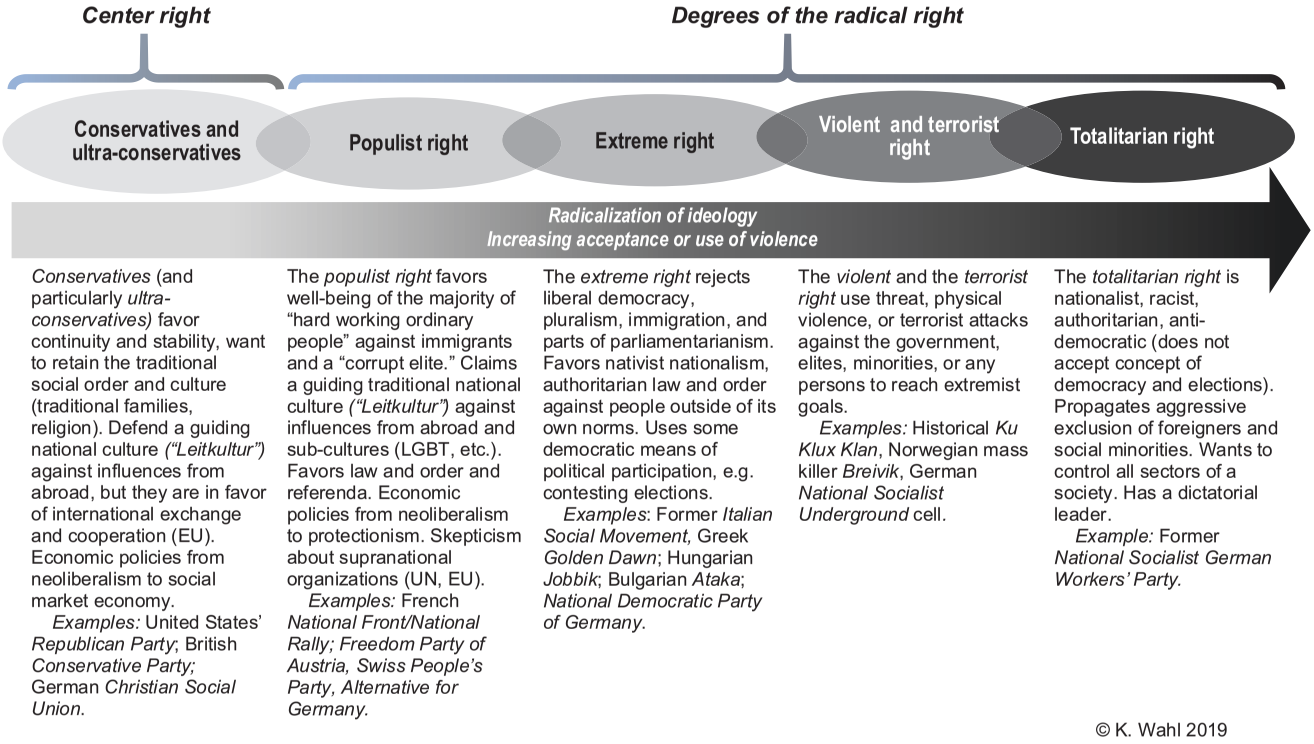

Fig. 1.2 Spectrum of the political right

the radical right are quite independent of this scale. Some parties tend toward a liberal, free-market policy, and others more to a welfare state policy, and some adopt a mixture of both. While favoring traditional social and cultural structures (traditional family and gender roles, religion, etc.) the radical right uses modern technologies (social media, etc.).

Since there have been various attempts to define phenomena on the right-wing political side, and since there is a broad spectrum of such political phenomena, we pragmatically propose a broad but graduated scale. We call the part of the political spectrum at the right side of conservatism *degrees of the radical right*. The gradations are based on the degrees of *ideological radicalism* and *militancy* (against outsiders, democratic principles, nativism instead of cosmopolitism, etc.) as well as the degree of approval or use of *violence*. Center-right and conservative programs and parties will only be mentioned in passing in this book.

We have to add that there is no consensus among authors about how to categorize many of the political parties of the political right as conservative, populist, radical, or extreme parties. On the one hand, this is due to the mixture of positions in the political programs of the parties; on the other hand, politicians of the same party can speak and act more or less militantly in contrast to the party's program. In other words, the same political party is described as populist by some authors but as extremist by others.

In order not to overstretch the scope of this book, we focus on the widespread *political ideologies*, *parties,* and *movements* of the populist and extremist right. Phenomena of the violent, terrorist, and totalitarian right are only secondary topics.

Throughout this book "the radical right" is used as a shorthand term covering all variations from the populist to the totalitarian political right, if there is no other specification. When referring to specific authors, however, usually their own terms are used without re-categorization.

References

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