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# Imagined Identity: Immigration, *Ueberfremdung*, and Cultural Chauvinism in German Far-Right Partisan Discourse

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## Abstract

*In recent years, issues of an imagined ethno-cultural identity and revived nationalism have received renewed attention in German partisan public discourse. Initially, this came as a shock to both Germans and non-Germans. Both inside and outside of Germany the rise of right-wing partisan rhetoric has evoked fearful memories of the Nazi past. Yet, given the political parties responsible for bringing this nationalist, xenophobic and anti-semitic discourse to the forefront, most notably the Die Republikaner (REP), Deutsche Volksunion (DVU), and Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) such reactions should hardly be surprising. The radical right's adherence to racist ideology is both openly xenophobic and anti-Semitic and centers around the threat of elimination of the German kulturelternation.*

This article addresses this right-extremist rhetoric in light of Germany's liberal post-War immigration policies. I first undertake a historical examination of German immigration policy which has contributed to Germany's multi-cultural milieu. I then examine German far right partisan discourse and its attack on Germany's expansive immigration policies. My ultimate goal is to expose the illusory and fallacious character of the far right's racist arguments in light of Germany's post-War status as a true immigration country.

Since the end of World War II Germany has witnessed changes in the demographic makeup of immigrants entering its borders. Whereas in the immediate post-War years co-ethnics from throughout Central and Eastern Europe dominated the immigrant landscape, since the 1960s a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural mix of peoples from throughout Eastern

Europe, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Africa, and Asia stand out as the dominate form of immigration. The growth and sustained immigration to Germany is a result of economic factors coupled with the rise of liberal immigration policies which were adopted in the past fifty years. These liberal policies have sustained wide scale international immigration and have transformed Germany into a truly heterogeneous society. Yet, rather than accept a national identity based upon universal values of democracy, human rights and equality, right extremist parties such as the REP, DVU, and NPD adopt an ascriptive national identity with roots in nationalist and racist ideas of identity and belonging. In addition, all three parties defend, in varying degrees, xenophobia, the rejection of free democratic order, the relativization of the crimes committed under National Socialism, the repatriation of all foreigners, and open anti-semitism.

**Debunking the Racist Myth: Immigration, *Jus Sanguinis*, and Ascriptive National Identity.**

The Federal Republic of Germany does not officially recognize itself as a country of immigration yet, it is the destination for Europe's largest population of foreign residents: guest-workers and their families, asylum seekers, war refugees from the former Yugoslavia, Jews from the former Soviet Union and Ethnic German immigrants. The total immigrant population within Germany is 7.5 million people or 9% of the population. Although many enjoy full social citizenship rights most are non-citizens.

Despite a long history of absorbing migrants from East Central Europe, Germany lacks a "national model" around which to organize its immigration debate (Faist, 1994; Kurthen, 1995). The only previous experience the country could draw upon was the incorporation of the Ruhr-Poles. The industrialization of Germany in the late nineteenth century in fact transformed the Second Reich into a country of immigration. The migration from East Central Europe came primarily in the form of seasonal workers and labor migrants from Russia, Poland, the Eastern parts of Prussia and Italy (Herbert, 1990; Bade, 1993; Kurthen, 1995) who were recruited to perform manual labor in the growing industries on the Rhine, in Silesia and around Berlin, and to meet the agricultural demand for cheap labor. Bade (1984) notes that by the outbreak of World War I the number of "foreign laborers" on German soil was around 1.2 million. The majority of these were Poles from East Prussia followed by Russians from Galacia, then a part of the Austria-Hungarian Empire.

These migrants possessed little or no civil rights and were subject to questioning, internment and deportation with little or no forewarning (Herbert, 1990; Klessman, 1993). In addition, there were strict prohibitions against socializing and mixing with the indigenous German populace as well as holding meetings and church services in their native tongue. Their status as foreign laborers allowed the authorities broad administrative and police powers which were designed to curb their participation in nearly every aspect of their lives outside of work. Although labor migrants were subject to arbitrary deportation, there were some exceptions. The Ruhr-Poles enjoyed a "special legal status" in that they were considered East Prussian Citizens of Polish Descent. Although subject to intensive police scrutiny, their special legal status protected them from arbitrary deportation. In addition, they were permitted to organize their own clubs and societies and to establish their own press (Klessman, 1993). Their first union, the "Polish Professional Assembly," was formed shortly thereafter along with numerous community and church related organizations. The Treaty of Versailles and the reestablishment of Poland gave the Ruhr-Poles the option of choosing either Polish or German citizenship and approximately a third of the roughly 350,000 decided to stay in the Ruhr Valley and become German citizens (Klessman, 1993).

The Ruhr-Polish "Germanization" notwithstanding (Bade, 1992) Germany fell far short of adopting an American or French style citizenship model. Indeed, despite its large foreign population Germany continued to base citizenship on *jus sanguinis* (community of descent) as codified in its 1913 Citizenship Law rather than on *jus soli* (place of birth). The 1913 Law effectively permitted Germans living abroad (*Auslandsdeutsche*) to transmit citizenship to their descendants at birth. This has led several scholars to declare German citizenship is inclusionary in regard to Ethnic German immigrants (*Spaetaussiedler*) but exclusionary in regard to all other category of immigrants living in Germany (Brubaker, 1992; Faist, 1994). However, since January 1, 2000 children born in Germany of foreign parents will receive citizenship provided that one parent has legally resided in Germany for at least eight years. According to the so-called option model, the children have until their twenty-third birthday to decide which citizenship they wish to retain.

The ethno-cultural principle of German citizenship is rooted in the conception of the nation as an organic cultural, linguistic, racial community

(Brubaker, 1992; see also Koslowski, 1997). However, this seemingly exceptional or *Volkisch* view of German citizenship and German immigration policy is fallacious. True, an estimated 12 million German citizens and ethnic Germans were "expelled" from Eastern Europe and resettled in the American, British and Soviet zones of occupied Germany (for a full discussion see Muenz and Ohliger, 1997) in the immediate aftermath of World War II based upon their ethnicity alone. But, what many scholars and students of German immigration policy fail to overlook is that the victorious allied powers at the Potsdam Conference called for the resettlement of 12 million expellees within occupied Germany's new borders. As a result, the Allies enforced the resettlement of Germans and ethnic Germans alike to occupied Germany. As one scholar has found "the Allies wanted integration of the German expellees from the East, to avoid any revisionist activity against the new borders in the East." (Klekowski von Koppenfels, 2000) In short, the policy of according citizenship to ethnic Germans was implemented by the U.S. occupation authorities in Germany.

You will require the persons of German extraction transferred to Germany be granted German nationality with full civil and political rights... You will take such measures as you may seem appropriate to assist the German authorities in effecting a program of resettlement. (cited in Thraenhardt, 2000b: 22. The quote was made available to Thraenhardt courtesy of Josef Foschepoth, Stuttgart. See also, Public Record Office, Foreign Office 371/85268/ C 2972: 11f; Foschepoth, 1996:104-112.

Article 116 of the Basic Law accorded these expellees full German citizenship.

[In the eyes of the constitution, everyone is a German who holds German citizenship or who, as a refugee or expellee of German *Volkszugehoerigkeit*, or as a spouse or descendant of such a person, has been admitted to the territory of the German Empire as it existed on December 31,1937] (Federal Republic of Germany. Article 116 Basic Law).

Subsequent claims of German citizenship by Ethnic German immigrants (*Spaetaussiedler*) are guaranteed in the 1953 Federal Expellee and Refugee Law as amended in 1993 upon their legal resettlement or "return" to Germany. Those ethnic German migrants who continue to resettle in the Federal Republic are legally considered as Germans or co-ethnic returnees and counted as naturalized German citizens not as migrants.

The return migration of ethnic Germans should not be equated with a racist or particularistic *volkisch* character of ethno-cultural identity. As Dietrich Thraenhardt (2000) indicates:

Germany is not the only country accepting ethnic migrants from Russia and other C.I.S. states. All nations who feel that their co-ethnics live there are doing the same: Israel, Poland, Korea, Finland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Greece. Moreover, Germany does not take in all ethnic Germans but only those who are considered as being under *Vertreibungsdruck* (expulsion pressure). Consequently, since the end of the Soviet empire, Germany only takes in ethnic Germans from C.I.S. countries on the assumption that the discrimination of Germans in the C.I.S. is continuing since they are not allowed to return to their historic settlements in the former Volga Republic. In contrast, ethnic Germans from Poland and Romania no longer have a right to immigrate after the end the totalitarian regimes in these countries, unless they prove a special discrimination (p. 6).

Currently ethnic German migrants who live throughout the former Soviet Union makes up the lion's share of in-flows into the Federal Republic each year and is based upon *Vertreibungsdruck* (expulsion pressure) and their treatment at the hands of the Soviet authorities during World War II. Although the numbers have declined precipitously in recent years (from a high of 397,073 in 1990 to just over 103,000 in 1999) the Federal Republic still resettles at least 100,000 *Spaetaussiedler* (ethnic German migrants) per annum.

### **Postwar Immigration Patterns:**

Contemporary immigration and resettlement patterns to the Federal Republic can be better understood in light of traditional immigration movements since World War II. Six major migration waves can be

identified (Hoenekopp, 1994). The first one lasting from 1945 to 1950 comprised movements of Ethnic German expellees (*Vertriebene*) and refugees during which time approximately eight million resettled in the Federal Republic. The second, occurring from 1950 to 1961, brought large numbers of East Germans (*Uebersiedler*) from the German Democratic Republic to the West. The third, covering the mid-1950's to 1973, was characterized by the importing of large numbers of foreign workers (*Gastarbeiter*). The fourth, lasting from 1973 to the late 1980's, saw the emergence of family member immigration resulting from the earlier recruitment of foreign labor as well as a marked increase in asylum applicants. The fifth, occurring from the early 1980's to 1988, consisted of flows of Ethnic Germans (*Aussiedler*) primarily from Eastern Europe (Poland, Romania) and a marked increase in asylum applicants. The last phase, in effect since 1989, saw large numbers of Ethnic Germans (since 1988, some 2 million) , hundreds of thousands of asylum applicants, swelling numbers of East German *Uebersiedler* (before unification), and approximately 150,000 Soviet Jews entering the FRG.

TABLE 1.1 PHASES OF IMMIGRATION TO GERMANY

1945 - 1950	Approximately eight million ethnic German expellees ( <i>Vertriebene</i> ) resettled in West Germany
1950 - 1961	Approximately four million East German ( <i>Uebersiedler</i> ) resettled in West Germany
1955 - 1973	Approximately 4.5 million foreign guest workers ( <i>Gastarbeiter</i> ) settled in Germany
1973 - 1988	Family reunification of foreign guest workers ( <i>Gastarbeiter</i> ); marked increase in asylum applications as allowed under Article 16.
1980 - 1988	Ethnic German resettlement from Eastern Europe - Poland, Romania; marked increase in asylum applicants as allowed under Article 16.
1989 - present	(Spaet) <i>Aussiedler</i> resettlement 3.5 million Ethnic German migrants as allowed under the 1953 Federal Expellee and Refugee Law and as amended in 1993; continued demand for asylum; new category established for the permanent resettlement of post-Soviet Jews in 1991 (currently 150,000 Jews from the C.I.S. have since resettled in Germany)

Source: Hoenekopp, Elmar (1994) Germany - The Main Immigration Country of Europe: Causes and Prospects. Nuernberg: Institute of Employment Research; Harris (2000).

The Federal Republic of Germany is officially not a land of immigration. This assertion notwithstanding, it is now home to some 7.5 million immigrants or 9 percent of its population making Germany the largest country of immigration in Europe. Indeed, in a five year period from 1988 to 1993, for example, an estimated 2.5 million foreigners settled in Germany. In addition, there were an estimated 2 million asylum related foreigners living there in 1999. Among the latter, only 267,000 were recognized refugees and their families. Another 650,000 were "de-facto" refugees, 415,000 had pending asylum applications, and 350,000 had temporary asylum (Federal Republic of Germany. (2000) Federal Office for the Recognition of Refugees. Auszug aus der Geschaeftsstatistik des Bundesamtes fuer 1992 u. 1993. Nuernberg).

**Soviet Jewish Immigration: The Politics of Reparation and Return (*Wiedergutmachungspolitik*).**

Every German should give their personal thanks to those Jews who have demonstrated their will and resolve to take up residence in Germany and actively participate in German politics and society. The faith they have placed in our country and the relationship of mutual understanding between Germans and Jews makes each one of us stronger and is an indication in the strength of German democracy.

Dr. Rita Suessmuth, Parliamentary President  
January 19, 1996

Germany is unique among European Union member states in its immigration policies toward Jews from the former Soviet Union. Germany is now the third principal country of immigration for Jews, following Israel and the United States, and the only West European state allowing their migration and permanent settlement. At present an estimated 150,000 Soviet Jews have resettled in Germany. The open door policy towards Soviet Jews came about with the reintroduction of the Quota Refugee Law in January 1991. The Quota Refugee Law was initially

instituted in the early 1980's as part of the world-wide Orderly Departure Program (ODP) designed to resettle refugees fleeing Vietnam. However, with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a growing number of Soviet Jews began to take up residence in Berlin in the spring and summer of 1990. The interim East German government granted these individuals legal residency rights. When the country officially reunified in October 1990 the issue of Soviet Jewish immigration made it to the formal legislative agenda. After two parliamentary debates it was agreed to reintroduce the Quota Refugee Law as the legal framework which would allow for the permanent resettlement of Soviet Jews. Despite the law's title, there is no fixed annual quota for this group of immigrants: annual entries since 1995 have ranged between 20,000 to 23,000 per year. Furthermore, as Quota Refugees, Soviet Jews enjoy a full canon of social goods as well as a streamlined naturalization process (several years).

In addition to their legal status, Soviet Jews share similar post-war migration patterns with ethnic German migrants and have traditionally used emigration as a "safety valve" (Gitelman, 1989) in order to escape political and ethnic persecution at home. Further, Jews from the former Soviet Union have privileged standing that distinguishes them from other immigrant groups in Germany. Unlike the earlier immigration of "guestworkers" and their families, or the flow of war refugees and asylum seekers Soviet Jews are defined on the basis of the ethnic origin of the individual migrant and, as with the case of ethnic German migrants (*Spätaussiedler*) the policy began as a result of Germany's historic relationship with them (Harris, 1997a; 1997b; 2000). In short, the post-War immigration patterns of Soviet Jews and ethnic German migrants is driven primarily by humanitarian, historical and ideological factors (Harris, 1997b).

### **Immigration in the 1990's: The Asylum Compromise.**

Despite utterances to the contrary, the new Germany is indeed a land of immigration. Since 1990, the country has had the tasks of managing reunification and substantial levels of Ethnic German immigration, high levels of asylum seekers, and coming to terms with the growing numbers of Jews seeking to resettle permanently in the Federal Republic. Significant policy changes and revisions occurred as a consequence of the growing demand to immigrate and resettle in the Federal Republic.



Before the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, migration came chiefly from the entrance of guest-workers and their families, and asylum seekers and refugees. However, afterward and continuing up to the present, the greatest flow is the Ethnic German migrants. Concurrently, however, there was an increasing number of asylum seekers as well as war refugees fleeing the war in the Balkans. In 1992 alone, Germany received 438,191 applications for asylum. As a result of these growing post-1989 migratory pressures, the Federal Republic took the following steps in an effort to stem the flows: instituted bi-lateral temporary labor agreements with several East European countries; amended its liberal asylum provisions; established a quota of 220,000 ethnic Germans who may resettle each year; curtailed several social assistance provisions tied to resettlement. These changes in policy came about largely in response to growing public perception that immigration was spinning out of control. A perception that was fueled largely by right extremist rhetoric of over-foreignerization (*ueberfremdung*)

Consequently, German policy makers formulated and adopted policies which were designed to limit access and bring about a degree of management over the entry of specific immigrant groups. Despite this new restrictionist climate, however, the country also adopted a liberal front-door immigration policy, and re-established a special refugee category which permitted the continued immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union to Germany (Harris, 1997a; 1997b). In addition, even though entry quotas were levied for Ethnic German migrants wishing to resettle, the limit is still quite large at 220,000 per year.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, and the subsequent easing of East-West ideological tensions, Germany's migrant population has exploded from approximately 4.7 million in early 1989 (in both East and West Germany) to approximately 7.5 million in 2000. To cope with the burgeoning numbers the government introduced measures geared to at least slow down the flow of people seeking refuge. For many foreigners asylum was the only possible entrance into Germany. However, in June 1993, after a year of seemingly unmanageable immigration (more than one million came in 1992 alone) the FRG reformed its hitherto liberal asylum policy (Article 16 of the Constitution), which significantly tightened restrictions on persons seeking asylum via the "third safe country" provision. The provision designates Germany's immediate neighbors, the

Czech Republic and Poland, as first countries of asylum thereby prohibiting direct entry in the Federal Republic from the East.

Germany still maintains Europe's most liberal asylum provisions despite amending its asylum law (Article 16) in 1993. Indeed, there was a dramatic rise in the number of asylum seekers throughout Western Europe from 13,000 in 1972 to over 438,000 in 1992 (Santel, 1995). Germany experienced the sharpest demand for asylum with 438,191 requests filed in 1992, and 322,599 in 1993 (Federal Republic of Germany. 2000 Federal Office for the Recognition of Refugees. Auszug aus der Geschaeftsstatistik des Bundesamtes fuer 1992 u. 1993). In an effort to stem the tide of illegal asylum seekers Germany amended Article 16 of the Basic Law by imposing much tighter restrictions and controls. The new Law calls for procedures for the recognition of refugee status that are administered by the Federal Office for the Recognition of Refugee Affairs. One of the measures central to the newly amended legislation is the third safe country clause. Germany also accelerated processing of asylum applicants in airports enabling authorities to immediately turn back those unqualified for asylum. In short, the burden of proof now rests on the asylum seeker, not the German government. The new procedures have been effective: in 1993, for example, the number of persons applying for asylum was 322,599 yet only 16,396 were allowed in, an approval rate of 5.1 percent. At the end of 1999 the rate of approval in completed cases for the year 1999 was 3.0% (4,114 persons). (Federal Republic of Germany. 2000. Federal Ministry of the Interior. Pressemitteilung January 14, 2000). What is most striking is that since the passage of the 1993 Asylum reform the number of migrants claiming asylum has shown a continued decline: in the first-half of 1993 - 224,000 sought it; in the second-half of 1993 (after reform of Article 16) the number was 98,000. This trend has continued during the decade 138,319 persons sought asylum in 1999 for example, compared to 438,191 in 1992. That these applications for asylum often represent attempts to circumvent other "congested" immigration channels is demonstrated by the [approval] ratio. Whereas at the beginning of the 1970's in Germany about 40% of applications for asylum were [approved] as being justified, the [approval] ratio fell [since the passage of the 1993 Asylum Reform Act] to 3 - 4% (Straubhaar, 2000).

### Individual Categories of Immigrants:

Each individual migrant category, from quota refugees to temporary foreign workers are given a varying mix of social assistance benefits, residency and labor market restrictions.

Table 1.2 illustrates these broad differences between five immigrant categories. Ethnic Germans and Soviet Jews have the fullest entitlements and so enter the country via the front door whereas asylum seekers and family members of foreign denizens having far fewer benefits enter through the side door. Then there are those who enter Germany through the back door such as non-recognized asylum seekers and illegal immigrants with the most restrictive benefits.

TABLE 1.2 IMMIGRANT CATEGORIES WITHIN GERMANY.

Legal Status - Category	Residency Status	Social Assistance guaranteed under the Federal Social Assistance Law (BSHG)	Labor Permit*
quota refugees (Soviet Jews)	Unlimited	yes	special
Ethnic Germans	Unlimited	yes	special
war and civil-war refugees	Tolerated	limited	regular
de-facto refugees	Tolerated	limited	regular
temporary or project tied labor	temporary	no	regular

German law distinguishes between two types of labor permits; the regular and the special. A regular labor permit is issued for a particular job at a designated place within the district of the Local Employment Office and typically will not extend beyond a three year time period. A special labor permit, on the other hand, is valid permanently and carries no restrictions. It is issued only to German citizens, permanent foreign residents and those refugees who have resided in Germany for at least five years.

**Policy Outcomes:**

The politics of immigration in Germany today is overshadowed by the mistakes, failures, and unforeseen consequences of the guest worker era (1950's - 1960's), the asylum era (1978 – 1993) and by social conflicts associated with ethnic minorities arising during that time (Freeman, 1994). A cursory examination of German law might lead us to expect German immigration policies to be sharply restrictionist, and refugee policies to be exclusionary. But we have seen that since the 1960's immigration has been higher in Germany than any other West European state, and Germany has perhaps the most liberal refugee and asylum policy in Europe.

Germany is a reluctant land of immigration to say the least but I argue, a country of immigration despite claims to the opposite (for a full discussion see Martin, 1994). Most recently, Germany loosened naturalization restrictions beginning January 1, 2000 (Hagedorn, 2000) to enable a greater number of foreigners living in Germany to naturalize if they so choose, and it has in place a policy permitting the immigration, permanent settlement and eventual naturalization of Jews from the former Soviet Union. Germany in a word has a "true" migration policy, one which moves beyond an imagined ethno-cultural concept rooted in anachronistic views of immigration or immigrants.

Contrary to widely held beliefs, Germany did not adopt racist immigration policies based on national origins. The massive influx of German and ethnic German expellees in the immediate postwar years, and the continued return of ethnic German immigrants – *Aussiedler* and *Spaetaussiedler* - are special cases. Ethnic German Amish, for example, who live in the United States cannot reclaim German citizenship. As the legal successor of the German Reich, the Federal Republic was obliged to offer citizenship to Germans and ethnic Germans who had been expelled or persecuted. As Hoffman (1999) notes “the admission of over eight million expellees, evacuees, and refugees by 1950 was thus understood as an act of solidarity and an attempt to deal justly with the consequences of the war, not as a political measure designed to enforce *Deutschtum*” (p. 360). In the case of *Aussiedler* and *Spaetaussiedler*, their entry into the Federal Republic is codified in the 1953 Federal Expellee and Refugee Law as amended in 1993 and is based upon *Vertreibungsdruck* (expulsion pressure), and their inability reclaim their lands in the former Volga Republic. Despite tempered opinions toward their entry, *Spaetaussiedler* enjoy a preferred status and

degree of public legitimacy not accorded to other immigrant groups (with the notable exception of Soviet Jews) within Germany. In this same vein since 1991 the Federal Republic has opened its doors to an estimated 150,000 Jews from the former Soviet Union (Harris, 2000). Clearly, the Federal Republic's singular historical relationship to these two groups, coupled with a strong sense of collective responsibility (*wiedergutmachungspolitik*) are the core dynamics of these two policies.

In Germany, the sustained growth in all categories of immigration is dramatic. As Munz (2000) notes “in 1997 Germany had 82 million inhabitants, of which 74.6 million were German citizens. 7.5 million residents did not have German citizenship. The share of the foreign nationals was therefore just over 9%.” Hagedorn (2000) notes “the portion of aliens has increased steadily during the last decades, but this development is not only due to new immigration waves, but because the second and third generation of aliens continue to grow in Germany. In the under 18-year-old category over 1 million children or 63% [of the foreign population] are born in Germany.” In the following section I will highlight immigration and right extremist ideology and rhetoric.

### **Immigration and Right-Extremist Ideology and Rhetoric:**

What we do not need now is such a multicultural mush which is conflict pure and simple. Insidious conquest of the country, as we are now experiencing, must not be accepted any longer by the German people.

Dr. Rolf Schlierer, National Chairman, in a speech given at the Republikaner meeting. February 17, 1999.

The pillars of the far-right in Germany can best be described as “nation, national identity, and ethno-centrism” (Hainsworth, 1992:10). This rhetoric of national identity is based upon a fallacious vision of “the nation supreme, heroic, pure and unsullied by alien forces such as Third World immigration . . .” (Hainsworth, 1992:10) From the early 1980’s up to the present the far right parties REP, DVU and NPD have viewed issues of immigration as “the foreigner problem” (*Auslaenderproblem*). Their strategy was and is to attract potential voters of the right utilizing the rhetoric of intolerance and prejudice. Statements such as “Germany for Germans” (*Deutschland den Deutschen*) or “Germany is not an immigration country” (*Deutschland ist kein einwanderungsland*) have become the

political dialogue of the far right. Sadly, this rhetoric of cultural chauvinism has made its way into the mainstream conservative union parties: the Christian Democratic Union - CDU and its Bavarian sister party the Christian Social Union – CSU. For example, in a now infamous statement Edmund Stoiber (CSU), the current minister president of Bavaria once noted that “Germany was on the road to becoming a thoroughly racially mixed society (*durchmischte und durchrasste Gesellschaft*)” (see, Young, 1995:65; *Der Spiegel*, 1988:48:34-38).

The far right corruption of the mainstream Union parties has led many conservative politicians to adopt a more restrictionist stance toward immigration and citizenship issues. As noted earlier, this restrictionist posture eventually led to the asylum compromise of 1992 which amended Article 16 of the Basic Law thereby limiting access to asylum. Beginning in the 1980’s leading Union party politicians began to stress an ethnic German identity by fighting the concept of multi-culturalism, by denying the reality of immigration, and by raising fears among Germans of being “overtaken” by foreigners and their alien cultures.

To this Minkenberg, (1998) notes:

In his first speech after being elected Chancellor Helmut Kohl declared *Auslaenderpolitik* or the policy of dealing with foreigners, as one of the four pillars of his government. With 50,000 to 100,000 asylum seekers per year between 1980 and 1987 and a constant share of 7 percent non-German residents between 1975 and 1990, there was hardly an immigration crisis. Nonetheless, in the context of the election campaign of 1986-1987, members of the Union parties spread statistics on crime, on the rising numbers of illegal aliens, and on the exploding costs of immigration and asylum which suggested, for example, that a dramatic increase of crime and violence was the result of foreigners in the country (p. 16)

The ideology of German far right parties has its roots in nationalist and racist ideas. It is based on an imagined identity that ethnic affiliation with a nation or race determines the value of a human being. According to Saalfeld (1993) “right wing extremists attempt to recapture traditional forms of political integration and identity through an identification of citizenship with ethnicity . . . While modern right-wing extremism does not necessarily express contempt for other nations, there is certainly a desire to create or maintain states based on cultural, ethnic, or racial purity” (p. 191). Since,

according to right-extremist thinking, human and civil rights, too are accorded on the basis of this criteria, right-extremists refuse to accept the universal principle of equality applicable to every individual. In addition, right-extremist ideology propagates an authoritarian political order in which the State and an ethnically homogenous people unite as a natural order (*kulturnation*). Yet, we should make note of the following distinction.

Right-wing extremism in Germany does not form a uniform ideological framework; rather, its rationale and aims are quite different. Neo-Nazis strive for the establishment of a totalitarian *Fuehrer* state on a racist basis. From their point of view, the German people is of superior value and therefore must be protected from “racially inferior” foreigners or Jews. By contrast, the right-extremist parties take a more nationalist position. They consider the nation the supreme principle – however, this again implies depreciation of human and civil rights. Consequently, their aim is an authoritarian state in which free democratic fundamental order would be eliminated (Federal Republic of Germany: Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. *Annual Report 1999*: 9).

The post-war right as represented in the REP, DVU, and NPD is significantly different from the Nazis and other nationalists of the first half of the century because of the fundamental changes in the post-war German constitutional order. However, this does not make the new right any less abhorrent or less threatening to the potential victims of their loathing: Germany’s growing immigrant community. Racism and violence are near universal phenomena, certainly in modern Germany as was in Nazi Germany. Indeed, there are a number of similarities of today’s right-extremist parties, REP, DVU and NPD with the NSDAP of sixty years ago.

1. A narrowly, often racially conceived nationalism that is dissatisfied with the nation as it is and strives for an elitist hierarchically organized nation.
2. A hateful intolerance against physically and / or culturally different people where physical and cultural characteristics are usually equated. The “other” people are to be excised by elimination or full separation (ethnopluralism).

3. A hateful fixation on the Left, mirroring its methods and the polar opposite of its goals.
4. A contempt for the established state, government, and other parts of the economic, social, or cultural establishment, which the rightists regard as soft, corrupt, and dominated by their enemies or by conspiring external forces (Prowe, 1997:2-3).

Clearly the transition to an advanced industrial democracy coupled with a cultural shift that challenged the traditional societal values and institutions of pre-Nazi Germany resulted in a dynamic which opened the door for new right-extremist parties. To this Saalfeld (1993) writes:

Right-wing extremists attempt to recapture traditional forms of political integration and identity through an identification of citizenship with ethnicity. National Socialism was the most radical and aggressive expression of this attempt. While modern right-wing extremism does not necessarily express contempt for other nations, there is certainly a desire to create or maintain states based on cultural, ethnic or racial purity. (p. 191)

Although the NPD has been around for almost three decades (established in 1964) the REP and DVU are both products of the 1980s (the REP was founded in 1983 and the DVU was founded in 1987). Throughout the 1980's and early 1990's Germany experienced unprecedented and sustained immigration pressure. However, available data on foreign residents in terms of both their share of the population and their rate of absolute increase since the 1980's reveals a weak relationship between immigrant growth and far-right success in western Germany (see, Karapin, 1998:24-61). Indeed, even when the number of asylum seekers increased, rather than other categories of foreigners, we find even less of a relationship with far-right political success. To this point, Young (1995) asserts "the emotional rhetoric against foreigners was out of sync with the actual numbers entering Germany . . . the anti-politics so masterfully used [by the far right has now] become the politics of [Berlin]" (p. 65).

Asylum seekers are present in all German states (*Laender*) in rough proportion to their total population because of redistribution arranged by the Federal Office for the Recognition of Refugees. These findings notwithstanding, a primary political explanation of REP, DVU, and NPD



success has been the rise and fall of the asylum and other immigration related issues. Thraenhardt (1995) notes that established political parties made asylum and immigration issues highly visible while at the same time they appeared unable to resolve it. When the issue reached the level of “high politics” some voters turned to far right parties like the REP and DVU which had made asylum, immigration, *ueberfremdung*, and *umvolkung* of Germans (replacement of Germans by other nationalities) their main campaign issues.

As noted earlier, the national debates on asylum policies at the end of the 1980’s and the early 1990’s focused on the German government’s seeming inability to control admissions. This inability to curb widespread migratory pressures formed a “political opportunity structure” (Karapin, 1998:37) for the far right (see also, Sidney Tarrow (1998), *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics*). According to Karapin (1998) the political opportunity structure of the far right has proven to be sufficiently influential and long lived to account for several far right electoral successes throughout the 1990’s. Although far right parties have yet to take hold at the national level, their success at the *Laender* and local level should cause reason for concern. Current data provided by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (2000) estimates that roughly 37,000 persons are organized in far right parties [REP, DVU, NPD].

TABLE 1.3

<b>Party</b>	<b>Membership</b>
<i>Die Republikaner</i> (REP)	14,000
<i>Deutsche Volkunion</i> (DVU)	17,000
<i>Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> (NPD)	6,000

Source: Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution: *Annual Report 1999*.

Another reason to be concerned with the sustained electoral success of right extremist parties at the expense of immigrants and foreigners is their unrepentant and fantastic assertion that Germany is not an immigration country. The REP, DVU and NPD reject any idea of a multi-cultural Germany. Rather, they choose to pervert the 1913 German citizenship law (*Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*) and the principle of *jus sanguinis*.

In a circular of of a county REP parliamentary group the party writes:

So far, the jus sanguinis principle has ensured that the character and identity of our people have been preserved at least to some extent. By abandoning this principle, the Federal Government not only gives in to the phenomenon of immigration by birth, but it also lays the foundation for the destruction of our country and our people. Germany is becoming everybody's country – a multi-cultural settlement area permeated with an ethnic patchwork. Greetings from the Balkans!! (*Gross-Gerauer Kreis Bericht*. Circular of the REP Parliamentary Group of the Gross Gerau (Hessen) County Council. 1:99:1)

To the members of the REP, DVU, and NPD the only path to German citizenship is via birth from German parents. Yet, what these individuals fail to realize is that naturalization of foreigners is taking place at record pace. And, in contrast to other republican states such as France and the United Kingdom, naturalization restrictions have been eased quite considerably. For example, the newly adopted law allows a child born in Germany from non-German parents German citizenship, if at least one of the parents has had his or her residence for eight years in Germany and possesses a secured residence status. As mentioned earlier on January 1, 2000 naturalization provisions were streamlined to enable a greater number of foreigners living in Germany to naturalize if they so choose, and the country also has in place a streamlined naturalization process for targeted specifically to Jews from the former Soviet Union (Hagedorn, 2000; Harris, 2000). German citizenship law has been amended three times in the last decade.<sup>1</sup> Table 1.4 illustrates the liberal reforms to Germany's citizenship law between 1990 – 2000.

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<sup>1</sup> The minimum residence time has been lowered from ten to eight years, compared to the requirement before the year 2000. It can be reduced for some groups for example accepted asylum seekers (7 years), German-speaking persons from Austria or Switzerland (3 years) and former Germans (immediately). Instead of "assimilation" the term „integration" has been chosen on purpose, because it supposed to underlines the possibility of cultural independence in a pluralistic society. In the administrative practice, the verification of integration is reduced to an examination of the language skills, normally a simple conversation with the applicant. The knowledge of German has to be sufficient according to the social origin and education level, which is an elastic definition (Hagedorn, 2000).

TABLE 1.4: MAJOR REFORMS OF CITIZENSHIP LAW IN GERMANY IN THE 1990S

Year	Reforms of German citizenship law
1991	Creation of the Alien Act with a chapter titled "Facilitated Naturalization"
1993	Conversion from a discretionary procedure to a legal claim on German citizenship
2000	Automatic birthright citizenship for the second generation (optional model), reduction of the minimum residence time from 15 to 8 years

Source: Hagedorn, 2000.

The REP, DVU and NPD adamantly oppose the right of any foreigner (to include E.U. nationals) to vote. Rather they urge the federal government to encourage the repatriation of immigrants and assert that the naturalization of foreigners should only be accorded to Ethnic German migrants (*Spaetaussiedler*). The right of asylum which is guaranteed in Article 16 of the Basic Law, argue the far-right, is to be tightened or all together abolished. In all party propaganda of the far-right fears of Germany's *ueberfremdung* through guest-workers, asylum seekers, war refugees, post Soviet Jewish migrants and other immigrants are seen as an immediate danger to the country's national identity.

#### **Far-Right Propaganda:**

Clearly, a central element contributing to far-right success in Germany is the high level of publicity devoted to immigration-related issues. Publicizing issues concerning sustained rates of immigration, crime, and a scarcity of jobs and housing has proven to be a successful propaganda tool of the far-right by:

- 1) Raising the profile of immigration related issues for voters.

- 2) Favoring more restrictive immigration policies than those pursued by the government (for a full discussion of the “gap hypothesis” see Cornelius, Martin, Hollifield, 1994; Hollifield, 1999). 2
- 3) Consistently espousing anti-immigration and anti-immigrant positions (Karapin, 1998:53)

Through their highly emotional and aggressive propaganda campaigns the REP, DVU and NPD stir up latent racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism. To achieve this all three parties publish their own monthly and weekly circulars: The REP publishes *Der Neue Republikaner* (The New Republican) with a circulation of 20,000 monthly; the DVU publishes the *National Zeitung* (National Newspaper) with an estimated circulation of 48,000 weekly; and the NPD publishes the *Deutsche Stimme* (German Voice) with a monthly circulation of some 10,000 copies (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution: *Annual Report 1999*). An excerpt from the June 1999 edition of *Der Neue Republikaner* reveals its rejection of the Basic Law’s model of civil rights and civil liberties by referring to equal rights, tolerance, solidarity and antiracism as pseudo-values which had watered down traditional spiritual values over the course of years.

Surely everybody knows that our much-praised Western community of shared values is sagging to ever greater depths. . . After all, during the past decades of the East-West conflict, traditional idealistic values – ranging from piety and love of our country to the devotion of mothers to home life – have been watered down by pseudo values such as equal rights, tolerance, solidarity and antiracism (*Der Neue Republikaner*. 6/99:7)

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2 Hollifield (1999) argues that the gradual extension of rights to foreigners and to ethnic minorities has transformed social policy within advanced industrial democracies and that this fundamental change has made immigration control much more difficult.

The far right's xenophobic agitation is essentially centered around the threat and elimination of the German people (Saalfeld, 1993; Kuerthen and Minkenberg, 1995; Thraenhardt, 1995; Prowe, 1997; Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, 2000). All far right parties foment fears of excessive *foreignization* and clearly wish to preserve an ethno-cultural (ascriptive) concept of German identity as found in the *jus sanguinis* principle. "So far the *jus sanguinis* principle has ensured that the character and identity of our people have been preserved at least to some extent" (Bulletin of the REP Parliamentary Group as reported in the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution: *Annual Report 1999*). Clearly, the far right's understanding of *jus sanguinis* runs counter to Germany's post-war liberal constitutional order. As noted earlier, citizenship based on *jus sanguinis* must be understood as an act of solidarity on the new Bundesrepublik as an attempt to deal justly with the consequences of the war, not as a political measure designed to enforce *Deutschtum*. In addition, the far right foster stereotypes such as the *umvolkung* of Germans (the replacement of Germans by foreigners) and by utilizing sensationalist rhetoric which read "Germans: foreigners in their own country?" and "Balkan Gypsies: one-hundred thousand coming to this country!" (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution: *Annual Report 1999*).

The far right continues to wage a virulent anti-foreigner campaign over the issue of restricting the total number of immigrants and especially asylum seekers, entering Germany. Beginning in earnest in the 1980's the far right parties have consistently called for the repeal of Germany's liberal asylum law Article 16. The far right views asylum seekers in the most negative light. The rhetoric describing asylum seekers is depreciatory, pejorative, and clearly racist. Phrases like *asylschmorotzer* (asylum parasites) and *scheinasyllanten* (paper asylum seekers) are used to describe asylum seekers and clearly reflect the far right's intolerance of foreigners. This ugly rhetoric is counterproductive toward a sympathetic understanding of the plight of asylum seekers living in Germany. To be certain, large scale immigration to Germany is real and can contribute to inter-cultural irritation and misunderstanding between culturally different people. Yet, rather than come to terms with these differences the far right chooses to adopt an imagined "racially superior" ethno-centric German identity which views multi-culturalism as Germany's eventual downfall. This aggressive racism-based xenophobia of the far right is most clearly expressed in the following NPD circular:

The race includes the spiritual/mental attitudes of a people in its race's soul. Whoever wants to enforce the multiracial concept will also wish the insidious genocide of peoples. Whoever wishes to achieve this aims at a society destroying and contemptuous of the race, at the destruction of racial unity, and thus commits a horrid crime against the peoples of our Earth . . . Another consequence of multi-culturalism is to rob peoples of their territory. Man has a bond with his territory – if you take this away from him, ethnic existence will perish as well . . . With their intrusion in foreign territories, foreign immigrants take a valuable asset away from the people: namely land. (*Deutsche Zukunft* 3:99:16).

**Closing Remarks:**

The sustained activities of nationalist and xenophobic movements throughout Germany, coupled with the search for the regulation of immigration and asylum admissions is, and will be for some time, one of the major challenges of immigration and social policy in Germany. Immigration and the far right opposition to it has become one of the most intractable issues on the policy agenda in postwar Germany. The difficulty in managing migratory movement as a result of growing "supply-push" pressures, coupled with sustained far right nationalist movements has led many to question the ability of the German government to protect the lives and properties of foreigners living there. Despite the German government's limited ability to prevent hate and intolerance from flourishing, the popularity of these far right parties is still largely localized and they remain to be locked out of the national parliament (*Bundestag*). Still the far-right's persistence at the state and local level has significant implications at the national level. As Money (1999) argues "national politicians have an incentive to adopt local preferences and translate them into policy" (p. 9). Depending on the magnitude of popular support among the far-right at the state and local level, mainstream parties at the national level may co-opt immigration issues in order to achieve electoral success (for a full discussion, Morris, 2000; Williams, 2000).

Yet, we should not underestimate the vitality of the democratic movement and devotion to democratic values among the vast majority of Germany's citizens. The German people have shown great resolve to maintain civility and a commitment to protection of human rights in the face of open hostility and violent attacks upon foreigners from far right extremists and the parties which they belong to. Virtually all major right wing events in Germany are met with an equally powerful counter demonstration. Yet, Germany still continues to see sustained criminal offenses emanating from right extremists. In 1999, for example a total of 10,037 criminal offenses were proven or suspected to have a right extremist background. Right extremist acts of violence include violent offenses with xenophobic, anti-immigrant, and anti-semitic motives (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution: 1999 Annual Report). The German government and the German people must continue to demonstrate firm resolve in crafting ways to denounce the intolerance and racism emanating from the far right. Further, Germans must continue to battle the far right's assertion that Germany should not be a multi-cultural society. Germany **IS** a nation of immigrants comprised of guestworkers and their families, refugees, asylum seekers, Soviet Jews, and ethnic German migrants. These people have every right to exist peaceably and free from discrimination and racial intolerance. They have demonstrated their faith in German democracy by making Germany their permanent home. As such they have every right to be treated equally and the right to expect that others tolerate their ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences. The German government and the many millions of Germans who are committed to democratic ideals must in turn assail all racial and xenophobic attacks emanating from the far right (whether physical or rhetorical) with a consistent and unified voice. In short the far right partisan rhetoric on immigration and an imagined national identity coupled with its fatuous ideals must be exposed, laid bare, and de-legitimized within mainstream German partisan discourse.

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