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# The New Millennium's Extremist Political Parties in Germany and France

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**Abstract:** With the rise of extremist and populist parties in Germany and France in the last several years, many are asking why and how. By examining these parties' histories, platforms, their voter makeup, and their ability to interact in a democracy, we can begin to decipher why people have voted for these parties in the past and why more and more are voting for extremist parties nowadays. Then, looking at actual voter percentages for these parties in a single extremist aggregate, we can see the relation they have to economic trends which may effect voter psychology when coupled with the inability of the mainstream political parties to successfully implement solutions to these problems.

The results show a startling connection between the extreme right and left; large numbers of previously extreme right voters have decided to vote for the extreme left, and vice-versa. This helps us to view extremist parties not in terms of just *extremists*, but rather in terms of *core*, partisan ideologically driven voters and of easily pressured *rim* voters, those who switch from the extreme Left to the extreme Right. The rim is therefore the focus of this analysis, and it can be conceptually identified in graphs of the extremist voter aggregate in Germany and France from 1945 to the year 2002. This gives us an all-encompassing view of the extremist parties in Germany and France, and despite the severely different extremist traditions in either country, this study shows that in the new millennium, both countries' extremist parties are powered by socioeconomic problems and related issues.

**Keywords:** extremist Left and Right parties, Germany, France, socioeconomic, voter aggregate, NPD, PDS, Saxony, Brandenburg, neo-Nazi, communist

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## I. Introduction

A comparison of recent elections in Germany and France reveals a significantly stronger disposition towards the extreme right and left than in past years. In the recent local parliament elections of 2004 in Saxony and Brandenburg, the votes going to the two left and right mainstream parties, the SPD (Social Democratic Party) and the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) have drawn back significantly since the 1999 elections. The results show significant gains for the extreme Left and Right. In Saxony, the NPD (National-Democratic German Party) gained 39,000 votes from the CDU, 10,000 from the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism), 3,000 from the SPD, 1,000 from the FDP (Free Democratic Party), and 10,000 that were previously scattered among smaller, most likely extreme rightist parties. Most of its gains, 65,000 votes, constituted a large number of first time voters. The extreme leftist party, the PDS, made more modest gains, but still took 23,000 votes from the CDU, and 2,000 from other smaller parties. Most of its gains, 24,000 votes, came from new voters as well. In the Brandenburg elections, the DVU (German People's Union) made modest gains of 10,000 votes since the 1999 election, and the PDS gained significantly, putting it close to the SPD's voter percentage--currently the plurality. 7,000 votes came from SPD voters, 11,000 from the CDU, 2,000 from the DVU, and 50,000 from new voters. These 50,000 votes represent 26% of the first time voters in Brandenburg. These election results show a disturbing victory for the extreme left and right parties in the new millennium. Perhaps the answer to their success this time around lies in the Hartz IV reforms, the most important and debated issue amongst both political extremes. This set of reforms deals mostly with unemployment compensation and social welfare issues which have arisen out of the crass economic situation in Eastern Germany (<http://www.tagesschau.de/static/wahl/2004/brandenburg-sachsen/choice.html>). These socioeconomic issues are likely to provide the backbone for these parties' recent successes. An analysis of extremist party voting trends will be conducted further along in this paper to ascertain the ties between socioeconomic issues and popular extremist party voting trends.

In France, the 2002 Presidential election gave Jean-Marie Le Pen the second highest plurality of votes, riding on the FN (National Front) ticket. Although the second round of voting added little support to the FN vote, the issues of the extreme right in France came to the forefront as their party then held the political spotlight for a significant election

(<http://www.ifes.org/eguide/resultsum/france-pres-res02.htm>). Among these issues, two of the more prevalent were the repatriation of foreigners back to their homelands and the secession from the European Union (Ivaldi 4). In order that we do not limit our examination of voting trends simply to socioeconomic matters, these issues will also be examined through media portrayal and popularity. Although one can draw connections between socioeconomic matters and anti-foreigner sentiment, we should still examine each in its own before drawing any conclusions.

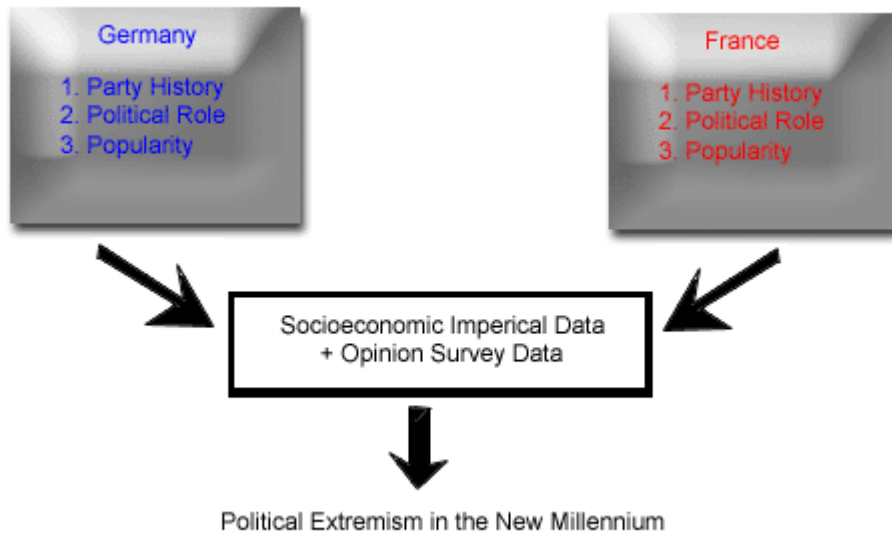


Fig 1.1. Conceptual Framework

While there is a clear contrast between France and Germany in respect to the identity and tradition of their respective extreme right and left political parties, an analysis of each party's platform, its role within a democratic government, and its periods of growth and decline, we will be able to make conclusions about the role of the extreme right and left in the new millennium.

## II. The Extreme Right and Left

The above description of recent election results of left and right extremist parties provides an adequate introduction to the far left and right parties of Germany and France, but in order to understand their roles in the twenty-first century we must first analyze the history of these parties, their platforms, their electorate, and any recent success or failure.

### Germany

#### *a. NPD*

Notwithstanding, the NPD is the oldest extremist party still alive in Germany. Founded at the end of 1964, it mostly picked up where the DRP (German Reich Party) left off, but it introduced some newer aspects too. Reconciling Germany's NAZI past and building a strong Germany through authoritarian and militaristic means were not new to extreme rightist parties in Germany during and after reconstruction. However, the NPD was revolutionary in regard to bringing the anti-immigrant and anti-consumerist/anti-Americanization dimensions into the extreme rightist party line. In the 1966 and 1968 local parliamentary elections, the NPD made gains past the five percent mark in seven of the eight federal districts. In number of gains this meant 61 new seats for the NPD. This success can be largely attributed to the first economic slump since the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany. However, in the 1969 national elections, the NPD failed to make five percent of the vote, and in addition the CDU made adjustments to its platform which took away a significant party base and presence that the NPD once had (Ignazi 67). Throughout the 80's with the entrance of the REP (The Republicans), a professed modern extreme rightist party, the NPD sidelined to more violent and less political activity by growing ties with violent neo-Nazi groups (Ignazi 71). Although somewhat overlooked as political activity, this grassroots sort of campaigning--if it can be called that--would later pay off. Toward the end of the millennium, the NPD concentrated most of its efforts on the newly incorporated Eastern federal districts, and up until the 2004 election, no noticeable gains had been made.

In 2004, at the time of writing this, the NPD have joined together with the DVU in hopes of getting a five percent vote in the next parliamentary election on a single ticket. They offered the REP a place in this alliance, but the REP refused the offer due to the NPD and DVU's antidemocratic neo-Nazi tactics (<http://www.n-tv.de/5455121.html>). The NPD currently adheres to a "three column" approach to political efficacy: 1. "Battle for the Streets," demonstrations and public exhibitions, 2. "Battle for the Parliaments," partaking in elections, and 3. "Battle for Minds," education of party members and influence on public opinion. There is no unitary establishment under which the NPD and Neonazi groups belong, because the Neonazi scene has long since been broken up into fractioned circles. This means that NPD members take part in Neonazi demonstrations and work together on an *ad hoc* basis with regional Neonazi groups, but there is no administrative organizational

stratum for cooperation (<http://www.extremismus.com/vs/neonpd.pdf>). The current figureheads of the NPD are mostly responsible for the Neonazi image of late. Udo Voigt has headed the NPD since 1996, and although he likes to appear as a professional politician, his behavior is recognized to be untrustworthy. For instance, he reports that the NPD desires to distance itself from their youth organization, the JN (Junge Nationaldemokraten), but at the same time he encourages the JN to work together with Neonazis. Also noteworthy is Horst Mahler, one of the founders of the extreme left terrorist group RAF (Red Army Faction) who is well known for his speeches and stark anti-Semitism (<http://www.extremismus.com/dox/npd-fuehrer.htm>). Aside from the election results in Brandenburg and Saxon Parliaments, the NPD has been in the spotlight since 2000 as it underwent a judicial review of its party's activities in light of violent extreme rightist agitation, and it faced a federal ban of its party. This case was titled the "V-Mann-Affäre," named after a man who came forward as a secret agent placed in the NPD to uncover their activities, however, Minister of the Interior Schily claimed no such agent had been placed in the NPD. The case ended with the judges deciding against a ban, as the NPD was able to successfully prove mishandling of the investigation and a wrongful association with radical right factions--which is not to say that such association did not exist. (<http://www.extremismus.com/npd/npd.html>).

***b. DVU***

The DVU arose in the 70s out of book and magazine fans of Gerhard Frey who in 1975 made an unsuccessful grab for power in the NPD. Due to his failure in the NPD, he founded his own party. The main issues of this party are closely linked with traditional nationalism and anti-immigration sentiment. It did not participate in any elections until 1987, and when it did run, it ran on a single list with the NPD. After the reunification of East and West Germany, the DVU ran alone with a campaign reminiscent of revisionist history, anti foreign sentiment, and nationalism. This platform gained them several seats in Bremen's and Schleswig-Holstein's local parliament in 1992, but not much more. In 1993 the DVU's platform also encompassed anti-EU issues at a time when Germany began to declare its status as a multi-nation state and its desire to expand the EU, however, these issues did not seem to grab much extra support despite the polarizing effects of EU related issues. What is noteworthy is that when they adjusted their platform to encompass social

welfare and East German issues, their popularity soared to 12.9 percent in 1998 in the local parliament election of Saxony-Anhalt and 5.1 percent in 1999 in Brandenburg. In national elections it still retained an insignificant percentage of votes, but the successes in Eastern Germany prove the party's appeal to those finding it difficult to adjust to the new liberal democratic consumerist economy (Ignazi 70).

Its recent successes before the turn of the millennium caused several REP politicians to campaign for the DVU in light of the REP's waning numbers. Currently, as was always, the party runs undemocratically with Frey at the center of all decision making, thus Frey handpicks candidates for the party. The party members pay Frey for their membership, and Frey spends his money mostly on elections campaigns. His party spends more on campaigns than all the democratic parties of Germany combined (<http://www.extremismus.com/texte/reader1.pdf> 104). After the NPD's election successes in Saxony, the DVU agreed to join with the NPD in the next Federal Parliamentary elections on a single ticket.

### ***c. REP***

The REP (or the Republicans) was founded in 1983 by two former members of the CSU. At the time the goal of this party was to reunite Germany completely, including the parts of Germany that were evacuated and handed over to Poland. Although the original inception of the party had barely any ties with the extreme right, that changed when Franz Schönhuber, a former television journalist and member of the Waffen-SS took over leadership in 1985. The main platform of the REP from then on voiced itself for a united and strong Germany, and an end to immigration. Different however, was the REP's acceptance of capitalism and free enterprise-- not to be confused with democracy. Like other extreme rightist groups, they imagine an authoritarian government as the most ideal. In 1989 the REP became the first extreme rightist party to gain more than 7 percent of the popular vote on the national level and in the European election. The REP's numbers dwindled after reunification occurred, that having been one of their strongest items. In 1991 and 1992 they were voted into several local parliaments, but they never achieved representation in the Bundestag again. In 1994 the REP was found to be unconstitutional in several of the federal districts. Schönhuber stepped down as a result of his poor handling of the situation, putting Rold Schlierer at the head of the REP in 1995. Schlierer has since

worked to distance the REP from the DVU, NPD, and other extreme rightist parties. In addition he has added a pro-democratic line to the party's charter, and has held to this. Just recently in November 2004, NPD and DVU invited the REP to join their ticket in the 2006 elections as part of a "Volksfront" (Peoples Front). The REP flatly refused the invitation, because they did not wish to work with undemocratic parties.

Those who vote for the REP tend to be young males from 25-35 and older males 45 and older. Those in the Western half of Germany tend to have had a basic education and are either unemployed or are employed in a lower paying job. Those in the Eastern half of Germany tend to have had a better than basic education and are employed in basic services. Most make a monthly income of 2,500€- 4,500€ and one-third belong to trade unions. Half the Eastern voters' jobs are threatened by the development of the tertiary sector and the decline of the industrial sector. Most live in either very small towns or very large metropolitan areas. And while most are protestant, fifty percent of those in the Western half of Germany are Catholic. The one uniting principal of REP voters is their frustration with democracy in Germany and sense of a failing economy--which are also uniting traits for the extreme left as well. (<http://www.politik.uni-mainz.de/kai.arzheimer/pds-rep/reppds.html>).

#### ***d. PDS***

The last party to be discussed in Germany is the PDS. The PDS represents the strongest most left faction in German politics. It is the successor party to the SED (German Socialist Unity Party) which governed East Germany throughout its existence. In its inception, the PDS was to rid itself of Stalinist and anti-capitalist ideals. The goal was to create a party that would reform society away from the dominance of profit making (Oswald 8). What makes the PDS extremist is often difficult to pinpoint. While certain members of the PDS seem to be considered dangerous in respect to democracy, the party itself works along very democratic lines. In his report on extremist parties in Germany, Barisic shows how the PDS aligns itself with the extreme left by linking its website to other more extreme leftist websites on the internet, such as the Union of Young Cuban Communists (Barisic 231). In addition, left extremists tend toward a type of anti-Semitism tied to their view of Israel as a danger to world peace (Kloke 116). Although much of this might sound a tad far fetched, the PDS certainly has ties with extreme leftists, and its electorate is much affected by the same issues that extreme right parties are.

The voter makeup of the PDS is half male half female, and the age groups are spread out quite evenly. Voters tend to be either decently educated or highly educated, but half are unemployed either as students, without work, or are unemployed, while the other half is mostly employed in the tertiary sector. Ten percent are employed as manual labor, and one-third belong to trade unions. Like REP voters, PDS voters earn mostly between 2,500€ and 4,500€ monthly. A large number of Eastern PDS voters live in small communities, while the rest tend to live in metropolitan areas. Close to one-hundred percent of PDS voters are non-religious. PDS voters view the economic situation as bad, and they foresee it getting worse. Like the REP, PDS voters also view German democracy as a farce. The greatest difference however, is that PDS voters have strong political interests, are better educated, and view the process of reunification with stark criticism. Strikingly, ideology only plays a part for half of the PDS voters, which means the other half could give into popular political pressures since they are not stubborn partisans (<http://www.politik.uni-mainz.de/kai.arzheimer/pds-rep/reppds.html>).

In the last ten years the PDS has struggled to put together a party platform based on socialism, because orthodox members of the PDS who view socialism as part of the capitalistic system to which they are opposed, have created a divide in forming the party platform. As it now stands, there still is no real consensus on a single party ideology. It remains a hodgepodge of ideologies dating from its ambivalent past to its ambivalent future (<http://www.extremismus.com/texte/pdspro.htm>).

## **France**

### ***e. PCF***

Unlike all the other extremist political parties mentioned here, the PCF (Parti communiste français) had a large share of the voter population in France since the beginning of the Fifth Republic. The PCF's voter population only started to head downhill in 1981. In the 1960's the PCF was a strong workers party with a well established network of cooperatives across France, but now in the new millennium the party caters to a group of voters who belong mainly to the well educated middle class (Evans 30). The PCF grew its party size in 1965 when it supported Mitterand for presidency over putting forward their own candidate (Evans 33). Unfortunately for the PCF, in creating a leftist coalition in 1972, many PCF voters went over to the Socialist Party. The PCF proved less able to control a

coalition than their stronger counterpart, the Socialists. In 1993, the Socialist Party collapsed, and instead of moving into the center-left, the PCF stood still as the Ecologists and the FN moved in to steal away the remaining votes (Evans 34). Robert Hue now leads the party and sticks close to the Socialist Party, which although prevents the PCF from falling into opposition against the Socialist Party, it turns the PCF powerless in the face of their bigger brother. This prevents the PCF from rallying support by using anti-EU rhetoric. Meanwhile the FN gains support by this very language. At this point the PCF is giving up its far left votes to other left extremist parties like the Trotskyite Party, the Lutte Ouvrière (Evans 39).

***f. LO, LCR, PT***

The LO (Lutte Ouvrière), LCR (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire), and PT (Parti des Travailleurs) makeup a block of extreme left parties in France known as "the left of the left" which are now more prevalent ever since the PCF took a blow to its voter population in 1981. In 1995, the Trotskyite candidate Arlette Laguiller received over five percent of the vote, and with the December strikes that year, the far left started to receive more attention. These parties concern themselves with remedying the homeless and unemployment problems of the country through changes to the Capitalist system--for instance, the introduction of a Tobin tax (Evans 102). The lack of voter participation and the increased numbers voting for the extreme Left as well as the populist Right show disappointment in the democratic process and its failure to bring socioeconomic issues to the forefront (103).

***g. FN***

In France the variation of extreme right parties in different moments in history could be compared to some of the extreme rightist parties in Germany today. The National Front, a populist party, much resembles the REP in its Catholic values. Le Pen founded the National Front in 1972. It achieved its first real parliamentary success in 1983 in the local election in Dreux. Later that year the FN won eleven percent of the vote and pulled into European Parliament. For a brief period between 1986 and 1989, FN benefited from proportional representation introduced by Mitterand. In 1993 the FN won twelve percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections. In 1995 Le Pen achieved fifteen percent of the vote in the presidential elections, and in 1997 the FN won three mayoral victories in Toulon,

Orange, and Marignane. In 1999 the party split into two factions: the FN led by Le Pen, and the MNR led by Bruno Mégret (Davies 135). In 1995, the number of blue-collar worker voters rose to one-third of the French population. This change meant that the FN needed to be a guarantor of social benefits for the lower class workers in the face of globalization pressures (Evans 140). Le Pen's voters are mostly concerned with insecurity, immigration, and unemployment (Evans 142).

### **III. Appearances**

#### ***1. Media Portrayal***

The media in Germany varies on its stance toward the extremist parties. While some newspapers like the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* call Saxony and Brandenburg's increase in votes for the NPD or the PDS as indications for democracy's weak hold in the Eastern federal districts, the *Sächsischer Zeitung* calls the election results an indication of voter dissatisfaction with the mainstream parties--something that is only temporary and does not show actual support for extremist parties. Other German newspapers expressed some anxiety, but noted that the vote stayed within the boundaries--something which other European countries are having more trouble with than Germany (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3672544.stm>). The international/European press like the BBC are using fear tactics to portray all extreme rightist parties, showing them to be on the rise, as opposed to being a sort of cyclical phenomenon. ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in\\_depth/europe/2000/far\\_right/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/in_depth/europe/2000/far_right/)). In any case, the mainstream media do not support these parties. The extreme Right and Left each have their own tabloid-like newspapers, reporting on current issues through the eyes of extremist ideology. It is basically through limelight and their own media apparatuses that the extremist parties support themselves.

#### ***2. The New Extreme Rightist Image***

Some political scientists point not to the socio-economic situation in Germany, but to the actual change in the NPD's image as contributing to their recent success. Most recognize that the NPD is using a façade of professionalism to cover up their neo-Nazi connections. "Their public manner has changed," said political scientist Patzelt. "They now present themselves as civilized and professional and try to hide the ugly side. But it's

deceptive“ (<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,1564,1323331,00.html>). Indeed, as the oldest extreme rightist party in Germany, its image had been a bit outdated, so it made sense to bring it more in line with newer more professional extremist parties like the REP. However, the new image seems to work more as a mockery of professional political parties than as an actual desire to step up to the same level as the other parties in a democratic system.

In France, the FN has started to change its image as well. Le Pen’s daughter Marine is entrusted with the youth organization of the FN, “Génération Le Pen,” but her work with the party has been one of erasing its fascist rhetoric (<http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw2002-3/france.htm>). Indeed, Le Pen uses fascist rhetoric reminiscent of Hitler--for instance, the slogan “500,000 jobless, 400,000 Jews” could be compared with Le Pen’s “One million immigrants equals one million jobless.” Marine’s contribution, like the NPD’s ambiguous distancing from neo-Nazi groups, could be one possible source for more votes without necessarily sacrificing its most extreme members.

#### **IV. Political Role**

##### ***1. The Connections Between Extreme Right and Left***

Kai Arzheimer shows in his publication "The Voters of the REP and the PDS in West and East Germany, an Empirical Comparison," that voters of the extreme left and right do have many similarities which the mainstream parties would not share. True, the extreme Left and Right are so distanced from each other that they would lie on either ends of a political left-right axis. However, if we were to introduce a second axis representing at one end democracy and at the other end authoritarianism, we would find that the extreme Left and Right lie closer to one another than we would have previously assumed.

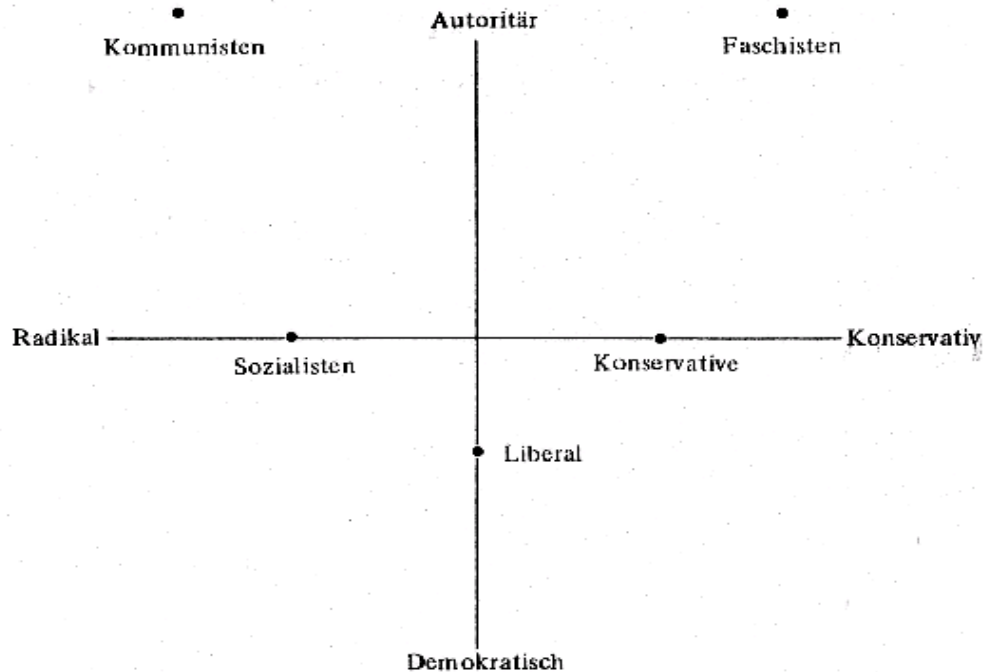


Fig 3.1. Political Axes(Source: Klingemann/Pappi 1972:31 )

The results of Arzheimer's study show that both PDS and REP are considered undemocratic in Western Germany, but in Eastern Germany only the REP is taken as undemocratic. In the East, the PDS is considered democratic, although used as an outlet for voter frustration with mainstream parties. This is supported by the fact that the socioeconomic status of PDS voters in Eastern Germany reflects the status of the average countrywide German voter. Based on his data set, Arzheimer theorizes that REP voters are unhappy with the system due to their lower education level and blue collar status, not being able to adapt to a modernizing country. Following this, Western German PDS voters, who are generally better educated and hold better jobs, tend to be unhappy with the system, because they cannot come to terms with the socioeconomic repercussions that a consumerist market economy is having on the country. Eastern German PDS voters, on the other hand, are unhappy with the system, because the transition process has not gone as well as they had hoped (Arzheimer #7). These musings are quite intriguing in that they all point to aspects of economic change or a bad economic situation for extremist voter inspiration, whether he has a good education or a bad one.

In the introduction I referred to the Saxony and Brandenburg local parliamentary elections. Two points to emphasize are as follows: In Saxony the NPD took 10,000 votes from traditionally PDS voters, and in the Brandenburg local parliamentary election the

PDS took 2,000 votes from voters that in the last election had voted for the DVU (<http://www.tagesschau.de/static/wahl/2004/brandenburg-sachsen/choice.html>). This result leads us to the conclusion that these voters found themselves not so much bound to their party by ideology, but by frustration with the failure of the mainstream political system in addressing their socioeconomic problems. We can rule out sheer confusion between parties, because PDS voters rank very high on level of political interest as well as education. As discussed briefly in the summary of the PDS, the problem of setting down a single party ideology may also have driven PDS voters to the extreme Right. Indeed, if these voters were angered with the failure of mainstream political parties, the PDS, in its confused status, was not performing very well either. The voters who left the DVU to join the PDS may have acted out of stupidity, but this is also unlikely. The same explanation of voter frustration seems all the more likely. With the DVU's numbers falling, the PDS is the only other party which could be used as an outlet for political frustration. The extreme Right and Left are both antidemocratic, and they promise solutions to problems through "alternative" methods, even if they do hang on the fringes of society.

In Part IV:3 of this document I will discuss relevant data sets that reveal socioeconomic trends for voting extreme Left or Right in the new millennium.

## ***2. Responses from the Mainstream Right and Left***

Left and Right extremist parties, aside from the PCF, have been typically pushed to the fringes and isolated from "normal" politics. For example, during the 1980's the RPR/UDF pushed the FN out of the center-right arena, leaving La Pen isolated. He reacted with a program of anti-system rhetoric (Ivaldi 2). However, the mainstream Left and Right parties of Germany, while all anti-extremist, do not necessarily intervene unless the extreme Right is actually threatening their democracy. During the debate in the parliament to discuss the ban of the NPD, each party got its chance to speak for or against a party ban. Dr. Michael Bürsch (SPD) gave an example of two young men who were sucked into the NPD's youth organization and taught to hate. His opinion of extreme parties is that, "One should fight the political party extremism in a secured democracy by political means..."

The NPD demonstrates these days in some places with the slogan 'Arguments instead of Prohibition!' The NPD itself has gone over the line, its goal- with violence instead of with words and the injury caused to human rights. As a parliament we should react instantly to the Cynicism of the NPD, namely: by arguments *for* a party ban!

(Bürsch)

However, Guido Westerwelle (FDP) believed a party ban to be unnecessary, "The election results of the NPD show however, that this danger just does not exist. The NPD is of all the right extremist parties the least successful" (Westerwelle). Wolfgang Bosbach (CDU) takes the middle road and stated:

The desire of the coalition factions that the German Parliament, as a third party to the Federal Constitutional Court next to the federal government and the upper house of parliament, should put forth its own motion to ban the NPD as a third party in the Federal Constitutional Court is neither legally allowed nor politically logical...if however the state itself does not use those options that it has to protect its constitutional order and potential victims of politically motivated violence, then it does not work very credible. Those who demand civil courage must also show stately courage. (Bosbach)

All these political opinions show a variety of reactions to an extreme rightist party, and each party answers particularly well in line with its own political ideologies. The SPD demanded a party ban of the NPD, because it is socially unacceptable. The FDP did not desire a ban until the NPD actually grew large enough to become a threat, because they wish to preserve political freedoms evenly for one and all political parties. The CDU/CSU believes in natural justice, so they were not opposed to a party ban of the NPD, but they did desire that it be done legally, which could not occur in the Bundestag body.

One thing is certain about the mainstream Left and Right. They do not treat the extremist parties as part of the same political system, rather, as outliers. This distancing effect makes extremist parties seem like viable alternatives to the mainstream during periods of outrage at the center Left and Right parties.

### ***3. Political Interactions within Respective Democracies***

On the first day in Saxony's parliament, the NPD and their twelve representatives met with indirect but stark opposition from all other parties. For example, the PDS brought representatives from the Jewish community and the organization of the persecuted, a group of individuals who were persecuted by the NAZI regime, in order that their presence hinder the performance of the NPD in parliament. In addition the senior SPD representative Cornelius Weiss spoke about the unfortunate situation of how certain individuals in Saxony were trying to convince people that democracy was failing them--an obvious reference to the NPD. However, to avoid supporting the NPD's notion that democracy has failed, the other representatives have taken action to include the NPD to participate but not

without fierce opposition in debates (<http://lola.d-a-s h.org/~zittau/news.php?article=567>). The NPD would certainly like to claim that they are being mistreated. New parliamentary rules were put into place to accommodate the influx of party fractions, but these reforms are far from excluding the NPD's participation (<http://www.das-parlament.de/2004/45/Inland/008.html>)

Unlike the NPD, the PDS is treated relatively well in parliament. The problem arises that in the national parliament, the PDS only holds several seats, and this makes them relatively weak. However, in local parliaments, the SPD has even formed coalitions with them, and the CDU even tries to encourage the size of the PDS to grow in order to split the left in half. These stances are much different than those directed toward the NPD. It is therefore reasonable to say that although the PDS has some anti-democratic ties, it is largely being regarded as a post-communist party, one which should integrate into democracy without any more difficulty than defining its own presence (<http://pds.extremismus.com/main3/main31/main31.html>).

The FN, on account of Le Pen, has largely isolated itself due to the racist rhetoric abundant in its platform. Although the FN has not received more than one representative in the national legislature for some years, the other French parties recognize the threat that the FN poses to their democracy. The result is that the other parties have asked their voters to vote for anyone but the FN on the second ballot (<http://fp1.cc.lehigh.edu/incntr/content/publications/perspectives/v15/demoyer.pdf>).

Voters of extremist parties are either oblivious to the ineffectiveness of their respective parties in a democracy, or they intend on disrupting the democracy through their political parties. In either case, due to their fringe platforms, these parties cannot truly serve as typical democratic parties unless a large plurality were to form, which is highly unlikely. Therefore, at this point in time, a single vote for an extremist party is worth more to the voter than the political representation he receives in return. That we should expect this to be apparent to an extremist voter is uncertain.

However, if we go ahead and assume that there are two types of extremist voters--a core group of extremist voters driven by ideology, and a rim group of voters driven by popular pressures--we can imagine that the rim group will be the easily pressured types who vote for the extremist parties based not on any sort of ideology, but out of pure resentment of the policies of the mainstream center parties. The core group, knowing that

their political effectiveness will be limited in a democracy, will desire to grow its party by indoctrinating the rim group during periods of political unrest. As mentioned in part III:1, only half of the PDS feels connected to their party because of ideology. That group would be the core, and the others would be the rim. Regardless of how the rim group thinks of the extremist parties, their vote is more of a political protest than an actual full blown desire for the ideology of these parties to be translated into politics. And since the rim voters can just as easily decide to vote for the opposite extreme in the next election, we must assume that these people are the versatile life force of the growing extremist parties. Upset by the government's inability to solve the economic crisis, a vote for an extremist party will then seem just as useful as one for a mainstream party.

### V. Popularity and Political Trends for the Extreme Right and Left

	1949	1953	1958 1957	1962 1961	1967 1965	1968 1969	1973 1972	1978 1976	1980	1981 1983	1986 1987	1988 1990	1993 1994	1997 1998	2002 2002
FR															
GER															
REP												2.1	1.9	1.8	0.6
DVU												0.8*		1.2	
NPD					2.0	4.3	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.6	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.7
DRP	1.8	1.1	1.0	0.8											
DKP	5.7	2.2					0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2					
PDS												2.4	4.4	5.1	4.0
TOT	7.5	3.3	1.0	0.8	2.0	4.3	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.6	5.6	6.5	8.4	5.3
FN			0.9	0.34							1.07	1.06	3.46	5.59	1.85
LCR*				0.9	0.93	0.57	0.47			0.01	0.01				
PCF			20.6	20.94	21.37	20.14	20.83	18.62		6.98	1.1	3.42	2.82	3.83	3.26
TOT			0.9	1.24	0.93	0.57	0.47			7.0	2.18	4.48	6.28	9.42	5.11

\*DVU ran only in EU election, though it received 1.6%, voter turnout was half of parliamentary elections

\*Data set combines all extreme left parties, the LO, LCR, and the PT. The PCF became the extreme left after 1981

Fig 4.1. Comparison of Germany and France's Extremist Voter Percentage (Wahlrecht.de and Election-politique.com)

In Fig 4.1. and Fig 4.2., I used only Parliamentary election data as opposed to local parliament or EU elections, because these had the highest voter turnout. All other graphics in this section are based off of figures 4.1. and 4.2. The data I used were taken from the second-ballot (Droite 2ème Tour/ Zweitstimmen), which are more accurate in judging the power of each party in the Parliament, because it is a total of votes for each party. The first-ballot would show the totaled votes from each district toward candidates of each party, which although does show popular sway toward candidates of extremist parties, it is better to use the second-ballot, because these numbers ultimately decide whether a party

receives seats in the parliament, and it judges how many seats based on percentage.

Figure 4.1. displays a table containing voter percentage data from parliamentary (Germany) and legislative (France) elections from 1949 to 2002. The blue dates represent French election date. The PCF vote from 1958 to 1978 is in gray, because I did not use these statistics in my diagrams. Firstly, France did not treat the PCF like an extremist party during its twenty year reign. Secondly, to include a party which received so many votes based on ideology would pollute my dataset in trying to correlate extremist populism with economic indicators. Thirdly, in order for the party to act as an outlet for frustration for the failure of mainstream political parties, said party must be distanced from the mainstream political parties enough that it could be considered a radical alternative.

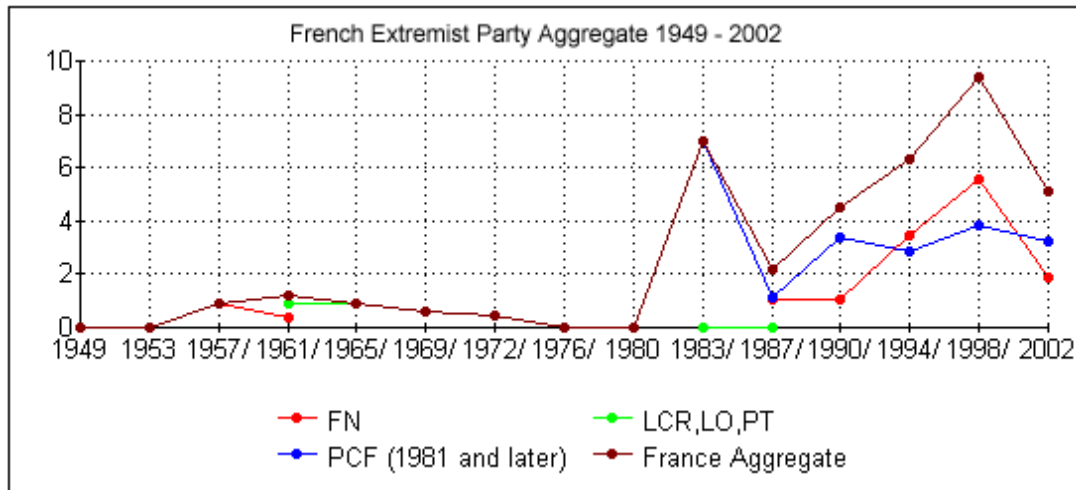


Fig 4.1.2 French Extremist Party Aggregate 1949 - 2002

Fig 4.1.2. is a graphical representation of the French data selection in Fig 4.1. Note that the data begins in 1953. The FN, the PCF, and the far Left block arise from 1957 through 1965 and then begin to steadily decline until 1983. At that point the PCF member dropped from around 20% to 6.5%, taking its place as an extremist party while the Socialist Party begins to soak up their previous electorate. The far Left block also shows itself again at this point, also taking away voters from the PCF. In 1987 the PCF and FN number begin to rise, and from 1998 to 2002 they decline slightly. There are therefore three periods of extremism in the Fifth French Republic: The first ever so small period takes place in 1961, the second in 1983, and the third in 1998.

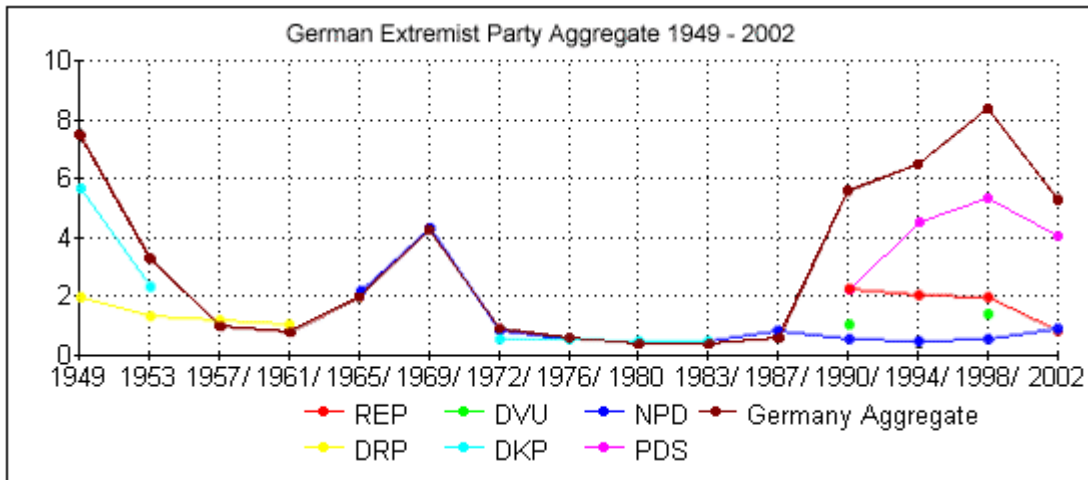


Fig 4.1.3 German Extremist Party Aggregate 1949 - 2002

Fig 4.1.3. is a graphical representation of the German data selection in Fig 4.1. Data from the GDR is not included as this would unnecessarily skew results. The DVU EU election results are show separately but not included in the aggregate. This has been done in order to show the actual level of extreme rightist activity during the time. The DKP and DRP are the original sources of extremism in Germany, but after they were banned, the NPD took over for the DRP. These make the first two peaks in German extremism after 1945: The first in 1949 at the inception of the FRG, and the second in 1969. Ever since reunification, extremism has been on the rise, making a third peak in 1998.

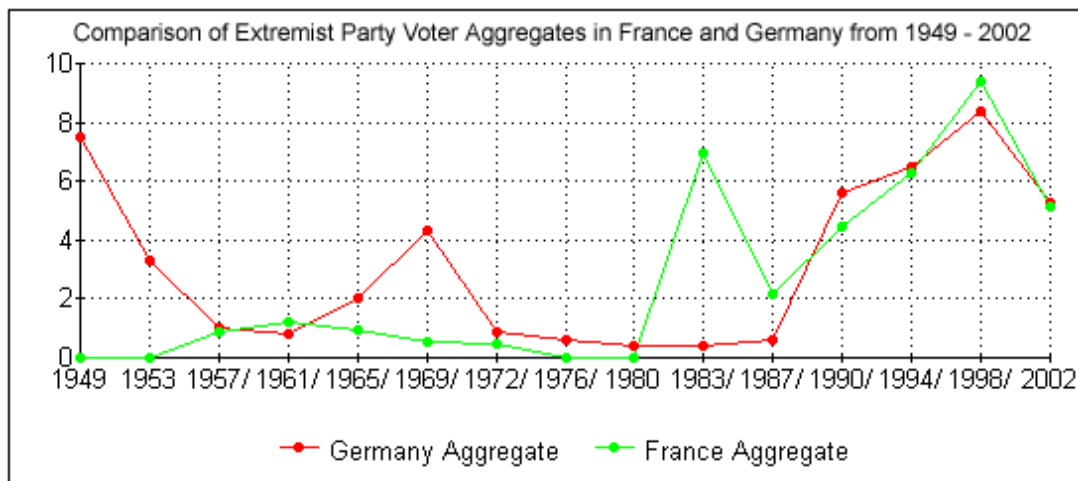


Fig 4.1.4 French and German Extremist Party Aggregate Comparison 1949 - 2002

Fig 4.1.4. is a comparison of the French and German extremist party aggregate vote percentages between 1949 and 2002. The goal of such would be to locate peaks of extremism in each country around the same elections. In doing so, we can ascertain that the

rise in extremism in both countries was caused by a mutual factor such as economy. The 1949 peak must be excluded altogether in the comparison since the Fifth French Republic had not yet come into existence. Unfortunately the second peaks for Germany and France do not coincide with one another, but this is not too worrying, because the French and German economies were not quite as linked together as they are now by the combined economic policy of the EU. This only means that we should also examine each country's economy in comparison with its extremist voter aggregate. The last peak is very promising as it shows both a rise and decline for extremism in Germany and France at the same time. This does not necessarily mean that they had the same causation or that the cause was the economy, however, we can at least guess for now that the cause was the same and investigate further. Admittedly, this still leaves us wondering why the two middle spikes of extremism occurred so far from each other, but an examination of economic indicators may provide more insight into this.

FR			1958	1962	1967	1968	1973	1978		1981	1986	1988	1993	1997	2002
GER	1949	1953	1957	1961	1965	1969	1972	1976	1980	1983	1987	1990	1994	1998	2002
TOT	7.5	3.3	1.0	0.8	2.0	4.3	0.9	0.6	0.4	0.4	0.6	5.6	6.5	8.4	5.3
UE	11.0	7.6	3.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	2.6	4.6	3.8	9.1	9.0	7.2	9.2	10.5	8.7
TOT			0.9	1.24	0.93	0.57	0.47			7.0	2.18	4.48	6.28	9.42	5.11
UE			1.6	1.5	1.6	2.3	2.8	5.3	6.44	7.48	10.8	10.3	11.8	11.8	8.7

Fig 4.2. Comparison of French and German Unemployment and Extremist Voter Aggregate (Bureau of Labor Stats.)

Figure 4.2. compares the extremist voter aggregate percentage of each country with its own rate of unemployment. The use of unemployment as opposed to another economic indicator is for purposes of exaggerating voter frustration. If a person remains unemployed and searching for work for a long period of time, they may begin to blame foreigners, Jews, or the stalemated government for their economic woes, thus adding the sociological dimension to their economic status. In such a disposition, casting a vote for an extremist party seems evermore likely. While the above data only goes up to 2002, I have included data in the below graphics for unemployment up to 2004. If a pattern can be identified between the economy and extremist party votes, these diagrams should leave something to be predicted.



Fig 4.2.2 Comparison of German Extremist Party Aggregate and Unemployment Rate 1949 - 2002

Figure 4.2.2. shows a comparison between the extremist party voter aggregate percentage and the unemployment rate in Germany. In the years after the FRG's inception, extremism does decline along with unemployment until 1961. The second spike in extremist party vote percentage does not seem to be explained by the economy. Indeed, the NPD was formed at this point in 1965, but even from the NPD's platform we might have known that the economy was not their pressing issue at this point, rather, it was to have an extreme rightist party at all, considering the DRP had then been banned along with the DKP. The next trend upwards is somewhat promising. It shows that there was an increase in unemployment from 1980 - 1987, and this prolonged period of high unemployment sent the voter percentage for extreme parties skyrocketing between 1987 and 1990. The last portion seems most promising. It shows that unemployment rose steadily since 1990 until 1998, probably as a result of reunification. At this same time we notice that voter percentage of extremist parties is also rising at nearly the same rate. Then from 1998 through 2002 the unemployment rate begins to drop, and the voter percentage drops as well--also at nearly the same rate. The last portion has yet to be seen, but it is likely, with this trend, that the percentage of extremist party votes will increase steadily with the amount of unemployment. The local parliamentary election results in Brandenburg and Saxony are perhaps the bellwether for an increase in the extremist vote percentage.

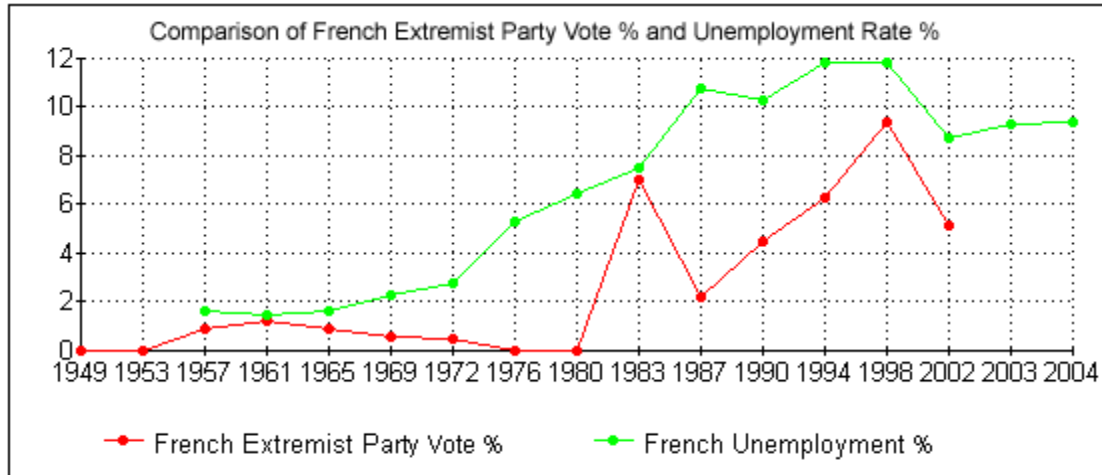


Fig 4.2.3 Comparison of French Extremist Party Aggregate and Unemployment Rate 1949 - 2002

Figure 4.2.3. compares the French extremist party vote percentage with the unemployment rate between 1958 and 2004. French unemployment shows a steady climb until 1998, and then it drops slightly in 2002 but continues rising slightly on into 2004. The French extremist party vote percentage really only correlates with the data from 1987 onward, however, both the vote percentage and the unemployment rate remain proportional to each other, excluding 1976 through 1980. It would be safe to question this time period as well for a non socioeconomic answer.

The analysis of these datasets reveal to us a series of trends between the political extremism in Germany and France that may be connected to the economy. The data from the new millennium is most promising, perhaps indicating the "popularest" characteristics now ascribed to extremist parties. Unemployment certainly influences the extremist vote, but it would be naive to assume it was fully a matter of economics. Certainly, for the extreme Right, distinctions can be drawn between blaming foreigners for joblessness and actual racism inherent in the extreme rightist doctrine. As for the extreme Left, the bad economic conditions of late only support the anti-capitalist dogma of these parties, so although the party base is rooted in anti-capitalism, their new votes may actually stem from socioeconomic misfortune. While the cores of these parties remain extremist in every aspect, the new voters may tend to either agree with a single issue or simply feel outcast from mainstream politics, so that they have no choice but to vote for extremist parties.

## VI. Conclusion: A Challenge for the New Millennium

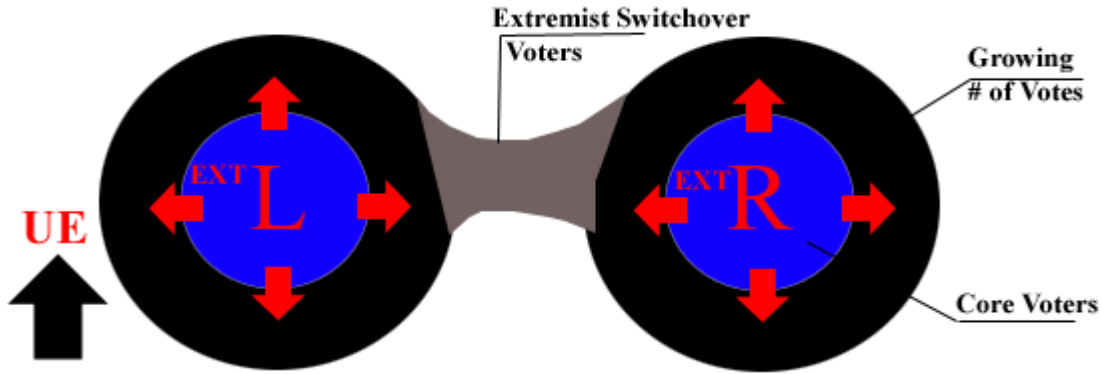


Fig 5.1 The Connection between Socioeconomic Problems and The Growing Extreme Left and Right

The results of extremist left and right political parties in the 2004 local parliamentary elections in Saxony and Brandenburg illustrate to us that these two extremes are indeed connected with each other, not by ideology, but as viable alternatives to mainstream parties, serving as outlets for voter anger and discontent. In the comparison of both France and Germany, we saw that the second spike in extremist parties did not necessarily attach itself to the socioeconomic situation in either country. This could be attributed to reasons which strike the core of extremist voters more than the rim. As we see with the formation of the FRG, extremist parties dwindled in numbers as the unemployment rate dropped. This trend seems to be taking over once again in the new millennium not just in Germany but also in France. The rim group of extremist voters are growing as the unemployment rate rises. It may be rash to conclude that the growing numbers of extremist voters should all be thrown into the rim, but if the core voter is rational, he will always act partisan and not change his party unless a political realignment were taking place. The voters on the rim come from everywhere: the mainstream and both extremes. If one could prove that there were a rising number of young extremist voters who could be considered part of the core, only then would it be possible to acknowledge a *real* rise in extremist parties. For now, the fluctuation in these parties will depend on the rim and the socioeconomic problems which influence it. If the core is successful in indoctrinating these voters, then there may also be a *real* rise in their size, however this is unlikely due to the general ineffectiveness of these parties in their respective democracies once they actually gain seats.

With the next national parliamentary elections yet to be held, one should pay close attention to socioeconomic factors in predicting the voter percentages of these parties. The

threat of these parties in their growing size will probably not be the largest challenge to democracy since these numbers are likely to fall again once economic conditions improve. The real challenge will be to deal with these parties in a democracy if they achieve any staying power. Undemocratic factions will not bode well for democracy as we once experienced with the collapse of the Weimar Republic in Germany. Therefore, it is up to the mainstream parties to recognize voter frustration and how to deal with the influx of extremist parties in their democracies.

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