Max Manuel Brunner

The European Far Right: A Review of the Recent Literature

Patrick Moreau and Uwe Backes, *Europas moderner Rechtsextremismus: Ideologien, Akteure, Erfolgsbedingungen und Gefährdungspotentiale* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021).

Ralf Havertz, *Radical Right Populism in Germany. AfD, Pegida and the Identitarian Movement* (London: Routledge, 2021).

Luca Manucci, *Populism and Collective Memory. Comparing Fascist Legacies in Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2021).

Leonie De Jonge, *The Success and Failure of Right-Ring Populism in the Benelux Countries* (London: Routledge, 2021).

Natasha Strobl, *Radikalisierter Konservatismus. Eine Analyse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2021).

In the 2019 European elections, the far-right faction *Identity and Democracy* secured 10,8 percent of the votes, with members such as the French *Rassemblement National* gaining up to 23 percent in their respective national votes. The electoral success of far-right parties in many Western democracies, alongside the emergence of right-wing extremist protest movements like PEGIDA or events like the publication of the infamous "Ibiza tape," which revealed the willingness of former Austrian vice-chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache (of the far-right FPÖ) to engage in corruption and an attempt to take control over a non-partisan media outlet, make clear that far-right contenders have become a serious threat to democratic institutions in many European countries. Accordingly, academic interest in the far right has increased dramatically, resulting in a spate of new publications. The bibliography[1] of the Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) lists more than 80 books published in 2021 alone. The works discussed in this review thus cover only a fraction of current publications available on the far-right. In *Europas moderner Rechtsextremismus: Ideologien,*

1 See CARR's annual (2013–2022) Bibliography and Non-Anglophone Bibliographies, at www.radicalrightanalysis.com/bibliography.

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Akteure, Erfolgsbedingungen und Gefährdungspotentiale (Europe's Modern Right-Wing Extremism: Ideologies, Actors, Conditions for Success and Potential Threats), Uwe Backes and Patrick Moreau offer a comprehensive overview of recent trends within the European far right, discussing its ideological and strategical modernization as a key factor for its recent success. Ralf Havertz's *Radical Right Populism in Germany. AfD, Pegida, and the Identitarian Movement* examines three actors within the contemporary German far right, focusing on their historic roots as well as recent trends and developments. In *Populism and Collective Memory Comparing Fascist Legacies in Western Europe,* Luca Manucci argues that the success of a right-wing populist contender in a given country depends on how that country remembers its relationship to fascism in the past. Like Manucchi, Leonie De Jonge is interested in the conditions that allow right-wing populist contenders to succeed or to fail. In the *Success and Failure of Right-Wing Populist Parties in the Benelux Countries,* she argues that in addition to supply and demand-oriented explanations, it is important to focus more broadly on the specific context within which opportunity structures for right-wing populist contenders are formed, especially the behaviour of established political parties and the media. In her extended essay, Natasha Strobl *Radikalisierter Konservatismus: Eine Analyse* (Radicalized Conservatism: An Analysis) focuses less on contenders traditionally associated with the far-right, but instead discusses the presidency of Donald Trump in the United States and Sebastian Kurz's two terms as chancellor of Austria to examine the phenomenon of a "radicalized conservatism" that systematically undermines democratic institutions, drawing parallels to the Weimar period where radicalized conservatism weakened democratic institutions and left them vulnerable to fascist takeover.

In their book, *Europas moderner Rechtsextremismus,* Uwe Backes and Patrick Moreau analyze the impact of modernized right-wing extremism on European politics. Six chapters focus on ideological and programmatic aspects as well as the key mobilizing factors and strategies of the far-right. In the introduction, the authors identify their subject as "soft extremism," located "between democracy and neofascism (17)." This "soft extremism" is signified by its negative attitude towards key values and principles of democratic institutions. They argue however that it does not follow a strictly traditional ideological programme that could be considered an "all-encompassing ideology" (Großideologie). Soft extremism thus distances itself from interwar fascism. Its followers present themselves as true representatives of the people's will who challenge the political elite. The book's main thesis is that the extreme right has undergone a process of modernization by transitioning to a form of "soft extremism": It thus opposes biological racism, is open towards women and sexual minorities, and propagates a form of anti-antisemitism that goes along with a "crusade" against Islam, playing on anti-Muslim attitudes within the majority society.

The second chapter gives a short overview of key figures and actors of this "soft extremism" present within European politics. The third and most extensive chapter discusses different ideological and programmatic aspects of right-wing "soft extrem-

ism." Different sections deal with ethnopluralism and the myth of the great replacement, antisemitism and anti-Muslim attitudes, the status of women and minorities, nationalism, anti-imperialism and anti-globalism, the relationship to Russia, religion, conspiracy theories, and ecology. The analysis is underpinned through a broad variety of empirical material. Unfortunately, the discussion of specific ideological features sometimes remains one-dimensional. Key concepts like antisemitism or "ethnopluralism" are only discussed superficially and self-descriptions are sometimes taken at face value. For example, the authors discuss the concept of "ethnopluralism" as a concept that breaks with biological racism and the hierarchy between lesser and higher races by highlighting the value of a "diversity of peoples" and cultural homogeneity. While the authors discuss how the ethnopluralist worldview differs from traditional biological racism, more in-depth analysis would uncover that "ethnopluralism" is a category of self-description within far-right circles that is often used to obscure an ideology that is in fact closely related to biological or cultural racism, antifeminism, and an antisemitic worldview.

The authors sometimes lean towards a generalizing view of a post-ideological and unspecific "soft extremist" ideology that replaces racism, antisemitism, and antifeminism with an ethnopluralist worldview, resentments towards Islam and a propensity for conspiracy theories. This generalizing view tends to overshadow the fact that "traditional" elements of right-wing ideology (for example biological racism, antisemitism, antifeminism) remain relevant within the contemporary far right. When, for example, Björn Höcke of the Alternative for Germany (AfD) rants about "international elites" or a "degenerate financial capitalism," it is evident that he is engaging in a form of dog-whistle politics that invokes antisemitic tropes. The fourth chapter briefly presents data highlighting the electoral success of "soft extremist" right-wing parties during the 2019 European elections. Key factors for the success of right-wing extremism are discussed in Chapter five. The success of the far right is contextualized within the broader framework of political events like the 2015 European migration crisis that made way for a growing acceptance of far-right positions. Subsequently, the authors discuss the impact of strategic factors like the spread of disinformation through social media, how "soft extremism" tries to appeal to voters by shifting between radicalization and moderation, and the spread of conspiratorial attitudes in different electorates. The final chapter analyzes how the "soft extremism" of the far right endangers European democracies. The authors conclude that "soft extremism" appears as an ambivalent political current that combines elements of liberal democracy (for example denouncing a claimed abuse of power) and totalitarian democracy (the idea of a homogenous will of the people and a dichotomy between friend and enemy) with a modernized worldview that promotes anti-antisemitism and is more open to the inclusion of women and sexual minorities while simultaneously appealing to anti-Muslim attitudes and conspiratorial attitudes.

Overall, the book provides a comprehensive overview of trends in the European far right and factors affecting their electoral success. However, by focusing only on "soft extremism," the authors may have overemphasized the newness of certain aspects and overlooked continuities between "soft extremism" and traditional aspects of far-right ideologies like antisemitism, racism, antifeminism, as well as homophobia and transphobia. This seems particularly striking since the material reveals that "soft extremism" is closely linked to ideological successors of interwar fascism of the so-called "New Right."

In *Radical Right Populism in Germany*, Ralf Havertz offers an insightful introduction to the contemporary German far right. The study contextualizes the AfD, PEGIDA (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident), and the German branch of the identarian movement within the conceptual framework of "radical right populism." This conceptual framework is based of the approaches of Cas Mudde and others: According to Mudde's "minimal definition of populism," populism is a "thin ideology" that rests on an assumed opposition between "the people" and "the elites." It can thus be understood as an anti-pluralist worldview that imagines itself as an exclusive representative of the volonté générale. Further, Havertz argues that radical right populism can be understood as a triadic variant of populism: beyond the dyadic distinction between "the people" and "the elites," it adds a distinction to the "other." Havertz refers to the work of Rogers Brubaker,[2] who claims that populism adds a "horizontal" dimension to a "vertical" opposition between the "the people" and "the elite." According to a vertical understanding of society, groups like "the people" and "the elites" are defined by class and social status. According to populism though "the people," "the elites" or "outsiders" are defined by "horizontal" criteria such as virtue or, in the case of radical right populism, ethnicity or identity. On this basis, Havertz discusses Mudde's "maximal definition," which defines the "populist radical right" as a combination of populism with both nativist and authoritarian tendencies. While Haverz agrees with Mudde that nativism and authoritarianism are both essential features, he disagrees with Mudde on the term "populist radical right." Moving away from Mudde's "populist version of the radical right,"[3] Havertz's term "radical right populism" emphasizes the structural features of populism discussed above. Havertz claims that "specific utterances of nativism may overlap and move along with" features such as the triadic relationship and a horizontal view of the social order. However, "nativism appears more like a description of the content for the antagonisms inherent

2 Rogers Brubaker, "Why Populism?," in *Populism and the Crisis of Democracy*, vol. 1, eds. Gregor Fitzi, Jürgen Mackert and Bryan S. Turner (London: Routledge 2019), 27–46.

3 Cas Mudde, *Populist radical right parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 24.

in populism (19)." In other words, for Havertz, radical right populism is primarily defined by its populist structure and only secondarily by its nativist content.

The concept of radical right populism developed in the inital chapters provides the foundation for the consecutive analysis. The discussion of the history of the German far right and the AfD in chapters three and four will be particularly useful to readers who are not yet familiar with the political discourse in Germany. The fifth chapter analyzes the AfD's programme, official documents, and individual statements to show that the party can indeed be understood as a radical right populist party. Chapters six to eleven discuss different aspects of radical right populist ideology in Germany such as volkish nationalism, euroscepticism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, antifeminism, and the AfD's ambivalent relationship to neoliberalism and social populism.

The author provides helpful examples and thoroughly reconstructs the discursive landscape of different actors within the populist radical right landscape and its close relationship to right-wing extremist groups like the so-called "New Right." Unfortunately, the discussion sometimes falls short on an analytical level. In the discussion of antisemitism, for example, Havertz exclusively addresses the populist radical right's antisemitism in Germany as a form of "secondary antisemitism" that is primarily interested in historic revisionism and eliminating the Shoah from German memory politics. Here Havertz misses out on an opportunity to address the intersections between antisemitism and other aspects of radical right populist ideology, such as anti-globalism and anti-Muslim racism. Havertz thus mentions the myth of a "great replacement" in his discussion on Islamophobia and states its importance for the justification of anti-Muslim positions. However, the myth of the "great replacement" serves as a conspiracist framework that conceptualizes European integration, liberal migration politics, and feminism as elements of a "globalist" agenda—a dog-whistle commonly used in antisemitic rhetoric—that undermines the ethnic and cultural integrity of European peoples.[4] Despite minor shortcomings, the book delivers a valuable discussion of a conceptual framework for analyzing the populist far right, as well as a comprehensive overview of contemporary currents within the German far right that is rich in material and will be particularly insightful for an international audience not yet familiar with the German context.

In *Populism and Collective Memory,* Luca Manucci tries to answer the question of "why is populism so successful in Italy, Austria, and France, while in Germany it is marginal and socially unacceptable?" Mannucci argues that in addition to differences in socioeconomic factors (including corruption), democratic institutions, and economic performance, each of these countries developed a particular culture of collective memory, providing different opportunity structures for populism in gener-

4 See for example, Samuel Salzborn, *Globaler Antisemitismus. Eine Spurensuche in den Abgründen der Moderne* (Weinheim: Beltz Juventa, 2020), 77–81.

al and right-wing populism in particular. As with other publications discussed here, Manucci's argument is based on the minimal definition of populism put forth by Mudde. Manucci points out that while populism and fascism are not the same, both embody illiberal and authoritarian tendencies: "it is possible to say that all fascists may be populists, but not all populists are fascists (15)." In other words: Fascism and populism are related but not identical. How a country memorializes the fascist past thus has an effect on whether populism and especially right-wing populism is socially acceptable or stigmatized. Manucci identifies four different "ideal-types (51)" of a collective memory of the fascist past: culpabilization, heroization, cancellation, and victimization. Each "ideal-type" thus entails specific ideas about a country's role during the Second World War and its relationship to fascism and determines the degree of stigmatization of illiberal elements shared by both fascism and populism. In the case of culpabilization, a country condemns its fascist past and goes through a process of critical self-examination, ultimately considering itself guilty. This goes along with a high level of stigmatization. On the other end of the spectrum, Manucci locates collective memory based on (self-)victimization.[5] In that case, a country confronts the past only to overturn and deny its own responsibility. This goes is paralleled by a low level of stigmatization.

The study's conceptual framework and the argument are developed in chapters one to three, before applying them to a comparison of eight European countries in the later chapters: Austria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. In Chapter five, Manucci analyzes the social acceptability of populism in each country based on a somewhat fuzzy qualitative comparative analysis. The following chapter analyses how each country memorializes the fascist past. Chapter seven asks how different levels of acceptability may be explained by socio-economic and political-institutional factors. Chapter eight analyzes how this acceptability relates to types of collective memory. In the case of Germany, Manucci argues that the country can serve as a textbook case for a memory culture of culpabilization that, "once established at the end of the 1950s […] was never seriously challenged in Western Germany (123)." According to Manucci, the integration of the German Democratic Republic, where a narrative of heroization was the predominant way of remembering the fascist past, presented the first real challenge to the culpabilization narrative, resulting in a process of normalization. Manucci argues that this memory political landscape presented a particularly challenging opportunity structure for right-wing populism, which explains why, until recently, no right-wing populist party has been able to establish itself in German politics.

5 Manucci clarifies that this type of collective memory can only be applied to countries that are at least partially ascribable to the group of perpetrators and not to countries that were actual victims of fascist regimes.

To support his claim that "culpabilization" remained mostly unchallenged in West Germany, Manucci refers to the so-called "Historikerstreit," pointing out that the main conflict in one of the most important debates on the politics of memory in recent German history was the question whether the Holocaust can be compared to other events. However, the author fails to address the fact that at the heart of that debate lay the question whether the Holocaust could be "historicized"—whether it was just a "normal" historical event and a reaction to historic circumstances or a unique event that shattered any concept of national-historical continuity. The question is of course linked to the question of German guilt and responsibility. In Chapter five, Manucci associates the demand to "historicize" Germany's Nazi legacy with the right-wing populist party "Die Republikaner" and claims that the high level of stigmatization associated with this demand led to the party's political failure (86). However, a closer inspection of the source material would have revealed that demands for a historicization of Germany's fascist past or a "normalization" of Germany's relationship to its history were not exclusively the purview of the margins of political discourse and were far from taboo.[6] Events like the German publication of Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners* or the so-called Wehrmachtsausstellung triggered far-reaching public debates on the role of ordinary Germans during the Holocaust. Though crucial for a comprehensive picture of German memory culture, neither are discussed in the book. The discussion that would have revealed that the discourse on Germany's fascist legacy and the Holocaust is more nuanced than Manucci suggests and that challenges to the culpabilization narrative have always been part of this discourse.

The example of German memory politics reveals the study's main weakness which likely a by-product of its design. Comparing populist and memory political debates in eight different European countries is an ambitious task, which can lead to a schematic and at times one-dimensional account that leaves little room for nuance or the portrayal of contradictory positions. A more thorough analysis of each country would perhaps have revealed that while memory politics may indeed play an important role, so do other, country-specific factors such as the integrative forces at play in postwar Germany or the concept of "peoples parties." Overall, Manucci presents an interesting argument for the relationship between memory politics and the success or failure of right-wing populism in Europe. While the general argument is plausible and the study does indeed show that "memory matters (171)," the book would have profited from a more focused analysis.

6 See for example Nicolas Berg's study on the West German academic discourse surrounding the Holocaust *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker. Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003), or Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer's discussion of the historicization of the Holocaust in the Historikerstreit: Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer, "Um die 'Historisierung des Nationalsozialismus': Ein Briefwechsel," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 36, no. 2 (1988): 339–72.

In line with Manucci, Leonie De Jonge's aims to contribute to a theoretical understanding of the conditions for the success or failure of right-wing populist parties in *The Success and Failure of Right-Ring Populism in the Benelux Countries*. While Manucci focuses on the impact of specific types of memory culture, De Jonge aims for a more holistic understanding, presenting an in-depth analysis of the opportunity structures for right-ring populist parties in the Benelux countries. De Jonge analyses variations in the electoral performance of right-wing populist parties in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg. She notes that while in recent decades, the Netherlands and the Flemish parts of Belgium witnessed the rise of right-wing populist parties, comparable contenders have failed to gain electoral success in Wallonia and Luxembourg. To fully understand why a right-wing populist contender could be successful, she argues that in addition to supply and demand explanations, contextual factors are also crucial: "notably the strategic choices of mainstream parties and the role of the media." Mainstream parties and the media, she argues can choose to "stigmatise, isolate, mimic or challenge the populist radical right (8)" and thus affect the degree to which an electorate is receptive to a right-wing populist contender.

In the first chapter, De Jonge introduces the reader to her argument and the political context of the Benelux countries. Chapter two elaborates the argument and presents a conceptual framework. De Jonge defines populism as a style of politics that tends to defy taboos—perceived as "political correctness"—and divides society into the virtuous "people" and an antagonistic "other." Right-wing populism is understood as a radical form of populism that combines the populist style with a rightist ideology consisting of nativist and authoritarian elements. Following this definition, De Jonge reviews three different approaches to explaining the success of right-wing populism. Success is understood here as the moment of a party's electoral breakthrough, since, as De Jonge argues, conditions drastically change once a party crosses a certain "threshold of relevance (32)." Different explanatory strategies thus focus on demand, supply, or contextual factors. A demand-side explanation may understand the electoral success of a right-wing populist party as the result of broad historical changes leading to a demand for a new type of politics. A supply-side explanation may argue that the success of a given party is a product of *internal* factors such as the party's leadership or *external* factors like political opportunity structures. Contextual explanations consider the broader situation in which factors like political opportunity structures arise. Following Antonis Ellinas,[7] De Jonge argues that "the electoral fortunes of right-wing populist parties are largely dependent on the behaviour of mainstream parties and the media (43)," who are considered "gatekeepers." Mainstream parties and the media can thus choose to ignore the populist far right or try to exclude them from the political

7 Antonis Ellinas, *The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

arena. Conversely, they can act on, recognize, or adopt issues that the populist far right stands for. Each of these decisions thus shapes opportunity structures and may determine the populist far right's success or failure.

The following chapters recapitulate the history of the populist radical right in the three Benelux countries, showing that for the better part of the twentieth century far-right parties have not managed to achieve or maintain a level of success that could be considered crossing the "threshold of relevance." While in Luxemburg and Wallonia the populist far right remains on the margins of political relevance to this day, parties like Geert Wilders's *Partij voor De Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom) in the Netherlands or the Flemish *Vlaams Belang* have managed to become relevant political actors. De Jonge argues that supply and demand approaches vary in their explanatory value for the success and failure of ring-wing populist politics. In the case of the Netherlands, she shows that there is little reason to believe that demand-side factors, like a growing scepticism towards immigration, can account for the electoral breakthroughs of the parties of Pim Fortuyn's party in 2002 and the subsequent success of Geert Wilders's Party. Conversely, for De Jonge, supply-side approaches seem more promising but tend to be reductionist: Due to their charisma, figures like Fortuyn or Wilders may have been able to mobilize voters in ways their precursors were unable to do. However, as De Jonge points out, they did not act in a vacuum. Thus, we need to address factors that allowed far-right figures to arise in the Netherlands but hindered them in Wallonia—particularly the behaviour of mainstream parties and the media. Chapters four and five focus on these contextual factors. De Jonge argues that for example in the Netherlands, long before the rise of Pim Fortuyn, centre-right parties contributed to a politicization of issues pertaining to immigration. The politicization of immigration, De Jonge argues, opened up a line of conflict that actors like Pim Fortuyn could engage on. In addition, De Jonge observes that while in Wallonia and Luxemburg the media engages in a strategy of isolating far-right actors, Dutch media has become increasingly more open and accepting towards them. Thus, mainstream parties and the media in the Netherlands contributed to an opportunity structure that has been far more beneficial for right-wing populist politics than in Wallonia or Luxemburg. Finally, De Jonge concludes that actors like the media or established parties and their behaviour towards the populist far right and its issues are a crucial factor for the success of far-right parties in the Benelux countries. She suggests that the approach presented may also be applied to the case of France and may also shed light on the rise of "trojan horses" such as the AfD, which once appeared as a single-issue party with a Eurosceptic agenda and over time transformed into a more obvious right-wing populist contender. Overall, De Jonge presents an insightful account that stands out through its attention to detail. The book will be a rewarding read to those interested in right wing populism in the Benelux countries as well as to those who are interested in a more general understanding of the success and failure of right-wing populism.

Another contribution that may be helpful to understanding the connection between the rise of the far right and the behaviour of actors who are more likely to be considered mainstream is Natasha Strobl's *Radikalisierter Konservatismus*. Strobl begins her essay with an overview of the present state of conservatism in Western democracies. In a world still shaped by the aftereffects of the 2008 economic crisis, global warming, and the COVID-19 pandemic, Strobl notes that, while some conservatives participate in democratic processes, others have increasingly adopted positions that were previously exclusive to the extreme right. The first chapter introduces the concept of "radicalized conservatism," analyzing the relationship between conservatism and fascism or the extreme right; a relationship she describes as precarious. According to Strobl, conservatism can be understood as an "anti-egalitarian, anti-revolutionary, class-harmonizing standpoint that, above all, values order and property (12)." Like fascism, it is oriented towards order and social hierarchies, it is anti-egalitarian, and anti-socialist. While conservatism is anti-revolutionary and interested in maintaining a status quo, fascism by contrast is understood as a revolutionary ideology interested in rewriting the social order at least to some degree. Some readers, especially conservative ones, may reject Strobl's notion of conservatism as a generalizing view that does not reflect the diverse nature of democratic conservative politics. However, Strobl later points out that to analyze radicalized conservatism, we need to be aware of the intersections between conservatism and the extreme right, rather than coming up with clear definitions separating the two.

For Strobl, the radicalization of conservatism is the realization of a potential present within a conservative DNA. In this process, the line between conservatism and fascism is obscured. Movements like the New Right need to be considered since they strategically appeal to more conservative audiences. However, she argues that the process must mainly be understood as a radicalization from within. As an essential factor, Strobl points towards authoritarian leanings within the conservative milieu, which she describes as *rohe Bürgerlichkeit*. The term was first introduced by the sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeier[8] and can roughly be translated to "raw bourgeois culture." It expresses a bourgeoise tendency to turn away from solidarity and instead deploy an ideology of hardship; instead of social justice, solidarity, and fairness, *rohe Bürgerlichkeit* values efficiency, utility, and economic usability. Strobl argues that radicalized conservatism appears when, driven by the dynamic of *rohe B*ürgerlichkeit, conservatism moves towards the extreme right. It then breaks up the consensus established with the more centrist or social-democratic left, turns away from social participation, and disavows any mediation between the property-owning and working classes.

8 Wilhelm Heitmeier, "'Rohe Bürgerlichkeit'. Bedrohungen des inneren Friedens," in *Wissenschaft & Frieden* 2 (2012): 39–41.

Using the examples of Donald Trump's presidency in the United States and Sebastian Kurz's two terms as Austrian chancellor, the second chapter reveals six aspects of how radicalized conservatism strategically shapes the public discourse and threatens democratic institutions. First, it deliberately transgresses the formal or informal rules of political discourse and behaviour, by, for example, disregarding electoral results or deliberately abusing language to discredit political opponents. Second, it engages in a language of cultural warfare to polarize society into different irreconcilable groups which are flagged as "us" or "the other." Third, it focuses on authoritarian leaders, along with an erosion of democratic party-structures. Fourth, it disassembles democratic institutions such as the welfare state, the judicial system, parliamentary processes, and the freedom of the press. Fifth, it instrumentalizes the media and fabricates scandals to stage a permanent state of campaigning. Sixth, to delegitimize criticism and appeal to those holding conspiratorial worldviews, it deconstructs established standards of truth.

While Strobl comprehensively depicts how radicalized conservatism undermines democratic institutions, it would be interesting to read a more detailed analysis of specific social and political dynamics that present the basis for the radicalization of conservatism. The third chapter, "Weimar Calling" only rudimentarily approaches that question by arguing that, in the 1920s, social movements and the organized working class confronted conservative interpretations of the world with intensifying scrutiny and questioned the dominance of the bourgeois ruling class. In order not to collapse into political insignificance, conservatism radicalized itself (in the form of currents like the so-called "conservative revolution" in Germany or the "Black Vienna" in Austria), undermined the foundations of a democratic society, and paved the way for a fascist rise to power. For Strobl, radicalized conservatism can thus be viewed as a backlash to a process of social emancipation. Strobl's analysis can thus be read along with works of authors like Matthias Quent,[9] who argue that the current rise of far-right movements in liberal democracies can be understood as a by-product of a general process of democratization in which traditional social hierarchies are increasingly questioned. Strobl's work ends with a word of warning: "Fascist dynamics cannot be controlled. Once normalized, fascist thinking spreads throughout society. Thus, one quickly approaches a point of no return (149)." In only 150 pages, readers cannot expect an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of radicalized conservatism. Rather, Natascha Strobl presents an interesting contribution to a more general debate trying to make sense of the populist politics of figures like Trump or Kurz. Her anal-

9 Matthias Quent, "Ruck nach rechts oder Rückschläge gegen Demokratisierungserfolge? Was ist neu in der 'Mitte'?," in *Die neue Mitte? Ideologien, Strategien und Bewegungen der Populistischen und Extremen Rechten*, eds. Raj Kollmorgen, Steven Schäller and Johannes Schütz (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2021).

ysis locates the origins of this specific type of populism in authoritarian tendencies within the conservative milieu and shows how this specific variant of an authoritarian mindset translates into political practice and undermines democratic institutions. A more in-depth analysis would perhaps address questions like: How does radicalized conservatism relate to what some commentators call a "social democratization" of conservative politics.

Max Brunner studied History and Philosophy at the Ruhr-University Bochum and the University of Copenhagen. He is a researcher at the Institute for Social Movements in Bochum, where he is affiliated with a research project analyzing far-right interpretations of Islam as a social challenge in Germany, Europe and beyond. In his doctoral dissertation, he considers fascist notions of history and historical subjectivity from the "Conservative Revolution" to the transnational "New Right."