

FAULT LINES IN CIVILIZATIONS AND RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM: GERMANY'S EXPERIMENT WITH DOMESTIC RESPONSIBILITY VS. INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATION

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Introduction

The first decade of the twenty-first century had, very spontaneously, associated right-wing terrorism mostly with Islamic extremist terrorism. However, events from the second decade of the same century seem to provide a deviation in such a narrative. This is mostly due to the rise in crimes committed by far-right groups that are not Islamist (Blackbourn et al, 2019). Scholars have drawn in particular on the work of Ehud Sprinzak, who describes right-wing terrorism as a particular form of terrorism that is distinctly characterized by split delegitimization. These terrorist groups lead off by developing antagonism and conducting acts of violence against groups that they deem to be 'illegitimate' - groups that do not belong to their milieu of humanity. Violent confrontations and threatening the state are secondary; however, once assured that the government in power is being negligent in fulfilling the demands of the 'legitimate', they begin to reject the government and flout the laws. They, thus function on a dual process of delegitimization that first delegitimizes the unaccepted aggregate and later delegitimizes the government. (Sprinzak, 1995)

Daniel Koehler while offering a more recent analysis of the term 'right-

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wing terrorism', explains that it essentially involves right-wing hate crimes but, in a more amplified state. They not only perpetrate crime against the specific target group but also aim for social and political goals. Both these actions of right-wing terrorists stem from a perceived sense of inequality and threat posed by the victim or target's identity. Moreover, the use of high distance methods such as chemical weapons, arson, explosives, and firearms, are more symptomatic with terrorism than a hate crime. It is thus, a combination of the above two factors, that distinguishes right-wing terrorism from other sorts of violence. (Köehler, 2017)

However, for the purpose of perpetrating violent acts of right-wing extremism, it is imperative for the actors to be strongly indoctrinated and be disposed to the right-wing extremist ideology, thereby making extremism the starting point of right-wing terrorism.

A resurgence of right-wing extremism has concurrently highlighted the resurgence of extremist ideologies that support and supposedly substantiate hate crimes and acts of violence especially against a foreigner and more recently migrants, particularly asylum applicants or refugees (Europol, 2018). The influx of refugees into Europe is one of the many discernible impacts of the Syrian conflict. In 2015 alone, over 1, 000, 573 reportedly travelled to Europe to seek refuge (Clayton & Holland, 2015).

A parallel ascendancy of far-right political parties and nationalist tendencies, accompanied by the lack of trust in the political frameworks that exist (Park, 2015), has begun to reveal the fractures in the European society that has for very long, been portrayed as an epitome of cooperation, unity, and homogeneity. In addition to these rising political cleavages, the security threat posed by the spread of terrorism from war-torn regions of Syria and Afghanistan, into Europe is also an increasing area of concern (Brady, 2017).

In the light of these circumstances, it has been observed that a majority of the European nations are leaning towards inward-looking policies, that are favorable for the domestic population (Martens, 2012). Though not necessary, this has also led to the germination of anti-immigrant sentiments and more specifically against refugees and asylum seekers, with a simultaneous rise in right-wing discourses and extremism also observed since 2015.

Of tremendous significance to this phenomenon, is Germany. Among the European countries, Germany has hosted the highest number of refugees. The number of refugees in Germany as of 2018 was 1,063,837. This is the highest number in Germany since 1993, when the refugee population accounted for 1,418,000 (The World Bank, 2018). Germany, however, displays a very peculiar case of its responses to the refugee situation as it faces a serious conundrum between domestic responsibility and international obligation.

The domestic responsibility at hand is to cater to the concerns and fears of the domestic population being threatened by the existence of refugees in the mainstream society (chiefly threatened in terms of security and identity), even if these threats might not be well founded. The international responsibility is to guarantee the safety, security, and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers, for which, curbing acts of right-wing extremism and preventing savageries of the far right, are integral to the process.

This paper addresses such a trajectory in Germany, against the influx of migrants, while analyzing the spectrum of right-wing extremism between 2015-2018. The theories of populism and Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilisations thesis have been employed in an attempt to further understand the nuances of right-wing extremism. The research concludes with the approaches of the government in this regard, while simultaneously proposing that the adoption of stringent punitive measures is likely to expedite the crackdown against right-wing extremism.

Contextualizing the Rise of Right-Wing Extremism Against the Background of the Refugee Crisis – 2015

Part I Article 16a of the Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany) grants the right of asylum to people persecuted on political grounds (Bundesamt für Justiz, n.d.). The Federal Republic of Germany is also a signatory of the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951) & (1967) which obliges them to comply with the provisions provided in the Convention (UN General Assembly, 1951, 1967). Hence, in compliance with these frameworks, Germany has been consistently accepting asylum applications.

From among the pool of asylum applicants, Syrians represent the largest majority, from 2015-2018. They are followed by applicants who are mostly of Non-west European descent, from places including Iran, Kosovo, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, among others. A majority of the asylum applications are from those who have identified themselves as Muslims, forming 73.1 percent of the total number of applicants in 2015 and 60.9 percent in 2018 (Das Bundesamt in Zahlen 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018). While a majority of Germans are either Christians or unaffiliated to any religion (Kanning, 2019).

There is a fundamental difference in the ethnicity, religion, and culture of the actors involved. Populist parties such as the Alternative for Germany [Alternative für Deutschland- AfD] have capitalized on the difference in the

cultural variables to garner support and votes by (Colla, 2018) claiming that refugees pose a threat to the German identity, thereby making the identity variable key to such political nuances.

Europe has popularly promoted itself as an entity that espouses homogenous sensibilities and identities. The foremost juncture of cohesion for this continent was Christianity, which though established in Asia, later came to assume a European identity. Another common force that brought Europe together was the Latin language. It was widely used for official purposes across Europe, until the eighteenth century. Europeans would often invoke Roman laws and the Greco-Roman culture to trace back their political and cultural heritage. Such homogeneity was more enforced than naturally found. Historians and philosophers such as Strabo, Herodotus, and Hegel, have in their times, constantly reinforced the idea of Europe occupying a pivotal position in the world. According to Strabo, no other region in the world has been able to achieve a harmony between the Greek dialectic of the world of nature and the world of men. Remarks such as these are recurrent, until the nineteenth century (Pagden, A. 2002). Such coercive homogenization or projection of an imagined superiority based on an imagined reality was however never questioned or debated in public discourses.

However, nuances in the reception of refugees, whether positive or negative will be keenly observed in a world, such as ours, that is connected more than ever. The resultant nexus between international organizations, the state, support groups, the vigilante, and civil society, facilitates the creation of platforms for deconstructing and sifting through the varied responses to the refugee crisis.

In addition to this increased situational awareness that globalization has availed the masses, is the emerging focus on non-traditional security. The value of human life has become ever more important with the emergence of the novel primacy accorded to non-traditional security. The significance given to human security, is unlike before, being discussed with equal primacy to the state, around which security discussions previously revolved (Singh & Nunes, 2016).

Right-wing extremism is symptomatic of the serious security threat that non-traditional security speaks of, with refugees and migrants turning into victims of the ethnocentric savagery of right-wing extremists. Germany presents a curious case of right-wing extremism, where, on one hand, former Chancellor Angela Merkel's government implements pro-migration policies and on the other, protests with neofascists trends are on a rise (Baradat & Phillips, 2016).

Right-Wing Extremism in Germany – Conceptual Framework and Reality

Right-wing extremist groups aim towards creating a society and eventually a state with a specific ethnic group, or a shared racial identity. An authoritarian rule further, facilitates this process. The Nazi rule, upholding Nordic-Aryan supremacy, and the subsequent Jewish persecutions through the Holocaust, testify that right-wing extremist rhetoric along with the support of an authoritarian state has been a successful *modus operandi* for right wing extremists, which has additionally led to grave human rights violations.

Victims of right-wing violence do not belong to a particular ethnicity or nationality. They are targeted by virtue of being a ‘foreigner’ or an individual of non-German descent (Coester, 2010). The idea of *Volksgemeinschaft* aids in explaining such hostility.

The central tenet of right-wing groups in Germany, is the idea of ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’. Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto opine that this concept is to be understood with the meaning and the idea of ‘*volk*’ which as most would perceive, does not merely translate to people. National socialists considered *volk* to be a timeless entity and therefore, included the dead, the living, and the posterity. The existence and the demeanor of the *volk* were determined by their race. Nazi Germany believed that the German *volk* had been deprived of survival especially under the Weimar Republic and therefore were determined to amend their predicament by creating a ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’. The German society was thus divided into two groups: *volksgenossen* – who were to become members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*; and ‘the others’ who would be deprived of the benefits that the *volksgenossen* were to be privileged with. (Steber & Gotto, 2014)

Volksgemeinschaft was seen as an emancipatory concept that yearned for an imagined German society. It was an ideal on the basis of which the Nazi party socially engineered the social, political and, private lives of individuals in the German society. (Steber & Gotto, 2014) The idea promised the German *volk* of a luminous future. It was a collective spirit that was ultimately aimed at the individual by determining whether the individual was worthy to be deemed a ‘*volk*’ or were they to be annihilated because they were ‘the other’ otherwise known as ‘*Gemeinschaftsfremde*’ (community aliens). However, in order to fully realize the ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’, a framework was required. The Nazi regime, led by Hitler, served the purpose of creating the national community in Germany. Hence, the ultimate aim of ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’ was to create a national community that is racially homogeneous.

The resurgence of right-wing extremist groups has been visible in Germany, especially after 2015. The years 2015-2017, have seen a rise in the influx of migrants, mostly in the form of asylum applicants, who migrate from war-torn regions, in anticipation of receiving refuge in countries that are relatively stable. The rise of right-wing extremism may not be completely novel to German society. The antecedents of such events can be traced back to the Holocaust and the Nazi regime and in the 1990s, during the Yugoslavian civil war, leading to the influx of migrants into Germany, with a consequent increase in the incidence of arson attacks on shelters and hostels that housed refugees, asylum seekers, and migrant workers, especially in East Germany. (Hille, 2020; Jegic, 2018)

All the above instances occurred in different international and domestic political landscapes. Despite this difference, there has been a similar pattern of response from right-wing extremists. And therefore, it is important to identify the point of cohesion that has led to cause its recurrence, irrespective of the political environment.

The Right-Wing Extremist Spectrum in Germany 2015-2018

With the increase in asylum applications following the Syrian Civil War, there was also a parallel rise in the membership of right-wing extremist groups in Germany. The Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz [BfV-Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution] categorizes these groups into: political parties, associations that are independent of political parties, unstructured or sub-cultural groups, and violent right-wing extremists. (BfV, n.d-a.). What follows is a bird's-eye view of such a spectrum. The numbers and the data have been derived from the Annual State Reports of the Verfassungsschutz (Office for the Protection of the Constitution), which is either a semi-independent security agency, answerable to the State Ministry of Interior or a security department within the said Ministry of any given state.

Right Wing Extremist Political Parties

AfD is the most prominent right-wing political party, that has been able to secure seats in the Bundestag after the 2017 elections (Clarke, 2017). There are, however, other political parties at the state level, that work with great efficacy towards the promotion and indoctrination of right-wing extremism and are often even supporters of violent right-wing activities. These political parties include the National Democratic Party (NPD), Die Rechte and Der III.

Weg.

Established in 1964, NPD is the oldest right-wing political party that continues to exist in Germany. The 1960s and 1990s were the only two periods where the party enjoyed significant support (Counter Extremism Project, n.d.). The Hanover-based party, strongly positions itself against immigration, asylum seekers, pro-migration policies, and against liberalization and privatization. (NPD Landesverband Schleswig-Holstein, n.d.). German authorities such as the German Federal Council, have remained unsuccessful in banning the political party, despite repeated attempts in 2003, 2013, and 2016. (Counter Extremism Project, n.d.).

Unlike NPD, 'Die Rechte' is a relatively new political party that was established in 2012 by Christian Worch, a well-known neo-Nazi in Germany (Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz [LfV] Baden-Württemberg, 2018). The party is believed to be relatively moderate as compared to NPD, in its right-wing extremist activities. However, even Die Rechte opposes immigration. The party is known to conduct its activities with a close resemblance to the erstwhile Nazis – especially with regard to the symbols used. It is known for manipulating media in a provocative manner yet within the bounds of legality (Schumacher, 2015). Like the Die Rechte, the Der III Weg party is also a recently established political party, with most of its members from the NPD or the banned neo-Nazi group of 'Free Network South'. (FOIA Research, 2019). In its ten-point program, the fourth point reads: 'Preserving our homeland', in which the party members see asylum seekers and foreigners as a threat to the German identity (Der Dritte Weg, 2016). Despite not having a seat in the parliament, the above three political parties have a strong influence on German civil society.

While membership for NPD and DIE RECHTE has been decreasing across the years, it has been the reverse for DER III.WEG, especially in the states of Saxony and Bavaria (LfV Sachsen, 2019; Bayerischen LfV, 2019). The Der III Weg has also published online guidelines to disrupt asylum seekers' camps and shelters. Similarly, Die Rechte has periodically advocated against refugee and asylum centers in their protests at North-Rhine – Westphalia (BfV, n.d-b). The two parties have been very explicit in their extremist stance against refugees and asylum seekers.

The only right-wing party that has effective political control is the Alternative for Deutschland, with 89 seats in the 19th German Bundestag. It was the third largest party in the Bundestag, after the CDU/CSU coalition and the SPD in 2020, and continues to remain an active member of the Bundestag following the 2021 federal elections (German Bundestag, 2020). Securing seats in the Bundestag has given the party significant leverage in

influencing legislation, especially with regard to the migration conundrum, that they have been so strongly opposing.

Right Wing Structures or Associations – Independent of a Political Party

Associations or subcultural groups like the Pro-Chemnitz or the Identitarian Movement come under this category. The adherents of the Identitarian Movement believe that a homogenous population is a necessary pre-requisite for a stable society and therefore, they are firm dissidents of a multicultural environment. They strongly oppose the pro-migration stance of the central government and condemn the inflow of refugees. They conduct events such as speeches, presentations, music concerts, and exhibitions (LfV Baden-Württemberg, 2019). Voicing their opinion via such means may not be undemocratic. However, their belief in ethnic homogeneity, eliminating the 'other', and the expression of such a belief by using symbols or rhetoric that bears an uncanny resemblance to Nazism, is certainly against the Basic Law of the country and therefore a form of extremism. Such mediums of propagation, work more effectively in warranting acts of violence and indoctrinating the masses.

As of 2018, Saxony appears to be the state with the highest number of such extremists, with a potential of 1050 people in 2018 alone (LfV Sachsen, 2019). An increased potential was also noticed in the states of Berlin, Baden Württemberg, Brandenburg, Thuringia and Hamburg (Abteilung Verfassungsschutz – Berlin, 2019; LfV Baden-Württemberg, 2019; Abteilung Verfassungsschutz – Brandenburg 2019; Amt für Verfassungsschutz – Thüringen, 2019; LfV Hamburg, 2019)..

Unstructured Right-Wing Extremist Potential

Unstructured right-wing extremism includes those extremists who are usually attendees of right-wing extremist events such as music concerts or events for leisure. (BfV, n.d-c.). Saxony and Bavaria lead the list under unstructured right-wing extremist potential, with an increase in their numbers from 2017 to 2018 (LfV Sachsen, 2019; Bayerischen LfV, 2019). The 2018 Reports of the State Office For the Protection of the Constitution, also illustrates the steady rise of unstructured right-wing extremist potential in East and South Germany.

Violent Right-Wing Extremists

There has been a substantial increase in the number of violent right-wing extremists in the states of Saxony and Brandenburg, with a potential of more than 1000 in both the states (LfV Sachsen, 2019; Abteilung Verfassungsschutz – Brandenburg, 2019). While the number has been stable for most of the states, the figures for 8 out of 16 states are in the range of 600-1000 members. These states are Bavaria, Lower Saxony, Baden Württemberg, Berlin, Mecklenberg – Vorpommern and Hesse (Bayerischen LfV, 2019; Abteilung Verfassungsschutz - Niedersächsisches, 2019; LfV Baden-Württemberg, 2019; Abteilung Verfassungsschutz Mecklenburg-Vorpommern 2019; LfV Hessen, 2019).

Right-Wing Extremist Potential – Total Membership

The total membership includes the cumulative membership in the aforementioned 4 categories, after deducting multiple memberships. The 2018 Verfassungsschutz Reports (2019), have projected an increase in the total right-wing extremist potential across six states: Baden Württemberg, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Hesse, Hamburg, and Saxony - from 2017 to 2018. However, of extreme concern, is the number of right-wing extremists in Hesse (LfV Hessen, 2019) and Saxony (LfV Sachsen, 2019), where the potential has progressively increased from 2015 to 2018. Saxony is seen to have the maximum membership, across most of the above four categories, with the only exception in the category of political parties (LfV Sachsen, 2019). Its neighboring state of Bavaria has a similar predicament, with the second-largest number of right-wing extremists (Bayerischen LfV, 2019).

To further complement this data from the Verfassungsschutz Reports, is the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) published by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (2018), which records a total of 145 terrorist attacks in Germany, from 2015-2018. Out of the 145 attacks, 73 terrorist attacks have been committed with the motive of right-wing extremism. For most of the data, the motive does not explicitly state right-wing extremism nor is the perpetrator of the crime known; however, there are a few attacks for which groups such as the Freital group, neo-Nazi extremists, Der III. Weg, PEGIDA, and anti-immigrant extremists have been identified as perpetrators of these crimes. For the terrorist attacks that have ‘unknown’ perpetrators, the source from which the data for GTD has been retrieved, states that the suspects have either had xenophobic motives or an act of violence against refugees, as their motive. Almost 87 percent of the

right-wing terrorist attacks have targeted refugees, with most attacks recorded at refugee camps or shelters. (National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, 2018)

The above data would also imply that nearly half of the terrorist attacks in Germany between 2015 and 2018 have been a result of right-wing extremism against refugees and migrants. Despite an increase in acts resembling terrorism from the right-wing, the gravity of the criminal act is often underestimated as compared to Islamic terrorism. On several occasions, right-wing terrorism, is not classified as terrorist activity and is merely given the title of a hate crime (Doering & Davies, 2019). The numbers have dwindled from 2015 to 2018. Nevertheless, one cannot be sure, if these have genuinely reduced or merely not been reported or recorded as acts of terrorism.

In most of the data from the Verfassungsschutz Reports and the Global Terrorism Database, right-wing extremist membership and incidents of terror attacks and violent extremism appears to be concentrated in Saxony, Bavaria (East German states), and Hesse. The relatively stronger support for right-wing elements in East Germany as compared to West Germany is often argued to exist due to the historical processes that West Germany has witnessed prior to their re-unification, unlike the East. West Germany had experienced the migration of ethnic Germans from eastern Europe to the Federal Republic of Germany, unlike East Germany (Hayes & Dudek, 2019). Additionally, the Federal Republic of Germany was one of the initial signatories to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol, while the German Democratic Republic had not been a signatory to either the Convention or the Protocol (UN General Assembly, 1951,1967). The Federal Republic of Germany is thus seen to have accepted refugees and asylum seekers from East European nations since the 1950s (Oltmer, 2017).

Therefore, the 2015 refugee influx was not novel to them in the phenomenon, but certainly in numbers. However, the same cannot be said for the regions that previously occupied the German Democratic Republic, as asylum applications and refugee migration have been a disconnected part of their history for four decades after their establishment, until the 1990s.

It was during the Yugoslav wars and the Bosnian crisis that Germany received an increasing number of asylum seekers. While this was previously witnessed by West Germany, it was a new and invidious phenomenon for the East Germans. This was accompanied by a simultaneous rise in xenophobia and right-wing extremism (Hageboutros, 2016). The contemporary scene does not differ much from the precedent that was set in the 1990s.

However, scholars find it difficult in explaining events that trigger

the growth of right-wing extremism. Thus, many of them have drawn in particular on the work of Lauren M. McLaren. She provides three factors that act as a trigger for right-wing ideology to further provide stronger currency to right-wing extremism. These three factors are: immigration, slow economy, and unemployment (McLaren, 1999). Germany seemed to be experiencing two of these three factors, between 2015-2018. Immigration has increased after 2015, due to the increase in the refugee influx. The German economy hit its lowest economic growth at 1.5 percent in 2018, in the last 5 years (Jones, 2019). However, the rate of unemployment unlike what McLaren suggests has not been high. Rather the unemployment rate is the lowest in the last 15 years and has progressively reduced from 2015 to 2018 (Trading Economics, 2020). Such a framework may have worked to explain the causes behind the German right-wing extremist scene in the 1990s; however, the current extremist scene goes beyond such an economic pretext.

Right Wing Extremism: A Ramification of the Clash of Civilisations and Populism

While a combination of economic parameters may be helpful to explain the rise of right-wing extremism, the political theory of populism lends lucidity for the purposes of interpreting such an emergence, owing to the importance it accords to the identity and cultural variables. The intersection of Right-wing Populism with Huntington's Clash of Civilizations further aids in comprehending such an upsurge, from 2015-2018.

Populism as a concept is a highly contested one. Though there is no wide consensus on its definition, there are however, three chief approaches to this concept:

1. The Ideational approach
2. The Political – strategic approach
3. The Socio-cultural approach

Scholars that seek to define populism through the ideational approach such as Ernesto Laclau, Terence Ball, and Cas Mudde believe it to be an ideology. Mudde defines it as an ideology, wherein the society is bifurcated between 2 groups: 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite' and that politics should revolve around fulfilling the general will of the people. He further clarifies that in this context, 'the pure people' does not imply racial or ethnic

divisions, but rather is based on morality or the state of 'not being corrupt' and therefore authentic and pure (Mudde, 2017).

The political-strategic approach, on the other hand, defines populism as a means by which a personalistic leader engages or mobilizes the masses. The general will of the people is carried out by this leader, whom they follow. The leader may take advantage of adversity and maneuver the situation to increase his/her popularity (Weyland, 2017). Finally, the socio-cultural approach employs the concepts of the 'native' and the 'other'. The native represents the neglected populace, who are also variously referred to as 'Us' or the 'Self'; they are usually culturally popular. Whereas the 'other' is antithetical to this identity of the true 'us-ness', that the 'native' represents (Ostiguy, 2017).

Political parties such as the National Rally (France), Jobbik party of Hungary, Alternative for Germany, and UK Independence Party, are all linked with the common thread of being a right-wing populist party (Wike et al., 2019). Political parties such as these, have expressed their animosity towards patterns of migration into Europe; they are vastly concerned about preserving the European culture and criticize globalization and representative democracy. However, the most distinctive feature of such populist groups is the political struggle between the 'pure people' and 'the other' or 'the corrupt elite' (Kaya, 2018).

The 'other' may comprise of any individual who does not befit the parameters that accord an individual of belonging to the 'pure people'. Most of the time these parameters are set on the basis of cultural identities such as religion, ethnicity, language, race, etc. (Havertz, 2019). Therefore, at the core of right-wing populism is the sharp distinction of the individual's identity. Right-wing populism is therefore predominantly driven by the socio-cultural approach of Populism.

Nativism, which is an important part of right-wing populism, seeks to safeguard the interests of the natives; nativists perceive foreign elements as a threat to their interests. While the Germans, form the 'natives', every refugee or asylum applicant is a foreigner to the nativist. They stand in strong opposition to the government as they believe that the government is no longer safeguarding their interests, by making concessions for refugees through pro-migration policies; thereby, making the nativists believe that the government forms the 'political elite' (Hayes & Dudek, 2019). In the German Right-wing populist scene, political parties such as CSU and CSD with their pro-migration and pro-refugee stance, form the corrupt elite for right-wing populists. Political parties such as the AfD are believed to re-emphasize the idea of *volgemeinschaft* and the *volk* and also represent the 'people' or

‘natives’.

One might misconstrue that right-wing populism functions mostly at a cultural ideological level. However, Mabel Berezin’s analysis of the same proves otherwise. She provides insights into two analytical axes, that assess the success of a right-wing populist party: institutional and cultural. The socio-economic and cultural resentment together provide fodder for the proliferation of such political parties. However, culturalization of all complex issues of societal, economic, and political nature, is a maneuver that has gained wide currency among Right wing populists (Kaya, 2018). Such an inclination towards politicizing cultural fault lines, is elicited in Samuel Huntington’s thesis on the ‘Clash of Civilizations’.

Huntington in his thesis hypothesizes that global politics in the new world, post-Cold War, will be dictated by cultural conflicts. There will be divisions between cultures via different civilizations, civilization being the highest and broadest level of identification of an individual. He rationalizes the clash of civilizations by pointing out that civilizational differences have emerged through centuries, and therefore it is immutable and fundamental to an individual. The increasing interaction between the civilizations will expose each other to their similarities, differences and most importantly an awareness of the existence of the other. This may more often than not, lead to clashes between the different civilizational individuals. Huntington also points out to the rise in religious fundamentalism in all religions as a cause for this civilizational conflict. (Huntington, 1993/2013)

The success of regional cooperation, in which the member states share cultural similarities, would indirectly also suggest the success of the cultural and civilizational model, of which they are inheritors (Huntington, 1993/2013). For instance: the success or the failure of the European Union, would imply the success or the failure of the European civilization and culture, on the foundation of which such a cooperation is based. Huntington further built his theory, on HDS Grenway’s ‘kin country syndrome’, that appears to be an integral part of the civilizational war. According to this syndrome, one group within a civilization attempts to garner the support of varied groups within the same civilization, in order to fight against ‘the other’ (Nossal, 2018). The German right-wing extremist scene isn’t very different and therefore, groups such as the Identitarian movement, the Pro-Chemnitz group, or the PEGIDA work on a matrix that Grenway proposes and Huntington further builds on.

PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the West) - based in Dresden, the movement opposes immigration and the growth of Islamic extremism in Germany (Knight, 2017). Since mid-2014, PEGIDA inspired protests, have unravelled in cities across Europe such as Prague,

Calais, Amsterdam, chanting slogans such as 'Shut the border', 'Ban Islam in Czech Republic', Etc. (Hentschel, 2016). Fortress Europe, a by-product of the cooperation among anti-Islam groups across Europe, spearheaded by PEGIDA Germany, seeks to protect European culture and identity by closing borders, as they view immigrants and especially Muslims as a threat to the European identity. (Volk, 2016)

Huntington further proposes that future international conflicts and politics will be dominated specifically by the clash of the western-European civilization with that of the Islamic, Slavic-orthodoxy and African civilizations. (Huntington, 1993/2013) These civilizations possess among them deep seated cultural differences. Because these cultural differences are found in more embedded forms as compared to political differences and ideologies – when used for political manifestos and by political parties, they work more effectively in indoctrination as well as pursuing the masses in comparison to selling the idea of welfare, globalism et al. Right wing populist politicians, religious leaders and media have found increasing cleavages between the civilizational lines as a potent means of arousing mass support and of pressuring hesitant governments to pass hard policies on refugees and asylum seekers.

Responses of the Bundestag: A Conundrum of Sorts

With pro-migration responses and policies in place, the German government has largely been in favor of creating domestic environments that are secure for migrants and refugees. However, discontent for such an approach has been manifested through populist tendencies, protests in various forms, right-wing extremist violence, and propagation of the elimination of the 'other'.

The German government is skeptical towards adopting a hard stance on refugees and migration such as Austria and Italy, already have (Barry, 2018). The above dichotomy in the responses to the refugee population in Germany, would probably make the serious challenges faced by the incumbent government in Germany, more discernible. The government faces a dual challenge. Germany having signed the Refugee Convention of 1951, is obliged to receive refugees after a thorough application and interview process; the accepted applicants are then expected to be sheltered and assimilated into the mainstream society (UN General Assembly, 1951).

However, the government is also faced with the consequent challenge of its domestic accountability and responsibility of fulfilling the citizens' demands. The perceived threat of the 'refugee' to the German 'volk', is a subject that the government cannot elude. Moreover, any visible tendencies

of the far-right in Germany, have often witnessed severe criticism from the international community, as most would return to the discourses of World War II and eventually put the blame on Germany. Thus, Germany, today, stands on the tip of a melting iceberg.

The German state holds the collective memory of the past and has institutionalized it as antithetical to its modern national identity, also known as ‘*vergangenheitsbewältigung*’. However, right wing populist political parties, are influenced by an ideology that is based on the collective idea that Nazi’s propagated, which goes against the identity of the modern political state. Moreover, the German collective past has mostly been stigmatized and their collective memory has been of an attempt to overcome their fascist past. Such a collective memory plays an important role in preventing right-wing political parties from influencing major decisions of the government (Hayes and Dudek, 2019). Therefore, in the initial years of the refugee crisis, Germany was seen to be receiving and accepting the maximum asylum applications, among the European nations (The World Bank, 2018). Had there been a right-wing party at the fore, such as the Freedom Party of Austria, the asylum acceptance rate would have differed drastically.

A right-wing political party could manifest its presence at the central level by either being a part of the opposition or a part of the coalition government. Such circumstances would befit a right-wing political party to advocate and proselytize their ideas on anti-immigration and their perceived notion of the identity threat, which is often believed to be a result of immigration. An extreme form of advocacy of right-wing ideas at the central level would even warrant right-wing extremist activities that could be of violent or non-violent natures. (Hayes & Dudek, 2019).

Therefore, in an attempt to appease all stakeholders and domestic and global actors, Germany passed the Deportation law in 2019 (Mischke, 2019) and has also been simultaneously aiding safe third countries. One such aid is the financial aid of more than 290 million euros that Germany provided to Jordan in 2018. Germany has promised cooperation in supporting Jordanian communities that are hosting a large number of Syrian refugees. Similar financial aids have been provided to Lebanon and Turkey, especially to communities that share close borders with Syria, and where the refugee population is concentrated. (Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015).

Final Remarks

There is no contention on the rise of right-wing political parties or ideologies, as every citizen is entitled to voice their political opinion. However, their transition into extremist factions puts forth a security risk and is of prime concern to the foray of human rights that one is entitled to and is especially a violation of Articles 2 and 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 2 guarantees the right to an entitlement of all the rights enshrined in the UDHR without discrimination of any kind. Article 3 guarantees the liberty and security of a person (UN General Assembly, 1948). Acts of right-wing extremism are not only discriminatory on the basis of their religion, country, and culture, but also, a violation of the security of refugees, asylum seekers, or those who are perceived as a foreigner or 'the other'.

Conflicts such as these, that stem from cultural differences ought to be resolved in a more holistic manner. One such measure that Germany follows is the Exit Program, supervised by the 'Federal Government Strategy to prevent Extremism and Promote Democracy'. It is a Counter Violent Extremism (CVE) strategy, launched in 2000, with the aim to deradicalize right-wing extremists. The program includes counselling and family support. NGO's such as LidiceHaus, in Bremen further assist the program by providing counselling services and training (Hardy, 2019).

Another Federal Agency that is key to preventing and controlling right-wing extremism is The Bundesamt fur Verfassungsschutz (BfV - The Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), which was established to ensure the free democratic basic order, in accordance with Article 21 of the Grundgesetz fur die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (the German Constitution). The BfV, believes right-wing extremism to undermine this free democratic order; it possesses the authority to ban political parties and groups that facilitate any sort of extremism (Coester, 2010). This Federal Agency believes right-wing extremism, to be a major social problem, and therefore they have taken precautionary measures such as dropout programs known as Aussteigerprogramm (Bundesamt Fur Verfassungsschutz, n.d-d), that offers assistance for citizens willing to opt out of right-wing extremist associations.

While awareness and sensitization could be at the root of such solutions, stronger punitive measures for right-wing extremist violence could complement CVE programs. Just as one would strongly condemn Islamic extremism, right-wing violent extremism by any other religious group or cultural orientation should also be condoned and met with strong resistance.

The rise of right-wing extremism against the background of the migration of refugees and asylum seekers displays not just hostility for 'the other' but also a very ethnocentric approach that is contrary to the current

trends of globalization and multiculturalism. Acts of extremism, terror attacks, and hate crimes against refugees originating from war-torn countries and who have suffered political and religious persecution, would destroy the very purpose of their sought for refuge. The other alternative would be a civilizational conflict, which would essentially close boundaries and economic and political frameworks that were in the first place, created by these very nations that seek border controls today. Thereby, also implying a reversal of every political development that was embarked on, across a period of 70 years, beginning from the 1950s.

Key to such a potential reversal is the role of the right-wing AfD party that has not been able to secure as many seats following the German Bundestag elections in 2021, as it did in the 2017 elections. However, the party continues to remain a strong adherent of the right-wing ideology. Simultaneously, of concern is the uptick in the incidence of right-wing extremist groups capitalizing on more pressing issues, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the climate crisis, with several of such groups posing to be outlets for lockdown opponents and climate-change skeptics. The above is indicative of the strengthened presence of the right-wing extremist spectrum in mainstream society. With this, the potential for states to transform into inward-looking entities, as already witnessed in the COVID-19 vaccine nationalism demonstrated regionwide, is likely, as such ideas are liable to gain more traction, especially given the severe health and economic crisis that countries witnessed worldwide. The polarized environment is liable to strengthen in subtle ways, while eventually creating a wider scope for the proliferation of far-right sentiments in key political and economic decisions of Western nation-states.

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ABSTRACT

The influx of refugees in 2015- an aftermath of the Syrian Civil War, propelled European leadership into a predicament of maintaining a cautious balance between international obligations and domestic responsibilities. While most nations adopted harder migration policies, Germany decided to navigate through such a conundrum by adopting pro-migration policies. However, the simultaneous rise in right-wing extremism posed a significant threat to those who were considered to be 'non-German'. The paper thus analyses the right-wing extremist spectrum in Germany from 2015-2018 and further employs The Clash of Civilisations thesis with Populism to explain the upsurge in right-wing extremism.

KEYWORDS

Right-Wing Extremism; Populism; Clash of Civilizations; Germany.

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