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The Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) is arguably the largest far-right party in Germany. The far-right political spectrum is diverse and includes a number of formal parties including the Republicans and Die Rechte as well as some informal street level organisations. The NPD was formed in the post-war years as a conglomeration of far-right organisations and achieved some success in local elections and was expected to break the 5% barrier to gain representation in the Bundestag. As a result of this the NPD received a great deal of scrutiny by the media and during the 1970s and 80s declined in its influence. In the contemporary era the NPD has gained growing popularity, in particular following the fall of the Berlin Wall. This article seeks to explain that the NPD has changed. Gone are the days of nostalgic former Nazis, desperately trying to rekindle the 1930s and early 1940s. The 1960s saw a rise in the fortunes of the NPD to the point where numerous domestic and international observers became convinced that the party would exceed the 5% threshold and enter the Bundestag in the 1969 election. In the end the party accrued 4.3% of the vote and following this high water mark fell into terminal decline. As the party’s support base began a mass exodus, many having been Wehrmacht veterans and former Nazi party activists, the party became a marginalised element in an ostracised scene.

The party has experienced something of a renaissance in recent years and has been rebuilding its support base. However, while during its previous success the party attracted an older support base, it has now sought to exploit the lack of identity and prospects among many of the youth in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR). The study aimed to compare the NPD over the period of the 1960s and the contemporary period as these represent the two most successful periods for the party. The aim of the study was to identify any similarities and differences in the party’s growing influence across what are two very

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different political and historical contexts. This study was part of the assessment for my undergraduate degree at the University of Edinburgh. One important part of the study emphasises that, while economic concerns certainly play a role in the development of far-right sympathies among society, there is also an important point of ethnic-nationalism being the main sticking point for groups choosing to support the NPD. In terms of ‘ethnic-nationalism’ this term refers to the identity of the German nation and the insistence of the far-right that German morals and values are being undermined and that German nationalism should be based on blood (jus sanguinis) rather than birth (jus soli). This is particularly relevant in the former GDR where, according to the mayor of Zwickau “it wasn’t just unemployment. It was a collapse of the whole system of people’s values. Young people were looking for some form of direction. All the old institutions disappeared” (Peel, 2012). However, the most striking and worrying change in the NPD is its growing links to street-level neo-Nazi movements. These groups have adopted modern methods of communications to protest against globalisation and multiculturalism in Germany and have used violence and intimidation to express their views. In this sense the party has moved from its traditional definition of a parliamentary party to being a street-level activist movement. The specifics of these movements and the NPD's links to them will be elaborated later.

This all leaves the German government in a quagmire about how to deal with the problem of the far-right. On the one hand a ban would simply make martyrs of the party’s activists and its principles while simply ignoring the phenomenon causes criticism from the rest of society for failing to deal with the threat the party poses.

**Methodology and Sources**
The methodology of this study was limited to an extent by the author’s lack of fluent German. However, through the medium of a number of useful websites and publications a great deal of scholarly and journalistic work on the far-right in Germany was available in English. The majority of the research for this study was found using newspaper and online
articles mostly from German magazine Der Spiegel but also includes works from other international news organisations such as BBC and Suddeutsche Zeitung.

A number of scholarly works including Lukas Novotný’s ‘Right Wing Extremism and No-Go Areas in Germany’ (2009) helped to expand the study from merely studying the history of the party to analysing why the party has been popular and in particular the importance of street-level, neo-Nazi movements to the party’s growing support base. In addition to this, broader scholarly works including Herbert Kitschelt’s ‘The Radical Right in Western Europe’ (1997) was consulted to understand the basics of the far-right. Other important sources looked at the transition of the far-right since the end of the Cold War and the impacts the fall of the Berlin Wall has had on both the German people and the German state. Finally, the nature of Germany during the 1950s and 1960s was also studied through scholarly works and some newspaper articles. This was vital to understanding the differences in Germany then and now. It was also vital to understanding the similarities and differences of the NPD in these periods.

In essence, the methodology for this study was fundamentally based on media reports and current scholarly works. Undoubtedly there is scope for further research into the NPD and its most recent tactics for gaining support through the use of direct interviews with former neo-Nazis, discussion with politicians and further involvement and insight from experts in the field - this included an interview and short discussion of my project with a member of the charity EXIT-Deutschland who aims to help neo-Nazis leave the scene.

**Arguments**

The main questions this study sought to answer were:

1) Are there any similarities and differences explaining the rise of the NPD in the 1960s and contemporary period and how culpable are the German authorities for the rise in NPD support?
2) How important is the economy in explaining far-right support and what is ethnic-nationalism?

3) How has the strategy of the NPD changed, in particular relating to a switch towards a more youthful support base and also street-level movements and what explains this switch?

This study has three main arguments. Firstly, that the party is the product of a number of societal and national factors. Included within this is the nature of the political system in Germany and the attitudes towards the far-right expressed by political elites and the authorities and how the NPD has been able to take advantage of these attitudes in order to build support. In effect, the German government along with its security forces have failed to deal with the far-right threat. While the practical and legal issues of banning the NPD are alluded to later in this piece the German government has still failed to conduct a genuine and innovative plan to stop the growth of far-right movements and help people to leave the scene. The study’s second main argument is that the party garners support from large and diverse spectrums of the German population, most notably in the former GDR - importantly this doesn’t relate completely to economic concerns. Issues of ‘frustrated nationalism’ as a result of history and the implications this has on ethnic nationalism and national identity are crucial to understanding the support of the NPD. Finally the study has looked into the growing phenomenon of Nationally Liberated Zones (NLZs) in Germany and how these have begun to link with the party. In addition to this, clandestine neo-Nazi movements have also become increasingly linked to the party which shows a worrying deviation in the traditional structure of the NPD and creates a more youthful, activist support base. The study points to a number of changes in Germany since the 1960s and how reunification has created a number of issues which explains the NPD’s change in discourse and strategy to attract a more youthful and activist support base.
When Beate Zschäpe handed herself into the authorities in East Germany, few could have predicted the tumultuous revelations that followed. Zschäpe was a wanted neo-Nazi activist who had been linked to various attacks and bank robberies with her two accomplices Uwe Bönhardt and Uwe Mundlos. Both Bönhardt and Mundlos had committed suicide following a botched robbery hours before Zschäpe revealed her murderous past. What was particularly embarrassing for the German authorities was the revelation that the police had known about the group, operating as the ‘National Socialist Underground’ (NSU), and had instead blamed a number of the assassinations on the Turkish mafia. This attitude was compounded further when reports surfaced that the German security forces (BfV) shredded a number of important documents relating to the NSU case.

This is indicative of the task facing German political elites following the fall of the wall. This shows how the political elites have struggled to deal with the far-right threat. In recent years the politicians have had to fight against a loss of votes to far-right parties by claiming that immigration needs to be curbed and that ‘multiculturalism has failed’ as claimed by current Chancellor Angela Merkel.

These revelations soon began to resonate with voters who identified politicians as being at least partly culpable for the ability of the NSU to commit its crimes. As a result the political elites in Germany were accused of being ‘blind in the right eye’ (Gebauer, 2012) to the threat of far-right terror, instead focusing too much on the politically profitable issue of Islamist terror. In addition, anything that presents a threat to the German public’s civil liberties are routinely scrutinised by the press and population; most notably with the ongoing revelations following the leaks by Edward Snowden which claim Germany was among a number of countries benefitting from the interception of private communications by the CIA.
This study used the NSU as a reference point throughout and chapter one discussed the issue of the political context in Germany as being vital to understanding the rise of the NPD. The main reason for analysing this association is to demonstrate a key example of how the German government and authorities have failed to take the threat of far-right terror seriously enough. This study compared the two periods and, despite them appearing different in terms of context, fundamentally the NPD was able to build a base of support by taking advantage of the attitudes of political elites and also the German democratic system itself.

1960s West Germany was an entirely different place from the contemporary united Federal Republic - yet the NPD managed to flourish in both periods showing the flexibility of the NPD in its reactions to changes in the social and political environment. The erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 divided the nation and caused outrage across the world. Here was a sure symbol that Germany's power was completely defunct and that it had been relegated to a potential battlefield for decades to come. As we now know Germany wasn’t destroyed under the tank tracks and threat of nuclear Armageddon and instead was reunited in 1989. This created an entirely different Germany; one that had become an economic powerhouse in central Europe and now had to incorporate a lost generation of East Germans into the new system.

As has been firmly established by the on-going criticism of the German government by the media and political pressure groups the political elites of the modern era have been accused of failing to recognise and firmly oppose the threat of neo-Nazism and the far-right in Germany. In addition to this there have been examples of the political elites appearing to partially, if unintentionally, condone the discourse of the far-right in Germany. The claim that ‘multiculturalism has failed’ was made by Angela Merkel in 2010 - this sort of rhetoric suggests that there needs to be a real debate over the issue of immigration in Germany and echoes the claims by the far-right in Germany that the country is losing its identity. While it can be claimed that Merkel was making this point purely to attract votes, this view has been expressed by politicians across the political spectrum. SPD politician Thilo Sarrazin wrote a
book entitled ‘Deutschland Schafft Sich Ab’ which roughly translates to ‘Germany abolishes itself’. The point of the publication was to decry growing tensions between ethnic communities in Germany and the need to protect a sense of German identity and nationhood - something which is constantly eluded to by the far-right; in particular the NPD.

However, as this study has discovered, politicians have been accused in the past of having sympathies for the far-right or failing to condemn the scene. For example in 1969 Kurt Kiesinger was elected as Chancellor, heading the ‘Grand Coalition’ between the CDU and SPD. This caused some concern as Kiesinger was a former prominent Nazi. In addition to this a number of elements within the German political system and civil service were accused of having far-right sympathies or dubious Nazi pasts.

However, while this explains the issues of the political elites it fails to understand how the NPD profits from this. To understand this, the political system of Germany needs to be scrutinised.

**Germany’s democratic system**

Some elements of the proportional representation system used in German elections can be said to unintentionally aid the cause of extremist political groups in Germany. The nature of the system means that mainstream parties, in order to gain power, have to negotiate with other parties. As a result of this manifestos become diluted and in some cases fringe supporters can feel alienated. Although it hasn’t happened in Germany, it also makes it possible for extremist groups to gain positions of power within government as occurred in Austria with the ‘Freedom Party’ (FPÖ).

An interesting system explaining this issue can be seen in ‘A Frightening Dwarf?’ where it borrows from Herbert Kitschelt the theory of how extremist political parties exploit political ‘space’ left by the mainstream parties in order to attract more voters.
If both a social democratic party and a moderate conservative party are present in a political system then their movements help to define where the political space, and therefore political success, lies. In Germany the social democratic party is the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) and the modern conservative party is the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU). If the CDU/CSU moves to the centre ground to attract votes this opens space on the right of the CDU/CSU which the NPD is again able to exploit by appealing to conservative and nationalist concerns. However, when the electorally unsuccessful SPD moves to the centre ground and adopts a more liberal stance then it alienates voters on its left and pushes the CDU/CSU to the right. Therefore the NPD is able to gain votes from disillusioned former voters of the SPD, for example workers. This can be seen in its rhetoric surrounding the need to protect jobs and benefits for German workers who feel threatened by globalisation. However, during this process the two parties will converge in the centre. This is when the NPD is most profitable as the NPD is able to accuse the mainstream political parties of ‘all being the same’. This allows them to attract a wider variety of votes due increased political space not being occupied by the main parties on both ends of the political spectrum (Kitschelt, 1997:43). This occurred during the 1960s during the Grand Coalition and can be also be evidenced in the contemporary period. Currently, the SPD is in opposition and the hardships of the economic crisis cause problems for workers and the issues of nationalism and on-going Eurozone crisis causes dissent on the right of the CDU/CSU. This can be seen in an interview with an NPD executive committee member in Der Spiegel which explains that the Euro crisis “enables us [the NPD] to reach conservative groups we wouldn’t have been able to reach in the past” (Der Spiegel, 2012).

This model explaining the emergence of political space explains why politicians will adopt far-right rhetoric in order to stop a significant move of voters to the NPD which costs them support. It also explains how an issue that isn’t addressed adequately can lead to a favourable political climate for the NPD, for example over the threats to nationalism and employment prospects. The voting system in Germany is based on proportional representation meaning that a loss of votes to a smaller party is problematic for larger
parties who will often have to enter into coalitions and therefore need to strongest possible position to bargain from as smaller parties often hold the balance of power.

These issues have appeared in Germany over the past few years with the chancellorship of Angela Merkel alienating many conservatives on the right of the CDU/CSU over a variety of issues including immigration and the bailing out of Greece and other countries as a result of the Eurozone crisis. As a result this could lead to the CDU/CSU losing conservative votes to far-right alternatives such as the NPD. This is particularly salient in the former GDR where the CDU/CSU has only become a major national party since the fall of the Berlin Wall and therefore, like the SPD and FDP, lacks major and established inroads into east Germany. The study also points to the coinciding of a growth in NPD support when the Bundestag elections of 1969 slowly moved towards gridlock leading to the ‘Grand Coalition’ and the ability of fringe parties, including the NPD, to portray political elites as ‘all the same’. In this sense, the issue of portraying the elites as corrupt is a continuing phenomenon.

The security services have also been criticised regarding their attitudes towards the far-right - something that isn’t a completely new phenomenon. In the 1950s there were numerous reported cases of racist attacks on Jews by former Nazis as some small elements of the population struggled to come to terms with the end of Nazism and the assimilation of Jews into society. In some extreme cases the authorities were even implicated in attacks on Jews (Russell, 1968:78). Equally during civil unrest in Cologne over the 1959/60 Christmas and New Year period the authorities blamed hundreds of blatant examples of Nazi commemoration such as the painting of Jewish swastikas on Synagogues and Holocaust memorials as examples of “rowdy hooliganism” (Russell, 1968:89). This wanton disregard for examples of neo-Nazi activism was therefore present during the mid-century when the NPD was emerging as a force.

While not as blatant, the security forces of today can also be accused of being too naïve and even ignorant of the threat posed by far-right groups - in particular those that have moved
towards terrorist and street-level activities. The clearest example of this, of course, relates to the NSU and their murderous killing spree which was passed off by the German authorities as the actions of the Turkish mafia. This led to an outcry among the public. The main reason for this inability to recognise the far-right threat might be partly to do with the politically profitable fight against the war on terror and terrorism in Germany.

The political system and climate in Germany has favoured the NPD in recent years and elite attitudes towards the far-right have meant the scene has been able to grow clandestinely. This marks a continuation of attitudes between the 1960s and the present day which the NPD as a party has been able to exploit.

People who vote for the far-right are often perceived to be unemployed, working class and living in deprived areas. They are, as Kitschelt describes them, the ‘losers of modernisation’. This implies that economics is the main cause of a move towards the far-right - but it is more complicated than that, ethnic nationalism is playing a more important role. Ethnic nationalism can be related to the way a society is organised and historically Germany has focused more on the importance of rights by blood (Jus Sanguinis) than rights by birth (Jus Soli) - in effect an ethnic German living in another part of Europe is more German than a second-generation Turkish immigrant born in Hannover. This ethnic nationalism comes from a number of issues but history plays an important role in German identity and how it has been formed, especially following the reunification of the country.

There has been a shift in the demographics of those who support the far-right. Rather than an older generation, there are now many young people moving towards street-level groups which the NPD has links with. According to insiders within the far-right scene, many of the new supporters are actually middle class and well educated - some are lawyers and the NPD hopes to patronise these groups in order to gain a stronger footing within the population.
This hypothesis has also been supported by Hajo Funke who told Der Spiegel in 2009 that a study by himself at the Berlin Free University found 14.4% of German teenagers held views that were “deemed highly xenophobic” (Der Spiegel, 2009).

Therefore, if the demographics of the NPDs support have changed, then what is causing it? This study argues that ethnic nationalism is the cause of far-right support and will show how these issues were equally prominent during the NPDs 1960s heyday. Of course economics always play a role, but the far-right’s support is more diverse than simply being about economic issues causing protest votes.

**Threats to the fatherland**

External threats are often reported in the press and have an influence on the population. Since the end of the Second World War, the concept of Germany as a nation-state has been a complicated concept. The 1960s saw the erection of the Berlin Wall, effectively dividing the country in two between the capitalist West and the Communist East. This became the symbol of a divided Europe and the fact it was on German soil must have had a huge psychological effect on ordinary Germans - especially after the dramatic gains made in the name of Nazism.

As a result, the degeneration of Germany into a Cold War battlefield reinforced this concept of external enemies using Germany and Germans being pawns in a larger game of global affairs. This played into the rhetoric of the far-right in particular where it called for German reunification and the allowance of Germany to regain its territories in the south and east. The external enemies were of course the brutal Soviets in the East and the pseudo-imperialist, capitalist west which also occupied Germany. In this sense national identity was vital.

This concept has continued. Chatham House (2011) identified, from a study of European countries, that populations were five times more concerned about cultural unity than
economic issues. However, Germany was reunified in the early 1990s, so surely these issues of frustrated nationalism and external threats can’t be used by the far-right and NPD anymore?

The term ‘frustrated nationalism’ is used extensively in this study to describe issues within German nationalism which link with the complicated recent history of the country. The NPD emphasises that Germany is unfairly vilified for the Second World War and the division of the country only exacerbated this. As a result Germany has only become a united country over the past two decades and the country exists with different histories. As a result there can be said to be a frustrated nationalism among some elements of the German population. As a result the NPD seeks to exploit this by creating a German nationalism based exclusively on ethnic lines - again this idea of the importance of citizenship being based on Jus Sanguinis rather than Jus Soli. In this dichotomy, you can only be a true German if you’re an ethnic German. (Peck, 1997:78)

The NPD and the far-right has been able to exploit the former GDR as the region has struggled to adapt to the introduction of migrant workers and the collapse of the old system. In the modern day, the NPD and the far-right seeks to demonise globalisation as the main external threat to German identity. Therefore, the introduction of corporations to Germany and the emergence of foreign workers are often cited by the far-right as reasons to oppose these threats to the ill-defined ‘German identity’.

**Integration is genocide**

As a direct result of this, the far-right and NPD have begun to claim that ‘Integration is Genocide’. According to the NPD hierarchy, the entire concept of Germany is at stake as a result of multiculturalism. This is linked directly to the emergence of migrant workers in the east after the fall of the Berlin Wall and also to the issue of cultural unity.
The NPD therefore targets this concept of national unity and cultural identity, especially in the east where this is lacking, and seeks to attract support along typical far-right lines; blatant racism and opposition to the presence of foreign workers on German soil.

This is clear when current leader of the NPD Holger Apfel said in an interview with the Huffington Post (2012) that there is a need to “ensure that Germany again becomes the country of the Germans... We see the growing danger that the biological basis of our people will wither away because there’s an increase in mixing.” Clearly this is playing on the lack of identity and in a sense fostering its own ideas of inclusion to attract support from the population to irrationally oppose the presence of foreigners on German soil not just for economic reasons but for reasons of ‘cultural unity’.

This, however, is not a phenomenon borne out of the collapse of Communism and fall of the Berlin Wall. These issues were present in West Germany during the 1960s.

The division of the country in this period caused great upset across Germany, particularly among those who had fought in the Wehrmacht. As a result, there were real issues between West Germans and refugees fleeing the East who were seen as a threat to the West German way of life and as potentially being subversive agents.

When there was a greater emergence of economic migrants from abroad this animosity quickly switched towards those who were not ethnically German - as a result the NPD picked up support in areas with high immigration. This was again seen as a threat to the German nation as the country remained divided and was now seeing an influx of foreign migrants who were meant to stay for a short period of time but ended up staying permanently. Therefore, to many supporters of the far-right, there was a real issue with integration. As a result this isn’t a new phenomenon in Germany - in fact the NPD has been advocating this as an issue to gain support since their 1960s heyday.
Economic issues

Of course, there are economic issues that cause support for the far-right - this can’t be ignored especially in areas of the former GDR. The collapse of the East German state meant that many lost their jobs and stability as industries that had been the lifeblood of the workforce became defunct in the face of the new capitalist Germany.

Equally the system of values that had been keeping the people together disappeared along with state apparatus to keep people at work and socially cooperative. As a result unemployment and inequality spread throughout the former GDR. Therefore, in this sense the NPD was able to exploit the growing economic unrest and feelings of upset among the East German population who felt they were losing out as a result of the reunification process. This in turn led to some outbreaks of racist violence against immigrant populations who were perceived by some elements of the population as being forced upon them by the West German economic policies as well as costing ordinary East Germans jobs. This can most clearly be seen in the Rostock riots of 1992 where a tower block housing Vietnamese migrants was torched by rioters after provocation and agitation from far-right activists, including some displaying NPD symbols, who cheered the burning of the apartment blocks and actively sought to scupper attempts by fire fighters and authorities to deal with the escalating situation.

Therefore, the economic issues can’t be underestimated but they aren’t an isolated factor - they form part of the issue of nationalism and cultural identity.

Frustrated nationalism

So what does this all mean with regards to the rise of the NPD and support for the far-right in Germany? In effect, this study has sought to show that, while economic factors are often cited as a primary reason for an increase in support for the far-right, this isn’t the only factor worth investigating.
The frustrated nationalism Germany has experienced is the direct result of all these issues. A concept of German identity based on ethnicity and a concept of external threats to Germany, both during the Cold War and the current threat from globalisation combined with economic issues in the East currently and in the West following German defeat in the Second World War means that there is a serious problem with frustrated nationalism in Germany - particularly in the east following the ruptures of the 20th century.

The NPD and far-right in general have managed to profit from these attitudes and occurrences over their periods of relative success. The fallout and unrest in public opinion regarding the division of Germany meant the NPD was able to exploit public opinion in the west during the 1960s. However, following this heyday the NPD went into exile but were able to return in the former GDR after reunification of Germany. Again, while economic woes played a role in the rise of the NPD, fundamentally they were able to exploit this concept of frustrated nationalism and ethnic nationalism in order to increase their influence. This can be seen in the former GDR where a strict socialist system was destroyed overnight meaning that the East felt that the West was invading with a new system of values which has led to an end to the pseudo-security of a socialist system and replaced it with a neo-liberal, globalised system which has recently brought inequality and unemployment to some sections of the population.

This all suggests that there is a pattern to the support for the NPD - however the demographics of support for the NPD have shifted and their methods for gaining support and influence have become increasingly sinister and violent.

This article has mentioned previously that the NPD has changed its methods of attracting support from the population. The change in demographics and actions of the German far-
right in general has facilitated this and has helped the NPD to become more influential among these groups.

The use of newspaper articles and online sources has been particularly useful in identifying the links between the NPD and other street-level far-right groups as media coverage has become more focused since the NSU revelations.

The most notable examples of this occurring can be seen with the emergence of Nationally Liberated Zones (NLZs) in Germany. These are close-knit communities of far-right activists who move into an area and are able to force out those who oppose them through intimidation. The formation of these NLZs were originally a form of collective with activists sharing income but has moved to becoming a tactical formation. In a description by Burkhard Schröder NLZs aren’t necessarily a geographically defined location but more an area of shared behaviours and attitudes which exclude those they see as different (1997: 158). Other NLZs have appeared in cities whereby small squares in the city are taken over by neo-Nazi activists.

The informal purposes of these NLZs are to organise their own law and order and rid areas of ethnic diversity. However, they also seek to remove themselves from society. This can be seen most clearly in the town of Jamel which was the subject of a BBC documentary on the far-right in Germany (Adler, 2012).

Furthermore, the NPD has links to the groups who have created the NLZs. The neo-Nazi leader of Jamel, who is currently in jail for firearms offences, is a member of the local NPD party (Der Spiegel). The NPD’s deputy leader Udo Pastörs who himself has blatant ethnic-national and racist views expressed in interviews is also resident near to Jamel.

In addition to this, the NPD has developed links with groups within the Autonomous Nationalists association who are an informal conglomerate of a number of far-right...
organisations. These groups have become increasingly involved in street-level activism of a wide variety. Some of the groups within this informal organisation allegedly had links to the NSU, which of course is accused of a decade long killing spree. The Autonomous Nationalists also have links to a group called The Immortals who arrange spontaneous night-time protests while carrying torches and wearing masks. Many of these videos are uploaded via social media sites and mark a distinctive switch in the tactics of the far-right showing more emphasis on intimidation and using social media to get their message to a wider audience. This occurred in the 1990s as part of a tactical effort to attract more support - this therefore suggests that a number of NPD members have links to other far-right groups and aren’t exclusively representatives and members of the party. By having links to the creation of NLZs and the Autonomous Nationalists it can be inferred that the tactics and associations of the NPD have switched towards something more sinister and threatening than the simple parliamentary representation of the past.

This shows a serious change in the strategy of the NPD, especially since the 1960s where the party was primarily a parliamentary umbrella organisation for former Nazis and ultra-conservatives seeking representation at the national level.

All this is important to understand and is indicative of a change in the attitudes and actions of the NPD - but why has this started to happen? It’s clear that the fall of the Berlin Wall has been an important factor but in order to understand this, other factors need to be explored to reveal such a dramatic shift in demographics and methods by the NPD and German far-right in general.

**WHY THE CHANGE?**

All this research into the creation of NLZs and the linking of the NPD to far-right and neo-Nazi street level groups is pretty superficial unless the reasons behind this shift are more closely examined. In order to understand this context, the change in electoral support and
the interpretation of Germany’s Nazi past need to be analysed in order to understand this change of strategy.

CONTEXT

The earlier emergence of the NPD coincided with a period in German history whereby the Nazi past was abhorred and the government had to clamp down particularly hard on any groups exhibiting neo-Nazi tendencies. As a result, the NPD had to ensure that it stayed a legal organisation to remain a force in German politics. This was particularly obvious following the banning of the Sozialistische Reichspartei (SRP) for being overtly pro-Nazi. Therefore, the NPD, while having former Nazis within its ranks and being far-right, was careful to stay on the right side of the law and ensure it wasn’t banned as a political movement. Therefore, having links to any street-level groups was out of the question and influencing German politics through a parliamentary means was more lucrative. Equally, the memory of the Nazi party in this period was a party of government, not a street-level group which it had been prior to the 1930s where the party participated in civil disobedience and violent intimidation to gain support during the 1920s. Equally, large parts of the German establishment in the 1960s were former Nazis - most notably the German chancellor during the Grand Coalition, Kurt Kiesinger.

The modern day context is very different. As has been previously established the German government has been criticised recently for not doing enough to tackle the far-right threat in Germany. In addition to this the terrorist attacks of the early 21st century made it more politically profitable for the government to focus on alleged Islamic fundamentalism than far-right groups.

Another important contemporary factor relates to the attempted ban of the NPD between 2001 and 2003. The constitutional court ruled against the government’s attempts to ban the party. The reason for this was that there were too many government informants within the party. A ban was considered as recently as last year however the German government was
reluctant to remove its informants and also feared that another defeat would bolster the party’s image and increase its exposure in the national media, as well as martyring a number of its members.

Another important contextual factor has been the reunification of Germany which effectively meant the NPD was able to exploit those in the former GDR who opposed the new order being imposed upon them. This is important and the scrutiny on the far-right is clearly less caustic with the dropping of a proposed ban on the NPD which the government and experts alike agree is not the best way to combat the party, suggesting its influence has become too pervasive in the contemporary era. The context of the NPD’s emergence in these two periods is important and helps to explain the change in demographic support for the NPD; from an older one in the 1960s to a younger one in the contemporary period.

CHANGE IN DEMOGRAPHICS
The change in demographics also helps to explain this change in strategy. As has been established the changing context between the 1960s and contemporary period explain why the party has increased its links to street-level movements and changed its strategy. The 1960s largely saw support for the far-right among former Nazis and veterans of the Second World War - mostly an older demographic. However, as the context explains this was during a time when scrutiny on the far-right was particularly strict and therefore terrorist and violent tactics were largely ruled out. Equally, it is harder to imagine an older demographic being involved in street-level activities, especially after their experience of the Nazi regime largely being that of a governmental regime which actually discouraged terrorism and civil disobedience.

However, in the modern period the demographics of the NPD have become younger. This can be seen as a result of the change in context - most notably the disintegration of the former GDR which left a void which the NPD was able to exploit. Equally, younger people were more attracted to the street-level aspect than the parliamentary approach and
therefore gravitated towards neo-Nazi and far-right groups. As a result, when the NPD began to exploit this context and attract younger supporters through links with these groups the demographics of the party began to shift, giving the party greater influence among the neo-Nazi groups and the younger population. As a result this helped to instigate a change in strategy for the NPD which saw a shift away from their primarily parliamentary role to a clandestine association with street-level movements.

The question of why the NPDs demographic has become younger is certainly one for debate, but this author would conclude that the turmoil of the collapse of the East German system meant that younger people were more likely to gravitate towards the far-right. Equally the older generations were more likely to drift to the left after the dictatorship of the Communist led government - this can be seen with the growing influence of the Die Linke party in East Germany.

**INTERPRETATION OF THE NAZI PAST**

Finally, the Nazi’s legacy and interpretation of Germany’s Nazi past can’t be ignored in explaining this trend.

The 1960s saw the NPD emerge during a time when the memories of the Nazis were largely as those of a government party. Therefore the tendency towards terrorism and street-level activities were discouraged. Instead, parliamentary agitation and an attempt to gain representation through legal means was the strategy followed.

However, following the division and then reunification of Germany the education of the Nazi past has been less comprehensive in the East. Therefore, while the demographics have become younger, the interpretation of the Nazi rise to power is more based on their 1920s agitation and sometimes violent tactics in order to gain support from a scared and angry population. Therefore, the far-right has as a result moved towards street-level tactics and the neo-Nazi memorabilia and tactics reflect this.
This article has sought to summarise the study ‘A Frightening Dwarf’. The main aims of this study were to discuss received wisdom and scholarly studies already existing in this field while seeking to add to the current levels of research available. The main theme of this study was to compare the NPD of the 1960s with its modern day successor. The study agrees with some received wisdom about the rise of the NPD - in particular that economic concerns do play a role in the rise of the far right - but also challenges this by suggesting that the economy isn’t the root cause of an increase of support for the far-right. Ethnic nationalism and the resulting ‘frustrated nationalism’ bolstered by historical issues explain the roots of support for the far-right. This study has also criticised the German authorities for not doing enough to tackle the far-right threat in Germany - this again supports much received wisdom, in particular from the liberal media in Germany and anti-Nazi charities and groups such as EXIT-Deutschland. Finally, this article has sought to summarise the growing links between the NPD and street-level neo-Nazi groups. The NPD has changed and this study has shown that; but it has also drawn comparisons between the 1960s and the contemporary period and pointed out how some of the factors that facilitated the rise of the NPD in the 1960s are still present today; as a result there needs to be further frank discussion about how to deal with far-right extremism, how to stop people joining the scene and helping disaffected members leave the scene.
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