

Oliver Rathkolb
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(eds.)

Authoritarian Trends and Parliamentary Democracy in Europe

Wallstein

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Oliver Rathkolb

Introduction

For a number of years in these geopolitically and economically turbulent times, we have been experiencing a global trend: the erosion of parliamentary democracy and a questioning of the liberal values upon which it is founded – in some cases with dramatic consequences for the status and prestige of democratic institutions.¹ At the same time, we are witnessing radical, authoritarian responses to the complex challenges of the day, as representative democracy is called into question as a system for determining political will and balancing interests, in favour of authoritarian structures of decision-making despite formally free elections.

Long-term analyses on the basis of snapshots in 2017,² 2019,³ or, in the context of the University of Vienna's Austrian Corona Panel, in May 2020 and most recently in January 2022⁴ document a stable core of anti-democratic attitudes that have risen sharply from 10 to 15 % in France and Italy, but also in Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, while being not quite as strong in Germany and Austria.

Almost exactly one hundred years ago, the Vienna-based legal scholar Hans Kelsen expressed the basic principle that a functioning democracy requires that political will be formed in an active *process* that is never final or complete. This process requires the active participation of everyone, be it directly, as part

- 1 Cf. R.S Foa, A. Klassen, M. Slade, A. Rand, and R. Collins, The Global Satisfaction with Democracy Report 2020, Cambridge, United Kingdom: Centre for the Future of Democracy, <https://www.bennettinstitute.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Democracy-Report2020.pdf> (accessed 5 April 2022).
- 2 Oliver Rathkolb, Martina Zandonella, Günther Ogris, NS-Geschichtsbewusstsein und autoritäre Einstellungen, in: http://www.zukunftsfondsautria.at/download/SORA_13069_Pressepapier_Geschichtsbewusstsein_autoritaere_Einstellungen.pdf (accessed 3 April 2022). Cf. also in detail Oliver Rathkolb, Autoritäres Potenzial und demokratische Werte in Österreich 1978 – 2004 – 2017, in: Juridikum 2018, Vol. 1, 80–91 (https://www.juridikum.at/fileadmin/user_upload/ausgaben/Juridikum_2018_1.pdf).
- 3 Cf. the assessment of the detailed results of this survey in Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary conducted and examined by Oliver Rathkolb in conjunction with the Fritz Bauer Institute, Dr. Petra Ziegler, and Respondi Cologne: Julian Aichholzer, Clemens M. Lechner, Refining the Short Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SSDO): A Validation in Seven European Countries, in: Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 2021, Vol. 9 (2), 475–489, <https://doi.org/10.5964/jssp.6919>.
- 4 Cf. the Corona Panel Blog 89, Oliver Rathkolb, Julian Aichholzer, Demokratische Einstellungen in Österreich: Vor und während der Corona-Krise, <https://viecer.univie.ac.at/corona-blog/corona-blog-beitraege/blog89/> (accessed 2 April 2022).

of civil society, or indirectly, via the principle of representation. Kelsen's idea that the essence of democracy lies in its process and not in its outcome is increasingly endangered. To an extent, the COVID pandemic and the measures taken to control it have accelerated the loss of trust in the ability of political representatives to react. For a long time, the authority and legitimacy of existing democratic institutions such as parliament or political parties have been severely undermined by bot-driven "fake news" and a feeling among large swathes of the population that they are no longer part of the political decision-making process.⁵

In recent years, scholars have been more prepared to use surveys to measure anti-democratic attitudes,⁶ but at the same time, they have not offered any models for a solution other than the response that "More education protects against an autocratic trend". This directly gives rise to questions concerning the potential for the renewal and further development of methods of citizens' active participation in processes of democratic *Willensbildung*.

In the meantime, brutal acts of violence are on the increase, for instance the nine racially motivated murders in Germany and the murder of the president of the Kassel district, the CDU's Walter Lübcke, who had called for Christian values during the heated debate on refugees in 2015. All of the perpetrators are from right-wing milieus and involved in the inhuman campaigns against migrants and war refugees. Long forgotten in today's Austria, however, are the series of murders by the right-wing extremist Franz Fuchs, who, acting alone, was infected by the same propaganda as the Germany right-wing extremists. Between 1993 and 1996, Fuchs murdered four young Roma in Oberwart with a booby trap and injured fifteen other people, some of them severely, with letter and pipe bombs. And every year, the police in Austria's federal provinces find arms depots with ties to the neo-Nazi scene in Germany.⁷

However, as the history of the 1920s and 1930s clearly shows, when the state and society break down, it is the small groups and streamlined networks that ultimately drive political developments via acts of violence.

People who take a critical view of dictatorial, totalitarian pasts generally have less sympathy for authoritarian developments in the present. For this reason, Orbán and Kaczyński also attempt to prevent and suppress a critical and non-nationalist depiction of history by all possible means, as the political instrumentalization of the museums of contemporary history in the two coun-

5 SORA Institute for Social Research and Consulting, Österreichischer Demokratie Monitor, 2021, https://www.sora.at/fileadmin/downloads/projekte/2021_SORA_Praesentation-Demokratie-Monitor-2021.pdf (accessed 5 April 2022).

6 Cf. also the SORA democracy barometer.

7 <https://www.bonvalot.net/das-sind-die-waffen-der-neonazis-und-rechtsextremen-842/>

tries demonstrates. At the same time, fundamental recognition of the central developments in the history of democracy is in sharp decline.

Ignorance is just as dangerous to democratic politics as an uncritical nationalist view of history that falsifies facts, and ultimately amounts to a kind of political apathy. This leads to a situation in which it is easier to mobilize societies for authoritarian and anti-democratic messages. The people have neither positive nor negative historical experience and are resigned to taking developments as they come. In Hungary, we have demonstrated a high level of political apathy for over ten years.⁸ In our survey of 2007, the percentage of apathetic Hungarians was so large that it was no surprise that many followed Orbán's hyper-nationalist temptations of a better future.

Is the basis of Western-style parliamentary democracy fragile despite the incredible economic and social development since 1945, and is it in danger of being replaced by illiberal, pseudo-democratic models? If the democratic system cannot provide social justice, security, and democratic orientation in daily life and work, then clearly people will be more prepared to follow a "strong leader" once again. For Dahrendorf, globalization brings with it a phase of "authoritarian constitutions" – with the "consolations" that they "are neither as prone to disaster nor as precarious as totalitarian dictatorships".⁹

A potential antidote to the root causes of authoritarian trends is strengthening an economic and social development that has provided at least a reasonably degree of social equality since 1945, offering more solidarity to offset the individualization of today's society.

On the whole, the results of these empirical surveys demonstrate that on the national level, there is certainly great dissatisfaction in some EU states, even if there is relatively high support for democracy. But debates about migration and asylum boost authoritarian attitudes.

In 2024, surveys and also studies like those of the Bertelsmann Foundation¹⁰ and the Stockholm Institute for Global Democracy Studies¹¹ have documented that parliamentary democracy is in decline and that since 2004, various types of autocracies have overtaken democratic systems – despite the election results and transformations in Poland and Brazil.

In the USA, Donald Trump is now hyping Viktor Orbán's Hungary as a role model, perhaps in order to undermine the division of powers – and especially the independent judiciary – in addition to "purging" a neutral bureaucracy

8 Cf. Árpád v. Klimó, Hungary, in: Rathkolb/Ogris (eds.), *Authoritarianism*, 79–90.

9 Dahrendorf, *Die Globalisierung*.

10 <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/publikationen/publikation/did/transformation-index-bti-2024-all>

11 <https://www.idea.int/gsod/gsod>

that upholds the law and using AI-driven social media to implement the Hungarian system of “illiberal democracy” with elections in the USA.

Our surveys were initiated by the Vienna Institute for Cultural and Contemporary History in conjunction with the Fritz Bauer Institute at the Goethe University of Frankfurt and the University of Vienna, before the COVID pandemic in 2019 and in December 2022, and were conducted under the auspices of Petra Ziegler, co-founder of Wiener Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Bildungsforschung (the Vienna Institute for Labour Market and Education Research). The surveys show that even for Europe, there are clear warning signs despite what remain high levels of acceptance of the democratic model: asked whether they wanted a “strong leader” who rules without elections and parliament, 41 % of French and 46 % of Italian respondents said that they did.

Quite clearly, fears of ending up on the losing side in the “nervous age” driven by the digital revolution are so strong that they are easily amplified by hateful messages opposing “foreigners” and other groups. Lacking hope regarding their social circumstances, many people consider an authoritarian regime their only way out.

Trust in politicians declined in our surveys from an average of 9 to 11 %; only in Germany (19 %) and the United Kingdom (15 %) is there greater agreement – in France and Hungary they are considered particularly untrustworthy (71 %).

Our surveys show clearly that people afraid of social decline have a greater tendency to be receptive to authoritarian messages than those who feel more socially and economically secure. And the higher the level of education, the easier it is to cope with today’s rapid transformations and not resort to apathy and its associated search for a strong right-wing leader.

The implication for the political agenda is that it is important not only to talk about social justice but to reduce the gap between income groups via comprehensive social measures and laws. Only then, as Dahrendorf demands, can the authoritarian trend be stopped.

Studies on France and observations in Austria, Poland, and Hungary show that disadvantages with respect to infrastructure in rural and provincial regions can lead to a stronger trend towards authoritarian messages. This underscores the need for an infrastructure policy that does not concentrate solely on megacities but instead aims for more balanced town and country planning such as that implemented in Germany and Austria after the Second World War.

The same holds for education: the Austrian government in particular shows how it is possible to ignore all international expert studies and keep muddling through with a concept from the nineteenth century. Instead of diverting as many resources and trained staff to the sphere of primary education as possible,

the state continues to provide substandard fare – as Ruth Beckermann's film *Favoriten* demonstrates.

Instead, there is talk of expanding the police force to prevent juvenile crime; there are no extensive and profound education initiatives, other than declamations in party programmes and glossy brochures and on social media. Everywhere, classical politics appears to be unable to cope, from France to Germany to Austria and Italy.

Another international trend can also be observed in Europe, and to an extent in the USA: young men between the ages of eighteen and thirty have a stronger tendency to adopt authoritarian attitudes than women in the same age group. However, this is not something we should leave to schools to deal with; we all have a role to play.

And it is certainly possible, as international studies in the USA and in China (!) demonstrate: in companies, even simple measures can result in measurable and sustained reductions in authoritarian attitudes: short, well-moderated twenty-minute discussions in small groups of five to ten people once a week on a Monday morning are sufficient: after just six weeks, not only are less authoritarian attitudes measurable, but productivity is increased.

Only novel and innovative approaches and concrete political measures will help reverse the authoritarian trend, at least in Europe, and promote parliamentary democracy. Soapbox speeches and PR campaigns certainly aren't going to do anything!

The sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf was right in his prediction made in the late 1990s: if Europe does not manage to stabilize or modernize the successful post-war welfare system, there will be great conflict. The result of this conflict is already evident in the increase in authoritarian attitudes and leader personalities.

But the return of a radically authoritarian politician like Donald Trump as US president and the radicalization of the Republican Party in the USA, which actually no longer seeks parliamentary compromise, also confirm Dahrendorf's theory. Fear of migration and economic crises increase readiness to accept simple yet radically formulated messages and vote for authoritarian models, even if they clearly tend towards illiberal parties and rule by one man, as in Hungary.

Investment in comprehensive political education across society that at least touches on the development of democracy in the twentieth century, and especially the big dictatorships and totalitarianism, is an investment against authoritarian developments. We continue to focus a great deal on grammar school, middle school, and university education, but we neglect compulsory and vocational schools and apprentices. Political education must reach society as a whole, however, in order to keep democracy alive.

Petra Ziegler | Andreas Schulz-Tomančok

Authoritarianism, Historical Perceptions and Democratic Dispositions in Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom: Methodology and Comparative Results of the 2019 and 2022 Online Surveys

1. Introduction

In November and December 2022, an online survey was conducted on authoritarianism, historical perceptions, and democratic dispositions in Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and, for the first time, the United Kingdom (UK). The format was based on a prior survey conducted in the above countries, with the exception of the UK, carried out in the autumn of 2019. The surveys were commissioned by the Verein zur wissenschaftlichen Aufarbeitung der Zeitgeschichte at the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna and funded by the University of Vienna, the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria, and the Fritz Bauer Institute in 2019, and by the University of Vienna and the Alfred Landecker Foundation in 2022.¹

The aim of the survey is to examine authoritarian attitudes, hostility towards certain groups, such as Islamophobia or primary and secondary antisemitism, national views on history in the countries on coping with post-war history and/or socialist regimes, and European transformation and integration after the fall of the Iron Curtain, and to compare them with the survey from 2019. Besides topics already surveyed in 2019, the survey in 2022 also considered attitudes towards Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine since February 24, 2022, as well as attitudes towards government and official institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1 A multi-disciplinary team worked together to realise the surveys: in 2019 the Department of Government and the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna (AT) worked together with the Fritz Bauer Institute (DE) and the Viennese Institute of Labour Market and Education Research (WIAB, AT); in 2022, again the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna worked together with the Fritz Bauer Institut and WIAB, this time supported by the Alfred Landecker Foundation (DE).

The surveys intend to provide valuable analytical material on the current situation and development of authoritarian attitudes in the selected European countries, thereby making an important contribution to the ongoing socio-political debates regarding the increasing autocratic developments in the world and in Europe in particular.

Within the following introductory chapter, we provide an overview of the survey's method, design, and questionnaire as well as the main results of the surveys conducted in 2019 and 2022 with respect to anomia and democratic dispositions, authoritarianism, culture of remembrance/historical awareness, antisemitism and Islamophobia, and effects of and attitudes towards Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The results will be presented in a country comparison for 2019/22 (except for the UK, which was not surveyed in 2019).

2. Method, sample size, and questionnaire

The survey was conducted by the market research institute Bilendi & respondi in cooperation with their partners in eight European countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom. The survey was designed as a cross-sectional sample.

The population universe in both surveys, from 2019 and 2022, comprised the internet population living in each country aged 18+ years (in the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, and the UK) or aged 16+ years (in Austria, where the voting age is 16), with no upper age limit. Additionally, participants had to have sufficient language skills in the respective national language in order to answer questions.

The sampling scheme used a quota to be achieved for the following variables:

- Gender (male/female)
- Age in five groups: 16(18)–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60+
- Education in three groups: following Eurostat's scheme of low (ISCED 0–2), medium (ISCED 3–4), and high (ISCED 5–8) education.
- Region (either NUTS-1 or NUTS-2 regions).

During the survey administration and afterwards, the following quality checks were introduced: the first quality check comprised a battery of Likert-type attitude questions (questions Q5–Q7, eight items in total in 2022). If a respondent showed zero variance in his/her responses to these nine questions (straight-lining pattern), the respondent was immediately excluded from the survey. The second quality check was formulated as a trap question (attention check question) placed in the middle of the questionnaire (question C1): 'Please click 'Next' without selecting any of the response options.' If the response was

non-missing, the respondent was immediately excluded from the survey. The third quality check excluded respondents showing extreme speeding relative to other respondents (relative to the sum of median response times per page).² These were dropped ex-post by the polling firm.

Weighting variables were calculated for post-stratification adjustment according to known population distributions defined by the quota (or sampling adjustment, in the case of Germany³) and electoral results of the last national election in both 2019 and 2022.⁴

The questionnaire was developed in 2019 and updated in 2022 and is based on surveys that have already been conducted for various times in different countries, such as EVS⁵, CSES⁶, ESS⁷, ISSP⁸, the GMF-Survey⁹, or ACCP¹⁰. Also, a survey conducted in 2007 – by SORA and Oliver Rathkolb – was an important input for developing the questionnaire (Rathkolb, Ogris, 2010) and one reason to select again the countries Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, as these countries represent four different settings in terms of historical development and experiences with authoritarian regimes; to broaden the analysis, the surveys in 2019 and 2022 also included Germany (where research is regularly conducted on xenophobia and right-wing extremism), Italy (with its authoritarian history and recent developments with an openly post-fascist party in government), France (where the parties in power over many decades have crumbled in recent years and new movements, as well as a far-right party,

2 Using the equation: $\sum \text{medians}(\text{user}) \times \text{rank}(\text{user}) / \sum \text{medians}(\text{user}) < 0.13$.

3 In Germany, a disproportional allocation of regions was used in the sampling design. All eastern regions (*Bundesländer*) were assigned a higher likelihood (by a factor of 2) of being sampled (= oversample). Thus, a lower weighting factor was applied in the post-stratification weighting.

4 A first weighting variable uses only demographic criteria – demographic weight: Gender (male/female) / Age in five groups: (16)18–29, 30–39, 40–49, 50–59, 60+ / Education in three groups: following Eurostat's scheme of low (ISCED 0–2), medium (ISCED 3–4), and high (ISCED 5–8) education. / Region (either NUTS-1 or NUTS-2 regions). All data were derived from the Eurostat database. In each country, marginal distributions of the population aged 16(18) to 69 years were used as the reference population. A second weighting variable combines demographic and political criteria (i.e. vote recall for the last national election) – demographic plus political weight: Demographic weighting criteria (see above) / Vote recall of last national election.

5 European Value Study, <https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/> (7 August 2023).

6 Comparative Study of Electoral Systems, <https://cses.org/> (7 August 2023).

7 European Social Survey, <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/download.html?r=1> (7 August 2023).

8 International Social Survey Programme, <https://ess.sikt.no/en/> (7 August 2023).

9 Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit (GMF-Survey 2009), https://search.gesis.org/research_data/ZA5574 (7 August 2023).

10 Austrian Corona Panel Project, <https://viecer.univie.ac.at/coronapanel/> (7 August 2023).

are the most relevant players in politics), and in 2022, for the first time, the United Kingdom (with different historical experiences with authoritarianism than continental Europe and bringing in a different perspective after Brexit). The main topics of the questionnaire are: democratic dispositions and pluralism; authoritarianism; historical awareness; antisemitism and Islamophobia; and effects of and attitudes towards Russia's war against Ukraine (for details please see Annex 1: questionnaire, p. 58).

3. Main results of the surveys in 2019 and 2022

In the following, introductory comparative results on selected topics are presented both to indicate the scope of the survey and to present an overview of the current dynamics in the countries studied. For this purpose, findings on subjective political participation (p. 18 ff.), satisfaction with the functioning of democracy (p. 19 ff.), and attitudes towards democracy (p. 23 ff.) are presented descriptively. The second part of the presentation of results is followed by comparative descriptions of various aspects of authoritarian attitudes, ranging from authoritarian aggression (p. 26 f.) to servility (p. 27 f.) and social dominance (p. 31). In the third section, findings from the questions on cultures of remembrance (p. 33 f.) are presented. Subsequently, the results from the antisemitism (p. 36 ff.) and Islamophobia (p. 39 ff.) survey show the different developments of attitudes in Europe. This introductory presentation of results concludes with an overview of attitudes towards Russia's war against Ukraine. (p. 46 ff.)

3.1 Anomy and disenchantment with democracy

In order to better understand electoral behaviour and thus the processes of democratic change, it is first relevant to look at the aspects of democratic consciousness of the people interviewed as well as the social psychological concepts behind them. For this purpose, a concept of efficacy that is important for the phenomenon of political anomie will first be briefly introduced, and then the findings from 2019 and 2022 will be presented.

3.1.1 Internal efficacy

Political efficacy is a social psychological construct and is used to measure individual political competence and influence beliefs. The conviction that one can

understand political processes and influence them through individual political engagement is considered one of the most important predictors of political participation. Consequently, the term political efficacy encompasses two constructs (Converse, 1972): (a) internal political efficacy refers to the individual's (self-)conviction that political options for action are available to him or her (Balch, 1974). This includes, for example, the ability to understand political issues and to participate effectively in politics; (b) external political efficacy is defined by Balch (1974, 24) as the individual conviction that political authorities are receptive to attempts to influence them (cf. Beierlein et al., 2012, 7). In the present study, three items were used to record internal political efficacy. These are borrowed inter alia from Balch's 1974 study and adapted from a study on group-focused enmity (*gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit* (GMF)) (Heitmeyer et al., 2011; 2020).

First, the study participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree on a five-point scale with the following statements: "People like me don't have any say about what the government does." With the exception of Hungary and the Czech Republic, there is an increase in agreement with this statement in all countries over time. In Italy (53 %), the Czech Republic (53 %), and the UK (52 %), more than half of the respondents agree. The response behaviour is most balanced in France, with 40 % agreeing and disagreeing. In Italy, rejection is lowest, at 22 % (see figure 3-1).

Similar developments can be observed for the statement "Even as an individual citizen I can influence developments in [COUNTRY]" over the course of time. Especially in Hungary, three quarters of the respondents tend to disagree or disagree completely with the statement. This compares to only 27 % in France. This is also the country with the highest approval rate (50 %) among the countries surveyed. In most countries, the partly agree/disagree category (France: 21 %, Germany: 34 %) was often selected.

In contrast, the third question on efficacy paints a contrary picture. Almost half of the French (47 %) agree with the statement "I think it's pointless for me to become politically engaged". This compares to 24 % in Germany, 25 % in Austria, 29 % in Hungary, 31 % in Italy and Poland, 34 % in the UK, and 35 % in the Czech Republic. The highest level of disagreement is found in Germany and Hungary, with 44 %, followed by Austria with 43 % and the UK with 41 %.

A comparison of mean values over time and by country shows that, with the exception of Hungary, internal political efficacy has declined in all countries (see table 3-1). The mean values differ rather gradually, with the exception of Hungary, which has particularly low values.

Across almost all country contexts, it is also evident that women are more likely to agree with the statement that they consider it pointless to get involved

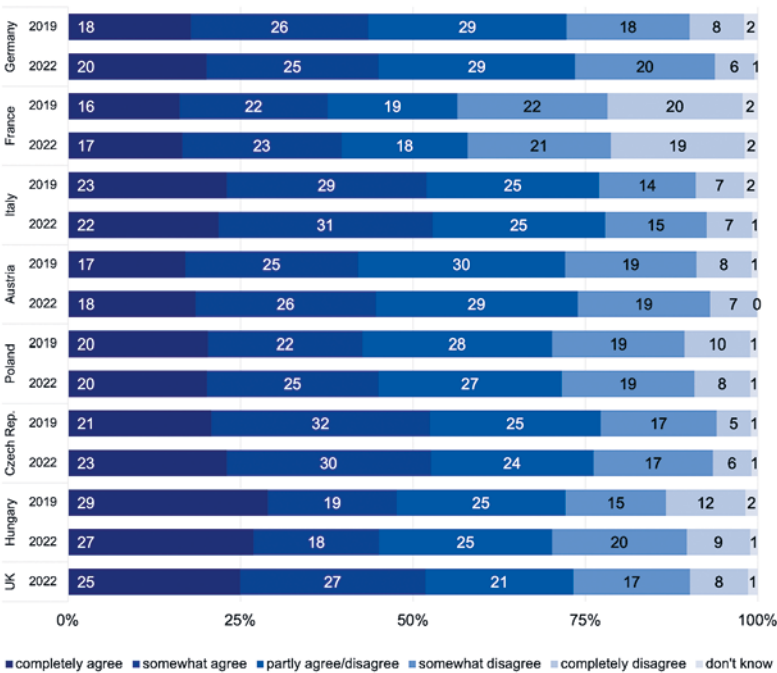


Figure 3-1: Agreement with “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does.”

in politics. Germany and Italy are exceptions here, where no differences between men and women can be observed. However, the higher the level of education, the higher the level of agreement that individuals can also influence political decisions. With regard to the economic situation, it is evident in Italy, for example, that the worse the perception of the economic situation, the stronger the agreement that individuals have no influence.

3.1.2 Satisfaction with the functioning of the democracy

The findings make it clear that people see themselves as less able to influence developments in society. However, it can be stated that political interest is comparably high in the observed countries, with the exception of France and the Czech Republic. In a few countries, interest has decreased on average, as in Italy and France, and gradually in Germany too. At the same time, it has increased in Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary (see table 3-1).

However, this insight does not yet provide us with any statements on the extent to which democracy is advocated. Adapted from Rathkolb’s 2007 study (Rathkolb & Ogris, 2010), the results of the question “Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements: Democracy is the best form of government, even if it may entail problems” show that in all countries, agreement increased over the survey periods (see figure 3-2, table 3-1). In Austria, 79 % tend to agree to a great extent, in Italy 78 %, in Germany 76 %, France 74 %, and in the Czech Republic only 66 %. The Czech Republic is also the country where the highest level of disagreement is found, at 10 %. In the UK, 9 % could not answer this question (“I don’t know”). Also, in the UK, only about two thirds agree with the statement.

It can be seen that with increasing formal education and higher subjective class affiliation, the rate of agreement with the statement increases in all observed countries. In Poland, Germany, Italy, France, and the UK there is a

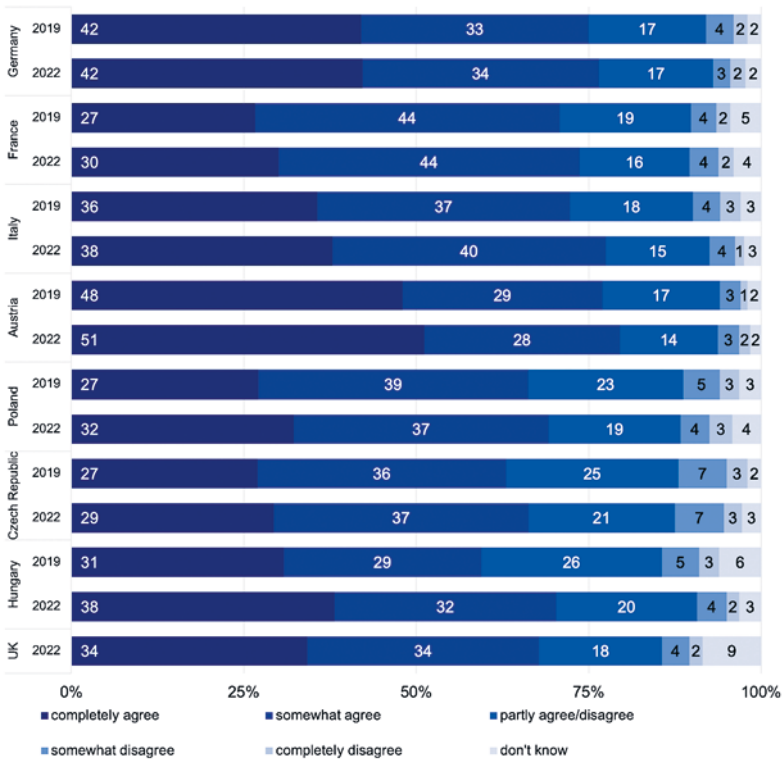


Figure 3-2: Agreement with “Democracy is the best form of government, even if it may entail problems.”

significantly stronger agreement with the statement among men than among women. In Poland, it can also be observed that with increasing age and across all political camps, there are high approval ratings. In Italy, on the other hand, it is clear that politically left-leaning people agree much more strongly (91 %) with the statement than people bordering on the right-wing (69 %).

The question whether “experts, not the government, should decide what is best for the [COUNTRY]” (adapted from EVS, 2022, v146) was more strongly supported in the Central European countries than in the Western European countries. In Poland in particular, 62 % agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, in the Czech Republic 61 %, and in Hungary 58 %. In comparison, in Germany and France, where support has declined over the years, only 27 % in Germany and 44 % in France agreed with the statement. In Poland and the Czech Republic, agreement increased. Especially in Western European countries, the ambivalence between approval and disapproval is higher than in Central European countries. Accordingly, rejection of the statement is also higher there: in France 19 %, Germany 18 %, Italy 16 %, and the UK 15 %. The responses to the question “Democracy must take into account the interests of different groups” make it clear that democracy is understood as the representation of the interests of diverse social groups across the countries. In all countries, approval is increasing in this regard. In Germany, 87 % agree or strongly agree with the statement, in Austria 87 %, in France 86 %, and in Poland 85 %. This contrasts with the Czech Republic, where only 75 % agree with it. But the Czech Republic shows the greatest increase in agreement, over 10 % from 2019 to 2022.

With regard to satisfaction with the functioning of democracy at home and in the EU, two question items from the CSES were used. On a four-point scale from very satisfied to not at all satisfied, the survey asked, “On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your own country and in the EU?”

With regard to satisfaction with one’s own government, there are different dynamics over the course of time. For example, one third of Germans are quite or very satisfied with their government. In France and Italy satisfaction has risen, from 21 % to 24 % in France and from 21 % to 33 % in Italy. In Austria, approval fell from 43 % to 19 %, in Poland from 31 % to 23 %, and in the Czech Republic from 33 % to 26 %. In Hungary, confidence in the Fidesz-led government rose slightly to 36 %. Dissatisfaction is particularly high in Austria, where 78 % disapprove of the government in 2022. In contrast, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in the EU in countries such as Germany (41 %) and France (29 %) is relatively stable over the survey period. In Italy and the Czech Republic, satisfaction levels rose slightly over the time, whereas in Austria, Poland, and Hungary the trend is in the opposite direction. In Austria, satis-

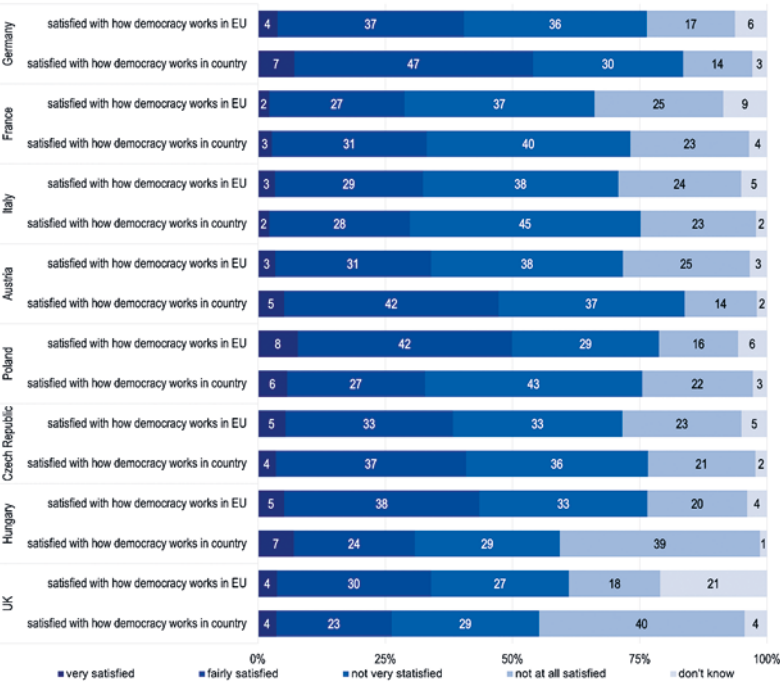


Figure 3-3: Satisfaction with the way democracy works in one's own country and the EU (2022)

faction with the functioning of democracy fell by eight percentage points to 44 % and in Poland from 57 % to 50 %. The greatest uncertainty in answering the question can be seen in the non-EU country, the UK, where 20 % of the participants cannot answer the question. In the direct comparison between satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in one's own country and in the EU for the year 2022 (see figure 3-3), no unitary picture emerges with regard to satisfaction. In most countries, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy at home is higher than in the EU (Germany, France, Austria, Czech Republic). However, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in the EU is higher in countries with high corruption (Hungary) (Transparency.org, 2023) or Hungary and Poland, where the ongoing consolidation of illiberal democracy has led not only to a stagnation but also to an erosion of the fundamental principles of the rule of law (Blanke & Sander, 2023). It can be summarised that in all countries, approval of democratic principles has increased, in some cases strongly. The highest values are found in Germany ($m=3.74$), followed by

Austria ($m=3.7$). The lowest approval is found in the Czech Republic ($m=3.37$) (see table 3-1).

In all countries, male participants are significantly more satisfied with the functioning of democracy in the EU than female ones. In Poland and France, satisfaction also rises sharply with increasing age. In contrast, satisfaction decreases in the Czech Republic in older age groups compared to younger ones. In Italy, for example, people from the upper classes are clearly more satisfied (54 %) than people from the lower classes (24 %).

3.1.3 Democracy and parties

Knowledge about attitudes towards democracy and parties is essential for analyses of democratic developments. For this purpose, in the 2022 survey, respondents were presented for the first time with six statements with which they could completely agree or completely disagree. In all countries, more than 50 % of the respondents agreed with the statement that “most politicians only care about the interests of the rich and powerful”. Poland and the UK had the highest levels of agreement with 73 % each, followed by France and Italy with 71 % each. The lowest level of agreement is found in Germany, with 52 %.

With the exception of Germany (19 %) and the UK (15 %), the statement that most politicians are trustworthy is only agreed with by between 9 % and 11 % of respondents. In Hungary and France, politicians are considered particularly untrustworthy (71 %). Only in Germany do less than 50 % disagree with the statement. The low level of trust in politicians is also reflected in the complex of questions on trust in democratic institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Here, the federal government and parliament are ranked last in Germany (37 % for the federal government and 36 % for the German Bundestag), the UK (26 % for the parliament and 26 % for the Tory-led government), Austria (21 % for the conservative-green coalition and 27 % for the Nationalrat), the Czech Republic (23 % for both parliament and government), France (22 % for both parliament and government) and Poland (18 % for parliament and 20 % for the PIS-led government). In Italy, the government enjoys a few percentage points more trust than the public media services. The national parliament is in last place with 32 %. In Hungary, only the public broadcaster (25 %) has lower trust ratings than the Fidesz-led government (29 %) and the Hungarian parliament (27 %).

The statement that the people and not the politicians should make the important political decisions was supported most strongly in Poland (66 %), France (63 %), Austria, and Hungary (both 59 %). The lowest level of support (45 %) and highest rejection rate (23 %) was in Germany.

Table 3-1: Comparisons of political interest and disenchantment with democracy in 2019 and 2022

		Political interest	Best form of government	Understanding index	Efficacy index	Democracy in country	Democracy in EU	Democracy index*
Germany	2019	2.82(.86)	4.11(.97)	3.02(.53)	3.02(.97)	2.52(.80)	2.31(.79)	
	2022	2.81(.86)	4.14(.94)	3.74(.61)	2.96(.94)	2.49(.82)	2.29(.81)	2.63(.86)
France	2019	2.51(.88)	3.94(.91)	3.04(.54)	2.99(.98)	2.15(.83)	2.06(.79)	
	2022	2.47(.93)	3.99(.93)	3.65(.59)	2.97(.97)	2.13(.81)	2.06(.81)	2.27(.72)
Italy	2019	2.84(.86)	4.02(.98)	2.95(.55)	2.95(.95)	1.89(.78)	1.98(.82)	
	2022	2.78(.87)	4.12(.90)	3.6(.58)	2.92(.94)	2.10(.77)	2.12(.83)	2.25(.73)
Austria	2019	2.89(.86)	4.23(.90)	2.98(.48)	3.06(.97)	2.67(.74)	2.3(.80)	
	2022	2.94(.83)	4.27(.93)	3.7(.59)	3.01(.94)	2.39(.77)	2.13(.84)	2.29(.73)
Poland	2019	2.85(.83)	3.85(.98)	3.12(.55)	3.03(1.0)	2.29(.86)	2.58(.78)	
	2022	2.96(.82)	3.94(1.01)	3.48(.59)	2.99(.96)	2.17(.84)	2.45(.86)	2.11(.68)
Czech Rep.	2019	2.58(.82)	3.79(1.93)	3.24(.55)	2.84(.88)	2.34(.74)	2.19(.81)	
	2022	2.66(.82)	3.86(1.02)	3.37(.62)	2.82(.92)	2.24(.83)	2.21(.88)	2.37(.83)
Hungary	2019	2.71(.86)	3.84(1.05)	3.12(.63)	2.52(.92)	2.02(.92)	2.41(.81)	
	2022	2.89(.84)	4.04(.98)	3.51(.59)	2.55(.91)	1.99(.96)	2.3(.85)	2.34(.77)
UK	2022	2.86(.91)	4.03(.96)	3.6(.62)	2.98(1.1)	2.33(.83)	2.25(.86)	2.28(.74)

Note. Mean values (SD); weighted data; * questioned only in 2022; **political interest**: four-point scale: 1=not at all interested, 4=very interested; **Democracy is the best form of government even though it may bring problems**: five-point scale: 1=disagree entirely, 5=agree completely; **democratic understanding index**: Includes: (1) "Democracy must take into account the interests of different groups", (2) "Democracy is the best form of government, even if it may entail problems", (3) "Experts, not the government, should decide what is best for [COUNTRY]", five-point scale: 1=disagree entirely, 5=completely agree. **Efficacy index**: includes: (1) "People like me don't have any say about what the government does", (2) "I think it's pointless for me to become politically engaged", (3) "Even as an individual citizen I can influence developments in [COUNTRY]", 1=disagree entirely, 5=completely agree. **Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in [COUNTRY] and the EU**: four-point scale: 1=not at all satisfied, 4=very satisfied; **democracy and parties index**, includes: (1) "When people talk about 'compromise' in politics, they actually mean selling their principles", (2) "Most politicians only care about the interests of the rich and powerful", (3) re-polished: "Most politicians are trustworthy", (4) "The parties are the main problem in [COUNTRY]", (5) "The people, and not politicians, should make our most important political decisions", (6) "I would rather have an independent citizen as a member of parliament than a party member", five-point scale: 1= completely agree, 5=disagree entirely.

With the exception of Germany (38%), 50% or more of the participants in the countries agreed that the parties are the main problem in their country. Agreement is particularly high in Poland (70%), Italy (64%), and the UK (60%). In the other countries, agreement with the statement varies between 50% (Hungary) and 55% (Austria). In summary, the index for these question (democracy index) shows that satisfaction with the democratic system is highest in Germany ($m=2.63$) and lowest in Poland ($m=2.11$) (see table 3-1).

3.2 Authoritarianism

Authoritarian developments can be observed across the globe. It is crucial that the manifestations differ greatly from one another and that hybrid regimes have emerged or are currently emerging (Adler et al., 2022). In the following section, the various questions of the survey are presented, as well as the dynamics in the survey contexts. The survey distinguished between a number of concepts: 3.2.1 authoritarian aggression, 3.2.2 authoritarian submissiveness, 3.2.3 conventionalism and traditionalism, 3.2.4 new political authoritarianism, and 3.2.5 social dominance orientation.

3.2.1 Authoritarian aggression

Authoritarian aggression was surveyed in both the 2019 and the 2022 studies with three attitude items, each on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Following Aichholzer and Zeglovits (2015), respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statement “It is important to protect the rights of criminals” and Dunwoody and Funke (2016): “Tough punishments for criminals are necessary to send a message”. For the survey, the following statement was recreated for evaluation: “The reintroduction of the death penalty should be unthinkable today.” A comparison over time shows a decrease in agreement across countries, with France, Poland, Hungary, Italy, and the Czech Republic showing significantly higher supportive attitudes than is the case in the German-speaking countries (see table 3-2). The last statement shows that in the Central European countries, rejection of the notion that reintroduction of the death penalty is unthinkable today is higher than in countries where it has been abolished for a much longer time, such as Germany or Austria, which abolished it completely in 1968, and that capital punishment also enjoys the highest approval, with over two thirds. The most polarized re-

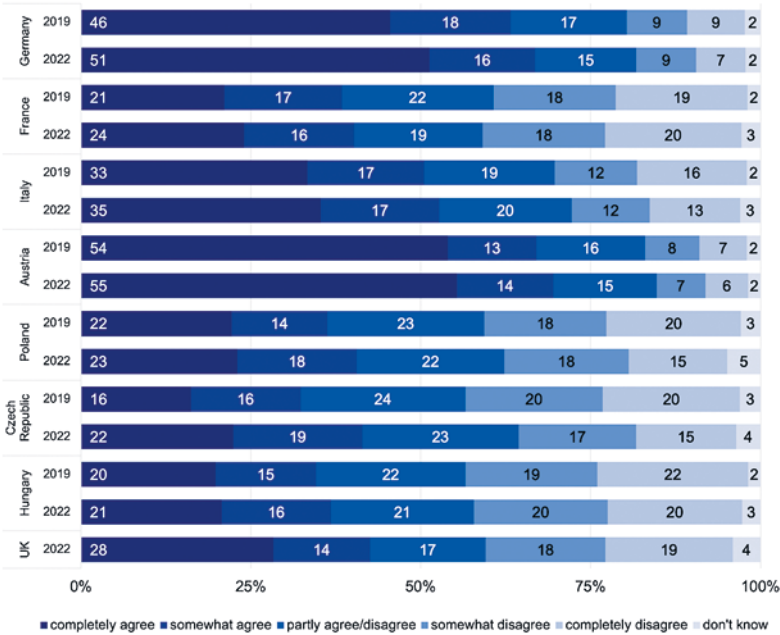


Figure 3-4: Agreement with “Today, the reintroduction of death penalty should be unthinkable.”

sponse, however, is found in France, where almost as many respondents reject the statement in 2022 (38 %) as support it (40 %).

In almost all countries studied, rejection of the death penalty increases with rising education and income. In Austria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, agreement also rises with increasing subjective class affiliation. In Germany and Italy, it is also evident that the further a person positions themselves to the right, the less they consider the reintroduction of the death penalty unthinkable.

3.2.2 Authoritarian servility

Authoritarian servility was measured with two items each on a five-point scale: following Beierlein et al. (2012), participants were asked to agree or disagree with the statement “We need strong leaders so that we can live safely in society”. Adapted from Rathkolb and Ogris (2010), the question was posed: “There should be a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections”. In the German-speaking countries, agreement with this statement is very low and disagreement is very high compared to the other surveyed countries, as in German “Führer” in this context means something different than for example “leader” in English. In 2022, Italy (46 %), and France (41 %) in particular have high approval ratings. Polarized response behaviour with a high partially agree/disagree response is found in the Central European states. However, a look at the mean values shows that in all countries (with the exception of Hungary, where the values are largely stable), the increase in approval, for example in Germany, is somewhat lower than in Poland or the Czech Republic (see table 3-2).

In all countries studied, disagreement with the statement increases, whereby the differences between low and high formal education are greatest in the former socialist countries Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic, as well as in Austria (AT: 47 % vs. 75 %, HU: 18 % vs. 55 %, PL: 26 % vs. 47 %, CZ: 24 % vs. 71 %). In all countries except Hungary, agreement is stronger among men than among women.

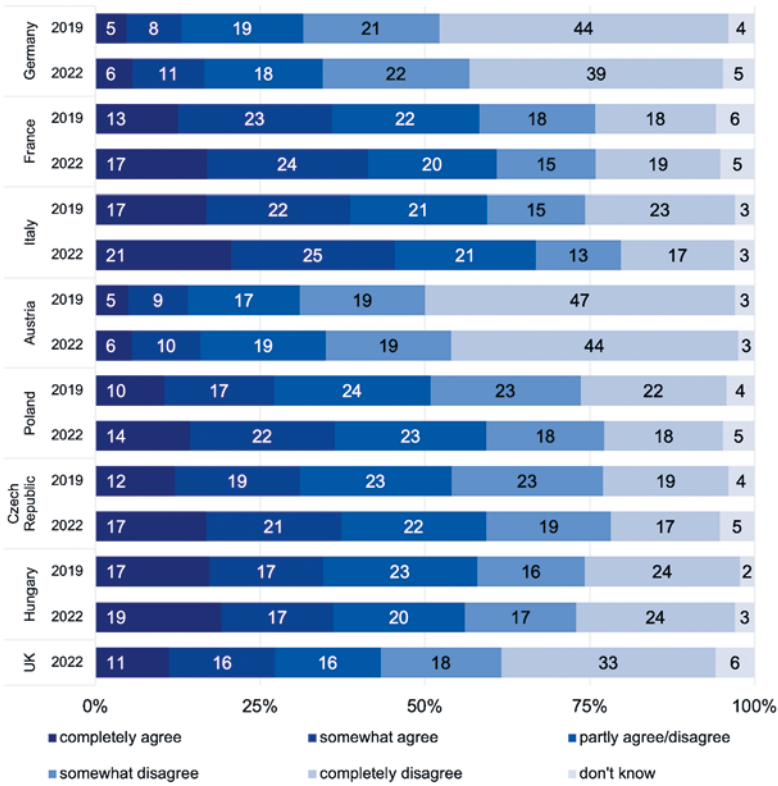


Figure 3-5: Agreement with “There should be a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections.”

3.2.3 Conventionalism and traditionalism

The convention and traditionalism construct was surveyed with three items in the 2019 survey and only two items in 2022. In each case, measured on a five-point scale, respondents were asked to agree or disagree with the statements “Our country needs people who oppose traditions and try out different ideas” (Aichholzer & Zeglovits, 2015) and “People should question social traditions in order to advance society” (Dunwoody & Funke, 2016). On the one hand, there are different dynamics over time and on the other hand, there are high approval ratings in almost all countries. Accordingly, attitudes towards traditionalism have slightly decreased in Germany and slightly increased in Austria, France, and the Czech Republic. Italy, Poland, and Hungary showed the greatest increase in approval of the attitude construct. Along with Italy (3.44), the

UK (3.4) has the highest mean approval ratings. The Czech Republic has the lowest (3.1) (see table 3-2).

3.2.4 New political authoritarianism

With regard to more recent manifestations of authoritarianism, attitudes were asked about a number of measures that were first surveyed in Rathkolb’s 2007 study (Rathkolb & Ogris, 2010), such as “Which of the following actions by a government do you think are justified? A general ban on demonstrations”, “Surveillance of communication via smartphone”, “Restrictions on media coverage”, and “Pre-emptive detention of potentially dangerous people”. In addition, “Video surveillance in public areas” was adapted from the European Value Study (EVS, 2017). The following measure was added for this study:

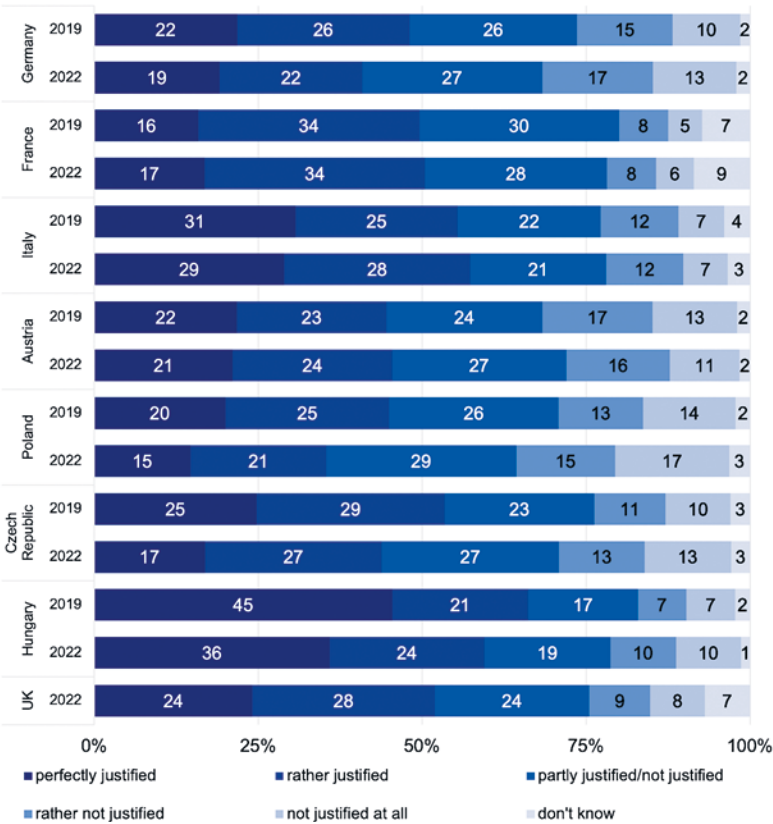


Figure 3-6: Agreement with “Pre-emptive detention of potentially dangerous people.”

“Restricting access to certain content on the internet”. A comparison of time and countries shows a decline in support for the measures (see table 3-2), with the exception of Austria, which is stable over time. The highest support for the measures is found in the UK and the lowest in the former socialist countries Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. With regard to the measure of preventive locking away of potentially dangerous persons, a different picture emerges: in Hungary, 60 % are still in favour of this measure despite decreasing approval, whereas in Poland only 36 % and in the Czech Republic 44 % consider it justified. In Italy, the UK, and France, more than 50 % of the respondents also think that the measure is perfectly or rather justified (see figure 3-6).

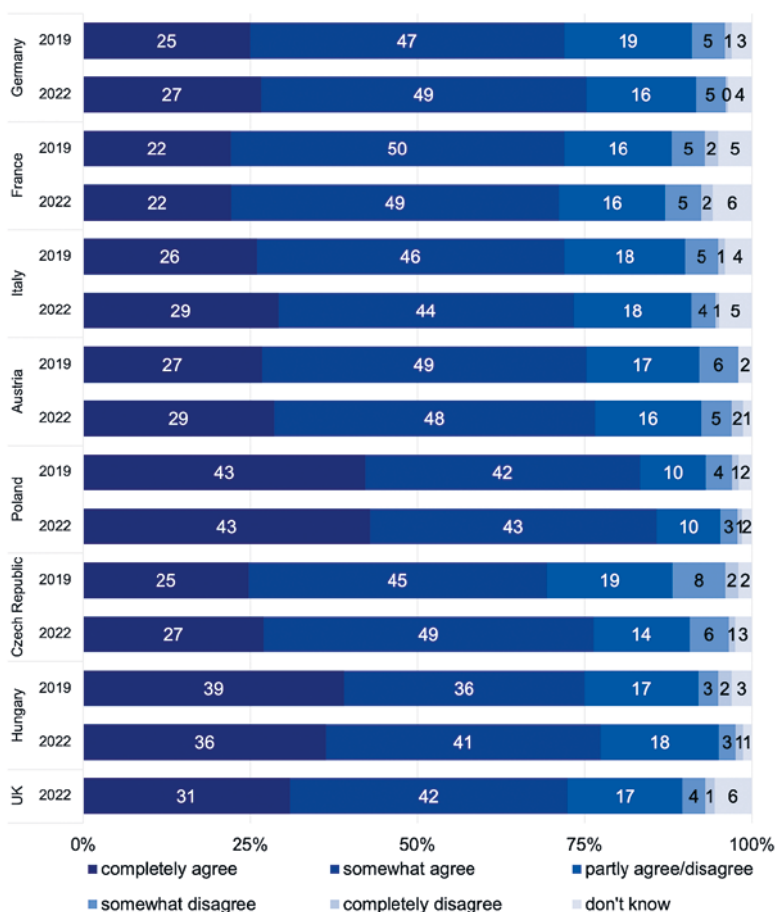


Figure 3-7: Agreement with “When setting priorities, we must consider all societal groups.”

3.2.5 Social dominance orientation

The social dominance orientation construct by Pratto and colleagues (2013), which they validated with their four-item short scale (SSDO), was measured on seven levels and redimensioned to a five-level agreement scale for presentation. Participants were asked to agree or disagree with the following statements: “In setting priorities, we must consider all societal groups”, “We should not push for equality of societal groups”, “The equality of societal groups should be our goal”, and “Superior societal groups should dominate inferior groups”. Low scores indicate preferring group inclusion and equality to dominance.

Here, too, a decrease in the degree of social dominance can be observed over time and across countries. Especially in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Italy, the approval rate has fallen more sharply over the years. These countries also have the lowest levels of social dominance. Only in France has it slightly risen.

The survey results for the statement “When setting priorities, we must consider all social groups” shows that in all countries more than two thirds of the respondents rather agree with it. Poland stands out, with an agreement rate of 86%. The lowest level of agreement is observable in France, which is also the only country where the level of agreement has fallen slightly (see figure 3-7).

Table 3-2: Comparisons of authoritarian attitudes in 2019 and 2022

Note. Mean values (SD); weighted data. All five-point scales, 1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree: **authoritarian aggression index:** (1) “Strong punishments for criminals are necessary in order to send a message”, (2) “It is important to also protect the rights of criminals”, (3) “Today, the reintroduction of death penalty should be unthinkable”; **authoritarian servility index:** (1) “We need strong leaders so that we can live safely in society”, (2) “There should be a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections”; **convention & traditionalism index:** (1) “Our country needs people who oppose traditions and try out different ideas”, (2) “People should challenge social traditions in order to advance society”; **new political authoritarianism index:** (1) “General ban on demonstrations”, (2) “Surveillance of communication via smartphone”, (3) “Video surveillance in public areas (EVS)”, (4) “Restrictions on media coverage”, (5) “Pre-emptive detention of potentially dangerous people”, (6) “Restricting access to certain content on the internet”; **social dominance index:** (1) “In setting priorities, we must consider all societal groups”, (2) “We should not push for equality of societal groups”, (3) “The equality of societal groups should be our goal”, (4) “Superior societal groups should dominate inferior groups”.

Table 3-2: Comparisons of authoritarian attitudes in 2019 and 2022

	Authoritarian aggression index	Authoritarian servility index	Convention & traditionalism index	New political authoritarianism index	Social dominance index
Germany	2019	3.17(.87)	2.84(.98)	3.28(.82)	2.6(.74)
	2022	3.08(.84)	2.87(1.03)	3.24(.88)	2.51(.73)
France	2019	3.6(.82)	3.3(1.01)	3.23(.92)	2.94(.78)
	2022	3.63(.83)	3.4(1.09)	3.26(.99)	2.91(.79)
Italy	2019	3.50(.83)	3.34(1.19)	3.24(1.01)	2.89(.82)
	2022	3.42(.85)	3.5(1.14)	3.44(.95)	2.84(.83)
Austria	2019	3.09(.87)	2.74(1.03)	3.26(.89)	2.53(.81)
	2022	3.06(.84)	2.83(1.03)	3.28(.93)	2.53(.75)
Poland	2019	3.57(.84)	3.3(.99)	2.91(1.03)	2.51(.82)
	2022	3.5(.82)	3.47(1.0)	3.13(1.03)	2.36(.77)
Czech Rep.	2019	3.71(.82)	3.24(1.07)	3.08(.84)	2.51(.8)
	2022	3.48(.83)	3.42(1.12)	3.1(.92)	2.32(.75)
Hungary	2019	3.64(.82)	3.46(1.06)	3.08(.97)	2.46(.76)
	2022	3.55(.79)	3.43(1.11)	3.19(1.03)	2.31(.79)
UK	2022	3.43(.99)	3.33(1.02)	3.4(.97)	3.04(0.88)

3.3 Cultures of remembrance

Reconstructions of the past contribute to the identity formation of individuals, social groups and nations whilst conferring legitimation and orientation to present political constellations. Collective memory as conceived by Maurice Halbwachs refers to socially constituted frames of reference without which an interpretation of historical events and their contexts would not be possible (Ptaszyńska et al., 2010, 16).

In a system characterized by democracy and pluralism, a diverse range of perceptions of historical events can be observed. It is within pluralistic and democratic communities that contrasting frameworks of interpretation and narratives are permitted to openly compete. Undoubtedly, public establishments, civic groups, political parties, and mass media uphold and advance those understandings of historical events that bolster their favourable reputation and validate their authority. Nonetheless, these entities constitute a public forum wherein perceived culpability and errors linked to one's own nation face a real possibility of being disclosed and discussed. Within authoritarian or dictatorial systems, there exists a centralization of political authority at the top level of the state hierarchy. Mechanisms of regulation are either absent or ineffective. The population is not anticipated to act in accordance with what it believes to be true. Instead, leaders demand compliance and subservience. In such authoritarian systems, the understanding of historical events tends to be homogenized to a significant degree. If data concerning certain historical events and their interpretations run contrary to the fundamental tenets of the state's ideology, the governing powers attempt to relegate or suppress them. Nevertheless, modes of memory that have been removed from, for example, educational curricula or mainstream media may still be preserved and propagated by opposition members (Ptaszyńska et al., 2010, 16).

The questions asked concerning the cultures of remembrance were developed on the basis of the survey from 2007 by Rathkolb and Ogris (2010) on authoritarianism, history and democratic dispositions in Austria, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. All questions were measured on a five-point scale from completely agree to completely disagree. The questions on historical perceptions that were asked in all countries in 2019 and 2022 were the following:

Agreement that the discussion about World War II and the Holocaust should be ended has slightly increased in some countries (France, Germany, Italy), slightly decreased in others (Austria, Poland), and remained roughly the same in others (Czech Republic, Hungary). What is striking – as in 2019 – is the high level of approval that this discussion should be ended in Hungary, at 59 %, and the low level of approval in the Czech Republic, at 16 %. There is a

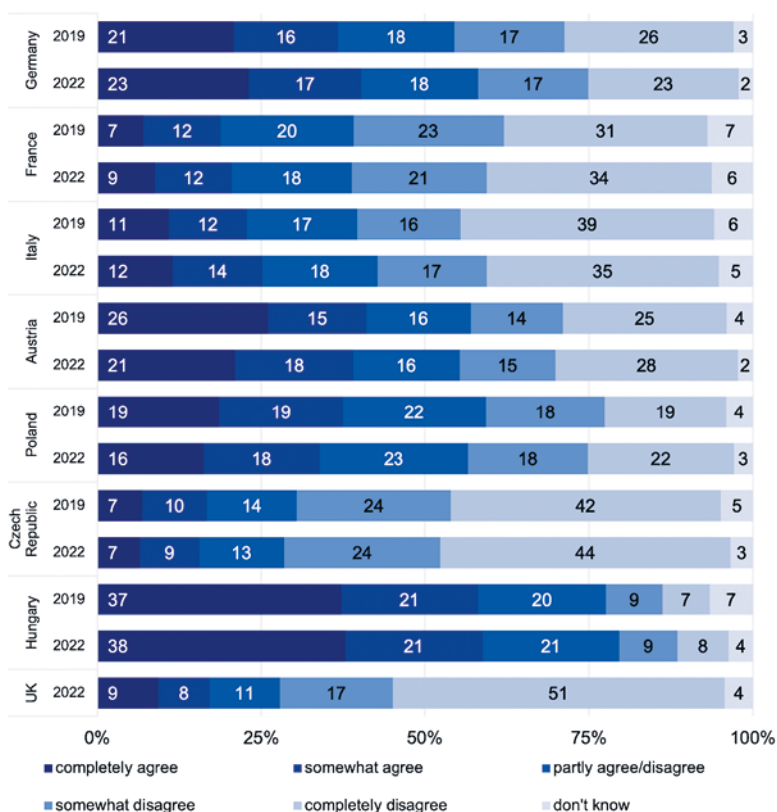


Figure 3-8: Agreement with “The discussion about World War II and the Holocaust should be ended.”

comparatively high level of approval in Germany (40%) and Austria (39%). For Austria, additional data from the survey from 2007 show that agreement with this statement is significantly declining, as in 2007 it stood at 47%, in 2019 at 41%, and in 2022 at 39%.

In many countries, agreement is much higher for people who identify politically as centre-right or right-wing, and also for respondents for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income, agreement that the discussion about World War II and the Holocaust should be ended is much higher. At the other end of the spectrum, agreement is lower for participants who have higher levels of education and who are younger.

In all countries, agreement with the statement that the country benefited from the opening of borders in 1989 has decreased compared to 2019. Agreement is particularly low in Italy (30%) and France (33%), but it is also declining

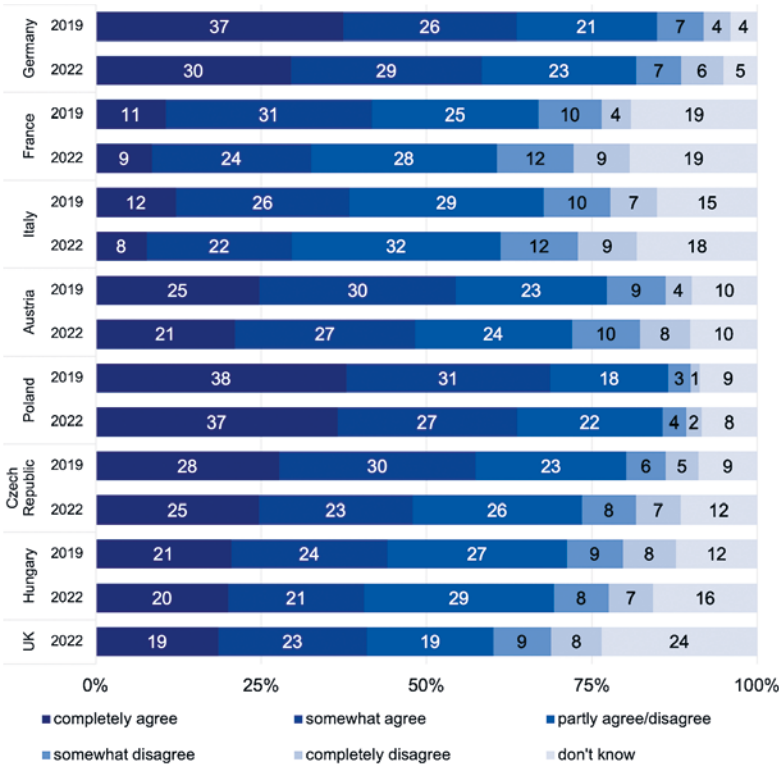


Figure 3-9: Agreement with “[COUNTRY] has profited from the opening of the borders in 1989.”

in the Eastern European countries; for example, in Hungary approval stands at only 41%. In Poland agreement is still stronger than in the other countries (64%); also, in Germany (59%) there is still a majority that says the opening of the borders in 1989 benefited the country, and approval in the eastern regions (*Länder*) of the country is much higher (68%) compared to the western regions (52%). In the Czech Republic only 48% agreed in 2022 – in 2019 it was 58%; here respondents with higher levels of education agree more often (56% for people with university degrees) compared to people with a compulsory school leaving certificate (35%), and participants for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income agree less often with this statement (31%) than those who live comfortably (68%) – these trends can also be seen in the other countries.

3.4 Group-focused enmity

A central focus of the Berkeley group's studies of authoritarian character was to identify a willingness to engage in authoritarian aggression against groups of people who can be broadly described as "others" (Adorno et al., 1950). This approach has been adopted and refined by modern research on right-wing extremism. An important instrument for this is the construct of group-focused enmity: we speak of this when persons of foreign or similar origin are considered unequal on the basis of their chosen or assigned group membership and are subjected to devaluation and exclusion, up to and including hostility and violence. As a result, the dignity of the people concerned becomes vulnerable and can be destroyed. In the conception chosen by Wilhelm Heitmeyer et al. (2020) for the research on Germany, the construct has several elements: racism, sexism, xenophobia, antisemitism, homophobia, Islamophobia, establishment privilege, and the degrading of Roma and Sinti, refugees, and homeless or long-term unemployed people (Heitmeyer et al., 2020, 90 f.).

The survey conducted referred to three elements of Heitmeyer's study: antisemitism is directed at the devaluation of people of Jewish faith and origin. Its central element is a willingness to discriminate on the basis of stereotypes. Xenophobia, which was surveyed with attitudes toward immigrants/asylum seekers, refers to the rejection of group members of foreign ethnic origin. Islamophobia includes a generally negative attitude toward Muslims, blanket devaluations of Islamic culture, and distancing behavioural intentions (Ptaszyńska et al. 2010, 19). All statement ratings were measured on a five-point scale from completely agree to completely disagree. Participants also had the option to answer with "Don't know". Within the following subchapters, the results for antisemitism and Islamophobia will be presented and compared.

3.4.1 Antisemitism

"Anti-Semitism is characterised by traditional stereotypes and negative attitudes towards Jews" (Ptaszyńska et al., 2010, 19). A study by the Austrian Parliament in 2018 – which was conducted again in 2020 and 2022 – analysed which forms antisemitism currently takes in Austria; they were determined in a special analysis of the data as part of the 2018 antisemitism survey. The manifestations of antisemitism identified three basic attitudes toward Jews for the population. Two of them express an antisemitic attitude (affective antisemitism, pseudo-rational antisemitism), while the third expresses an unbiased relationship (non-antisemitism). Additional evaluations for young people under thirty confirmed the three dimensions and revealed for the youngest an ad-

ditional fourth dimension: no-history antisemitism (Dawid & Zeglovits, 2023, 19). Within the surveys conducted in 2019 and 2022, the following items can be associated with two forms of antisemitism identified by the Austrian study: pseudo-rational antisemitism that puts forward supposed explanations (Jews in [COUNTRY] have too much influence on public opinion; Today, hatred of Jews is essentially only found among immigrants) and non-antisemitism that reflects an unbiased relationship with Jews (Jews have contributed a lot to cultural life in [COUNTRY]; Jews in [COUNTRY] should have the right to build synagogues).

Agreement with the statement that Jews have too much influence on public opinion in the respondents’ respective countries has either remained the same (e.g. Austria, Germany) or decreased (e.g. Hungary, France, Czech Republic) compared to 2019. Despite the decline, Hungary still has the highest level of agreement in a country comparison, at 20 %, while the Czech Republic has the lowest, at 8 %. In Hungary, respondents who politically identify as centre-right

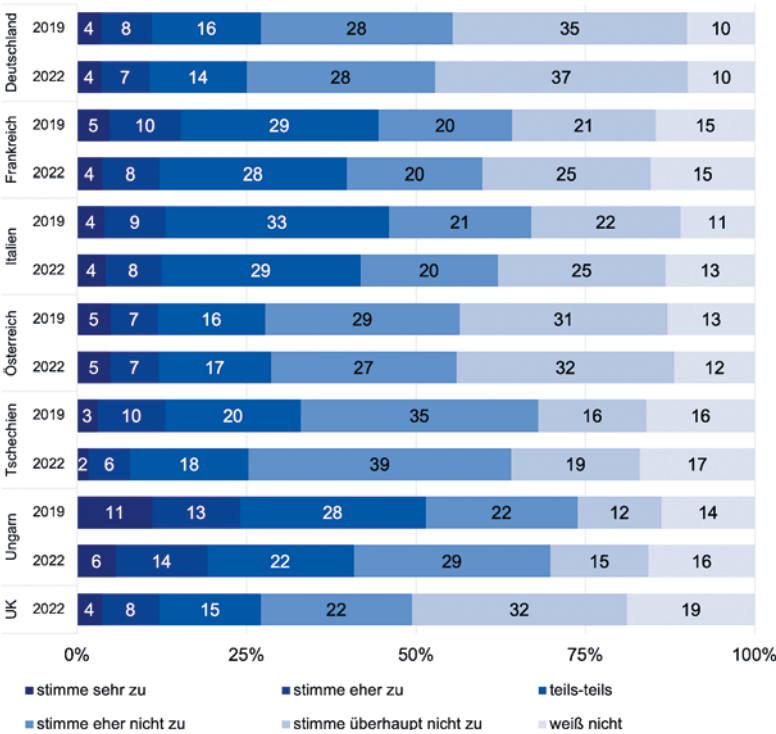


Figure 3-10: Agreement with “Jews in [COUNTRY] have too much influence on public opinion.”

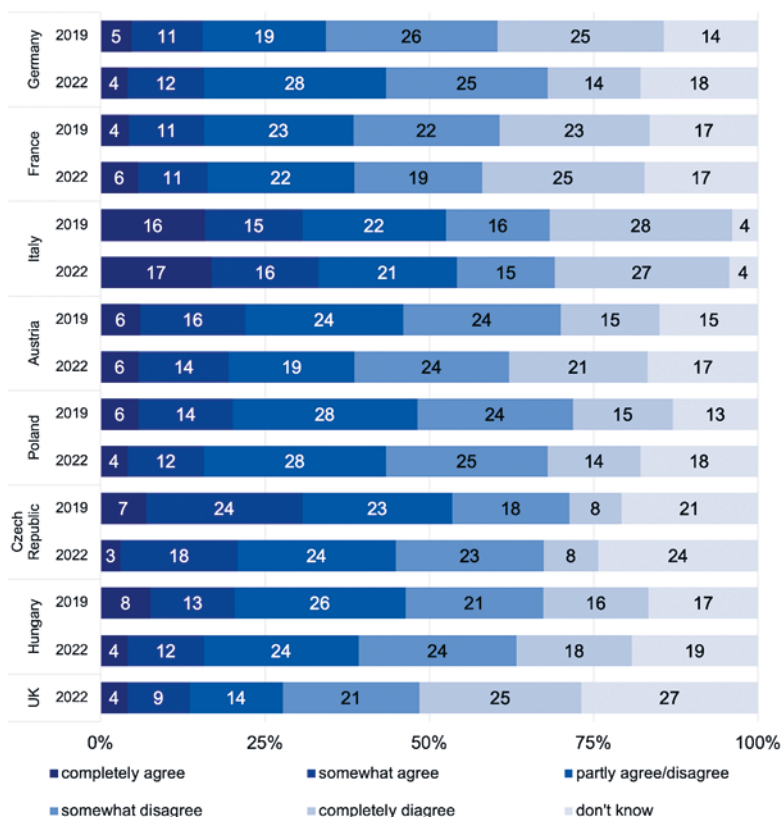


Figure 3-11: Agreement with "Today, hatred against Jews is essentially only found among immigrants."

or right-wing and also persons for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income agree a lot more with this statement than those on the left or centre-left or those who can live comfortably on their income.

Compared to the other countries, respondents in Italy agree more often with the statement that today hatred of Jews is essentially only found among immigrants: 33 % (similar to 2019 with 31 %). In the other countries, the results are either also similar to those in 2019 (e.g. Germany, France) or there are declines in agreement (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary).¹¹ In Italy, respondents who

11 In Poland, individual statements on the topic of antisemitism that formed part of the questionnaire in the other countries were not put to respondents. This was decided during the development and translation of the questionnaire after feedback from na-

identify politically as centre-right or right-wing and also persons for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income agree a lot more with this statement than those on the left or centre-left or those who can live comfortably on their income.

The highest level of agreement with the statement that Jews should have the right to build synagogues in their respective countries is found in the UK (69 %), followed by Germany (61 %) and Austria (58 %); the lowest level of agreement is found in Poland (39 %). In 2019, the lowest level of agreement was found in Hungary, where agreement increased quite substantially, from 39 % in 2019 to 48 % in 2022. In Poland, respondents with university degrees agree with the right to build synagogues significantly more often (54 %) – all other levels of education levels range between 33 % and 35 %. Also, people in Poland whose economic situation has clearly improved agree significantly more often (68 %) than people whose economic situation has become somewhat worse or much worse (37 % each). And there are also differences according to place of residence: respondents living in a rural area or village agree much less with the right to build synagogues (29 %) compared to those living in a big city (47 %).

In the UK, Austria, and Germany, the majority of respondents agree that Jews have contributed a lot to cultural life in their respective countries: 55 %, 54 %, and 52 % respectively. The lowest levels of agreement are found in France and the Czech Republic, at 38 % each. Compared to 2019, agreement declined in Germany, France, Italy, and the Czech Republic and increased in Austria and Hungary. In the UK, people with higher educational levels agree more often that Jews have contributed a lot to cultural life in the UK (61 % for people with degrees compared to 37 % for people with a compulsory school leaving certificate); also, respondents who live comfortably on their income agree much more often (63 %) than persons for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income (43 %).

3.4.2 Islamophobia

“Islamophobia” is a modern word for a prejudice that dates back to the Middle Ages and that permeates Western societies in the 21st century. It refers to the fear of and hostility toward Muslims and Islam, as well as the discriminatory, exclusionary, and violent practices arising from these attitudes that target

tional experts, who pointed out that individual questions are difficult to evaluate in Poland. Therefore, the statements about the cultural contribution of Jews or the influence of Jews on public opinion did not form part of the survey in Poland.

Muslims and those perceived as Muslims. Islamophobia is best understood as a form of cultural racism that instigates animosity based on religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and ethnicity. (Oxford Research Encyclopaedias).¹²

Islamophobia is another form of group-focused enmity. As its name implies, it is a feeling of hostility towards Muslims, a feeling of being threatened by them and an inclination to harbour stereotypical judgements about Islam (Ptaszyńska et al., 2010, 19).

Islamophobia increased after 9/11 in 2001 and again after terroristic attacks in Europe by affiliates of the Islamic State or otherwise indoctrinated or radicalized terrorists – for example, the attacks in Paris in 2015 or in Belgium in 2016. Statements regarding Islamophobia within the surveys were either positively or negatively phrased.¹³

Compared to 2019, agreement with the statement that they sometimes feel like a stranger in their own country because of all the Muslims there decreased in almost all countries (with the exception of Germany, where it remained constant). Overall, the level of agreement is still highest in Austria (48%) and Germany (43%) – and lowest in Hungary, at only 20%. In Germany, agreement with this statement is very high among people with compulsory schooling or secondary education (52% or 56%) compared to people with a degree (33%). Also, within the eastern regions (*Bundesländer*) agreement stands at 47% compared to 41% in western regions, and people for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income agree much more often (60%) than people who can live comfortably on their income (35%).

In France, 41% of respondents agree with the statement that Muslims should be prohibited from immigration; here, agreement increased significantly compared to 2019 (25%). In the other countries, agreement either remained constant (e.g. Germany, Italy) or declined (as in Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Hungary). In France, especially people for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income agree that Muslims should be prohibited from immigrating (66%), compared to 28% of people who can live comfortably on their income (28%). Also, older people agree more often (60+: 50%) than younger people (18–29 years: 28%), people with compulsory schooling

12 <https://oxfordre.com/religion/display/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.001.0001/acrefore-9780199340378-e-685;jsessionid=3A8726669F9F5063D160DE6F37BD479F#acrefore-9780199340378-e-685-div1-2> (9 August 2023).

13 In Poland, the survey did not include individual statements about Islamophobia that formed part of the questionnaire in the other countries. This was decided during the development and translation of the questionnaire after feedback from national experts, who pointed out that individual questions are difficult to evaluate in Poland. Thus, the statements about whether one sometimes feels like a stranger in one's own country because of the many Muslims or about the cultural contribution of Muslims were not put to respondents in Poland.

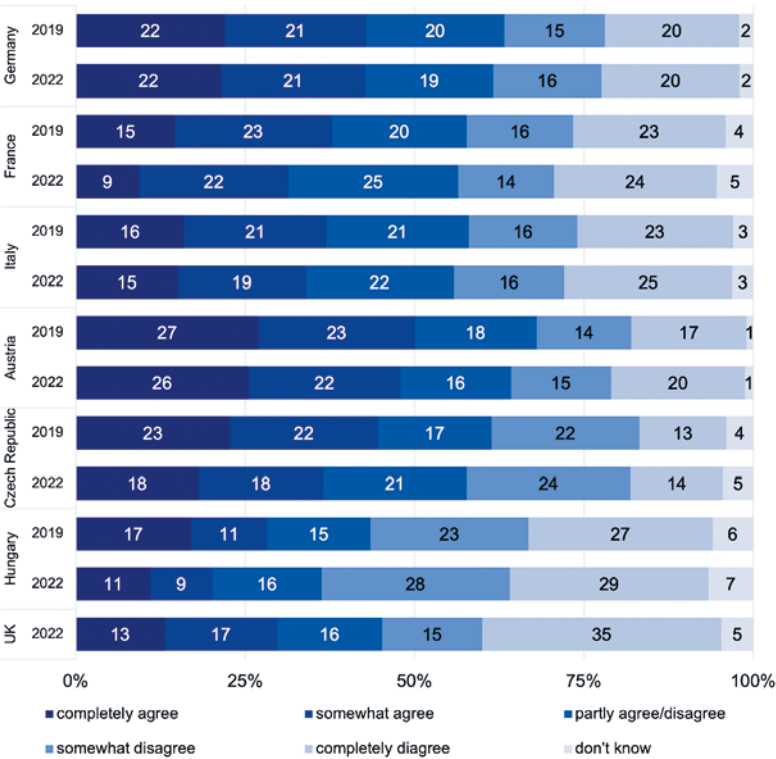


Figure 3-12: Agreement with “All those Muslims in [COUNTRY] sometimes make me feel as if I were a stranger in my own country.”

(54 %) compared to those with degrees (31 %), and people living in a rural area or village (44 %) compared to those living in a big city (34 %).

Agreement with the statement that Muslims should have the right to build mosques in their respective countries shows a slight increase in the eastern European countries and Austria compared to 2019; in France, on the other hand, approval drops significantly: from 32 % in 2019 to 20 % in 2022. By far the highest approval was found in the UK, with 59 %. In France, similar to the previous statement, people who live comfortably on their income (27 %) agree more often than respondents for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income (14 %). Also, young people agree more often (18–29 years: 33 %) than older people (60+: 11 %), people with university degrees (27 %) more often than people with a compulsory school leaving certificate (11 %), and people living in a big city (25 %) agree more often than to those living in a rural area or village (16 %).

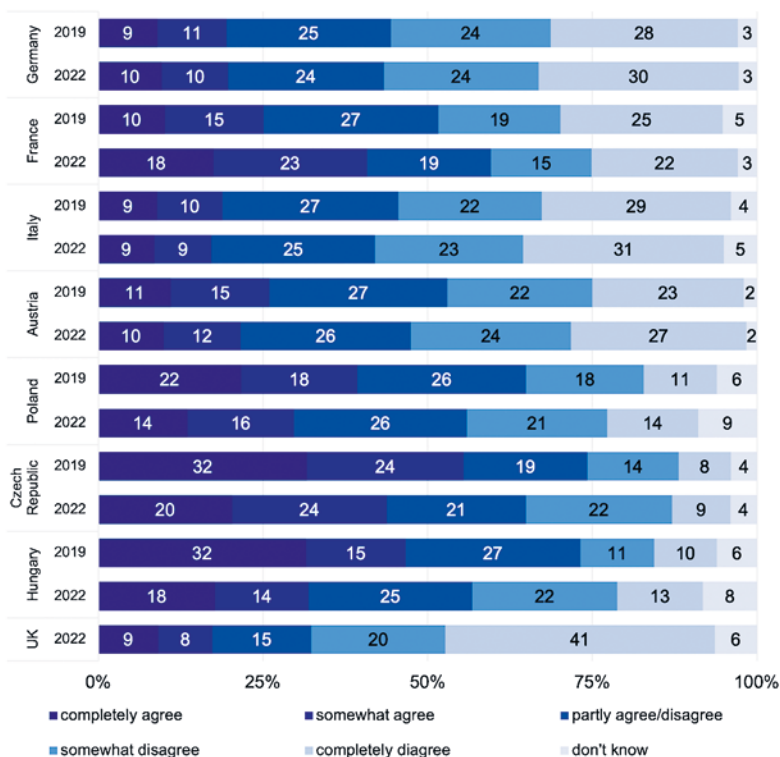


Figure 3-13: Agreement with “Muslims should be prohibited from immigration to [COUNTRY].”

Respondents in the UK agree the most (48%) that Muslims contribute a lot to cultural life in their respective countries; in Germany the figure stands at 27%, France 20%, and Austria 19%. There were only minor changes within response behaviour for this question compared to 2019, and agreement is specifically low in the Czech Republic and Hungary, at 4% and 6% respectively. In Austria there was an increase compared to 2019 (15%), and young people tend to agree more often (16–29 years: 26%) than older people (60+: 11%); also, people living in a big city agree more often (22%) than those living in a rural area or village (16%); and respondents who can live comfortably on their income (21%) agree more often with this statement than people for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income (8%).

3.4.3 Comparing results: Right to build mosques vs. synagogues and contribution to cultural life

In all countries there is a large difference regarding support for the right to build synagogues compared to the right to build mosques, and respondents agreed significantly more often that people have the right to build synagogues.

The greatest agreement with the statement that Jews should have the right to build synagogues in the respective country is found in the UK (69%), fol-

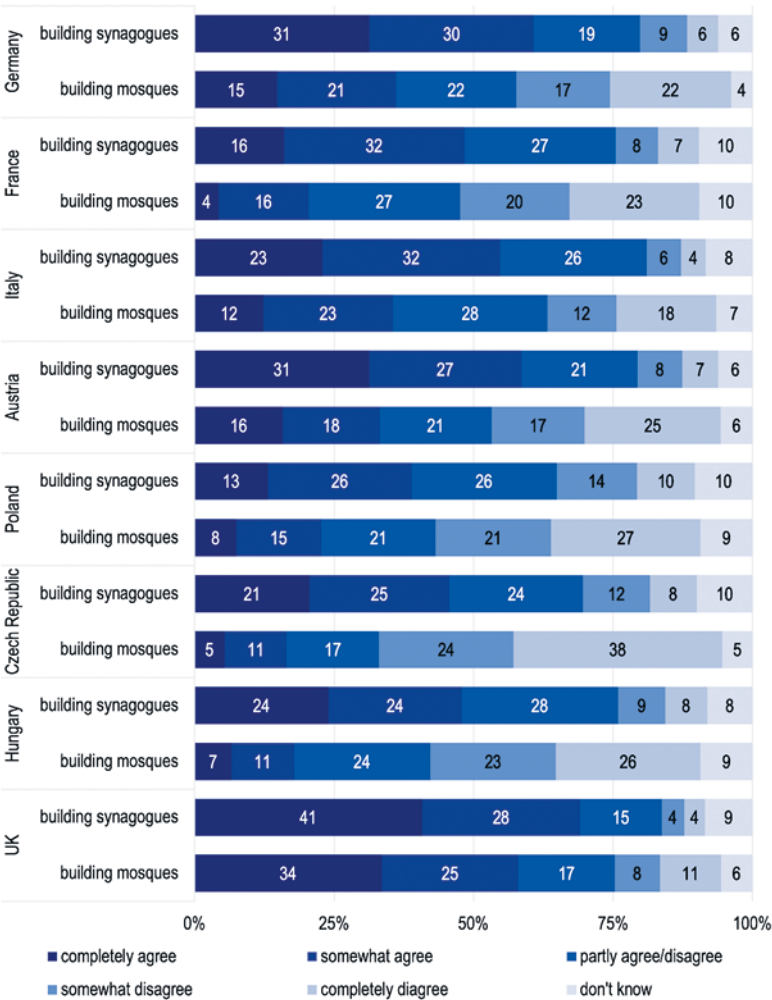


Figure 3-14: Agreement with right to build synagogues vs. right to build mosques, 2022

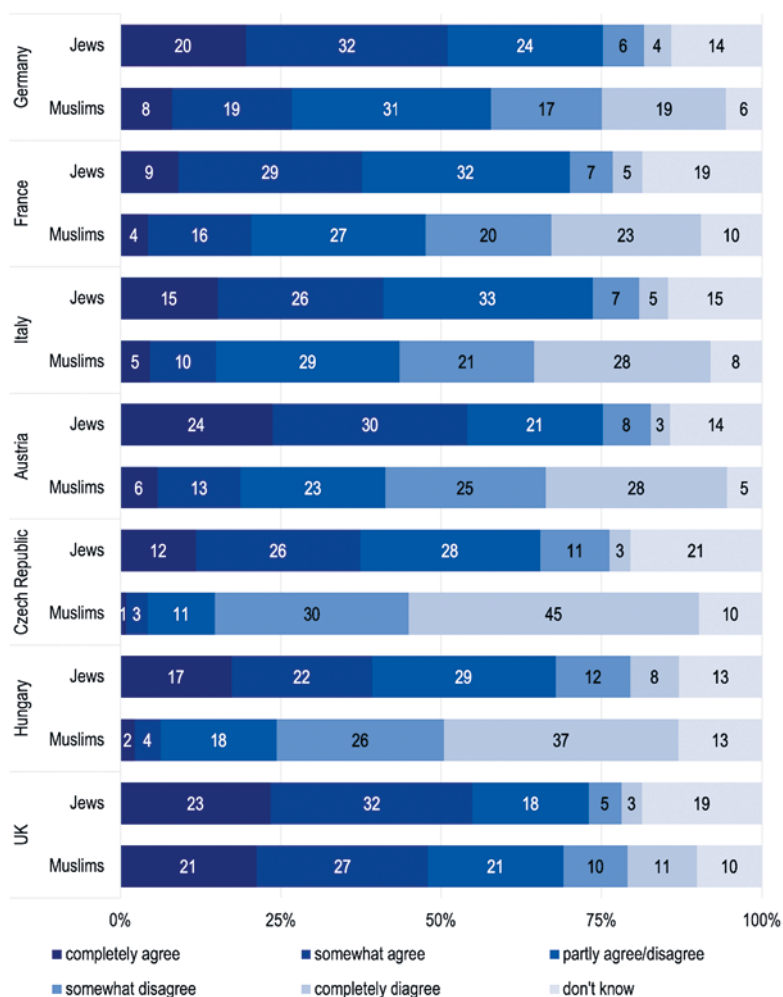


Figure 3-15: Agreement with “Jews vs. Muslims have contributed a lot to cultural life in the country”, 2022

lowed by Germany (61%) and Austria (58%); Poland shows the lowest level of agreement (39%) in a country comparison for 2022.

When it comes to the statement that Muslims should have the right to build mosques in the respective country, approval is by far the highest in the UK, at 59%, followed by Germany (36%) and Italy (35%). Agreement is lowest in Hungary, with only 18% approval.

Huge differences can be seen in the Czech Republic and Hungary (both

a 30 % difference), France (26 %), Germany (25 %), Austria (24 %), and Italy (20 %); the lowest difference can be found in the UK, with 10 %.

A comparison of the two statements on the contribution of Jews or Muslims to cultural life in the respective country also shows that acceptance of the contribution of Jews is significantly higher than that of Muslims in all countries.

In the UK, Austria, and Germany in particular, a majority of respondents agree that Jews have contributed a lot to cultural life in the country: 55 %, 54 %, and 52 %, respectively. The lowest level of agreement is found in France and the Czech Republic, each at 38 %.

The statement that Muslims contributed a lot to the cultural life in the respective country was mainly agreed with by respondents in the UK (48 %); agreement is particularly low in the Czech Republic (4 %) and Hungary (6 %).

Huge differences can be seen in Austria (35 %), the Czech Republic (34 %), Hungary (33 %), Italy (26 %), Germany (25 %), and France (18 %) when the two statements are compared; the lowest difference can again be found in the UK, with 7 %.

In summary, if we look at the development over the years, a decrease in antisemitic attitudes is evident in the majority of the countries studied. Austria, the Czech Republic, and Hungary are particularly noteworthy. The UK has the lowest level of agreement with a mean value of 2.11. At the other end of the spectrum is Poland with a mean of 2.7. In Italy the value has stagnated at around 2.5, and in Germany it has risen slightly from 2.21 to 2.25. Similar dynamics are also evident for the Islamophobia index. Here, however, the values across all countries show significantly higher levels of agreement. In Germany, for example, the agreement with Islamophobic statements has risen slightly, and in France it has risen sharply. In Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, on the other hand, the level of approval has fallen sharply. In the UK, as in the case of antisemitism, the value stands far below that for the other countries, at 2.42. The highest level of agreement can be found in the Czech Republic, where with a mean of 3.57 Islamophobic statements are rather to very much agreed with (see table below).

Table 3-3: Comparison of group-focused enmity

Note. Mean values (SD); weighted data. All five-point scales, 1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree: **antisemitism index:** (1) "Jews in [COUNTRY] have too much influence on public opinion", (2) "Jews have contributed a lot to cultural life in [COUNTRY]", (3) "Jews in [COUNTRY] should have the right to build synagogues", (4) "Today, hatred against Jews is essentially only found among immigrants", (5) "Prejudices against Jews are an obvious part of public discourse in Hungary" (*this item was used only in Hungary*); **Islamophobia index:** (1) "Muslims should be prohibited from immigration to [COUNTRY]", (2) "All those Muslims in [COUNTRY] sometimes make me feel as if I were a stranger in my own country", (3) "Muslims in [COUNTRY] should have the right to build mosques", (4) "Muslims

contribute a lot to cultural life in [COUNTRY]", (5) "Christian [COUNTRY] culture and Islam are not compatible with each other" (*this item was used only in Hungary and Poland*).

		Antisemitism index	Islamophobia index
Germany	2019	2.21(.82)	2.94(1.15)
	2022	2.25(.86)	2.95(1.17)
France	2019	2.51(.75)	3.01(1.14)
	2022	2.49(.76)	3.14(.69)
Italy	2019	2.53(.85)	3.00(1.07)
	2022	2.53(.87)	2.95(1.07)
Austria	2019	2.52(.83)	3.14(1.03)
	2022	2.31(.86)	3.12(1.17)
Poland	2019	2.79(.86)	3.41(1.12)
	2022	2.7(.89)	3.05(.66)
Czech Rep.	2019	2.63(.74)	3.8(.97)
	2022	2.54(.76)	3.57(.99)

3.5 Current developments: Russia’s war against Ukraine

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine after weeks of troop deployments along the border. Whereas in the past – for example, upon the annexation of Crimea – the reactions were more like a polyphonic chorus, and Russia did not need to expect coordinated and sustained sanctions, the response from European countries and the United States was swift and in unison: joint sanctions were imposed on Russia and military support was provided to Ukraine. This unanimous support was established at the beginning of the invasion, but in the meantime some countries, such as Hungary, have maintained their strong connections with Russia, and others, such as Austria, are still importing huge amounts of its gas. Also, within many countries, discussions started about how far support for Ukraine should go; for instance, in Germany, which together with the US and the UK is providing massive military support and materiel, there are voices questioning support for Ukraine or advocating that it should stop. In other countries too, the longer

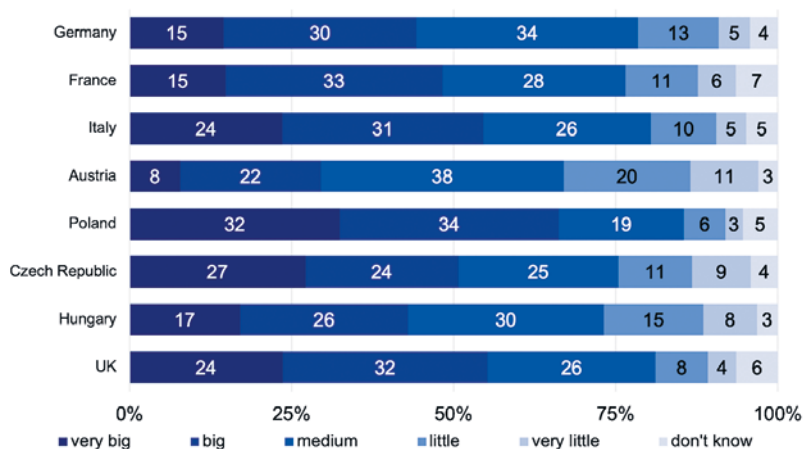


Figure 3-16: Response to “How great do you consider the danger posed by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine for the security of [COUNTRY]?”

the war goes on, the more people and parties (mostly right-wing or populist right-wing and, depending on the country, also left-wing or populist left-wing) would like to stop support for Ukraine altogether – except for the UK, where overall support across party lines is still strong. During the winter of 2022/23, on the basis of reduced gas and oil exports from Russia, many European countries had to deal with higher costs for energy and buy more expensive gas from other countries; people in many countries thus had to deal with rising costs of living and inflation.

Due to these developments, the 2022 survey included items that asked respondents their opinions on different aspects about the war in Ukraine, for example with regard to the national economy and security but also concerning sanctions against Russia or taking in Ukrainian refugees. The items were developed by the ACPP – the Austrian Corona Panel Project – and were used within several waves of the Corona Panel in Austria. The first two, dealing with the threat to security and the economy, were measured on a five-point scale from very big to very little.

When asked how great they assess the danger Russia’s invasion of Ukraine poses to the security of the respective country, respondents in Poland show the highest concerns (66 % think the danger is very big or big); also, in the UK (56 %), Italy (55 %), and the Czech Republic (51 %) the majority of respondents think the danger posed by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine to the respective country’s security is very big or big. The lowest levels of concern can be found within Hungary (43 %) and Austria (30 %), the latter being the only neutral

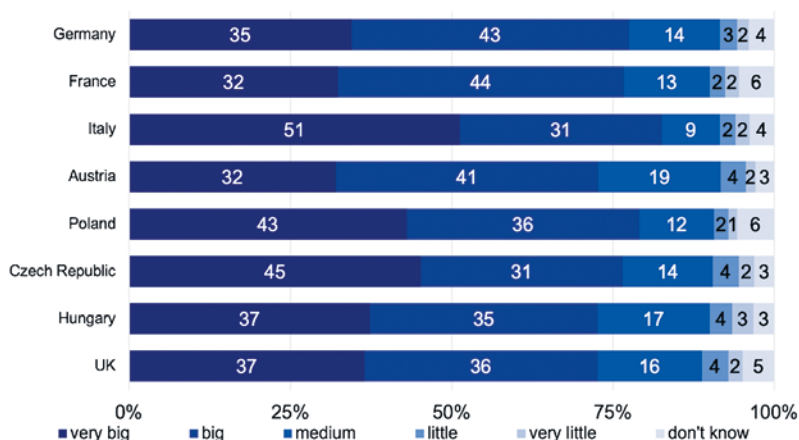


Figure 3-17: Response to "How great do you consider the danger posed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine?" For the economy in [COUNTRY]

and therefore non-NATO country within this country comparison (see also table 3-4).

Women perceive the security threats posed by Russia's war of aggression to be greater than men in all countries except the UK. In Germany, it is also evident that the lower the subjective class affiliation, the greater the concern about security in the country.

When asked how great they assess the danger Russia's invasion of Ukraine poses to the economy in the respective country, respondents in all countries perceive very great or great danger: in Italy in particular, respondents see many dangers (82 %), but this is also the case in Poland (79 %), Germany (78 %), and the Czech Republic (76 %). With 73 % perceiving very high and high risks, respectively, Austria and the UK as well as Hungary, with 72 %, are at the lower end of this country comparison but still show high numbers.

Men and women perceive roughly the same level of threat to the economy in almost all the countries surveyed. Concerns grow with increasing formal education.

National governments had to react to Russia's war in Ukraine. Therefore, respondents were asked how appropriate they felt the reaction of their country's government was. Measured on a five-point scale from not at all appropriate to too extreme, there are considerable differences in perception. People in Hungary consider the national government's reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine to be not at all adequate or rather not sufficient in comparison with

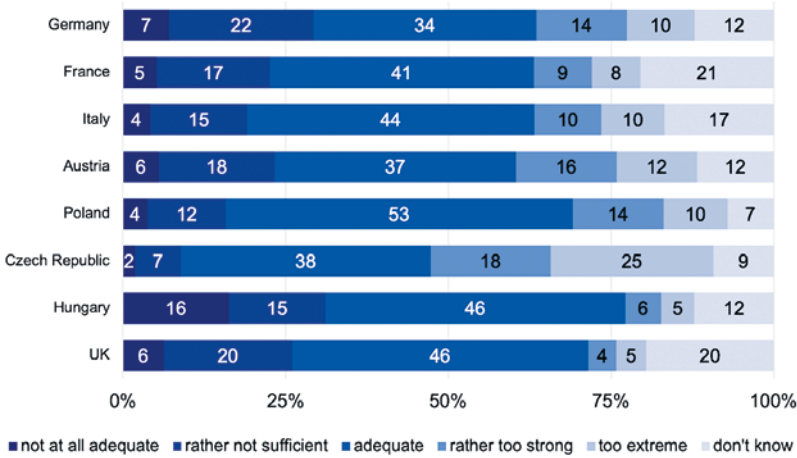


Figure 3-18: Response to “Do you consider [COUNTRY] federal government’s response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine to be not sufficient, appropriate, or too extreme?”

the other countries (31 %) – within these 31 %, the 16 % that rate the reaction as not at all adequate are also striking; this is more than double the figure in Germany, which is in second place (7 % not at all adequate and 22 % rather not sufficient). By contrast, 43 % of respondents in the Czech Republic consider the reaction of their own government to be rather too strong or too extreme, while only 9 % are of the opposite opinion and consider the reaction to be not at all adequate or rather not sufficient. In Hungary, people with a university degree (40 %) more frequently consider the reaction of the Hungarian government not at all adequate or rather not sufficient compared to respondents with a compulsory school leaving certificate (22 %); also, people who live comfortably on their income think the reaction is not sufficient (34 %) more often than respondents for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income (25 %).

The following results show the findings from the agreement values for three statements on the situation of Russia’s war, which were measured on a five-point scale from completely agree to completely disagree.

In a country comparison, respondents from the UK agreed the most that their country should participate in economic sanctions against Russia, even if it will be expensive for the individual (63 %), followed by Poland at 60 %; agreement is comparatively low among respondents in Italy and Austria (36 % in each) and Hungary (23 %). In Hungary, older people agree more often with this statement than younger people (60+: 34 %; 18–29 years: 23 %); respondents with a university degree agree more often (33 %) than people with a compul-

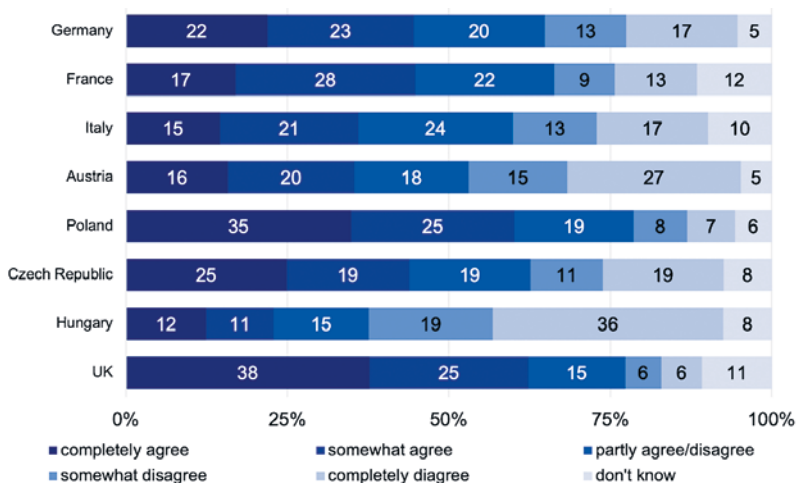


Figure 3-19: Agreement with "[COUNTRY] should participate in economic sanctions against Russia, even if it will be expensive for the individual."

sory school leaving certificate (11 %). Also, people who can live comfortably on their income agree more often (31 %) than those for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income (20 %).

In all countries, the approval rate for sanctions is significantly higher among male respondents than among women. In Austria, for example, the approval rate for sanctions against Russia increases with age and higher levels of formal education. In Germany, Italy, and Austria, it is also evident that people with an improved economic situation and belonging to a higher social class also show higher support.

When it comes to the statement that the respective country should stop gas and oil imports from Russia, there are large differences between the countries: respondents in the UK and Poland agree overwhelmingly with 66 % and 65 %, respectively, and only 13 % and 14 %, respectively, disagree; in Hungary, on the other hand, only 16 % agree, and 61 % disagree. In Poland, older people agree that gas and oil imports should be stopped (60+: 78 %) more often than younger people (18–29 years: 55 %); people with university degrees agree more often than people with a compulsory school leaving certificate (70 % vs. 60 %). People who live comfortably on their current income (74 %) also agree more often than those for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income (53 %).

In almost all of the countries studied, it can be seen that the higher the formal levels of education and subjective class alignment, the greater the support to stop imports of gas and oil from Russia.

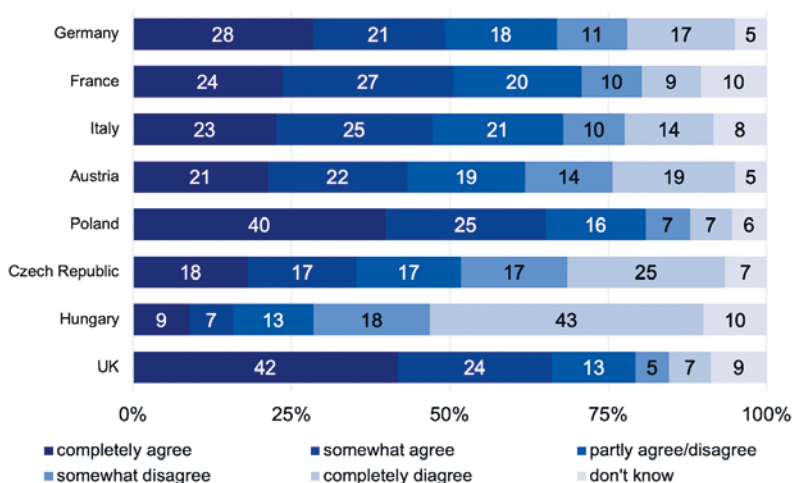


Figure 3-20: Agreement with “[COUNTRY] should stop gas and oil imports from Russia.”

When it comes to which country took in the most refugees, so far, the Czech Republic has the highest numbers per thousand people: overall, the number of beneficiaries from temporary protection from Ukraine relative to the EU population was equal to 9.2 per thousand people at the end of July 2023. The Czech Republic (33.0) and Poland (26.4) had the highest ratios per capita; in absolute figures, Germany took in 1.15 million Ukrainian refugees, Poland 971,000, and the Czech Republic 357,000.¹⁴

When asked whether their respective country should take in Ukrainian refugees, respondents showed overall support, especially in Western European countries: in UK 69%, in Italy 60%, and in Germany 58%. In Poland, 53% agree, compared to 40% in the Czech Republic and Hungary. In the Czech Republic, people with university degrees agree more often with this statement (50%) than respondents with only compulsory schooling (20%). People who can live comfortably on their income also agree much more often (63%) than respondents for whom it is very difficult to manage on their current income (17%).

In all countries, the approval rate is higher among men than women, and the higher the level of formal education, the more support there is for accepting refugees. In Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, and France, the approval rate for accepting refugees also increases with rising income and an improved economic situation.

14 https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Temporary_protection_for_persons_fleeing_Ukraine_-_monthly_statistics (15 September 2023).

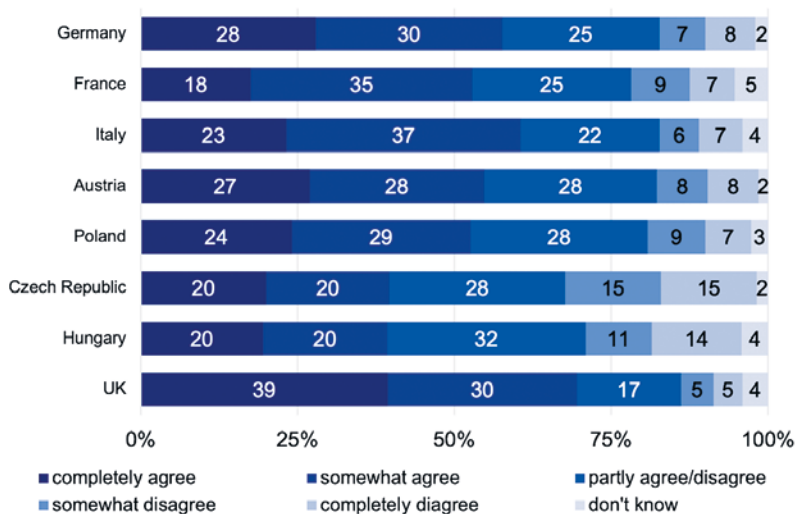


Figure 3-21: Agreement with "[COUNTRY] should take in Ukrainian refugees."

Finally, if we examine the distribution of the mean values, it becomes apparent that the attitudes within the European countries studied are very different. For example, the NATO member countries see a significantly higher security threat than Austria, the only non-NATO country in the survey. Countries with stronger economic and political dependence, such as Germany, Austria, and Hungary, assess the situation below the overall countries' average. Moreover, women across all countries see greater dangers for security than men. The economic threat, on the other hand, is assessed as very high by both men and women and has the highest ratings. It is interesting to note that agreement is highest in the UK and Poland. However, across countries, support for sanctions increases with age and education. In Austria, approval increases with an improved economic situation and rising social class. Approval of the admission of refugees from Ukraine is above average in the Western European countries, whereas the three former socialist countries show significantly lower approval ratings. The higher the level of education, the higher the acceptance of refugees.

In summary, education, a good economic situation, and the correlating subjective class affiliation are the strongest socio-demographic predictors for agreeing with critical statements on Russia with regard to the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Table 3-4: Comparisons of attitudes towards Russia's War in Ukraine

	Secure danger ¹	Econ. danger ²	Gov. resp. ³	Econ. sanct. ⁵	Russian media ⁶	Ukraine ref. ⁷	Stop of gas/oil ⁸
Germany	3.38 (1.05)	4.1 (.88)	2.98 (1.1)	3.2 (1.41)	3.27 (1.39)	3.64 (1.2)	3.34 (1.46)
France	3.43 (1.09)	4.08 (.88)	2.95 (.98)	3.3 (1.29)	3.56 (1.26)	3.49 (1.13)	3.51 (1.27)
Italy	3.62 (1.1)	4.32 (.91)	3.08 (.98)	3.04 (1.34)	3.23 (1.29)	3.66 (1.13)	3.35 (1.36)
Austria	2.97 (1.09)	4.01 (.91)	3.13 (1.08)	2.81 (1.46)	2.99 (1.43)	3.58 (1.2)	3.13 (1.44)
Poland	3.92 (1.03)	4.24 (.87)	3.15 (.92)	3.76 (1.25)	4.22 (1.07)	3.54 (1.18)	3.9 (1.23)
Czech Rep.	3.5 (1.27)	4.17 (.98)	3.64 (1.03)	3.22 (1.47)	3.5 (1.42)	3.14 (1.33)	2.86 (1.48)
Hungary	3.29 (1.18)	4.03 (1.01)	2.64 (1.04)	2.4 (1.43)	2.69 (1.44)	3.2 (1.3)	2.11 (1.34)
UK	3.66 (1.09)	4.06 (.96)	2.77 (.89)	3.92 (1.2)	3.88 (1.24)	3.99 (1.11)	3.98 (1.22)
m	3.52 (1.13)	4.14 (.92)	3.03 (1.02)	3.3 (1.41)	3.51 (1.37)	3.58 (1.2)	3.41 (1.43)

Note: mean values (SD); weighted data. All measured on five-point scales: "How great do you consider the danger posed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine?" **For security**¹; **For the economy**²; 1=very small, 5=very large; **government response**³ "Do you consider [COUNTRY's] federal government's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine to be insufficient, appropriate, or too extreme?"; 1=not at all adequate, 5=too extreme; "Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements"; 1=completely disagree, 5=completely agree; **NATO**⁴ "[COUNTRY] should stay/should participate in NATO", mean of the NATO countries (excl. Austria); **economic sanctions**⁵ "[COUNTRY] should participate in economic sanctions against Russia, even if it will be expensive for individuals." **Russian media**⁶ "[COUNTRY] should restrict Russian media"; **Ukrainian refugees**⁷ "[COUNTRY] should accept Ukrainian refugees"; **stop of gas/oil**⁸ "[COUNTRY] should stop gas and oil imports from Russia.

4. Conclusion

Since the first survey in fall 2019, various crises have befallen the people in the countries studied: beginning in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact fundamentally changed the realities of many people's lives. Russia's war in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, led – in addition to the terrible effects of war and destruction – to rising energy prices, rising cost of living, and inflation, as well as generally dimming economic prospects and a growing sense of insecurity. In economic terms in particular, it is evident that many people see their own economic situation as having deteriorated over the past twelve months. Against this backdrop, some changes to the 2019 survey emerge, but also some constants – the main results have been presented within this chapter.

This introductory chapter documents, on the basis of a descriptive analysis, the proportion of those who agree or disagree with various statements put to them in the surveys of 2019 and 2022.

- Political interest has decreased in some countries and increased in others over the period, the latter including countries in Central and Eastern Europe like Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.
- Efficacy has decreased on average in all countries except Hungary.
- Agreement with the statement that an individual has no influence on the government has increased slightly in all countries, except for Hungary and the Czech Republic. Accordingly, in three out of eight countries (UK, the Czech Republic, and Italy) more than 50 % of the respondents fully agree or somewhat agree with the statement.
- The statement that democracy is the best form of government, even if it entails problems, is agreed with across all the countries studied. Regional differences can be observed; the three post-socialist countries and the UK have lower approval ratings than the other countries. Over time, the approval ratings have risen slightly.
- There are different dynamics with regard to satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in one's own country and in the EU (see also Wilke et al., 2022). Higher satisfaction with democracy in one's own country is found in Germany, France, Austria, and the Czech Republic, although only in a few countries is this perceived as satisfactory by more than half of the respondents.
- The present survey's findings on authoritarianism confirm more recent studies, such as the Leipzig Authoritarianism Study conducted every two years by the social psychologists Decker and Brähler (2022). In the case of Germany, for example, they find that satisfaction with democracy has risen in recent years, but that the desire for authority has also increased. Interestingly, a new study for Germany 2022/23 (Zick et al., 2023) showed declining satisfaction with democracy and a growing authoritarian tendency in the

- midst of German society that could not (yet) be detected within our surveys; this should be kept in mind and subjected to further analysis in the future.
- Historical awareness: agreement that the discussion about World War II and the Holocaust should be ended has slightly increased in some countries (France, Germany, Italy), slightly decreased in others (Austria, Poland), and remained roughly the same in others (Czech Republic, Hungary). What is striking – as in 2019 – is the high level of approval in Hungary, at 59 %, and the low level of approval in the Czech Republic, at 16 %.
 - In all countries, agreement with the statement that the country benefited from the opening of borders in 1989 has decreased compared to 2019. Agreement is particularly low in Italy (30 %) and France (33 %), but it is also declining in the Eastern European countries; in Hungary, for instance, approval stands at only 41 %.
 - Antisemitism vs. Islamophobia: in all countries there is a large difference regarding support for the right to build synagogues compared to the right to build mosques, and respondents agree significantly more often with the statement on the right to build synagogues than they do with the statement on the right to build mosques. The same trend was seen when we analysed the two statements on the contribution of Jews and Muslims to cultural life in the respective country: it shows that recognition of the contribution of Jews is significantly higher than that of Muslims in all countries. Compared to 2019, rising Islamophobia was detected in France.
 - Effects of and attitudes towards Russia's war in Ukraine: the 2022 survey included questions about Russia's war in Ukraine, which asked about the impact on the economy and security, but also about attitudes towards various measures: respondents in the countries sense great dangers for the economy within their own countries; at the same time there is differing willingness to take strict measures against Russia: respondents in Poland and the UK often agree with strict measures, whereas those in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Austria agree less.

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Appendix I: Fragebogen 2022

Guten Tag!

Dies ist eine Studie der Universität Wien, die in acht Ländern Europas durchgeführt wird. Wir möchten Sie in dieser Umfrage zu politischen Themen in [LAND] befragen. Dies wird ca. 15 Minuten dauern.

Ihre Mitarbeit wird einen Beitrag dazu leisten, besser zu verstehen, was die Menschen in [LAND] denken und von der Politik erwarten. Ihre Angaben werden selbstverständlich vertraulich behandelt!

Weitere Informationen zu dieser Studie erhalten sie unter:

<https://www.verein-zeitgeschichte.univie.ac.at/forschung/laufende-projekte/europaeische-autoritarismus-studie/>

Wir danken Ihnen hiermit für Ihre Teilnahme!

Q #	Item #	Deutsch – Intro	Deutsch – Item/ Frage	Deutsch – Antwortskala
SD1			Wie alt sind Sie?	
SD2			Bitte geben Sie Ihr Geschlecht an!	Mann 1 Frau 2
SD3			In welcher [REGI- ON] leben Sie?	[LÄNDER-SPEZIFISCH]
Q1			Einmal ganz allge- mein gesprochen: Sind Sie an Poli- tik ...?	sehr interessiert 1 ziemlich interessiert 2 wenig interessiert 3 gar nicht interessiert 4
Q2	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit die jewei- lige Aussage Ihrer Meinung nach zutrifft oder nicht zutrifft!	Leute wie ich haben keinen Einfluss darauf, was die Regierung macht.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q2	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit die jewei- lige Aussage Ihrer Meinung nach zutrifft oder nicht zutrifft!	Ich halte es für sinnlos, mich politisch zu engagieren.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q2	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit die jewei- lige Aussage Ihrer Meinung nach zutrifft oder nicht zutrifft!	Auch als einzelner Bürger kann ich auf die Entwick- lung in [LAND] Einfluss nehmen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88

Appendix I: Questionnaire 2022

Hello!

The present study is conducted by the University of Vienna in eight European countries. We would like to hear your opinion on political issues in [COUNTRY]. This survey will take about 15 minutes.

Your participation will contribute to a better understanding of what people in [COUNTRY] think and expect from politics. Your information will, of course, be treated confidentially!

Further information on this study is available at:
[LINK]

We thank you for your participation!

Q #	Item #	ENG – Intro	ENG – Item/ Question	ENG – Response scale
SD1			How old are you exactly?	
SD2			Please state your gender!	Male 1 Female 2
SD3			In which region do you live?	[COUNTRY-SPECIFIC]
Q1			Generally speaking, how interested would you say you are in politics? Are you ...?	very interested 1 somewhat interested 2 not very interested 3 not at all interested 4
Q2	Item 1	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	People like me don't have any say about what the government does.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q2	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	I think it's pointless for me to get politically involved.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q2	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Even as an individual citizen I can influence developments in [COUNTRY].	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88

Q3	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit die jeweilige Aussage Ihrer Meinung nach zutrifft oder nicht zutrifft!	Eine Demokratie muss die Interessen unterschiedlicher Gruppen berücksichtigen.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q3	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit die jeweilige Aussage Ihrer Meinung nach zutrifft oder nicht zutrifft!	Die Demokratie ist die beste Regierungsform, auch wenn sie Probleme mit sich bringen mag.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q3	Item 4	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit die jeweilige Aussage Ihrer Meinung nach zutrifft oder nicht zutrifft!	Experten und nicht die Regierung sollten darüber entscheiden, was für das Land das Beste ist.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q4	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Wenn in der Politik von „Kompromissen“ gesprochen wird, meint man eigentlich, dass man seine Prinzipien verkauft.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q4	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Die meisten Politiker kümmern sich nur um die Interessen der Reichen und Mächtigen.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q4	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Die meisten Politiker sind vertrauenswürdig.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q4	Item 4	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Die Parteien sind das Hauptproblem in [LAND].	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88

Q3	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Democracy must take into account the interests of different groups.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q3	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Democracy is the best form of government, even if it may entail problems.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q3	Item 4	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Experts, not the government, should decide what is best for the country.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q4	Item 1	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	When people talk about compromise in politics, they actually mean selling their principles.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q4	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Most politicians only care about the interests of the rich and powerful.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q4	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Most politicians are trustworthy.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q4	Item 4	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	The parties are the main problem in [COUNTRY].	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88

Q4	Item 5	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Das Volk, und nicht die Politiker, sollte unsere wichtigsten politischen Entscheidungen treffen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q4	Item 6	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Als Abgeordneten hätte ich lieber einen unabhängigen Bürger als ein Parteimitglied.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q5	Item 1	Wie zufrieden sind Sie mit ...	... dem Funktionieren der Demokratie in [LAND]?	Sehr zufrieden 1 Ziemlich zufrieden 2 Nicht sehr zufrieden 3 Überhaupt nicht zufrieden 4 weiß nicht 88
Q5	Item 2	Wie zufrieden sind Sie mit ...	... dem Funktionieren der Demokratie in der EU?	Sehr zufrieden 1 Ziemlich zufrieden 2 Nicht sehr zufrieden 3 Überhaupt nicht zufrieden 4 weiß nicht 88
Q5	Item 3	Wie zufrieden sind Sie mit ...	... der [AKTUELLEN/REZENTE NATIONALE] Regierung in [LAND]?	Sehr zufrieden 1 Ziemlich zufrieden 2 Nicht sehr zufrieden 3 Überhaupt nicht zufrieden 4 weiß nicht 88
Q6	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Harte Strafen für Kriminelle sind notwendig, um eine Botschaft zu senden.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q6	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Es ist wichtig, auch die Rechte von Verbrechern zu schützen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88

Q4	Item 5	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	The people, and not the politicians, should make our most important political decisions.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q4	Item 6	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	As a Member of Parliament I would rather have an independent citizen than a party member.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q5	Item 1	On the whole, how satisfied are you ...	... with the way democracy works in [COUNTRY]?	Very satisfied 1 Fairly satisfied 2 Not very satisfied 3 Not at all satisfied 4 don't know 88
Q5	Item 2	On the whole, how satisfied are you ...	... with the way democracy works in the EU?	Very satisfied 1 Fairly satisfied 2 Not very satisfied 3 Not at all satisfied 4 don't know 88
Q5	Item 3	On the whole, how satisfied are you ...	... with the current national government in [COUNTRY]?	Very satisfied 1 Fairly satisfied 2 Not very satisfied 3 Not at all satisfied 4 don't know 88
Q6	Item 1	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Strong punishments for criminals are necessary in order to send a message.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q6	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	It is important to also protect the rights of criminals.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88

Q6	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Die Wiedereinführung der Todesstrafe sollte heute undenkbar sein	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q7	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Wir brauchen starke Führungspersonen, damit wir in der Gesellschaft sicher leben können.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q7	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Man sollte einen starken Führer haben, der sich nicht um ein Parlament und Wahlen kümmern muss.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q8	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Unser Land braucht Menschen, die sich Traditionen widersetzen und neue Ideen ausprobieren.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q8	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Menschen sollten soziale Traditionen hinterfragen, um die Gesellschaft voranzubringen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q9	Item 1	Welche Maßnahmen einer Regierung halten Sie für gerechtfertigt?	Generelles Demonstrationsverbot	absolut gerechtfertigt 1 eher gerechtfertigt 2 teils-teils 3 kaum gerechtfertigt 4 überhaupt nicht gerechtfertigt 5 weiß nicht 88
Q9	Item 2	Welche Maßnahmen einer Regierung halten Sie für gerechtfertigt?	Überwachung der Kommunikation auf Smartphones	absolut gerechtfertigt 1 eher gerechtfertigt 2 teils-teils 3 kaum gerechtfertigt 4 überhaupt nicht gerechtfertigt 5 weiß nicht 88

Q6	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Nowadays, the reintroduction of death penalty should be unthinkable.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q7	Item 1	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	We need strong leaders so that we can live safely in society	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q7	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	There should be a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q8	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Our country needs people who oppose traditions and try out different ideas.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q8	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	People should challenge social traditions in order to advance society.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q9	Item 1	Which of the following actions by a government do you think are justified?	General ban on demonstrations	perfectly justified 1 rather justified 2 partly justified/not justified 3 rather not justified 4 not justified at all 5 don't know 88
Q9	Item 2	Which of the following actions by a government do you think are justified?	Surveillance of communication via smartphone	perfectly justified 1 rather justified 2 partly justified/not justified 3 rather not justified 4 not justified at all 5 don't know 88

Q9	Item 3	Welche Maßnahmen einer Regierung halten Sie für gerechtfertigt?	Videoüberwachung an öffentlichen Plätzen	absolut gerechtfertigt 1
				eher gerechtfertigt 2
				teils-teils 3
				kaum gerechtfertigt 4
				überhaupt nicht gerechtfertigt 5 weiß nicht 88
Q9	Item 4	Welche Maßnahmen einer Regierung halten Sie für gerechtfertigt?	Einschränkung der Medienberichterstattung	absolut gerechtfertigt 1
				eher gerechtfertigt 2
				teils-teils 3
				kaum gerechtfertigt 4
				überhaupt nicht gerechtfertigt 5 weiß nicht 88
Q9	Item 5	Welche Maßnahmen einer Regierung halten Sie für gerechtfertigt?	Das präventive Einsperren von potenziell gefährlichen Personen	absolut gerechtfertigt 1
				eher gerechtfertigt 2
				teils-teils 3
				kaum gerechtfertigt 4
				überhaupt nicht gerechtfertigt 5 weiß nicht 88
Q9	Item 6	Welche Maßnahmen einer Regierung halten Sie für gerechtfertigt?	Einschränkung des Zugangs zu bestimmten Inhalten im Internet	absolut gerechtfertigt 1
				eher gerechtfertigt 2
				teils-teils 3
				kaum gerechtfertigt 4
				überhaupt nicht gerechtfertigt 5 weiß nicht 88
Q10	Item 1	Es gibt viele soziale Gruppen in [LAND]. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder sie ablehnen!	Beim Setzen von Prioritäten müssen wir alle sozialen Gruppen berücksichtigen.	Stimme voll und ganz zu 1
				Stimme weitgehend zu 2
				Stimme eher zu 3
				Teils, teils 4
				Lehne eher ab 5
Q10	Item 2	Es gibt viele soziale Gruppen in [LAND]. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder sie ablehnen!	Wir sollten nicht auf Gleichheit sozialer Gruppen drängen.	Lehne weitgehend ab 6
				Lehne voll und ganz ab 7
				weiß nicht 88
				Stimme voll und ganz zu 1
				Stimme weitgehend zu 2
Q10	Item 2	Es gibt viele soziale Gruppen in [LAND]. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder sie ablehnen!	Wir sollten nicht auf Gleichheit sozialer Gruppen drängen.	Stimme eher zu 3
				Teils, teils 4
				Lehne eher ab 5
				Lehne weitgehend ab 6
				Lehne voll und ganz ab 7 weiß nicht 88

Q9	Item 3	Which of the following actions by a government do you think are justified?	Video surveillance in public areas (EVS)	perfectly justified 1 rather justified 2 partly justified/not justified 3 rather not justified 4 not justified at all 5 don't know 88
Q9	Item 4	Which of the following actions by a government do you think are justified?	Restrictions on media coverage	perfectly justified 1 rather justified 2 partly justified/not justified 3 rather not justified 4 not justified at all 5 don't know 88
Q9	Item 5	Which of the following actions by a government do you think are justified?	Pre-emptive detention of potentially dangerous people	perfectly justified 1 rather justified 2 partly justified/not justified 3 rather not justified 4 not justified at all 5 don't know 88
Q9	Item 6	Which of the following actions by a government do you think are justified?	Restricting access to certain content on the internet	perfectly justified 1 rather justified 2 partly justified/not justified 3 rather not justified 4 not justified at all 5 don't know 88
Q10	Item 1	There are many social groups in [COUNTRY]. Please indicate to what extent you support or oppose each of the statements!	In setting priorities, we must consider all societal groups.	Strongly Favor 1 Somewhat Favor 2 Slightly Favor 3 Neutral 4 Slightly Oppose 5 Somewhat Oppose 6 Strongly Oppose 7 don't know 88
Q10	Item 2	There are many social groups in [COUNTRY]. Please indicate to what extent you support or oppose each of the statements!	We should not push for equality of societal groups.	Strongly Favor 1 Somewhat Favor 2 Slightly Favor 3 Neutral 4 Slightly Oppose 5 Somewhat Oppose 6 Strongly Oppose 7 don't know 88

Q10	Item 3	Es gibt viele soziale Gruppen in [LAND]. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder sie ablehnen!	Die Gleichheit sozialer Gruppen sollte unser Ziel sein.	Stimme voll und ganz zu 1 Stimme weitgehend zu 2 Stimme eher zu 3 Teils, teils 4 Lehne eher ab 5 Lehne weitgehend ab 6 Lehne voll und ganz ab 7 weiß nicht 88
Q10	Item 4	Es gibt viele soziale Gruppen in [LAND]. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder sie ablehnen!	Überlegene soziale Gruppen sollten unterlegene Gruppen dominieren.	Stimme voll und ganz zu 1 Stimme weitgehend zu 2 Stimme eher zu 3 Teils, teils 4 Lehne eher ab 5 Lehne weitgehend ab 6 Lehne voll und ganz ab 7 weiß nicht 88
Q11	Item 4	Nun einige Fragen zur Geschichte in [LAND], dem 2. Weltkrieg und welche Meinung Sie dazu haben. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Die Diskussion über den Zweiten Weltkrieg und den Holocaust sollte beendet werden.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q11	Item 6	Nun einige Fragen zur Geschichte in [LAND], dem 2. Weltkrieg und welche Meinung Sie dazu haben. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[LAND] profitierte von der Öffnung der Grenzen 1989.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q11	Item 7	Nun einige Fragen zur Geschichte in [LAND], dem 2. Weltkrieg und welche Meinung Sie dazu haben. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[LÄNDER-SPEZIFISCH]	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88

Q10	Item 3	There are many social groups in [COUNTRY]. Please indicate to what extent you support or oppose each of the statements!	The equality of societal groups should be our goal.	Strongly Favor 1 Somewhat Favor 2 Slightly Favor 3 Neutral 4 Slightly Oppose 5 Somewhat Oppose 6 Strongly Oppose 7 don't know 88
Q10	Item 4	There are many social groups in [COUNTRY]. Please indicate to what extent you support or oppose each of the statements!	Superior societal groups should dominate inferior groups.	Strongly Favor 1 Somewhat Favor 2 Slightly Favor 3 Neutral 4 Slightly Oppose 5 Somewhat Oppose 6 Strongly Oppose 7 don't know 88
Q11	Item 4	Now a few questions about the history in [COUNTRY], the World War Two and your opinion about it. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	The discussion on World War Two and the Holocaust should be ended.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q11	Item 6	Now a few questions about the history in [COUNTRY], the World War Two and your opinion about it. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	[COUNTRY] has profited from the opening of the borders in 1989.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q11	Item 7	Now a few questions about the history in [COUNTRY], the World War Two and your opinion about it. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	[COUNTRY] is part of the history of European integration after 1945.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88

Q11	Item 8	Nun einige Fragen zur Geschichte in [LAND], dem 2. Weltkrieg und welche Meinung Sie dazu haben. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[LÄNDER-SPEZIFISCH]	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
		Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Das kommunistische System förderte die soziale Gerechtigkeit in [LAND].	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
		Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Das kommunistische System in Osteuropa förderte die soziale Gerechtigkeit.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
		Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Das kommunistische Regime in [LAND] förderte die Einheit der Nation.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
		Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Das kommunistische Regime in Osteuropa förderte die Einheit der Nationen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
C1		Bitte klicken Sie „Weiter“ ohne eine der Antwortoption auszuwählen.		stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88

Q11	Item 8	Now a few questions about the history in [COUNTRY], the World War Two and your opinion about it. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	[COUNTRY-SPECIFIC]	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88.
Q12	Item 1a	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	The communist system furthered social justice in [COUNTRY].	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q12	Item 1b	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	The communist system in Eastern Europe furthered social justice.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q12	Item 2a	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	The communist regime furthered national unity in [COUNTRY].	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q12	Item 2b	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	The communist regime in Eastern Europe furthered the national unity of nations.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
C1		Please click Next without selecting any of the response options.		completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88

Q13	Item 1	Was glauben Sie, hat sich die Mitgliedschaft [LAND-s] in der Europäischen Union insgesamt eher vorteilhaft oder nachteilig ausgewirkt für ...	... [LAND]?	Sehr nachteilig 1 Etwas nachteilig 2 Teils-teils 3 Etwas vorteilhaft 4 Sehr vorteilhaft 5 weiß nicht 88
Q13	Item 2	Was glauben Sie, hat sich die Mitgliedschaft [LAND-s] in der Europäischen Union insgesamt eher vorteilhaft oder nachteilig ausgewirkt für ...	... Sie persönlich?	Sehr nachteilig 1 Etwas nachteilig 2 Teils-teils 3 Etwas vorteilhaft 4 Sehr vorteilhaft 5 weiß nicht 88
Q14	Item 1	Einige Menschen sagen, die folgenden Dinge seien wichtig, um wirklich [BEWOHNER LAND] zu sein. Andere dagegen sagen, sie seien nicht wichtig. Was meinen Sie, wie wichtig jedes dieser Dinge ist?	In [LAND] geboren zu sein	Sehr wichtig 1 Ziemlich wichtig 2 Nicht wichtig 3 Überhaupt nicht wichtig 4 keine Angabe 99
Q14	Item 2	Einige Menschen sagen, die folgenden Dinge seien wichtig, um wirklich [BEWOHNER LAND] zu sein. Andere dagegen sagen, sie seien nicht wichtig. Was meinen Sie, wie wichtig jedes dieser Dinge ist?	[LANDs] politische Institutionen und Gesetze zu respektieren	Sehr wichtig 1 Ziemlich wichtig 2 Nicht wichtig 3 Überhaupt nicht wichtig 4 keine Angabe 99
Q14	Item 3	Einige Menschen sagen, die folgenden Dinge seien wichtig, um wirklich [BEWOHNER LAND] zu sein. Andere dagegen sagen, sie seien nicht wichtig. Was meinen Sie, wie wichtig jedes dieser Dinge ist?	[BEWOHNER LAND] Vorfahren zu haben	Sehr wichtig 1 Ziemlich wichtig 2 Nicht wichtig 3 Überhaupt nicht wichtig 4 keine Angabe 99

Q13	Item 1	Overall, do you think [COUNTRY]'s previous membership in the European Union has been rather advantageous or disadvantageous for ...	... for [COUNTRY]?	Very disadvantageous 1
				Somewhat disadvantageous 2
Q13	Item 2	Overall, do you think [COUNTRY]'s previous membership in the European Union has been rather advantageous or disadvantageous for...	... for yourself?	Neither advantageous nor disadvantageous 3
				Somewhat advantageous 4
Q14	Item 1	Some people say the following things are important for being truly British. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?	To have been born in [COUNTRY]	Very advantageous 5
				don't know 88
Q14	Item 2	Some people say the following things are important for being truly [NATIONALITY]. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?	To respect [COUNTRY]'s political institutions and laws	Very disadvantageous 1
				Somewhat disadvantageous 2
Q14	Item 3	Some people say the following things are important for being truly [NATIONALITY]. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?	To have [NATIONALITY] ancestry	Neither advantageous nor disadvantageous 3
				Somewhat advantageous 4
Q14	Item 4	Some people say the following things are important for being truly [NATIONALITY]. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?	To have [NATIONALITY] ancestry	Very advantageous 5
				don't know 88

Q14	Item 4	Einige Menschen sagen, die folgenden Dinge seien wichtig, um wirklich [BEWOHNER LAND] zu sein. Andere dagegen sagen, sie seien nicht wichtig. Was meinen Sie, wie wichtig jedes dieser Dinge ist?	[LANDES- SPRACHE] zu sprechen	Sehr wichtig 1 Ziemlich wichtig 2 Nicht wichtig 3 Überhaupt nicht wichtig 4 keine Angabe 99
Q14	Item 5	Einige Menschen sagen, die folgenden Dinge seien wichtig, um wirklich [BEWOHNER LAND] zu sein. Andere dagegen sagen, sie seien nicht wichtig. Was meinen Sie, wie wichtig jedes dieser Dinge ist?	Die [LAND/ NATIONALE] Kultur zu teilen	Sehr wichtig 1 Ziemlich wichtig 2 Nicht wichtig 3 Überhaupt nicht wichtig 4 keine Angabe 99
Q15	Item 1	Die Menschen haben unterschiedliche Ansichten darüber, was es bedeutet, Europäer zu sein. Was meinen Sie, wie wichtig sind jeweils die folgenden Dinge, um Europäer zu sein?	In Europa geboren zu sein	Sehr wichtig 1 Ziemlich wichtig 2 Nicht wichtig 3 Überhaupt nicht wichtig 4 keine Angabe 99
Q15	Item 2	Die Menschen haben unterschiedliche Ansichten darüber, was es bedeutet, Europäer zu sein. Was meinen Sie, wie wichtig sind jeweils die folgenden Dinge, um Europäer zu sein?	Europäische Vor- fahren zu haben	Sehr wichtig 1 Ziemlich wichtig 2 Nicht wichtig 3 Überhaupt nicht wichtig 4 keine Angabe 99

Q14	Item 4	Some people say the following things are important for being truly [NATIONALITY]. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?	To be able to speak national language	very important 1 quite important 2 not important 3 not at all important 4 refused 99
Q14	Item 5	Some people say the following things are important for being truly [NATIONALITY]. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is?	To share national culture	very important 1 quite important 2 not important 3 not at all important 4 refused 99
Q15	Item 1	People differ in what they think it means to be European. In your view, how important is each of the following to be European?	To be born in Europe	very important 1 quite important 2 not important 3 not at all important 4 refused 99
Q15	Item 2	People differ in what they think it means to be European. In your view, how important is each of the following to be European?	To have European ancestry	very important 1 quite important 2 not important 3 not at all important 4 refused 99

Q15	Item 3	Die Menschen haben unterschiedliche Ansichten darüber, was es bedeutet, Europäer zu sein. Was meinen Sie, wie wichtig sind jeweils die folgenden Dinge, um Europäer zu sein?	Ein Christ zu sein	Sehr wichtig 1 Ziemlich wichtig 2 Nicht wichtig 3 Überhaupt nicht wichtig 4 keine Angabe 99
Q15	Item 4	Die Menschen haben unterschiedliche Ansichten darüber, was es bedeutet, Europäer zu sein. Was meinen Sie, wie wichtig sind jeweils die folgenden Dinge, um Europäer zu sein?	Die europäische Kultur zu teilen	Sehr wichtig 1 Ziemlich wichtig 2 Nicht wichtig 3 Überhaupt nicht wichtig 4 keine Angabe 99
Q16		In [LAND] stehen einige Leute einer bestimmten politischen Partei nahe, obwohl sie ab und zu auch eine andere Partei wählen.	Stehen Sie im Allgemeinen einer politischen Partei nahe?	ja 1 nein 2 keine Angabe 99
Q17			Stehen Sie denn einer bestimmten Partei ein wenig näher als den anderen Parteien?	ja 1 nein 2 keine Angabe 99
Q18			Um welche Partei handelt es sich dabei?	[LÄNDER-SPEZIFISCH]
Q19			Stehen Sie dieser Partei sehr nahe, ziemlich nahe oder nicht sehr nahe?	sehr nahe 1 ziemlich nahe 2 nicht sehr nahe 3
Q20	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Gewalt sollte man grundsätzlich nie anwenden.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88

Q15	Item 3	People differ in what they think it means to be European. In your view, how important is each of the following to be European?	To be a Christian	very important 1 quite important 2 not important 3 not at all important 4 refused 99
Q15	Item 4	People differ in what they think it means to be European. In your view, how important is each of the following to be European?	To share European culture	very important 1 quite important 2 not important 3 not at all important 4 refused 99
Q16		Many people in [COUNTRY] lean toward a particular party, although they may occasionally vote for a different party.	How about you, do you usually think of yourself as close to any particular party?	yes 1 no 2 refused 99
Q17			Do you feel yourself a little closer to one of the political parties than the others?	yes 1 no 2 refused 99
Q18			Which party do you feel closest to?	Conservative and Unionist Party (CON) 1 Labour Party (LAB)
Q19			Do you feel very close to this party, somewhat close, or not very close?	very close 1 somewhat close 2 not very close 3
Q20	Item 1	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Violence should basically never be used.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88

Q20	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Wenn sich Fremde bei uns breit machen, muss man ihnen unter Umständen unter Anwendung von Gewalt zeigen, wer Herr im Hause ist.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q20	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Wenn man seine Wünsche durchsetzen will, muss man auch mal Gewalt anwenden.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q21	Item 1	Wenn Sie auf die folgende Liste sehen: Haben Sie sehr viel, ziemlich viel, wenig oder überhaupt kein Vertrauen in die jeweils genannten Institutionen im Rahmen der Coronakrise?	Das öffentlich-rechtliche Fernsehen [LAND]	überhaupt kein Vertrauen 0 – sehr viel Vertrauen 10 weiß nicht 88
Q21	Item 2	Wenn Sie auf die folgende Liste sehen: Haben Sie sehr viel, ziemlich viel, wenig oder überhaupt kein Vertrauen in die jeweils genannten Institutionen im Rahmen der Coronakrise?	Die Polizei	überhaupt kein Vertrauen 0 – sehr viel Vertrauen 10 weiß nicht 88
Q21	Item 3	Wenn Sie auf die folgende Liste sehen: Haben Sie sehr viel, ziemlich viel, wenig oder überhaupt kein Vertrauen in die jeweils genannten Institutionen im Rahmen der Coronakrise?	Das Parlament	überhaupt kein Vertrauen 0 – sehr viel Vertrauen 10 weiß nicht 88

Q20	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	When strangers spread out among us, we might have to use force to show them who is master in the house.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q20	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	If you want to make your wishes to come true, you sometimes have to use force.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q21	Item 1	If you look at the list below: Do you have much, some, little or no trust in the each of the institutions mentioned in the context of the Corona crisis?	Public service media [of the country]	no trust at all 0 ... much trust 10 don't know 88
Q21	Item 2	If you look at the list below: Do you have much, some, little or no trust in the each of the institutions mentioned in the context of the Corona crisis?	The Police	no trust at all 0 ... much trust 10 don't know 88
Q21	Item 3	If you look at the list below: Do you have much, some, little or no trust in the each of the institutions mentioned in the context of the Corona crisis?	The Parliament	no trust at all 0 ... much trust 10 don't know 88

Q21	Item 4	Wenn Sie auf die folgende Liste sehen: Haben Sie sehr viel, ziemlich viel, wenig oder überhaupt kein Vertrauen in die jeweils genannten Institutionen im Rahmen der Coronakrise?	Das Gesundheitswesen	überhaupt kein Vertrauen 0 – sehr viel Vertrauen 10 weiß nicht 88
Q21	Item 5	Wenn Sie auf die folgende Liste sehen: Haben Sie sehr viel, ziemlich viel, wenig oder überhaupt kein Vertrauen in die jeweils genannten Institutionen im Rahmen der Coronakrise?	Die Bundesregierung	überhaupt kein Vertrauen 0 – sehr viel Vertrauen 10 weiß nicht 88
Q21	Item 6	Wenn Sie auf die folgende Liste sehen: Haben Sie sehr viel, ziemlich viel, wenig oder überhaupt kein Vertrauen in die jeweils genannten Institutionen im Rahmen der Coronakrise?	Das Bundesheer	überhaupt kein Vertrauen 0 – sehr viel Vertrauen 10 weiß nicht 88
Q21	Item 7	Wenn Sie auf die folgende Liste sehen: Haben Sie sehr viel, ziemlich viel, wenig oder überhaupt kein Vertrauen in die jeweils genannten Institutionen im Rahmen der Coronakrise?	Wissenschaft und Forschung	überhaupt kein Vertrauen 0 – sehr viel Vertrauen 10 weiß nicht 88
Q22		Man spricht in der Politik immer wieder von „links“ und „rechts“.	Wo würden Sie sich selbst auf dieser Skala einordnen, wobei 0 „links“ bedeutet und 10 „rechts“ bedeutet?	links 0 – rechts 10 weiß nicht 88

Q21	Item 4	If you look at the list below: Do you have much, some, little or no trust in the each of the institutions mentioned in the context of the Corona crisis?	The Public Health Sector	no trust at all 0 ... much trust 10 don't know 88
Q21	Item 5	If you look at the list below: Do you have much, some, little or no trust in the each of the institutions mentioned in the context of the Corona crisis?	The Federal Government	no trust at all 0 ... much trust 10 don't know 88
Q21	Item 6	If you look at the list below: Do you have much, some, little or no trust in the each of the institutions mentioned in the context of the Corona crisis?	The Military	no trust at all 0 ... much trust 10 don't know 88
Q21	Item 7	If you look at the list below: Do you have much, some, little or no trust in the each of the institutions mentioned in the context of the Corona crisis?	Science and Research	no trust at all 0 ... much trust 10 don't know 88
Q22		In politics people often talk of "left" and "right".	Where would you place yourself on the following scale, where 0 means "left" and 10 means "right"?	left 0 to right 10 don't know 88

				Ich habe bei der [WAHL] nicht gewählt 1 Ich habe in Erwägung gezogen zu wählen, es diesmal aber nicht gemacht 2 Ich wähle normaler- weise schon, aber diesmal nicht 3 Ich habe bei der [WAHL/DATUM] gewählt 4 War nicht wahlberechtigt 77 weiß nicht 88 keine Angabe 99
Q23		Bei der [WAHL] gab es viele Bürgerinnen und Bürger, die aus guten Gründen nicht an der Wahl teilnehmen konnten oder wollten.	Wie war das bei Ihnen, welche der folgenden Aussagen trifft auf Sie zu?	
Q24			Und welche Partei haben Sie bei der [WAHL/DATUM] gewählt?	[LÄNDER-SPEZIFISCH]
Q25	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Juden haben in [LAND] zu viel Einfluss auf die öffentliche Meinung.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q25	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Juden haben viel zum kulturellen Leben in [LAND] beigetragen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q25	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Juden in [LAND] sollten das Recht haben, Synagogen zu bauen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q25	Item 4	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Heute findet man Hass gegen Juden im Grunde nur unter Zuwanderern.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88

Q23	In the general elections in December 2019, there were many citizens who did not vote or could not vote for good reasons.	What about you, which of the following statements applies to you?	<p>I did not vote in the general election 2019 1</p> <p>I thought about voting, but I did not do so this time 2</p> <p>I usually vote, but I did not this time 3</p> <p>I am sure that I voted in the general election in December 2019 4</p> <p>I was not eligible 77</p> <p>don't know 88</p> <p>refused 99</p>
Q24			[COUNTRY-SPECIFIC]
Q25	Item 1	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	<p>Jews in [COUNTRY] have too much influence on public opinion.</p> <p>completely agree 1</p> <p>somewhat agree 2</p> <p>partly agree/disagree 3</p> <p>somewhat disagree 4</p> <p>completely disagree 5</p> <p>don't know 88</p>
Q25	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	<p>Jews contributed a lot to cultural life in [COUNTRY].</p> <p>completely agree 1</p> <p>somewhat agree 2</p> <p>partly agree/disagree 3</p> <p>somewhat disagree 4</p> <p>completely disagree 5</p> <p>don't know 88</p>
Q25	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	<p>Jews in [COUNTRY] should have the right to build synagogues.</p> <p>completely agree 1</p> <p>somewhat agree 2</p> <p>partly agree/disagree 3</p> <p>somewhat disagree 4</p> <p>completely disagree 5</p> <p>don't know 88</p>
Q25	Item 4	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	<p>Nowadays, hatred against Jews is essentially only found among immigrants.</p> <p>completely agree 1</p> <p>somewhat agree 2</p> <p>partly agree/disagree 3</p> <p>somewhat disagree 4</p> <p>completely disagree 5</p> <p>don't know 88</p>

Q25	Item 5	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[WENN LAND = 2] Vorurteile gegen Juden sind offensichtliche Teile des öffentlichen Diskurses in Ungarn.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5
				weiß nicht 88
Q26	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Muslimen sollte die Zuwanderung nach [LAND] untersagt werden.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5
				weiß nicht 88
Q26	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Durch die vielen Muslime in [LAND] fühle ich mich manchmal wie ein Fremder im eigenen Land.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5
				weiß nicht 88
Q26	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Muslime in [LAND] sollten das Recht haben, Moscheen zu bauen.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5
				weiß nicht 88
Q26	Item 4	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Muslime tragen viel zum kulturellen Leben in [LAND] bei.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5
				weiß nicht 88
Q26	Item 5	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[WENN LAND = 2 | 3] Die christlich-[Land] Kultur und der Islam sind miteinander nicht vereinbar.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5
				weiß nicht 88
Q27	Item 1	Wie wahrscheinlich bzw. unwahrscheinlich ist es Ihrer Meinung nach, dass die folgenden Aussagen zutreffen?	Geheime Organisationen beeinflussen die Politik in [LAND]	extrem unwahrscheinlich 0
				–
				extrem
				wahrscheinlich 10
				weiß nicht 88

Q25	Item 5	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	n.a.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q26	Item 1	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Muslims should be prohibited from immigration to [COUNTRY].	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q26	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	All those Muslims in [COUNTRY] sometimes make me feel as if I were a stranger in my own country.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q26	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Muslims in [COUNTRY] should have the right to build mosques.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q26	Item 4	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Muslims contribute a lot to cultural life in [COUNTRY].	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q26	Item 5	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	n.a.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q27	Item 1	In your opinion, how likely or unlikely is it that the following statements are true?	Secret organizations are influencing politics in [COUNTRY].	extremely unlikely 0 to extremely likely 10 don't know 88

Q27	Item 2	Wie wahrscheinlich bzw. unwahrscheinlich ist es Ihrer Meinung nach, dass die folgenden Aussagen zutreffen?	Es gibt einen vom Menschen verursachten Klimawandel.	extrem unwahrscheinlich 0 – extrem wahrscheinlich 10 weiß nicht 88
Q27	Item 3	Wie wahrscheinlich bzw. unwahrscheinlich ist es Ihrer Meinung nach, dass die folgenden Aussagen zutreffen?	Die Bevölkerung in [LAND] wird von den Medien systematisch belogen.	extrem unwahrscheinlich 0 – extrem wahrscheinlich 10 weiß nicht 88
Q27	Item 4	Wie wahrscheinlich bzw. unwahrscheinlich ist es Ihrer Meinung nach, dass die folgenden Aussagen zutreffen?	Die [BEWOHNER LAND] Bevölkerung wird langfristig durch Zuwanderer ausgetauscht.	extrem unwahrscheinlich 0 – extrem wahrscheinlich 10 weiß nicht 88
Q28	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Ich unterstütze Demonstrationen gegen hohe Energiepreise und Inflation.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q28	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Ich würde an Demonstrationen gegen hohe Energiepreise und Inflation teilnehmen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q28	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Es ist akzeptabel, bei Demonstrationen gegen hohe Energiepreise und Inflation Gewalt anzuwenden, um Widerstand zu leisten.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q29	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Zuwanderer erhöhen die Kriminalitätsrate.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88

Q27	Item 2	In your opinion, how likely or unlikely is it that the following statements are true?	There is a man-made climate change happening.	extremely unlikely 0 – extremely likely 10 don't know 88
Q27	Item 3	In your opinion, how likely or unlikely is it that the following statements are true?	The people in [COUNTRY] are systematically lied to by the media.	extremely unlikely 0 – extremely likely 10 don't know 88
Q27	Item 4	In your opinion, how likely or unlikely is it that the following statements are true?	The [NATIONALITY] population will be replaced by immigrants in the long run.	extremely unlikely 0 – extremely likely 10 don't know 88
Q28	Item 1	There have been recurring demonstrations against the government's Corona measures. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	I support demonstrations against high energy prices and inflation.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q28	Item 2	There have been recurring demonstrations against the government's Corona measures. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	I would take part in demonstrations against high energy prices and inflation.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q28	Item 3	There have been recurring demonstrations against the government's Corona measures. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	The use of violence during demonstrations against high energy prices and inflation is acceptable as a form of resistance.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q29	Item 1	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Immigrants push up the crime rate.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88

Q29	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Zuwanderer nehmen Menschen, die in [LAND] geboren sind, Arbeitsplätze weg.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q29	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Zuwanderer machen [LAND] offener für neue Ideen und andere Kulturen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q29	Item 4	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	Zuwanderer kommen nur hierher, um den Sozialstaat auszunutzen.	stimme sehr zu 1 stimme eher zu 2 teils-teils 3 stimme eher nicht zu 4 stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q30		Was denken Sie:	Wie viele der Asylbewerber werden in ihrem Heimatland wirklich verfolgt?	alle 1 die meisten 2 einige 3 wenige 4 keiner 5 weiß nicht 88
Q31	Item 1	Wie groß schätzen Sie die Gefahr ein, welche von dem Einmarsch Russlands in der Ukraine ausgeht?	Für die Sicherheit in [LAND]	sehr groß 1 groß 2 mittelmäßig 3 klein 4 sehr klein 5 weiß nicht 88
Q31	Item 2	Wie groß schätzen Sie die Gefahr ein, welche von dem Einmarsch Russlands in der Ukraine ausgeht?	Für die Wirtschaft in [LAND]	sehr groß 1 groß 2 mittelmäßig 3 klein 4 sehr klein 5 weiß nicht 88
Q32		Halten Sie die Reaktion der [LAND] Bundesregierung auf den Einmarsch Russlands in der Ukraine für unzureichend, angemessen oder zu extrem?		überhaupt nicht ausreichend 1 eher nicht ausreichend 2 angemessen 3 eher zu stark 4 zu extrem 5 weiß nicht 88

Q29	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Immigrants take jobs away from people born in [COUNTRY].	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q29	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Immigrants make [COUNTRY] more open to new ideas and for other cultures.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q29	Item 4	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	Immigrants only come here to exploit the welfare state.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q30		What do you think:	how many of the asylum seekers are really persecuted in their home country?	all 1 most 2 some 3 few 4 none 5 don't know 88
Q31	Item 1	How great do you consider the danger posed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine?	For security in [COUNTRY]	very large 1 large 2 medium 3 small 4 very small 5 don't know 88
Q31	Item 2	How great do you consider the danger posed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine?	For the economy in [COUNTRY]	very large 1 large 2 medium 3 small 4 very small 5 don't know 88
Q32		Do you consider [COUNTRY] federal government's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine to be insufficient, appropriate, or too extreme?		not at all adequate 1 rather not sufficient 2 adequate 3 rather too strong 4 too extreme 5 don't know 88

Q33	Item 1	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[LAND] sollte der NATO beitreten.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q33	Item 2	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[LAND] sollte sich an wirtschaftlichen Sanktionen gegen Russland beteiligen, auch wenn das für den Einzelnen teuer werden wird.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q33	Item 3	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[LAND] sollte russische Medien einschränken.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q33	Item 4	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[LAND] sollte ukrainische Flüchtlinge aufnehmen.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
Q33	Item 5	Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie den folgenden Aussagen zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen!	[LAND] sollte Gas- und Ölimporte aus Russland stoppen.	stimme sehr zu 1
				stimme eher zu 2
				teils-teils 3
				stimme eher nicht zu 4
				stimme überhaupt nicht zu 5 weiß nicht 88
SD1			Ist Ihre eigene wirtschaftliche Lage in den letzten 12 Monaten ...?	viel besser geworden 1
				etwas besser geworden 2
				gleich geblieben 3
				etwas schlechter geworden 4
				viel schlechter geworden 5
				keine Angabe 99

Q33	Item 1	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	[COUNTRY] should stay in NATO.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q33	Item 2	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	[COUNTRY] should participate in economic sanctions against Russia, even if it will be expensive for individuals.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q33	Item 3	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	[COUNTRY] should restrict Russian media.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q33	Item 4	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	[COUNTRY] should accept Ukrainian refugees.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
Q33	Item 5	Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements!	[COUNTRY] should stop gas and oil imports from Russia.	completely agree 1 somewhat agree 2 partly agree/disagree 3 somewhat disagree 4 completely disagree 5 don't know 88
SD1			Would you say that over the past 12 months, your personal economic situation has ...?	got much better 1 got somewhat better 2 stayed the same 3 got somewhat worse 4 got much worse 5 refused 99

SD4	In der Gesellschaft gibt es Bevölkerungsgruppen, die eher oben stehen, und solche, die eher unten stehen.	Wo würden Sie sich selbst auf dieser Skala einordnen?	oben 10 – unten 1 keine Angabe 99
SD5		Welche dieser Bezeichnungen beschreibt am besten Ihr Wohngebiet?	Ländliche Gegend oder Dorf 1 Kleine oder mittelgroße Stadt 2 Vorort einer Großstadt 3 Großstadt 4
SD6		Was ist der höchste Schul- oder Bildungsabschluss, den Sie erreicht haben?	[LÄNDER-SPEZIFISCH]
SD7		Ungeachtet davon, ob Sie einer bestimmten Religion angehören, für wie religiös halten Sie sich? Bitte verwenden Sie folgende Skala	Überhaupt nicht religiös 0 – Sehr religiös 10
SD8		Was beschreibt Ihre derzeitige Situation am besten?	Berufstätig (Voll-, Teilzeit, geringfügig, im Familienbetrieb) 1 In Pension 2 Schüler/in, Student/in, sonstige Ausbildung 3 In Karenz (Eltern- oder Bildungskarenz) 4 Hausfrau/Hausmann 5 Zivil- oder Militärdienst, freiwillige Arbeit 6 Berufsunfähig (chronisch krank oder behindert) 7 Arbeitssuchend oder arbeitslos 8 sonstiges 9

SD4	In our society there are groups which tend to be towards the top and groups which tend to be towards the bottom.	Where would you put yourself now on this scale?	Top 10 — Bottom 1 refused 99
SD5		Which of the following best describes your residential area?	Rural area or village 1 small or middle-sized town 2 suburbs of large town or city 3 large town or city 4
SD6		What is the highest level of education that you have achieved?	[country specific]
SD7		Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are? Please use the following scale	Not at all religious 0 — Very religious 10
SD8		Which of the following best describes your current situation?	employed (full time, part time, family firm) 1 retired 2 a student at school, at university or other training 3 on leave 4 a homemaker 5 military service, civilian service, or voluntary social work 6 unfit for work 7 unemployed or seeking for work 8 other 9

		Angestellte/r 1 Arbeiter/in 2 Beamte/r, öffentlicher Dienst 3
SD9	Wie ist zurzeit Ihre berufliche Stel- lung?	Selbstständig/e oder Freiberuflich ohne Mitarbeiter (allein) 4 Selbstständig/e oder Freiberuflich mit Mitarbeitern 5 Landwirt/in 6
SD10	Welche dieser Beschreibungen kommt dem am nächsten, wie Sie die derzeitige Einkommenssitua- tion Ihres Haus- halts beurteilen? Können Sie ...?	bequem leben 1 zurechtkommen 2 nur schwer zurechtkommen 3 nur sehr schwer zurechtkommen 4 keine Angabe 99
SD11	Haben Sie die [NATIONALE] Staatsbürger- schaft?	Ja, von Geburt an 1 Ja, habe sie später bekommen 2 Nein, habe eine andere Staatsbürgerschaft 3 keine Angabe 99
SD12	In welchem Land sind Sie geboren?	1 [- bitte auswählen -] 2 Afghanistan [...] 246 Zypern
SD13	Und in welchem Land ist Ihr Vater geboren?	[LISTE, inkl. weiß nicht]
SD14	Und in welchem Land ist Ihre Mut- ter geboren?	[LISTE, inkl. weiß nicht]

		Employee 1 Blue-collar worker 2 Public official, civil servant 3
SD9	What is your current occupation?	Self-employed or free- lance worker without employees (alone) 4 Self-employed or freelance worker with employees 5 Farmer 6
SD10	Which of the de- scriptions comes closest to how you feel about your household's in- come nowadays?	Living comfortably on present income 1 Coping on present income 2 Finding it difficult on present income 3 Finding it very difficult on present income 4 refused 99
SD11	Do you have [NA- TIONAL] citizen- ship?	Yes, by birth 1 Yes, I received it later in life 2 No, I have another citizenship 3 refused 99
SD12	In which country were you born?	1 [- please select -] 2 Afghanistan [...] 246 Cyprus
SD13	And, in which country was your father born?	[LIST, incl. don't know]
SD14	And, in which country was your mother born?	[LIST, incl. don't know]

Appendix II

Table A-1 : Reliability of constructs 2022

	Austria	Hungary	Poland	Czech Rep.	Germany	Italy	France	UK
Anomy and disenchantment with democracy								
Efficacy (3)	.716	.588	.744	.662	.739	.654	.678	.778
Democratic understanding (3)	.706	.678	.659	.725	.711	.718	.671	.758
Democracy and parties (6)	.782	.770	.757	.843	.862	.787	.778	.772
Authoritarianism								
Authoritarian aggression (3)	.589	.435	.501	.527	.546	.511	.468	.693
Authoritarian servility (2)	.661	.662	.613	.765	.636	.776	.696	.516
Tradition/convention (2)	.759	.780	.704	.599	.698	.794	.741	.815
New political authoritarianism (6)	.709	.737	.740	.744	.707	.765	.758	.803
Social dominance (4)	.796	.706	.707	.720	.693	.739	.679	.743
Group-focused enmity								
Antisemitism (3) ^c , (4) ^{a, d, e, f, g, h} (5) ^b	.679	.499	.526	.655	.750	.785	.672	.765
Islamophobia (3) ^{b, c} (4) ^{a, d, e, f, g, h}	.882	.782	.805	.814	.900	.846	.135	.892

Note: (number of items). Reliability measured Cronbach's alpha: <.6=not acceptable, .6 to .7 questionable, .7 to .8 acceptable, .8 to .9 good, >.9 excellent. Group-focused enmity: ^a Austria, ^b Hungary, ^c Poland, ^d Czech Rep., ^e Germany ^f Italy, ^g France, ^h UK.

Oliver Rathkolb

The Long Shadow of Authoritarianism in Austria

The Austrian form of controlled democracy, characterized by two large and dominant party blocs well into the 1990s and the social partnership between institutionalised representatives of the employers and workers and defined as proportional or concordance democracy, was certainly an exceptional case among the generally limited development of democracy in Europe after 1945; many already spoke, excessively polemically, of a “Demo-kratur”.

However, there were reasons for this development. In Austrians’ collective self-understanding, the Second Republic was constructed in conscious contradiction to the conflict- and violence-oriented First Republic, and collaboration between the big political blocs was regarded as something positive well into the 1950s.⁴⁰ It was only in the 1960s that increasingly broad resistance to the Grand Coalition of the ÖVP and the SPÖ arose, followed by objections to the social partnership in the 1980s. The question is, however, to what extent this gradual break-up of authoritarian decision-making structures is also associated with open and progressive democratic attitudes on the part of the sovereign of parliamentary democracy – the voters.⁴¹

Even during the redemocratization that took place under the Allied Administration from 1945 to 1955, following the defeat of the National Socialists’ totalitarian terror regime, ideological thinking with dictatorial tendencies remained latent. For instance, in June 1948, the US Occupation Administration tested the “popularity” of communism and National Socialism in their zones in Vienna, Linz, and Salzburg. Three years after the war had ended, some 26.4 % of respondents in Linz, over 43.2 % in Salzburg, and up to 35.6 % in Vienna were openly in favour of National Socialism. In both Vienna and in Salzburg, over 50 % were for “neither”, and only Linz showed stronger rejection of authoritarian ideologies, with 62.8 %. In a different survey, 39.3 % supported democracy, 23.7 % were for a socialist republic (most of them meaning a social democratic, anti-communist republic, although the Americans understood it to mean a communist regime), 3.3 % advocated a dictatorship, and a remarkable 15.9 preferred the monarchy (some 17.8 % abstaining).⁴⁴ Here too, then, latent authoritarian potential is clearly evident, although in the 1950s observers such as the political scientist Hans J. Morgenthau also criticized the authoritarian structures of the Austrian universities.⁴⁵ He nevertheless remained confident that despite plenty of evidence of “clericalism and corporative state traditions”

from the period 1934–38, the practice of the “forced” Grand Coalition and enforcement by the Allied administration prevented the risk of a new authoritarian course.

Hence we might ask how Austrian society processed this transition from authoritarian-dictatorial regimes to a democracy. According to Bruno Kreisky, in 1966 many social democrats feared that after the end of the Grand Coalition, authoritarian traditions would win out within the ÖVP, and hence they sought to continue collaboration at almost any political price. However, as far as parliamentarism and the social partnership were concerned, these fears proved unfounded: the ÖVP’s single-party government under Josef Klaus did not question the system of informal balancing of interests and conflict characterizing the social partnership any more than the socialist single-party government under Kreisky did. This remained taboo, and the corresponding communication channels between a small group of decision makers remained intact – indeed, they were even expanded. Essentially, one even gains the impression that in the political day-to-day, the social partnership grew in significance under the single-party governments, temporary ideological differences notwithstanding.

In Austria in the late 1960s, there was a public debate about democratic reform, conducted mainly by the SPÖ in opposition and conservative or independent media and experts.⁴⁶ Here too, the focus was more on improving the system of democracy than on developing democratic attitudes among voters. Fundamentally, the aim was to shore up the rights of the parliamentarians and rights of citizenship against the administration and the executive. There was no criticism of the social partnership per se; rather the discussion was about regulating this informal balancing of interests.

In 1970, Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky observed at the outset of the first minority government in the Republic’s history, “What characterizes the real Austrians is that they just let themselves be directed. Me too. If a tendency exists, one gives in to it. Austrians are curious people.”¹ And he has been proved right to this day.

Authoritarian Potential in 1978

It was not until 1978 that voters were surveyed regarding their specific attitudes outside of elections,⁴⁷ but the study was soon consigned to the desk drawer, although two articles did find their way into the short-lived magazine *Extra-*

1 Christian Röttinger (ed.), *Also sprach Bruno Kreisky. Aussprüche gesammelt von Christian Röttinger. Karikaturen von Rudolf Angerer*, Vienna 1981, 73 f.

blatt. The general lack of interest in an assessment of authoritarian potential in Austria was probably connected to Kreisky government's high approval ratings. The SPÖ did not want to directly irritate the electorate, and in any case, the ÖVP was too weak to do so. Kreisky himself recognized the fundamental problem, as demonstrated by his initiative to set up a society against antisemitism, for instance. The national trauma of 1938, however – the Dollfuss–Schuschnigg dictatorship and civil war – would ultimately remain historicized, and in the late 1970s it was only of interest to historians.

There was more, albeit unconscious, concern about addressing the authoritarian potential that dated back to the National Socialist era. With the exception of antisemitism researchers and scholarly studies, no one yet dared introduce the socio-political level to the debate; this would have to wait until the conflict over Kurt Waldheim in the mid-1980s.

Snapshots of individual forms of expression of basic authoritarian positions such as antisemitism and/or xenophobia document that continuities from the first half of the twentieth century can be observed well into the second and, today, the third post-war generation. In her empirical study on changing attitudes towards minorities in Austria between 1984 and 1988, the sociologist Hilde Weiss noted that “antisemitism and xenophobia are, however, also borne by a common fundamental attitude – namely by an authoritarian ethos that also tends to be antidemocratic and ideologically right wing in orientation and associated with nationalist attitudes”.⁵⁰ These prejudicial syndromes cannot be profoundly changed by “isolated” enlightenment and information alone; this is only possible by changing the syndrome of the authoritarian fundamental attitude. It is comprised of a number of limitations and marginalizations in the classical modern democratic system, which goes hand in hand with “ethnocentrism, [...] nationalist hubris, [...] and] a rejection of a universalism that grants liberties also to minorities”.

This syndrome, observed in Germany by the group of researchers led by Theodor W. Adorno in the early post-war years (cited above) and in the Austrian elite by the political scientist Hans J. Morgenthau in 1952,⁵¹ remains evident to this day, in the third post-war generation. Politically, this latent potential explodes in socioeconomic crises or in periods subjectively perceived as such. This thesis is supported by surveys of fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds in Germany that examined latent xenophobia in relation to numbers of foreigners. In Austria, the results were more nuanced and in some cases more surprising, despite the high percentage of first-time voters supporting the FPÖ in the 1990s. The FPÖ had embraced a number of these authoritarian codes (especially in its policy on foreigners and migration, its law and order mentality, and an ethnocentric nationalism). However, when the authors Ferdinand Karlhofer and Gilg surveyed a total of 2,500 adolescents between fourteen and

nineteen in the autumn of 1999 for their study "Jugend und Demokratie in Tirol" (Youth and Democracy in the Tyrol), they found a hard core of just 12 % of authoritarian adolescents categorized as FPÖ sympathizers.⁵² Some 53 % of respondents were identified as firm democrats, 17 % as sceptical democrats, and 18 % as wavering democrats. Here too, it is clear that personal life circumstances – positive and optimistic vocational prospects – appreciably increase the degree of agreement with democracy (57 % versus 50 %) and that the share of agreement with authoritarianism in this category markedly decreases (from 16 percent to 9 percent).⁵³ This does not mean, however, that young FPÖ voters are automatically the core group with respect to authoritarian potential; rather, this is found in intermediate strata.

Although the camps of the two large parties have been strongly eroded, extreme authoritarianism had generally decreased compared to thirty years earlier; while in 1980 24 % still preferred the idea of a "strong man" to the parliament, in 1991 the figure stood at 22 %, and in November/December 1997 at just 18 %.⁵⁴ In November/December 1997, only three indicators were surveyed (a positive attitude to obedience, acceptance of "leading minds", and authoritarian upbringing), some 8 % of the population being classified as clearly authoritarian and 51 % as clearly non-authoritarian. But the contrasting answers to the question concerning a parliament versus a strong man alone display inexplicable differences. However, my basic thesis that authoritarianism based on personality is not necessarily connected to political ideas and electoral behaviour was confirmed.⁵⁵

Since the 1980s, a new phenomenon has arisen in the wake of the globalization debate and Austria's joining the EU: authoritarian codes seem more effective even if there are no real, universally obvious changes to the general social situation. Moreover, they must be modern and well-packaged if they are to be politically effective. Traditional authoritarian slogans and marketing strategies from the pre-1945 era only work for right-wing extremist groups; the symbolism has changed – despite the occasional historical "gaff".

Since the mid-1980s, which in my view already signal a renationalization of Europe, mere fear of negative change has been sufficient to reinvigorate authoritarian trends. An important aspect in this connection is the Austrians' strong need to feel safe; they attach great importance to it, from both a social perspective and a "criminalist" perspective. This was clearly evident in the increasing hostility towards migration and the strong distrust with regard to the EU's eastern expansion, which were accompanied by fear for jobs and a rise in crime.

In the extensive authoritarianism survey of 1978 too, the focus was not on radicalized former National Socialist functionaries but on average voters, enabling analysis of the conditions for the receptiveness for antidemocratic,

authoritarian codes and propaganda. SPÖ voters primarily displayed authoritarian tendencies displaying a predisposition for convention and irrationality, as well as latent potential for aggression towards marginal groups and minorities – attitudes that proved more prevalent among the SPÖ's core voters than among even the FPÖ's, although the latter were far more likely to glorify National Socialism and antisemitism than SPÖ and ÖVP voters.

In 1978, Austrian society was "controlled" and socially stable with respect to recognition of formal rule of law. However, the surveys revealed that a number of legal reforms during the Kreisky era were not widely popular. Even the reintroduction of the death penalty, abolished before 1970, would have been accepted by a referendum, and the liberalization of criminal law did not meet with broad societal approval.

The picture of the "Austrian" in 1978 displayed an unexpectedly strong continuity of authoritarian codes, with the following peaks: 80% thought that "[c]riminals today are punished too leniently", compared to 4% who disagreed, 74% considered "[o]bedience and respect" important virtues in children, versus 4% who didn't; 68% wanted "scruffy foreign adolescents" to be barred from entering the country, versus 16% who didn't; 67% were for stricter punishment for transvestites and sexual offences against adolescents, versus 16% who were against; 60% thought that only "the reintroduction of the death penalty could put a stop to terrorism", opposed to 19% who disagreed; 51% still considered the "natural role as housewives and mothers the real fulfilment of women", while 16% didn't; and 47% stressed that "one could divide people into two classes: the strong and the weak", a view not shared by 19%. Moreover, 46% thought that "if one could be rid of asocials and crooks, most of our societal problems [would be] solved", 21% disagreeing.

These findings – a year later, in 1979, Bruno Kreisky would enjoy his largest election victory – ran counter to the SPÖ government's programme in theory and in practice. The contradiction signalled extremely high authoritarian potential, which was repressed by the security of the welfare state and an active policy of securing employment, however. The SPÖ's authoritarian electoral potential stuck with Kreisky mainly because his model of the welfare state seemed more important than Justice Minister Christian Broda's liberal reform of the justice system or the democratization of other areas of life such as artistic freedom.

Kreisky himself, who was accepted as a leader, and even revered by many, was probably more aware of these authoritarian continuities than anyone. It was for this reason that he had only cautiously attempted to explore the boundaries of socio-political discourse. The intensity of the authoritarian potential's responses had been seen in 1972, when most of the bilingual signs for place names in the linguistically mixed area of Carinthia, put up in line with Article

7 of the State Treaty, were torn down and violence broke out. In his attempt to offer political support to the provincial leader Hans Sima in Klagenfurt, Kreisky ran up against hostile resistance even from members of the SPÖ, some of it expressed openly. Consequently, he reduced his original commitment to the issue and let Sima fail.

A repeat of the 1978 survey on authoritarian attitudes in Austria, commissioned by the author in late 2004, showed very clearly fundamental progress towards political democracy, despite increasing weariness with politics (or with politicians). However, in this connection it is important to ask whether the critical and negative opinions on politicians are not also related to an increasing capacity for critical thinking on the part of Austrians.

Some 1,420 people aged fifteen and older, selected using “stratified multi-stage clustered random sampling”, were surveyed in August and September 2004 by IFES on behalf of the author. Notably, while the opening question “Obedience and respect for authorities are important virtues that children should learn” showed relative continuity (68 % agreement in 2004 versus 74 % in 1978), authoritarian codes such as the reintroduction of the death penalty, reluctance to accept responsibility, or emphasis on society’s division into strong and weak had clearly declined.

Regarding questions on the National Socialist past, the statement “It wouldn’t be the worst thing if another Hitler came” met with much less agreement (84 % against, compared to 62 % against in 1978; in 1978, 19 % agreed, compared to 4 % in 2004). The same went for glorification of the National Socialist past: the statement “Mistakes were certainly made in the Third Reich, but six million Jews were not murdered” was rejected by 61 % and accepted by only 5 % (compared to 35 % who disagreed and 21 % who supported it in 1978).

However, the fact that there is a lot of revisionism in this area was demonstrated by responses to the thesis that “The Jews are not entirely without blame for their persecution”: in 2004, 52 % completely disagreed, and 12 % fully agreed, whereas in 1978 only 29 completely disagreed and 25 % agreed.

The reintroduction of the death penalty “in order to put a stop to terrorism” met with the approval of 60 % of respondents in 1978, at the height of the Broda reforms. In 2004, on the other hand, only 12 % were in favour – despite 9/11; 66 % rejected it outright, compared to just 19 % in 1978.

That prejudices still exist concerning migration issues is demonstrated by the relatively similar figures in response to the question whether scruffy foreign students should be forbidden to enter the country: in 2004, 45 % clearly agreed, and only 21 % completely rejected the statement. In 1978, 68 % were in agreement versus 16 % who disagreed. Harsh punishment for sexual offences against adolescents remained in favour: in 2004, 42 % agreed, versus 67 % in

1978, although the rejection rate remained almost the same: 13 % versus 12 %. At the time of both surveys, the two issues – migration and crime and sexual offences against minors – were intensively debated in the media and in politics.

On the other hand, a clear breakthrough was the position of women: in 1978, 51 % still argued that the “natural role of women” was “as a housewife and mother, in which she can find fulfilment”; in 2004, the figure stood at just 13 %; the rate of rejection had risen from 16 % to 65 %.

For this reason, I would not equate the shift in democratic politics in Austrian with the changes in socio-political trends in the mid-1960s and in the 1980s. The potential for authoritarianism in 1978 – at the peak of the Kreisky era with its dictum of the “flooding of all areas of life with democracy” – remained extremely high, and it was only the socio-political cushioning that prevented it from being radicalized. Awareness of democracy and socioeconomic development are thus by no means parallel; democracy needs time to develop.

A further indicator of this delay in the field of political participation is the collective historical memory’s readiness to grapple with taboo subjects; hence I would argue that it was not until the mid-1980s that the erosion of the authoritarian shadow hanging over the development of democracy in Austria set in. It was not the radio referendum of 1964, which was ultimately an elitist initiative by the print media against the Grand Coalition and state radio, but the broad-based movement against the Hainburg power station in 1984 and the establishment of the Greens that are the indicators of a slow decline in authoritarianism. While the defeat suffered by the SPÖ and Bruno Kreisky in the referendum on the Zwentendorf nuclear power station was a sign of this erosion, it was rather the result of political tactics by the ÖVP and the immovable stance adopted by Kreisky, the SPÖ, the trade unions (ÖGB), and the social partnership. How else could Kreisky’s election victory of 1979 be explained?

It was not the then youthful Jörg Haider’s putsch-like takeover of the leadership of the FPÖ, but probably his successful strategies in taking on the social partnership and the Grand Coalition that offered further indication of voters’ readiness to abandon their traditional political camps. At the same time, authoritarian codes were very much welcome during this transformational phase as long as they combined right-wing populism, modernism, and casual youthfulness. This two-headed development – one the one hand, the erosion of society’s basic authoritarian attitude, but on the other hand the reinforcement of new authoritarian codes against foreigners, migrants, crime, etc. – dominated the late 1980s and the 1990s.

The global economic crisis since 2008 and another global trend, the crisis of rising inequality with respect to income despite the economic crisis, form the foundations of a new return to yearning for strong political leaders. In early 2014, an opinion poll funded by the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria,

initiated by SORA, Günther Ogris, and the author, demonstrated that 29 % of Austrians more or less agree with the statement “One should have a strong leader [Führer] who does not have to worry about elections and parliament”. Compared to other surveys from 2007, this documented a clear increase. It should be noted, however, that the survey included people who felt this desire for a “strong leader” due to apathy and frustration at negative social and economic development and the lack of societal solidarity.

An online survey on “authoritarianism, historical perceptions, and democratic positions” commissioned as part of a study by the Vienna Institute for Cultural and Contemporary History and Arts (VICCA), with representative samples of 2,000 respondents per country in Germany, France, Italy, Poland, and the UK, and 1,000 per country in Austria, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, paints an uneven overall picture. Petra Ziegler and Andreas Schulz summarized the recent trends in Austria 2019 and 2022 as follows:

Democratic dispositions and pluralism: on the one hand, high approval of democracy as the best form of government, on the other hand, low satisfaction with the government and great distrust of politicians

The survey (November–December 2022) shows that 79 % agree with the statement “democracy is the best form of government, even if it may entail problems”. Only 5 % disagree with the statement, 14 % are undecided (partly agree/disagree) –the results are very similar to the first survey in 2019.

Notably, at the same time, over half (52 %) agree that experts and not the government should decide what is best for the country, 12 % disagree and 34 % are undecided (partially agree/disagree).

With regard to satisfaction with the federal government in Austria, there is a very significant decrease compared to 2019 (when the expert government under Chancellor Bierlein was still in office at the time of the survey): Only 19 % of those surveyed are satisfied with the current government (in 2019 it was 43 %), 78 % are not very or not at all satisfied (51 % in 2019).

Also, satisfaction with democracy in the EU has decreased: from 43 % satisfaction in 2019 to 34 % in 2022. At the same time, dissatisfaction has increased to 63 % (it was 52 % in 2019).

In addition, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Austria has decreased significantly compared to 2019: while 63 % were still satisfied in 2019, this value fell to 47 % in 2022 –and dissatisfaction reached a majority of 51 % (in 2019 this was 34 %).

There is also a great deal of distrust in politicians: only 11 % of respondents agree with the statement “Most politicians are trustworthy”, while two thirds (66 %) disagree.

Also, two thirds (67 %) agree that most politicians only care about the interests of the rich and powerful, while 11 % disagree.

Furthermore, 59 % agree that the people, and not politicians, should make the most important political decisions, 14 % disagree with this statement.

Authoritarianism: Low approval of a strong leader; lower formal education weaken trust in the political system and strengthen authoritarian attitudes

63 % of respondents disagree with the statement “One should have a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections”, 16 % agree with the statement. 19 % do not want to position themselves clearly (partly agree/disagree).

As part of the Corona-Panel of the University of Vienna (Kittel et al. 2020), the same question was asked in January 2022 and showed the following results at the time: 14 % approval of the strong leader, 21 % undecided (partly agree/disagree) and 60 % rejection. But regular surveys by SORA as part of the Democracy Monitor show a significantly higher approval for October 2022 with 30 %, and 67 % rejection (this is significantly higher also in comparison to earlier surveys by SORA); on the one hand, there is no middle category “partly agree/disagree” in this survey, so that the respondents have to position WIAB Research Länderbericht Österreich 2022 10

themselves clearly (SORA 2022, 184), on the other hand, in the surveys on which this report is based, no comparable development of greater approval for a strong leader was observed.

Historical awareness: “Victim thesis” is still relevant for almost every fourth respondent, slightly more disagreement than agreement when it comes to ending the discussion about World War II and the Holocaust; declining agreement that Austria benefited from the opening of the borders in 1989

The statement that “Austria was the first victim of National Socialism” is agreed by 23 % of respondents, 30 % disagree, 31 % do not want to position themselves clearly (partly agree/disagree) and 17 % cannot give an answer

(don't know) –there were only minor changes compared to 2019 (approval: 27 %, rejection: 31 %).

Regarding the question of whether the “discussion about World War II and the Holocaust should be ended”, 39 % of respondents agree and 43 % disagree, 16 % undecided (partly agree/disagree) –this is a slight change in comparison compared to 2019, when there was a little more agreement than disagreement with this statement (agreement: 41 %, disagreement: 39 %).

Agreement with the statement “Austria benefited from the opening of the borders in 1989” fell to 48 % compared to 2019 (2019: 55 %), 24 % are undecided (partly agree/disagree), 18 % reject this statement (2019: 13 %), 10 % don't know. In a country comparison, Austria is in third place behind Poland (with 64 % approval) and Germany (with 58 % approval).

Trust in public institutions during Corona, especially in parliament and the federal government, is low

A question on trust in public institutions during the Corona crisis was included in the 2022 survey. It shows that, compared to the other public institutions mentioned, 71 % have a lot of trust in science and research, the healthcare system (63 %), the police (59 %) and the military (53 %). On the other hand, 62 % distrust parliament (trust: 27 %) and 66 % distrust the federal government (21 % trust).

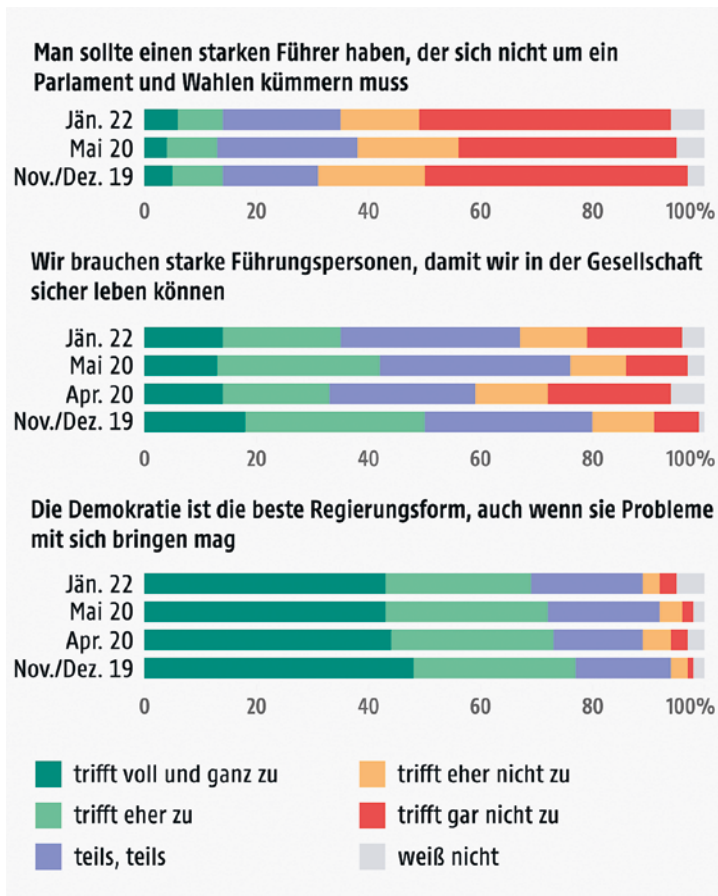
People who identify themselves as in the lower class show less trust in the political system and public institutions than people who identify themselves as in the middle or upper class: Asked about trust in the federal government during the Corona crisis only 9 % of people who classify themselves as belonging to the lower class trust the federal government in this context, 21 % of those in the middle class and 34 % of those in the upper class.

Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: More tolerance towards Jews than Muslims

The results on anti-Semitism in 2022 are similar to 2019: 54 % of respondents agree that Jews have contributed a lot to cultural life in Austria, 21 % are undecided (partly agree/disagree), 11 % disagree –14 % cannot evaluate this statement (don't know).

58 % agree that Jews in Austria should have the right to build synagogues, 21 % are undecided (partly agree/disagree) and 15 % disagree.²

2 Petra Ziegler, Andreas Schulz, WIAB Research Länderbericht Österreich, Vienna 2023, 9–11.



<https://science.orf.at/stories/3211672>

Let us review in comparison the chronology of developments in attitudes in Austria regarding a strong leader without elections and parliament:

In Austria, only 16 % agreed with this statement, which implies the abolition of parliamentary democracy and the establishment of a dictatorship, but a further 19 % responded “partly agree/disagree”.³ In Germany, the figures are also lower, but are still at 17 %, although, as in Austria, the term “Führer” is off-putting due to its association with Adolf Hitler and National Socialism. Only 39 % expressed genuine opposition to such a regime, compared to 44 % in 2019.

³ <https://www.fr.de/politik/studie-verlangen-autoritarismus-faschismus-deutschland-frankreich-italien-eu-wahl-92896516.html>

It is particularly irritating that preparedness to commit violence, unfortunately omitted by both surveys, has certainly been in evidence in Austria – for instance in response to the anti-COVID measures: in 2022, 15 % of people attending COVID demonstrations were not averse to violence, 3 % were entirely for it, 8 % said that they were rather for it, and the rest were undecided.⁴

In closing, we can establish that in Austria too, satisfaction with how democracy is working and the work of the government has declined. In 2022, only 9 % of Austrians surveyed said they were “very satisfied” with how democracy is working in their country.

The results can be interpreted as displaying a tendency for dissatisfaction with incumbent politicians and an increasing desire for a strong leader.

In comparison to a survey in 2019, agreement with the statement “People like me have no say about what the government does” increased in all countries, with the exception of Hungary and the Czech Republic (rising from 42 to 44 % in Austria). However, the statement “Democracy is the best form of government, even if it entails problems” met with agreement from 79 % of respondents in Austria in 2022 (an increase of two percentage points) – more than in any of the other seven countries. Nevertheless, at the same time, the study would suggest that satisfaction with the government’s work fell from 43 to 19 % in Austria.

The survey conducted in November and December 2022 also included items concerning Russia’s war against Ukraine. In response to the question as to how great a danger the Russian invasion posed for the respondents’ own country, the Austrians were the least concerned, by some distance: only 30 % considered the risk very large or large. At the other end of the scale stands Poland, where the highest number of respondents had serious security concerns, some 66 %.

How might parliamentary democracy be strengthened? I identify three areas: there is a need for genuine social justice for as many people as possible; the education system must be fundamentally reformed; and politics must manage to take away people’s fears and regain their trust via concrete measures. It is a big problem that the potential for fear in our societies is growing, even if these fears are irrational in view of the social security systems. The right-wingers offer simple messages in this regard with their openly authoritarian models.

Those who are better educated cope better with this situation in a world of turbo-globalization due to their knowledge and access. They have more trust in democracy and are less authoritarian, and have fewer prejudices. In the European Union and in Austria, more money is being invested on the level of research than ever before, while at the same time the elementary education system in the kindergartens and primary schools is being hollowed out. We

4 <https://science.orf.at/stories/3211672>

are neglecting the foundations. This is particularly disastrous in societies that in recent years have become migration societies – such as Germany or Austria, France or Italy.

Let us again cite Ralf Dahrendorf, one of the most important liberal thinkers of the post-war era, who established already in the early 1990s: the European success story after 1945 is based on an invisible pact: we will build things up on a just basis. If we undo this pact, as has happened during the age of neoliberalism, then the societies will fall apart. Dahrendorf said: if that happens, then we will return to an authoritarian age. This is what we are currently experiencing the world over, and increasingly in Europe too.

Andreas Kranebitter

The Changing Disciples of Authoritarianism

Authoritarian Attitudes and Social Change in Post-War Austria

In the meantime, it's evening ...

The unemployed of Marienthal and National Socialism

The film *“Einstweilen wird es Mittag”* (“In the meantime, it will be noon”, Karin Brandauer, Austria 1988) is about Marienthal, both the Lower Austrian village and the sociological study linked to its name. In 1930, an entire community became unemployed when a local textile factory closed down during the Great Depression, and a group of young social scientists led by Marie Jahoda and Paul Lazarsfeld took up residence in the village for a few months. The idea to conduct a social study of the unemployed came from Otto Bauer, the Social Democratic Party theorist. The overall question was whether mass unemployment would lead to a revolutionary mood among the unemployed or, on the contrary, make them unfit to fight. The team measured the longer time it took the unemployed in the village to cross the road, the increased consumption of lard, or the increasingly modest wishes that schoolchildren made to the *Christkind*. From their observations, the social psychologists concluded that unemployment made people tired and politically downright apathetic. Brandauer's film stages the study cinematically, fictionalizing the sociological observations with artistic freedom. In one of the film's final sequences, we see the scientists returning to Vienna after their work is done. At the station, they wait for their train – from which one of the unemployed alights when it arrives. But he is not alone, he is “accompanied by two men (about 25 and 40), both in street suits, with wide knickerbockers and white knee-high socks”,¹ the film script tells us. He couldn't find work in Vienna, the man tells the scientists, but he did find these new friends, a group of National Socialists, whom he gladly joined. “Well, we want to organize a meeting here. Because it can't go on like this.”² In bewilderment, the scientists board the train. Now it is they who are puzzled and tired, watching the formerly unemployed Nazi activist as they leave Marienthal behind them.³

1 See Kouba, Heide/Brandauer, Karin: *Einstweilen wird es Mittag ... Ein Drehbuch*. 3rd version, March 16, 1987, Archiv für die Geschichte der Soziologie in Österreich (AGSÖ), 120.

2 Ibid.

3 The script continues: “*Resigned, Strauss* [one of the social scientists – AK] *shrugs his shoul-*

The study, taking the sentence “In the meantime, it will be noon” from an unemployed man’s diary as representing a lack of structure in the absence of work in addition to boredom and resignation, is made a harbinger for fascism. The film thus carries a vivid message: it was the broken, apathetic working class that brought fascism to power. Even if it was probably not directly to blame for the rise of National Socialism and may not have propagated and voted for it, the tiring and wearying unemployment prepared the ground for National Socialism to break into the ideal world from afar. Its coming from outside, literally by train from Vienna, resembled the old Austrian story that National Socialism was “imported” from Germany. In Marienthal, then, it fell upon a milieu deprived by unemployment, which in its apathy was a feast for demagogues.

However, in the study itself, this thesis can only be found in one place. In his preface to the American edition of 1960, Lazarsfeld wrote: “[T]he apathetic effect of total unemployment helps us to understand in retrospect why the ‘Führer’ ideology of nascent National Socialism was so successful.”⁴ There is no evidence for this assertion in the rest of the study. Some reviewers had also warned against drawing the wrong political conclusions from the Marienthal study – above all Käthe Leichter. In her review of the book, otherwise almost hymnal, she warned with political foresight against generalizing the locally specific situation of Marienthal. “Individual statements such as those about the change in human relationships in the course of unemployment or about participation in political life are certainly not generally valid. In particular, the thesis that with increasing hardship, membership of associations develops from a matter of opinion to a matter of interest cannot be confirmed by all previous experience; indeed, the opposite can be observed.”⁵

However, not only in the study, but also in historical reality there is no evidence for Lazarsfeld’s thesis that unemployed factory workers had a peculiar affinity for fascism. In fact, it can even be deemed empirically false. Both in the municipal council elections of on April 24, 1921 in Gramatneusiedl, the municipality of which Marienthal was a district, and in the National Coun-

ders. He looks towards the station, which is slowly moving away. Holub [the unemployed Nazi – AK] walks with the two men in the direction of Weissenberg. He turns around once more and waves. / ABOVE IT 1. TITLE: IN THE MEANTIME, IT WILL BE NOON / The train slowly pulls out from the station. The scientists are still standing on the platform of the last carriage. They do not wave. / ABOVE: TITLE – CONTINUATION.” (Ibid., 121).

4 Lazarsfeld, Paul: Vorspruch zur neuen Auflage, in: Jahoda, Marie/Lazarsfeld, Paul F./Zeisel, Hans: Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal. Ein soziographischer Versuch, Frankfurt am Main 1975, 22 f.

5 Leichter, Käthe: Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal, in: Arbeit und Wirtschaft 11, no. 7, in: Müller, Reinhard: Marienthal. Das Dorf – die Arbeitslosen – Die Studie, Innsbruck/Bozen/Vienna 2008, 281–286, here: 285.

cil elections of November 9, 1930, the Social Democrats (SDAP) had a clear majority in working-class Marienthal, and the Christian-Socials (Wirtschaftspartei, Economy Party) had a clear majority in the farming village of Gramatneusiedl. At the same time, the Communist Party (KPDÖ) also had a considerable share of the vote, which was particularly evident among the more than 8% of male voters in Marienthal – particularly surprising since the Communist Party had not even stood as a candidate and did not have a local branch in Gramatneusiedl.

For the national elections of November 1930, more than a year after the closure of the factory and immediately before the start of the study, there still was a clear Social Democratic majority, even if the share of the vote had decreased slightly over the years. The National Socialist Party (NSDAP) had achieved just 1.6% of the vote – far below the average of 2.7% for the whole of Austria and 3.8% for Lower Austria.⁶ The NSDAP was to increase its share of the vote in provincial and municipal elections in Austria considerably until it was banned in 1933, but it only recorded a significant increase in the 1932 provincial elections in Lower Austria and Salzburg and the municipal elections in Vienna – in Vienna it achieved 15.5%, in Salzburg 16.2%, and in Lower Austria 11.1%.⁷ However, even for these elections, there is no evidence of an affinity for the NSDAP among the unemployed: “No statistical evidence was found for a direct and immediate correlation between the level of unemployment on the one hand and the level of NSDAP voter shares or the mobilized voter potential by the National Socialists in 1932 on the other, although Austria’s working population was hit hard economically and socially by the economic crisis and the associated mass unemployment.”⁸ In fact, Hänisch identifies a clear surplus of voters from the new middle classes in the tertiary sector: “The Austrian National Socialist Party can therefore be characterized as a party with a strong middle class overhang, but not as a party with a social composition similar to that of a people’s party.”⁹

A lack of correlation between unemployment and NSDAP affinity applied not only to Austria, but also to Germany. As Jürgen Falter stated in large-scale research projects on “Hitler’s voters”, on a macro-historical level, an almost perfect parallelism between the unemployment rate¹⁰ and NSDAP vote share

6 See Hänisch, Dirk: Die österreichischen NSDAP-Wähler. Eine empirische Analyse ihrer politischen Herkunft und ihres Sozialprofils, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 1998, 86.

7 Ibid., 97.

8 Ibid., 396.

9 Ibid., 379 f.

10 Until 1933, this was not the unemployment rate for all workers and employees, but the ratio of unemployed workers and employees to non-unemployed workers and employees.

Party	Municipal Council Elections 1921			National Council 1930
	Gramatneusiedl village	Marienthal village	Total	Total
Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei	42.9 %	88.3 %	71.9 %	65.7 %
Wirtschaftspartei	56.0 %	5.5 %	23.8 %	
Christlichsoziale Partei				25.9 %
Kommunistische Partei	0.4 %	6.2 %	4.1 %	1.3 %
Heimatblock				3.9 %
Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei				1.6 %
Schooberblock				1.4 %
Großdeutsche	0.7 %	0.0 %	0.2 %	
Österreichische Volkspartei				0.1 %
Total	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %

Table 1: Share of the vote in Gramatneusiedl in the municipal council elections of 1921 and the National Council elections (*Nationalratswahlen*) of 1930 (shares in %, ordered by share of vote in 1921). The results for 1921 are shown by district, i.e. the farming village of Gramatneusiedl and the factory settlement of Marienthal. (Source: Müller, Reinhard: Marienthal. Das Dorf – die Arbeitslosen – Die Studie, Innsbruck/Bozen/Vienna 2008, 124.)

can be established for Germany. Thus, one is almost automatically inclined to assume a causal relationship between the two.¹¹ However, this is precisely what is known as an ecological fallacy, that is, a direct deduction of individual behaviour from aggregate data. According to Falter, a comparison of municipal results in municipalities with high and low unemployment rather shows that “[i]n all Reichstag elections after 1930, the NSDAP achieved better results on average the lower the unemployment rate, while in districts with above-average unemployment it tended to perform worse than the Reich average.”¹² Unemployment thus correlated with an increased affinity for the Communist Party

¹¹ See Falter, Jürgen: *Hitlers Wähler*, Munich 1991, 293.

¹² *Ibid.*, 299.

(KPD), not for the NSDAP. Even the increase in votes for the NSDAP was highest in areas with the lowest increase in unemployment. In short: in terms of electoral history, there is a clear and strong negative relationship between unemployment and “susceptibility” to vote for the NSDAP.¹³

Lazarsfeld had, most probably, reproduced only the American discourse that could be observed since the publication of the Marienthal study in Leipzig in 1933 – already published without mentioning the Jewish authors on the cover. The social psychologist and market researcher Robert Noleman McMurry, for example, noted in a prominent review of the study:

When people abandon nearly all restraints which have marked their lives from childhood, when the social mores are no longer observed, their behavior can hardly be other than capricious. They are hungry. Their clothes are in rags. Their children are suffering. They themselves are half sick. A demagogue promises them food, shelter, work. Will they stop to analyze the validity of this program or the merits of his claim? Dr. Lazarsfeld doubts it. Rather, they will follow him, no matter how impossible his pretensions or how great a sacrifice on their part it entails.¹⁴

13 It should be added, however, that Falter went to great lengths to disprove the “middle class thesis” put forward by heretical Marxists such as August Thalheimer, Leon Trotsky, and Otto Bauer (the originator of the Marienthal idea). According to them, the strengthening of the NSDAP was neither a matter of the workers and the unemployed, nor were National Socialists nothing but the henchmen of finance capital (according to the official CPSU line, the so-called “Dimitroff formula”); rather, the phenomenon had its basis in the – impoverished or perceived as impoverished – middle classes and the situation of a political vacuum resulting from the hegemonic crisis of both the upper classes and the workers’ movement. This position was also widely held in the contemporary social sciences – social scientists such as the Belgian social psychologist Hendrik de Man (1885–1953) or the German-Danish sociologist Theodor Geiger (1891–1952) wrote of a “panic in the middle classes”, which played a significant role in the electoral success of the National Socialists: “No one doubts that National Socialism (NS.) owes its electoral success largely to the old and new middle classes. [...] NS. has undergone a transformation: from the rioting Giovinezza to the party of the humiliated and insulted. [...] Those who have become small are rebelling.” (Geiger, Theodor: *Panik im Mittelstand*, in: *Die Arbeit. Zeitschrift für Gewerkschaftspolitik und Wirtschaftskunde* 10 (1930), 637–654, here 649). Falter countered this “chorus of middle-class theorists” (Falter: *Hitlers Wähler*, 195) with the thesis of the NSDAP as a “people’s party with a middle-class belly” (ibid., 13), a criticism that was understood as a criticism of “sociological” analyses of National Socialism. Apart from the fact that it is an implicit assumption to measure a party’s programme against its actual electorate, this formulation does not even deny that the middle class had an overhang in the electorate, contrary to the clearly audible wish that this should not be the case.

14 McMurry, Robert Noleman: *When Men Eat Dogs*, in: *The Nation*, 4 January 1933, 15–18, in: Müller, Reinhard: *Marienthal*, 267–273, here: 273.

McMurry had thus offered the first formulation of the thesis that the suddenly unemployed workers were just waiting for the demagogue who was already looming on the horizon. “The unemployed” would play a key role in deciding the fate of Europe through irrational, emotional gut decisions. This arrogance towards the unemployed, echoed here and elsewhere, was nothing more than classist prejudice.

The ecological fallacy was therefore made – because people wanted to make it. It was based not on surveys, but on impressions. Sociology speaks of an “addressing error” when those living in social misery are unable to address those responsible for it, but rather project their anger onto weaker out-groups: “It is not the responsible politicians or the division of society into classes that one declares to be the enemy, but those nearest socially, one’s own neighbour.”¹⁵ In the case of the Marienthal study, a similar but reverse “addressing error” can be seen: now it was the journalists and social researchers who did not understand the social basis of National Socialism in its complexity, but attributed it to the socially wretched. This was either an intentional or unconscious classism that blamed the working classes, the socially declassed or the unemployed for society’s failure to find a political response to the rise of fascism and European authoritarianism. (The most striking example of the persistence of this attitude after 1945 is German chancellor Konrad Adenauer, for whom even the alleged Nazi elite, the SS, consisted mainly of “asocials and people with criminal records”¹⁶).

Alternatively, this erroneous conclusion is the result of a “presentism” that is oblivious to history, as the structural social change of the post-war era in fact also changed the social affinity to authoritarianism. What was thus true for the 1930s in terms of socio-demographic factors had already changed considerably in the immediate post-war period. The economic upswing of the 1950s and 1960s as well as the neoliberal turnaround of the 1970s changed the social basis of authoritarianism once again – it was only during the latter that a statistical correlation between unemployment and authoritarian attitudes or affinity to right-wing populist parties (which is, admittedly, only one indicator of an affinity to authoritarianism) began to emerge internationally.¹⁷ In Austria, it is

15 Eribon, Didier: *Gesellschaft als Urteil*, Berlin 2017, 45. Eribon is referring here to Pierre Bourdieu et al.: *The Weight of the World. Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, Stanford 1999.

16 Konrad Adenauer, quoted in Paul, Gerhard: *Von Psychopathen, Technokraten des Terrors und “ganz gewöhnlichen” Deutschen. Die Täter der Shoah im Spiegel der Forschung*, in: Paul, Gerhard (ed.): *Die Täter der Shoah. Fanatische Nationalsozialisten oder ganz normale Deutsche?* Göttingen 2002, 13–90, p. 17.

17 See for instance Tim Speier’s discussion of this question in 2010; the evaluation of his own data shows: “According to this model, unemployed people have an approximately 22 % higher chance of voting for a right-wing populist party, regardless of their gender,

worth taking a look at survey data from different points in time in the post-war period – the surveys conducted by the US authorities in the late 1940s, the surveys on punitivity as part of authoritarianism conducted by the Institut für Rechts- und Kriminalsoziologie (IRKS) in the 1970s, and the corresponding items used in the international study on authoritarianism by the Vienna Institute for Labour Market and Educational Research (WIAB).

“Extrapunitiveness”: Punitive attitudes in Austrian contemporary history

Social research, which began early and innovatively in Austria with the studies of the Women’s Department of the Chamber of Labour led by Käthe Leichter as well as those conducted by the “Wirtschaftspsychologische Forschungsstelle” around Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Marie Jahoda, came to an abrupt end under National Socialism, at least as far as critical social research beyond mere administrative knowledge production is concerned.¹⁸ The most prominent and promising social scientists fled from Austrofascism and National Socialism into exile or were murdered in the Nazi concentration and extermination camps. After 1945, the US military administration established a social research unit and carried out studies on (post-)National Socialist attitudes in the Austrian population.¹⁹ As part of the Allies’ denazification policy, they conducted opinion polls based on the state of the art in social research at the time, including the

age, level of education or in which of the nine countries studied they live.” (Spier, Tim: *Modernisierungsverlierer? Die Wählerschaft rechtspopulistischer Parteien in Westeuropa*, Wiesbaden 2010, 176).

18 See Kranebitter, Andreas/Reinprecht, Christoph (eds.): *Die Soziologie und der Nationalsozialismus in Österreich*, Bielefeld 2019.

19 See Adlbrecht, Jo: *Flüchtig aber authentisch – zur Glaubwürdigkeit elektronischer Medien in ihrer Anfangszeit. Eine Spurensuche zwischen Röhrenradio und Schwarz-Weiß-Fernseher*, in: *medien & zeit* 3 (2005), 25–43; Adlbrecht, Jo: *Der “Dritte Mann” als “Interrogator” – 50 Jahre Feldforschung in Österreich*, in: *Verband der Marktforscher Österreich* (ed.): *Handbuch der Marktforschung*, Vienna 2007, 7–12; Kranebitter, Andreas/Reinprecht, Christoph: *Soziologie des Autoritarismus und autoritäre Soziologie*, in: *SWS-Rundschau* 60 (2020), no. 2, 122–141; Rathkolb, Oliver: *Politische Propaganda der amerikanischen Besatzungsmacht in Österreich 1945 bis 1950. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kalten Krieges in der Presse-, Kultur- und Rundfunkpolitik*, 2 vols., doctoral thesis, University of Vienna, Vienna 1981; Rathkolb, Oliver (ed.): *Gesellschaft und Politik am Beginn der Zweiten Republik. Vertrauliche Berichte der US-Militäradministration aus Österreich 1945 in englischer Originalfassung*, Vienna/ Graz 1985; Stifter, Christian H.: *Vermessene Demokraten. Meinungsumfragen der US-Besatzungsmacht in der österreichischen Bevölkerung, 1946–1955*, in: Dreidemy, Lucile et al. (eds.): *Bananen, Cola, Zeitgeschichte: Oliver Rathkolb und das lange 20. Jahrhundert*, Vienna 2018, 546–561; Weiss, Hilde: *Bewertungen der NS-Vergangenheit und Antisemitismus: Einstellungs-*

questions developed for the study *The Authoritarian Personality* by Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and R. Nevitt Sanford.²⁰

In some of the surveys conducted by the Survey Section of the Information Services Branch of the United States Forces in Austria, they noted not only a persistence of National Socialist attitudes, but often even an increase in positive approval of National Socialism. The question “Was National Socialism a bad idea or a good idea, badly executed?”²¹ which had proven to be particularly statistically valid, was answered in the affirmative by 38.7 % of respondents in August 1947 and even by 51 % in December 1947. The increase was partly encouraged by the stronger positioning of those previously undecided: in August 1947, 29.7 % still had “no opinion” on National Socialism – a proportion that fell to 10.9 % in December 1947. This question was also asked at later points in time, with the highest approval rating for the statement being achieved in Linz on February 18, 1948 with 61.9 %.²² Overall, this dramatically increasing positive assessment of National Socialism in the late 1940s was observed not only in Austria, but also in Germany.²³

In terms of socio-demography, the research indicated that “women, the 18 to 29 age group, the middle class and those with no party affiliation [...] are most friendly towards National Socialism. People with a low level of education, men and the left-wing parties are the most sceptical.”²⁴ Among those aged eighteen to twenty-nine, around 68 % agreed with the statement that National Socialism was a poorly executed idea that was good in principle. In contrast, the difference between the voters of the three parties was less marked – 53 % of Communist Party, 51 % of the Social Democratic, and 54 % of the conservative supporters agreed with the statement. The degree of antisemitism in the Austrian population was somewhat different in socio-demographic terms. Here, too, an alarming rise in antisemitism was observed – and this immediately after

forschung in Österreich 1945–1948, in: Kranebitter/Reinprecht (eds.): *Die Soziologie und der Nationalsozialismus in Österreich*, 355–375.

20 Adorno, Theodor W./Frenkel-Brunswik, Else/Levinson, Daniel J./Sanford, R. Nevitt: *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York 1950.

21 *Ansichten über den Nationalsozialismus* (Report #20), Vienna, 13 January 1948, Administrative Services Division Operations Branch, Foreign (Occupied) Area Reports, 1945–54, Austrian Reports (National Archives and Records Administration [NARA], Record Group 407, Entry 368, Box 1426).

22 *Meinungen ueber den Nationalsozialismus* (Report #41), Vienna, 4 May 1948, Administrative Services Division Operations Branch, Foreign (Occupied) Area Reports, 1945–54, Austrian Reports (NARA, RG 407, Entry 368, Box 1426), 3.

23 Merritt, Anna J./ Merritt, Richard L. (eds.) (1970): *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany. The OMGUS Surveys, 1945–1949*, Urbana et al. 1970, 31–33 and 171 f.

24 *Meinungen ueber den Nationalsozialismus* (Report #41), Vienna, 4 May 1948, Administrative Services Division Operations Branch, Foreign (Occupied) Area Reports, 1945–54, Austrian Reports (NARA, RG 407, Entry 368, Box 1426), 3.

the end of the war and thus the end of the Holocaust. Here too, men and older people were more likely to reject the Nazi persecution of Jews than women and younger respondents, but education and social class affiliation had the opposite effect on approval rates compared to Nazi affinity: educated people and those with a higher social class showed less approval of manifest antisemitism.²⁵ In general, however, the authors of the study were utterly resigned: "Even when the population is made aware of the Nazi murder methods, there is only a small group that condemns and rejects these atrocities."²⁶

In contrast to earlier – and later – times, the effects of gender and age on authoritarian attitudes were therefore evident. Reasons for this were not given in the Information Services Branch studies, or no attempt was made to analyze them. In sociological terms, two phenomena could at least partially explain the authoritarianism of women and boys in the Austrian 1940s: despite a reactionary image of women, the reality of the Nazi war economy during its last phase had had an immense effect on women's occupations, which was sometimes subjectively experienced as achieving economic self-determination. The return of men from war and captivity caused a displacement of working women from the labour market, paradoxically even a cultural backlash for women – which seems to have also generated a nostalgic turn towards authoritarianism.²⁷ Regarding the youth, the same radicalization effect that Michael Wildt described for the end of the First World War could also have been present among young people after 1945: the young generation, exposed not to war but to a massive propaganda machine, was particularly fanatical as a "generation of the unbound".²⁸

A rise in antisemitism and authoritarianism was also observed in the United States during and immediately after the Second World War. This was, not least, the social background against which Max Horkheimer and the exiled Frankfurt Institute for Social Research were commissioned by the American Jewish Committee to conduct a vast social science survey published in the five volumes of the *Studies in Prejudice* series. Their most famous and most influential volume was *The Authoritarian Personality*, which can be seen as a collaboration between German and Austrian researchers and American re-

25 *Der Antisemitismus in Österreich* (Report #43), Vienna, 13 May 1948, Administrative Services Division Operations Branch, Foreign (Occupied) Area Reports, 1945–54, Austrian Reports (NARA, RG 407, Entry 368, Box 1426), 2.

26 *Ibid.*, 3.

27 See Ziegler, Meinrad/Kannonier-Finster, Waltraud: *Österreichisches Gedächtnis. Über Erinnern und Vergessen der NS-Vergangenheit*, Innsbruck 2016, 152; Steinbacher, Sybille (ed.): *Volksgenossinnen. Frauen in der NS-Volksgemeinschaft*, Göttingen 2007.

28 Wildt, Michael: *Die Generation des Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes*, Hamburg 2003.

searchers and research methods. Part of the measurement of authoritarianism, which culminated quantitatively in the infamous F-scale, was the study of punitiveness, sometimes referred to as “extrapunitiveness”. This meant the emotional demand to condemn “criminals” particularly harshly, whereby the aggression against one’s own repressed desire to break rules is aggressively projected outwards in order to protect the ego. This attitude was thus seen as a prime example of “authoritarian aggression”. As a counterpart to “authoritarian submission”, it was interpreted by Erich Fromm as exemplifying a sadomasochistic character structure. As a psychoanalytical social psychologist, Fromm had played a significant role in the first studies of authoritarianism of the Institute for Social Research and had already pointed out the psychological significance of this punitive desire in 1936 in *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (Studies on Authority and the Family). Fromm writes that projectively, people want to condemn others on behalf of themselves:

The punishment of the criminal represents a satisfaction of the aggressive and sadistic instincts of the masses, which compensates them for the many deprivations imposed on them and which specifically enables aggression, which is naturally directed against the ruling and oppressive class, to be transferred to the criminal and thus creates a rebuff for it.²⁹

In *The Authoritarian Personality*, this extrapunitiveness was measured by the question: “Sex crimes, such as rape and attacks on children, deserve more than mere imprisonment; such criminals ought to be publicly whipped.”³⁰ In terms of statistical quality, it was one of the questions that best represented the F-scale in itself. It had high discriminatory power in that it generated a wide variety of answers and was not obviously linked to prejudices on the surface. Moreover, it was theoretically of major interest: it showed a preoccupation with sexuality, an open affirmation of physical aggression, and a willingness to justify aggression with reference to moralistic values.³¹

Punitivity or extrapunitiveness as the desire for harsher punishment of violations of the law that goes beyond legal regulations has been measured as an integral part of authoritarianism in research ever since. In Austria, the first director of the Institut für Rechts- und Kriminalsoziologie (IRKS), Heinz Steinert, together with the sociologist Gunter Falk at the University of Graz and the

29 Fromm, Erich: Zur Psychologie des Verbrechers und der strafenden Gesellschaft, in: Fromm, Erich: Gesamtausgabe, vol. I: Analytische Sozialpsychologie, Munich 1989, 11–30, 27). See also Cremer-Schäfer, Helga/Steinert, Heinz: Straflust und Repression. Zur Kritik der populistischen Kriminologie, Münster 2014.

30 Adorno et al.: The Authoritarian Personality, 232.

31 See *ibid.*, 246.

Austrian Gallup institute, conducted two opinion polls on law and justice in 1971 and 1974 in which the socio-demographic influences on punitiveness were directly and indirectly surveyed.³² The two studies were thus conducted immediately before Fordism's transition to neoliberalism, as well as immediately before a new penal code was introduced in Austria during the years of a Social Democratic government. The penal code, dating as far back as 1852 and having been in force until the 1970s, was revised in a minor penal code reform ("kleine Strafrechtsreform"), for instance concerning homosexuality or adultery, and finally replaced by a new penal code (StGB) in 1973 ("große Strafrechtsreform").

Regarding punitive attitudes, the respondents were asked about their subjective view of the need to reform certain fields of the law and were also requested to state their "wishes" for the punishment of individual offenses under Austrian criminal law. There were noticeable differences between the individual offenses: according to the majority of the interviewees, rape and car robbery, but not assault and burglary, should be sentenced more severely; abortion should not be punished at all or only by a fine, whereas threatening police officers should be punished by one to five years in prison. A separate item (of utmost importance for measuring authoritarianism) asked whether Austrian courts were too harsh or too lenient in their sentences.³³ The answers were, in general, not exactly liberal: the majority of the Austrian population, some 53 %, considered judicial sentencing practice in Austria in 1971, that is, before the criminal law reform, to be too lenient – only 5 % of respondents thought it was too harsh, and 30 % thought it was fair.

In socio-demographic terms (see table 2), unlike in the 1940s there now were clear education and age effects: only among young people and those with secondary or tertiary education did less than half think the courts were too lenient. Interestingly, however, there was no difference in this question according to employment type (if one disregards students representing an age effect rather than an employment effect): between 52 % of self-employed people and 57 % of farmers thought the sentences were too lenient. Only pensioners seemed to be more authoritarian than the working population – a full 60 % of them thought the penalties were too lenient. This also points demographically

32 Institut für Soziologie an der Universität Graz, Graz ca. 1974: Einstellung zu Recht und Gerechtigkeit in Österreich. Typescript (Institut für Soziologie an der Universität Graz, copy at Institut für Rechts- und Kriminalsoziologie).

33 The original wording of the question was: "Do you think that the Austrian courts generally judge too harshly, too leniently, or fairly?"; in German: "Finden Sie, daß die österreichischen Gerichte im allgemeinen zu hart, zu milde oder gerecht urteilen?" (Meinungsumfrage "Recht und Gerechtigkeit 1971", in: Institut für Soziologie an der Universität Graz, Graz ca. 1974: Einstellung zu Recht und Gerechtigkeit in Österreich. Typescript).

to National Socialism, since the Austrian pensioners of 1971 were born in 1911 or earlier, that is, they were twenty-seven years old in 1938 and thirty-four or older in 1945.

		No. of cases	Too harsh	Too lenient	Fair	No indication
Education	University	56	14 %	36 %	39 %	11 %
	High school diploma ("Matura")	191	6 %	42 %	41 %	11 %
	Secondary school	100	12 %	37 %	32 %	19 %
	Vocational school (Berufs-/Handelsschule)	567	5 %	53 %	31 %	12 %
	Secondary school	400	4 %	59 %	27 %	10 %
	Elementary school	582	3 %	59 %	27 %	11 %
Age (women)	66+	167	1 %	56 %	24 %	19 %
	51-56	292	4 %	60 %	26 %	11 %
	36-50	258	4 %	55 %	32 %	9 %
	26-35	209	5 %	50 %	32 %	14 %
	-25	148	7 %	41 %	41 %	10 %
Age (men)	66+	137	4 %	61 %	19 %	15 %
	51-56	171	2 %	64 %	28 %	6 %
	36-50	201	5 %	56 %	32 %	7 %
	26-35	164	7 %	45 %	36 %	12 %
	-25	188	12 %	42 %	36 %	11 %
Occupation	Pensioner	360	3 %	60 %	21 %	16 %
	Pupil/apprentice/student	104	14 %	27 %	42 %	16 %
	Housewife	504	3 %	53 %	32 %	12 %
	Farmer	84	1 %	57 %	31 %	11 %
	Self-employed	118	8 %	52 %	32 %	9 %
	State-employed official	110	10 %	54 %	29 %	7 %
	Clerk	274	5 %	54 %	33 %	8 %
	Skilled worker	187	8 %	55 %	30 %	8 %
	Labourer	132	8 %	55 %	29 %	8 %
Sample (n)		1935	5 %	53 %	30 %	11 %

Table 2: Distribution of responses to the question "Do you think that the Austrian courts generally judge too harshly, too leniently, or fairly?" in the 1971 opinion poll "Recht und Gerechtigkeit" according to socio-demographic characteristics.

A generally conservative response pattern was also evident in answers to other questions in the survey, particularly in pairs of opposing attitudes such as the question of whether prisons should be reformed or not.³⁴ In the opinion poll "Recht und Gerechtigkeit" (Law and Justice) of 1974, that is, after the criminal law reform had been passed, in general the 1971 questions were used again, but information on the size of the municipality of residence, on social class (as a self-assessment), and on subjective party preference was included. As the preference for the far-right "Freedom Party" (FPÖ) then only constituted 4% in the sample and preference for the Communist KPÖ only 0.2%, the analysis was limited to the two major parties, the Social Democrats (SPÖ) and the conservative People's Party (ÖVP).

The respondents' overall assessment of the quality of judgment of Austrian courts can still be interpreted as authoritarian, even if the approval rate has changed somewhat: 4% of respondents found them to be too harsh, 50% too lenient, 40% fair (a split henceforth abbreviated to 4/50/40), the latter increase being due to the decrease in those who had previously not wanted to give an answer. The 1974 survey also showed a large effect of education and age, with young respondents answering liberal (6/40/54) and older respondents conservative (1/56/43). Place of residence also explained a great deal of the differences in attitudes: while responses in Vienna were more liberal (3/44/54), responses in villages were more conservative (5/55/41). When asked what alternative institutions to prisons *should* be in their view, the Austrians surveyed showed the greatest support for forced labour camps (41%), whereas all other alternatives were apparently seen as less attractive – homeless asylums (2%), convalescent homes (6%), psychiatric institutions (15%), fortresses (6%), boarding schools (11%), barracks (9%), and factories (10%) were suggested by far fewer people.

As in 1971, approval of the reintroduction of the death penalty was asked, having been abolished in Austria in 1955. This item, measuring punitiveness par excellence, was asked as a binary agreement with the following pair of oppo-

34 The question entitled "Guilt and atonement" measured agreement with the following opposing poles: "In reforming the penal system (the prisons), care must be taken that the principle of guilt and atonement is not abandoned. Prisons must not become sanatoriums", and "In their present form, the penal system (prisons) must be rejected; they must be replaced by institutions that eliminate or compensate for the causes that turn people into criminals" (ibid.). This question was also answered conservatively overall (61:35). Among occupational groups, only schoolchildren had a different attitude (38:61), while pensioners were the most conservative (65:25). In terms of age, only the young were liberal, and old men (57:25) were more liberal than old women (64:24). Tertiary educated people (43:48) and people with a high school diploma (40:57) responded far more liberal than people with a primary school degree (72:24).

sites: "Someone who kills should always be punished with death themselves" vs. "A society that takes the right to punish people with death makes itself guilty."³⁵ This item too was answered by a majority of 59 % in favour of the conservative variant, that is, the death penalty, which was accordingly rejected by only 41 % of respondents, with a ratio of ratio of 59:41. (Even though the authors themselves labelled the opposites as conservative vs. liberal, it seems safe to describe the conservative answer as authoritarian in this case.) But what is to be said in terms of socio-demographic differences? Once again, the corresponding ratio was only 46:54 among young respondents; in Vienna it was 50:50, compared to 66:34 in villages. Education had a clear effect (university 39:61 compared to elementary school 63:37). There was, however, virtually no difference in terms of the political attitudes of those who stated them – SPÖ supporters answered similarly conservatively (58:42) to ÖVP supporters (60:40). Also, there was little difference in terms of gender and subjective class affiliation – among the "lower class", the ratio was 64:36, among the "middle class" 57:43, and among the "upper class" 58:42.³⁶ Gunter Falk, who conducted the study with Heinz Steinert, rightly contradicted the widespread thesis of the authoritarianism of the lower class, which had been put forward most prominently by Seymour M. Lipset.³⁷ Falk described the Lipset thesis of the authoritarian working class as the "projective image (of the enemy) that the (conservative) intellectual Lipset creates here of the 'authoritarian worker'".³⁸ In principle, this would be true for education, although political and economic ideology proved the opposite (in contrast to religion and repression), meaning that the working class was more liberal on economic matters. In non-economic questions of liberalism, the opposite proved to be true. Based on the Austrian survey data, Falk stated that in 1970s, workers had the "strongest preferences for democratic decision-making structures in politics", while people with degrees, farmers, and state-employed officials (*Beamte*) showed the most anti-democratic tendencies.³⁹

35 Institut für Soziologie an der Universität Graz, Graz ca. 1974: Einstellung zu Recht und Gerechtigkeit in Österreich. Typescript (Institut für Soziologie an der Universität Graz, copy at Institut für Rechts- und Kriminalsoziologie).

36 Approval of the introduction of forced labour camps as an alternative to prison also showed only minor class effects: "lower class" respondents mentioned them in 43 % of cases, middle class members in 40 %, and upper class members in 39 % (ibid.).

37 Lipset, Seymour Martin: Democracy and Working-Class Authoritarianism, in: American Sociological Review 24 (1959), no. 4, 482–501.

38 Falk, Gunter: Die Verteilung der Moral in Österreich. Über sozialstrukturelle Determinanten moralisch-ideologischer Wertpräferenzen und über den angeblichen Autoritarismus der Arbeiterklasse, in: Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie 3–4 (1979), 150–165, here: 160.

39 Ibid., 160.

In their two studies – and this makes them a unique social-historical source today – Falk and Steinert recorded not only the answers of the interviewees themselves, but also the socio-demographic characteristics of the face-to-face interviewers. This made it possible to measure interaction effects between interviewees and interviewers. Their findings in a nutshell: even in the general trend (i.e. be it conservative or liberal), the responses depended to a large part on the social situation of the interview, that is, on both the social characteristics of the interviewers and the interviewees (gender, class, and schooling) and the situational definition of the interview. With regard to the definition of the situation, the interviews were framed completely differently according to social class. Lower-class members saw the interview as an interview with the authorities, upper-class members as a chat with friendly strangers or poor devils. “All in all, it should be noted that members of the different social classes complete the interview under dramatically different situational conditions, that it has very different meanings for them.”⁴⁰ To Steinert, the interview represented, then, a gender and ideological class struggle. The “deviations” in response behaviour varied from topic to topic and constellation to constellation – and obviously concerned highly emotional and controversial questions about pornography, homosexuality, abortion, or the death penalty. In fact, it was precisely the example of support for the death penalty that primarily showed that respondents adjusted their opinion to the anticipated opinion of older women interviewers, and as a result of “social desirability” accepted a more conservative assessment. In generational terms, this means that the respondents adjusted to women socialized under National Socialism, who, as we have seen, on average still had greater affinities to National Socialism in the late 1940s and to a large extent did not reject the death penalty at all.⁴¹ This showed that effects of the interview situation on the interviewees’ response behaviour were not linear or tended in the same direction, but had very different effects: older and more highly educated interviewers generally received more conservative answers, women received more “liberal” answers on morality items (e.g. on abortion or pornography), but more conservative answers on punitiveness items (e.g. on capital punishment), most of all older female interviewers.⁴² In other words, it was precisely the authoritarianism item of extrapunitiveness that received a more authoritarian answer in a specific interview situation with women socialized under National Socialism.

In the authoritarian situation of the interview, a lot was at stake for many interviewees in terms of social status. For the sociologists, it proved essential

40 Steinert, Heinz: Das Interview als soziale Interaktion, in: Meulemann, Heiner/Reuband, Karl-Heinz (eds.): *Soziale Realität im Interview. Empirische Analysen methodischer Probleme*, Frankfurt am Main/New York 1984, 17–59, here: 38.

41 Ibid., 42 f.

42 Ibid., 42 f.

to survey the respondents' definition of the situation. In the second study in 1974, it was also recorded as the interviewer's interpretation. As a result, around 41 % of the interviewees defined the interviews as inquiries by authorities, 29 % as chats with "friendly strangers", and 12 % as the information to "poor devils", whereby a class effect clearly came to light: "It can be assumed that some of what sociology supposedly knows about the difference between 'middle class' and 'lower class' is based on the fact that members of the lower class present themselves 'upwards' – for which they have their own tactics."⁴³ Steinert interpreted the results as being fundamentally opposed to the everyday operation of social research and thus to an underlying "ideology" of the social sciences: interviews are not about querying individual stable opinions as a kind of private property, which would be consistent and constant to boot. "There is no such thing as an 'actual' opinion. Rather, expressing a certain opinion is a social act that is intended to achieve a certain goal in a certain situation."⁴⁴ Thus, he dismissed the "life lie" of survey research: making exact evaluations with highly ambiguous data".⁴⁵

Who carries authoritarianism today?

With the triumphant march of neoliberalism since the 1970s, culminating in deindustrialization and social cuts, the socio-demography of authoritarianism changed again – as shown, not least, by the study on authoritarianism conducted by the Vienna Institute for Labour Market and Educational Research (WIAB).⁴⁶ The WIAB study measures punitivity in three items relating to authoritarian aggression: agreement with the statements "Harsh punishments for criminals are necessary to send a message", "It is important to protect the rights of criminals as well", and – similarly to the IRKS studies of the 1970s – attitudes towards the reintroduction of the death penalty: "The reintroduction of the death penalty should be unthinkable today."⁴⁷ The approval rates for this last question appear to have remained fairly unchanged over the years 2019 to 2022. In Austria, 55 % strongly agree with the statement that the reintroduction of the death penalty should be unthinkable, while a further 14 % tend to rather agree with the statement. In other words: 69 % oppose the death penalty in Austria. In international comparison, then, opposition to the death penalty is

⁴³ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁴⁶ See Autoritarismus, nationale Geschichtsbilder und demokratische Disposition. Online Umfrage 2022, Ländervergleich. Endbericht; Petra Ziegler/Andreas Schulz, Vienna 2023.

⁴⁷ WIAB Research Länderbericht Österreich 2022, 22 f.

far higher in Austria than in Poland, France, and England, where it is rejected by only 23, 24, and 28 % of respondents respectively.

Thus, in contrast to the 1970s, having shown very conservative response behaviour in general, the overall change in values cannot be overlooked. In terms of socio-demography, however, other shifts are visible too. As the authors of the study note, there approval rates are clearly affected by education and – unlike in the 1940s and 1970s – income: academically educated people with higher incomes agree more strongly that the reintroduction of the death penalty should be unthinkable. “The statement ‘The reintroduction of the death penalty should be unthinkable today’ also shows different response behaviour according to the subjective ability to cope with income: people who can live comfortably agree 75 %, whereas those who find it difficult to cope only agree 52 %. Education also shows major differences: People with a tertiary education agree with the statement 82 %, those with an apprenticeship only 60 %.”⁴⁸ Also, a higher proportion of young (16–29 years) and also old people (60 years and older) agree with this statement than those in the middle age cohorts. A similar picture emerges with regard to education and age, for example for the question about a strong leader. These general trends can also be seen in the annual “Democracy Monitor” conducted by the Austrian research institute SORA.⁴⁹

Now, what can be seen from responses to the question whether the reintroduction of the death penalty is unthinkable (see table 3), interpreted as a descriptor of authoritarianism?⁵⁰ Only minor effects of gender, size of home community, and migration background can be seen, and almost no effect of unemployment or religion. The greatest differences now appear to be differences of income (or the question of how people get by on their income) and social class, with lower income and “lower class” (as a self-description) correlating with authoritarianism – authoritarian aggression has thus quite visibly increased in the lower classes.⁵¹ A final differentiator, however, is political ideology, with a clear yet unsurprising correlation between right-wing views and authoritarianism.

48 Ibid., 23.

49 See, most recently, Zandonella, Martina: Demokratie Monitor 2022. Fokusbericht. Vienna, December 2022.

50 One important reservation to be mentioned is that in order to measure the explanatory power of a particular variable, multivariate analyses would have to be conducted with the original data, which is beyond the scope of this paper. In the following, I am thus talking about correlations between authoritarianism and certain variables, not about causes and effects.

51 This is, in general, also the social picture to be drawn in the case of authoritarian submissiveness – 63.5 % of the “lower class” respondents agree with the statement that a strong leader is needed who does not have to care about parliamentarism, whereas 53.3 % of the “upper class” and 53.8 % of the “middle class” agree with this statement. Here too, however, political ideology is a far better descriptor of authoritarianism.

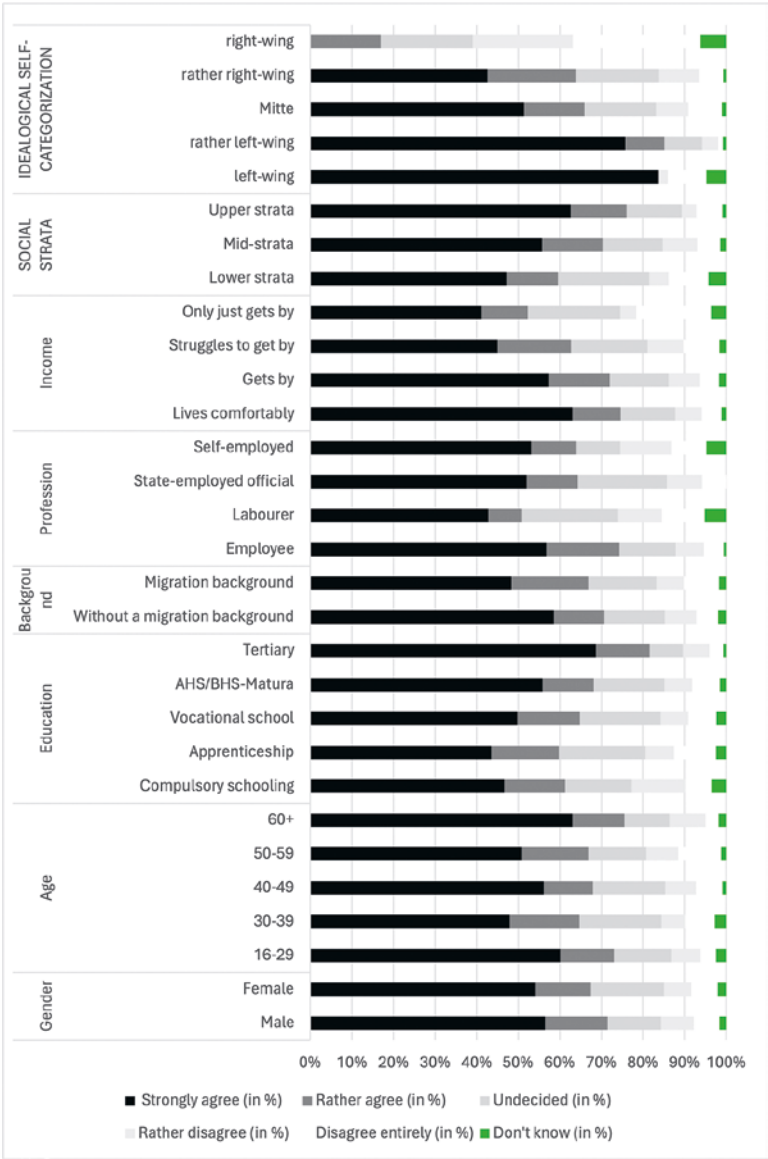


Table 3: Distribution of responses to the statement “The reintroduction of the death penalty should be unthinkable today” (“Die Wiedereinführung der Todesstrafe sollte heute undenkbar sein”) in the 2022 study on authoritarianism conducted by the Vienna Institute for Labour Market and Educational Research (WIAB), according to some socio-demographic characteristics.

Conclusion

A thorough analysis of authoritarianism today should not only be based on a careful interpretation of all available data, but also involve its theoretical and historical contextualization. Survey data from different points in time make visible the great social changes that authoritarianism in its time as well as society as a whole go through. A close look at these socio-demographic shifts prevents us from jumping to conclusions, as well as “essentializing” social probabilities for an adherence to authoritarianism. As the case of Austria has shown, there is not a single social factor that hasn’t changed over the decades: whereas in the 1940s, gender and age were descriptors of authoritarianism (with women and younger respondents being obviously more authoritarian), age and education were its main descriptors in the 1970s (with older and less educated respondents being more likely to show authoritarian attitudes). It is only since then that class status, occupational status, and income have had an influence on authoritarianism.

It goes without saying (and is beyond the scope of this paper) that explanations are to be looked for on the large scale of society, with historically informed social theory and social criticism (“Gesellschaftstheorie” as well as “Gesellschaftskritik”) guiding multivariate analysis of the survey data. The good as well as the bad news is, accordingly, that macro level factors determining authoritarian attitudes to a large extent can hardly be changed on a small scale, but they do not remain the same at all times either – what seems inevitable today may be completely different tomorrow. A “correct” political counteraction is, then, no simple matter of a technical ad hoc action – both because the social conditions behind authoritarianism need to be changed and because it would be another form of ecological fallacy to deduce political actions from macro-level descriptors of authoritarianism. Yes, higher education is associated with authoritarian attitudes to a lesser degree – but that does not mean that more education is synonymous with reducing prejudice. Education is the ultimate guarantor of better earnings in a world of social cutbacks, and hence higher education is correlated with a higher income and thus today with an affirmation of the status quo, whereas lower education correlates with a skewed need for the “crooked cure” of an authoritarian change in society. What applies just as much today as it did in other times is: if you want to combat the socio-psychological need for authoritarianism, you have to change society for the better.

Pavel Szobi

Prospects of Democracy in the Czech Republic

The Czech Republic is a Central East European country with twenty years of membership in the European Union and twenty-five years in the North Atlantic Alliance. It is a parliamentary republic in which the government is formed by elected representatives in the parliament. Less than half of the world's population currently lives in a democracy, with only 45.3 % enjoying democratic systems. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) conducted a study on the state of democracy in 167 countries, revealing that the Czech Republic holds twenty-fifth position in terms of democratic development. This is a remarkable achievement considering the country's struggles following forty years of communist dictatorship. However, the EIU highlights certain issues with transparency in institutions and the political culture of Czech democracy. These represent little warning lights on the control panel of the Czech train of democracy. What poses the threats to its continuing smooth ride?

Trust in democracy is closely tied to people's socio-economic status. The economic reforms of the 1990s created a market economy with multiple opportunities for the business ambitions of individuals and careers for employees in the growing private sector. At the same time, the remaining public sector maintained a surprisingly vigorous stability. Thanks to systems of social welfare and healthcare inherited from state socialism, citizens with worse income and social backgrounds continued to receive decent state support. Nevertheless, it was the era of the 1990s which contributed to the growing distrust in the state, as it was a time of privatization crimes, corruption, clientelism, and abuse of power. The regional differences in economic growth, closure of traditional industries, and overall living conditions have further amplified this situation, particularly in border regions, where disparities in education, wages, and social background are evident. Individuals facing foreclosure and trapped in debt often have significant distrust in the existing system.

The other issue is the political representation of the country. For two decades of the Czech democracy, the parliamentary system was controlled by two large political bodies on the traditional political spectrum – left-wing social democrats and right-wing liberal democrats. Some of the high-ranking politicians of this era were former members of the Communist Party. Memories of the political marasmus of the communist era and the turbulent transformation years of the 1990s have bred distrust toward politicians. In November and December 2022, an online survey was conducted on authoritarianism, historical perceptions, and democratic dispositions in the Czech Republic and other

European countries. It was commissioned by the Verein zur wissenschaftlichen Aufarbeitung der Zeitgeschichte at the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna and funded by the University of Vienna, the Future Fund of the Republic of Austria, and the Fritz Bauer Institute in 2019, and by the University of Vienna and the Alfred Landecker Foundation in 2022. The survey observed that a mere 9 % of Czechs believe politicians are trustworthy, while 61 % view them as self-serving individuals seeking power and access to money. At the same time, a survey conducted in 2022 established that only 23 % of Czech citizens think of politicians as people who only care about the interests of the rich and powerful. This number may be changing now with the centre-right government in power.

A long-lasting centrepiece of democracy was Václav Havel, the first president of Czech Republic. His persistent fight for freedom and touch with reality continued to bolster the role of the presidential office, which has an almost purely representative form in the Czech constitution. After the expiration of Havel's second term in office, the members of parliament faced the challenge of electing a new "heir to the throne". Compromises among the electors led to the selection of Václav Klaus, the former prime minister and reformer of the Czech economy after 1989. With his rise, the first shift toward the politicalization of the presidential office appeared. The president often loudly opposed the policies of the government, and his neglect of climate change became widely known beyond the Czech borders. After the two terms of Václav Klaus, the constitution eventually adopted a direct election of the president by the citizens. Seemingly the right choice to strengthen democracy, a man or woman elected by the people to a ceremonial office possibly without any support from the important political parties represents a lonely entity in the Czech parliamentary democratic system. Nevertheless, the public space afforded the president can turn him or her into an unguided missile. This was very well confirmed by the presidency of Miloš Zeman, whose activities were often criticized by government officials, and his openly pro-Chinese and pro-Russian sentiment alarmed many observers. The current president, Petr Pavel, appears to be following a path of independent action that aligns with democratic and liberal principles. One of his notable initiatives is a pan-European project aimed at raising funds to provide swift military aid to the Ukrainian army. This endeavour serves as evidence of his principled leadership and commitment to supporting Ukraine. When it comes to which country took in the most refugees, to date, the Czech Republic has the highest numbers per thousand people: overall, the number of beneficiaries from temporary protection from Ukraine relative to the EU population was equal to 9.2 per thousand people at the end of July 2023. The Czech Republic (33.0) and Poland (26.4) had the highest ratios per capita; in absolute figures, Germany took in 1.15 million Ukrainian refugees, Poland

971,000, and the Czech Republic 357,000. In the Czech Republic, people with academic degrees agree with the statement that the country should take in refugees more often (50 %) than respondents with compulsory schooling (20 %).

In the 2010s, the parliamentary political scene began to change too. A new movement by a business mogul Andrej Babiš, called ANO, attracted popular diplomats, entrepreneurs, and even actors as it ran on a liberal economic platform and the idea of cleansing the state of crooked politicians and overregulation. Many voters were glad to vote for a man who did not need to make money as a politician as he was already wealthy enough. Babiš spoke not like a politician but like a countryman, and the voters appreciated the non-formal approach of the new political leader. After ascending to power, the Babiš movement soon recognized the potential of using the movement's appeal to left-wing-oriented voters with the boost of social welfare. Babiš started to vocalize a more populist narrative in his political campaigns, as did his party members.

The inclination to listen to populist voices in politics can be traced back to the relative isolation of Czech society during the communist era and an only gradual adaptation to the open borders, especially among the older population. In the realm of J. R. R. Tolkien's imagination, one could liken the Czech people to Hobbits residing in the Shire and taking delight in their local communities, pubs, and convivial conversations while revelling in chilled beer. They tend to focus on their immediate surroundings, often overlooking events in the outside world. Thus, terms like migration or global pandemics hit society particularly hard. Czechs are very much opposed to Muslim involvement in the cultural life of the country – only 4 % think that Muslims have contributed a lot to cultural life in the Czech Republic. Overall, as Oliver Rathkolb stated in the comprehensive study *Authoritarianism, History and Democratic Dispositions in Austria, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic* in 2010, attitudes to minorities and foreigners are even more negative, particularly with regard to the heavily biased perception of the Roma. It is remarkable that in this context, Czechs have low antisemitism sentiment compared to other European countries – only 8 % of them think that Jews have too much influence on public opinion.

The government led by Prime Minister Andrej Babiš brought several shortcomings in the Czech legal system and the functioning of public institutions to light. Conflicts of interest were inadequately addressed, allowing politicians to amass political, economic, and media power in their hands. Chaotic decision-making during the COVID-19 pandemic, sometimes lacking a legal basis, and inefficiencies in public administration were also observed. Information regarding the new and dangerous virus flooded the public sphere spontaneously and without coordination. Scientists struggled to communicate effectively with the media, who, in turn, were unaccustomed to scientific language. An overwhelmed audience faced a flood of information, including complex graphs

and tables, leading to inaccuracies, confusion, and the proliferation of misinformation and conspiracies. Thus it does not come as a surprise that when asked whether experts, not the government, should decide what is best for the country, 61 % of Czech citizens answered in the affirmative in the 2022 survey. These problems cannot be fully resolved with the end of Babiš's government, necessitating important reforms. Efforts are now underway to strengthen dialogue and make the local communication environment more resistant to such risks. To address these issues, greater transparency within the civil service and the redistribution of public funds is needed. Strengthening the law on conflicts of interest and its enforcement is crucial, as is amending legislation to enhance the independence of the public prosecutor's office and public media. Furthermore, comprehensive reforms in socio-economic and educational sectors are necessary to combat the problems that fuel support for anti-system voices.

Andrej Babiš is currently losing his momentum, as he relies on often-repeated arguments which are coming very close to inducing political boredom. Nevertheless, the country's lasting problem is its susceptibility to populist politicians who gain support by making promises related to social welfare and exploiting irrational fears. Centrist democratic parties, which hold a strong presence in the Czech Republic, contribute to the resilience of democracy. In 2022, 75 % of Czech citizens agreed that democracy must consider the interests of different groups; Czechs see democracy, then, as the representation of the interests of diverse social groups across the countries. Although the percentage of people agreeing with this is lower than in Austria or France, the Czech Republic displays the greatest increase in agreement, over 10 % from 2019 to 2022. Smaller extremist political parties, such as the anti-migration movement of Tomio Okamura, have some, but only limited support. Only a low number of Czech citizens believe that there should be a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections. Nevertheless, the differences in agreement between low and high formal education are greatest: 24 % vs. 71 %. This is a pattern which is visible in other former socialist countries: Hungary and Poland. These countries lack liberal, pluralistic democratic parties, resulting in adverse effects on reproductive and sexual minority rights – all issues serving as litmus tests for democracy.

Crisis situations underscore the fragility of democracy and the need for its continuous nurturing. While past instances of a loss of democracy mainly involved coups, the current decline is characterized by a gradual erosion of democracy. Risk phenomena, like the rise of populism, are intensifying, and future crises are likely to escalate. Following the pandemic, challenges such as the Ukraine war, high inflation, and rising prices contribute to these uncertainties. There is concern about the mobilization of radicalized citizens and the challenges of “deradicalizing” them, reintegrating them into society, and rebuilding

their trust. Furthermore, the radicalization involves conspiracy theories, trolls, and, lately, support by Russian agents.

While Czech society is not strictly divided into winners and losers, a third group has emerged that completely rejects everything, often arguing about financial matters when they consolidate their fragmented stance. If this group unites, it could pose a significant threat to the democratic system. Nevertheless, Czechs do not agree that the state apparatus should limit the possibility of expression for different groups in society. Only 44% consider measures like a ban on demonstrations, restrictions on media coverage, or pre-emptive detention of potentially dangerous people justified. This is deeply connected with the belief that freedom of speech is part of a democratic society. After all, as stated by Muriel Blaive in 2010, historically, not only were the Czechs never tempted by Nazism, which embodied authoritarianism, discipline, and obedience even more than communism, but Czechs do not favour anything resembling authority in politics and loudly complain about authoritarian tendencies. Involving citizens in deliberations regarding the future of the Czech state or specific policies can yield numerous positive benefits, particularly considering the emergence of populism as a political style in recent years. Populist leaders tend to exploit societal divisions and criticize elected representatives when they are in power. Engaging citizens in decision-making processes can help counteract this trend. To bolster democracy, introducing correspondence voting is crucial, as it enhances electoral accessibility. The estimated 100,000 Czech passport holders living abroad will benefit from this form of voting, making elections more accessible to Czech citizens than ever before.

G. Daniel Cohen

Democratic Backsliding in France? Some Comments on the Data

In France, the 2024 electoral cycle saw an unprecedented rise in support for the National Rally (RN). In terms of both voter turnout and the number of deputies elected, the RN emerged as the country's leading political force. The results of the European elections were particularly revealing: Marine Le Pen's far-right party dominated with 31.4 % of the vote, more than doubling the score of Emmanuel Macron's camp, which garnered just 14.6 %. This solidified the RN as France's most powerful political party. Following the European elections, the dissolution of the National Assembly provided another opportunity for the RN to maintain its momentum. In the first round of legislative elections, RN candidates captured an average of 33.2 % of the vote, a significant increase from 18.7 % in 2022. This early success led to the election of 39 RN and allied candidates in the first round. Although many Le Pen candidates were defeated in the second round by a broad Republican front, the RN still experienced a substantial gain in seats, securing 142 in 2024, up from 89 in 2022 and just 8 in 2017.¹

The study conducted in November–December 2022 by Petra Ziegler and Andreas Schulz— *Autoritarismus, nationale Geschichtsbilder und demokratische Disposition – Online-Umfrage 2022* – did not predict this electoral success. But it offered data essential for gaining an understanding of how the RN's political base widened so dramatically in recent years. The lowest level of satisfaction with democracy in the EU, the study reveals, is to be found in France. Only 29 % of the French population, according to the survey, felt content with the functioning of democracy at the national or European Union level (Italy follows; there, 32 % express negative attitudes). This finding aligns with the subsequent Ipsos report “The State of Democracy” (2023), which similarly revealed that only 29 % of the French are satisfied with “how democracy is working.” Seventy percent also believed that “democracy has declined in the recent years.” The “barometer of political trust” regularly issued by SciencesPO-Cevipof (2024) likewise showed that 68 % of the French citizenry feels that democracy “does not function well”. Even before the European Parliament elections of June 2024, The Pew Research Center had documented a steady disillusionment

1 Jérôme Fourquet and Sylvain Manternach, *Comprendre la géographie du vote RN en 2024* (Paris: Institut Terram, 2024), available at: https://institut-terram.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/IT_ETUDE-00005_FOURQUET-MANTERNACH_2024-09-16_w.pdf

with democracy in France. Only 35 % of the public harboured positive attitudes in the first half of 2024.² As recent studies have established, a combination of high crime rates, poverty, inequality, and a large immigrant population in a particular area tends to create the best conditions for the rise in support for the National Rally (RN) party. Yet distrust of the democratic system provides the cement for the politics of resentment.

Although Ziegler and Schulz's *Länderbericht Frankreich* tracks with similar surveys, it nonetheless invites us to nuance our understanding of democratic aversion in France. Despite displaying the lowest level of dissatisfaction in the EU, the French public still overwhelmingly agrees that democracy "is the best form of regime, even though it may bring problems". 74 % thought so in 2022, 3 % more than in 2019. This result requires qualification. People reasonably well-off or with high levels of education view democracy as the "best form of regime". But support decreases among respondents with lower levels of formal education and among those who say they have difficulties getting by, or believe that their socio-economic situation has significantly deteriorated. Democracy, however, retains its aura in a country which otherwise features substantial levels of discontent. Part of the French public, in other words, feels frustrated with the functioning of democratic institutions rather than with democracy itself. Traditional symbols of democracy, more than the idea of democratic polity, come under attack. Ziegler and Schulz found ample evidence in this regard. Overwhelming mistrust of politicians (71 %), suspicion towards political parties (52 %), and preference for elected representatives that would be "independent citizens" instead of party members (62 %), reveal antagonism towards the political class. Resentment is also manifest towards the highly unpopular Macron government (73 % of negative opinions) and the European Union's so-called democratic deficit. With only 29 % of approval for "the functioning of democracy in the EU", Ziegler and Schultz's study makes clear that by 2022 the age of "Euro-optimism" in France had long come to an end. Do their findings ultimately indicate a desire to "dare more democracy" (to quote Willy Brandt's famous expression), to reform it, or to recede from it? These three options, it appears, overlap in the wide range of responses aggregated by the authors.

The section on authoritarian tendencies – one of the survey's key findings – suggests that withdrawal from certain democratic norms is now supported

2 IPSOS, "The State of Democracy" (December 2023), available at: https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2023-12/Ipsos-KnowledgePanel-TheState-Of-Democracy_SciencesPO-Cevipof_2023-12.pdf; SciencesPO-Cevipof, "Barometer of Political Trust" (February 2024), available at: https://www.sciencespo.fr/cevipof/sites/sciencespo.fr/cevipof/files/BConf_V15_Extraction1_modif.pdf; Pew Research Center, 18 June 2024, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2024/06/18/satisfaction-with-democracy-has-declined-in-recent-years-in-high-income-nations/sr_2024-06-18_satisfaction-democracy_2/

by a significant part of the French public. 41% of respondents would approve of a “strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections”; 61% wish for “strong leaders so that we can live safely in society”. This “Bonapartist” inclination, once again more perceptible among lower income respondents without university education, does not however indicate blanket support for authoritarian policies. 72% of the French approve of video surveillance in the public domain, but a small majority oppose the reinstatement of the death penalty, and many reject the monitoring of phone communications, a ban on political demonstrations, or restrictions on freedom of the press. 82% of the French also believe that “violence should never be used as a principle.” Attraction to strong political leadership – potentially emancipated from certain democratic constraint – can instead be explained by a desire to transcend the fossilization of democratic institutions. 41% of the French, for instance, would like to see the rise of new leaders who challenge traditions and “bring new ideas”. What emerges from these results is ambiguous: for approximately half of the public, the renewal of democracy does not rule out the return of charismatic authority. The French are also relatively lukewarm regarding the question of equality. Roughly half of the respondents agree that “the equality of all social groups should be our goal”, but France ranks last on this issue when compared with other European countries. Seen through this lens, the kind of democracy wished by a substantial proportion of respondents can potentially include illiberal and anti-equalitarian elements.

Signs pointing to democratic backsliding in French public sentiment, however, do not correlate with a surge of historical revisionism. 21% of the French public felt in 2022 that historical discussions of wartime collaboration and the Holocaust should end, but 55% disagreed. This is a fundamental finding, revealing both the normalization of what the French call “*devoir de mémoire*” (duty of memory) and its strategic acceptance by the now right-wing populist – and no longer right-wing radical – National Rally. Attacks on the functioning of democracy, or loss of faith in it, do not primarily emanate from historical resentment. This is another key feature of the report: “illiberal democracy” in France does not mean rolling back the process of “coming to terms with the past” initiated in the wake of the May 1968 student revolt. (The survey, less surprisingly, also reveals scant nostalgia for the Eastern European communist system.) What nonetheless changed significantly since the 2010 Eurozone financial crisis is the narrative of Europeanism, presented at the time of the 1992 Maastricht Treaty as Europe’s reinvention as a continent of peace, movement, and post-nationalism. The French are now deeply divided on this question. Approximately 50% of respondents think that membership in the EU has not yielded any benefit either at the personal or at the national level. This evolution tracks with increased value ascribed to “nativeness”. 58% of the French, for in-

stance, think that being born in France is an important part of French identity; 40 % believe that having “French ancestors” is also necessary to be fully French. More respondents, however, continue to believe that taking part in French culture or speaking the French language remain primary markers of national identity. The same results are obtained regarding the question of European identity. For 55 %, being born in Europe is a required entry ticket into Europeanness. But “taking part in European culture” remains more important for 76 % of the respondents; and an overwhelming majority do not see Christianity, or being born Christian, as a pillar of European identity: the low level of enthusiasm for the functioning of democracy in France is not primarily motivated by the discourse of “European civilization”.

The survey also investigates attitudes towards Jews and Muslims in France. Both primary antisemitism (overt hate of Jews) and secondary antisemitism (guilty-defensive antagonism towards Jews) appear contained. 12 % of the public believe that Jews “have too much influence on public opinion”, and the same proportion think that Jews made no contribution to French culture. Nearly 50 %, however, approved of the statement “Jews in France have the right to build synagogues”. These results also illustrate an epoch-making transformation. In France, the *stratégie de dédiablement* (“de-demonization strategy”) of the National Front and future National Rally began in the late 1980s. After succeeding her father at the head of the party in 2011, however, Marine Le Pen accelerated the drive to normalization through a series of pro-Jewish pronouncements. The National Front, she told Jews in 2014, “is without a doubt the best shield to protect you against the true enemy, Islamic fundamentalism”. The symbolic force of such statements – the far-right as the sole shield of France’s endangered Jews – only lured a small part of the Jewish electorate towards the party. Yet ten years later, Marine Le Pen found in the person of Serge Klarsfeld an unexpected endorsee of changed identity. “The National Rally has become philosemitic”, stated the famed Nazi hunter and historian of the Final Solution in France puzzlingly, nine months after the events of 7 October. That Marine Le Pen simultaneously declared that “the National Front had always been Zionist” (although far-right pro-Israelism in postwar France was above all Arabophobia and never precluded antisemitism) certainly encouraged Klarsfeld, wary of “leftist anti-Zionism”, to abandon all qualms about the once tabooed party. The National Rally’s stunning electoral results in the European parliament elections in June 2024, and in the French parliamentary elections a month later, confirmed the success of the *dédiablement* strategy: the party’s transition from extremism to national populism was also facilitated by a “philosemitic turn” which gave far-right politics across Western Europe a historic facelift.

Views on Muslims are more antagonistic. 31 % feel that the presence of Mus-

lims in France makes them feel like “strangers in their country”. 41% would approve of a ban on Muslim immigration – the highest approval rating for this statement among Western European countries. Only 20% of the French believe that “Muslims should have the right to build mosques”, while 43% opposed this statement. Similarly, 43% disagree with the statement “Muslims significantly contribute to France’s cultural life”: the survey clearly indicates high levels of Islamophobic sentiment in France while overt antisemitism is much weaker. This is not a French exception, however. In 2019, the Pew Research Center again found that “half of more of European countries surveyed have favourable views of Jews” – between 76% to 92% in Western Europe. Jewish people, to be sure, were the targets of harassment in 94 countries in 2020, with incidents ranging from verbal and physical assaults to desecration of cemeteries and scapegoating for the COVID-19 pandemic. But in public opinion polls, antisemitism is generally either condemned or not expressed overtly. Across the European Union, Muslims, refugees, and, at the bottom of the scale, Sinti and Roma, received lower levels of support or acceptance.³

Data regarding attitudes towards asylum seekers and migrants unsurprisingly point to overall negative views on immigration. Certainly, 43% of the French no longer believe that immigrants take jobs away from natives, a sharp reversal from the anti-immigrant rhetoric of the 1970s and 1980s. 40% still believe that immigrants make France more open to new ideas and cultures. But blaming immigrants for rising criminality, or the idea that newcomers come to France to take advantage of an excessively generous welfare system, remain prevalent. Like elsewhere in the European Union, this sentiment is influenced by a mix of economic fears, political rhetoric, and media coverage, often distorting the actual role migrants play in the welfare system. Ziegler and Schultz’s study confirms the correlation of “anti-democracy” with the belief that immigrants take more than they contribute to welfare services.

The survey also appraises the lure of conspiracy theories in French society. Conspiratorial thinking has a strong foothold in European countries, with varying degrees of prevalence. Factors such as distrust in politicians, social media consumption, and populist rhetoric generally contribute to these beliefs. Attraction to conspiracies is tied to broader disillusionment with democratic institutions. In the case of France, Ziegler and Schultz have unearthed revealing findings. According to the survey, 43% of the French public consider it “probable” that secret organizations influence politics in France, 42% believe in “great replacement theory”, and 59% believe that the population is “systematically lied to by the media”. Ziegler and Schultz confirm the results of previous

3 Pew Research Center Survey (2019), available at: <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/10/14/minority-groups/>

surveys. The 2018 survey by Ifop for the Jean-Jaurès Foundation, for instance, already revealed concerning trends regarding the pervasiveness of conspiracy theories in French society. A key finding is that while most people (about two-thirds) appear resistant to these ideas, 21 % of respondents agreed with at least five out of the ten conspiracy theories presented to them. Like Ziegler and Schulz's study, the IFOP poll highlighted generational, educational, and socioeconomic divides in susceptibility to conspiracy theories. Younger people, especially those between eighteen and twenty-four years old (28 % of whom subscribe to five or more conspiracy theories), the less educated, and those in more disadvantaged social categories, show higher levels of receptiveness. In contrast, only 9 % of respondents aged sixty-five and older adhered to a similar number of theories. In both surveys, belief in conspiracy theories is linked to a weakening attachment to democratic values. In the IFOP study, for instance, among those who subscribe to five or more conspiracy theories, only 43 % consider living in a democracy "very important", compared to the national average of 57 %.⁴

Finally, Ziegler and Schulz show that France is the country in Europe with the highest proportion of respondents (47 %) who believe that it is "pointless to become politically active". France, on the one hand, aligns with a European trend. According to the 2019 Eurobarometer, a notable portion of Europeans feels disconnected from the political system. For example, around 34 % of Europeans believed that their voice does not count in their country's political decision-making.⁵ But France also illustrates the possibility of alternative political engagement in the name of democracy, now imbued with populist meaning. This theme is left unexplored in Ziegler and Schultz's study. France indeed has a long-standing tradition of protests and direct action, with many citizens believing these methods are more impactful than voting or traditional forms of engagement via the political party system. The *Gilets Jaunes* (Yellow Vests) movement, which began in 2018, for instance, gained significant support from those dissatisfied with economic inequality and what they saw as government neglect. The majority of the French population sympathized with the movement. Many saw protesting as a response to the shortcomings of the political system, believing that conventional politics fails to address their concerns adequately.

4 IFOP, "Enquête sur le complotisme, vague 2" (2018), available at: <https://www.ifop.com/publication/enquete-sur-le-complotisme-vague-2/>

5 European Union, Standard Eurobarometer 2019, available at: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2253>

Markus Roth

From COVID to Democratic Fatigue? Loss of Control and Approaches to Authoritarianism in Recent Germany in a Contemporary Historical Perspective

Until recently, Germany could be seen as an exception among liberal democracies in many respects, and with some justification. The experience of the Nazi dictatorship seemed to limit susceptibility to, or at least public acceptance of, openly anti-democratic, antisemitic, and racist tendencies and to keep such parties in check. The stable party spectrum, with a strong “centre” of left-wing liberal to bourgeois-conservative forces, was seen as a kind of bulwark against the populist temptations of the extremes. In addition, along with the federal structure, it is an important pillar of a strongly consensual politics in the Federal Republic, characterized largely by continuity across changes of government. Central institutions such as the Federal Constitutional Court and the Federal President are also held in high esteem.

For a long time, the history of the Federal Republic as a whole, but also the history of the “culture of remembrance” (*Erinnerungskultur*) and crisis management, was told as a success story – in the West after the end of the Nazi dictatorship, soon after the founding of the Federal Republic, in East Germany only after the end of communist rule in 1989/90. The story of “successful democracy” (Edgar Wolfrum) was told as a story of democratic progress, liberalization, and the establishment of an enlightened, critical reappraisal of the Nazi past. The latter was a central point of reference for the reappraisal of SED rule that followed 1989/90.

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Germany is the world’s leading exporter, the world champion of memory, or even the world champion at soccer. This almost unbroken positive narrative, justified in some respects but sometimes self-satisfied, has been faltering for some time. At times, it has been replaced by the opposite narrative and doomsday scenarios, which, in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and a climate crisis that is becoming more tangible, have sometimes been condensed into a scenario of overwhelming crisis and powerlessness. This impression can be gained by following various social media channels, TV talk shows, and similar formats. The daily news alone seems to confirm this.

An almost cyclical sequence of crises since the 2000s – 9/11 and its aftermath, the financial and banking crisis, the “refugee crisis” – has accelerated over the years and, in today’s perception, has escalated into a major crisis consisting of overlapping crises such as the coronavirus pandemic, Putin’s war against Ukraine, the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, and its consequences, as well as a number of other crises whose consequences are less noticeable in Europe. And the climate crisis and catastrophe, which threatens our entire way of life and questions it as part of or the cause of the problem, is obviously looming over everything with increasing force. While the crises of the 2000s and 2010s mostly affected only certain social groups, the climate crisis and the pandemic, as well as the changed security situation and the consequences of the wars, potentially affect everyone. Moreover, according to Wilhelm Heitmeyer, routine crisis management mechanisms have been suspended and there is no longer any prospect of a timely solution.¹

In the face of this accumulation of crises and the pervasive sense of loss of control, it is not only historians who are forced to draw historical parallels or comparisons that are thrown into the debate as undifferentiated buzzwords, confirming and reinforcing the sense of crisis at least superficially, while at the same time appearing lethargic in their overwhelming force. Such parallels are also reinforced by the rise and radicalization of the Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany, AfD), as these developments occurred almost simultaneously with the accumulation of the crisis. In the form of the AfD, “authoritarian temptations” (Heitmeyer) were given a rallying point and thus a goal and a direction. With this development, the supposedly exceptional country of Germany seems to have finally arrived in the mainstream of a growing longing for authoritarian structures, for a strong hand, and a spreading fatigue with democracy. According to Arjun Appadurai, this has brought populist authoritarians to power in the past.²

The survey, conducted in 2019 and 2022 in several European countries, shows that a relatively large proportion of people in Germany feel that they are exposed to developments over which they have no influence. They see no point in political engagement as a means of change. Depending on the question, this proportion varies between 25 and 45 %. The proportion of those who are explicitly against democracy as a form of government is relatively stable at 5 % in

- 1 See: Heitmeyer, Wilhelm: Krisen und Kontrollverluste – Gelegenheitsstrukturen für Treiber autoritärer gesellschaftlicher Entwicklungspfade, in: Günter Frankenberg and Wilhelm Heitmeyer (eds.): *Treiber des Autoritären. Pfade von Entwicklungen zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2022, pp. 251–280, p. 255.
- 2 See: Appadurai, Arjun: *Demokratiemüdigkeit*, in: *Die große Regression. Eine internationale Debatte über die geistige Situation der Zeit*. Ed. by Heinrich Geiselberger, Berlin 2017, pp. 17–35, here p. 18.

the surveys. However, the resonance for such views is much greater when one considers the tendencies toward democratic fatigue and democratic scepticism revealed by the answers to other questions. Almost half of respondents rate the trustworthiness of elected politicians as low, about the same number say they only serve the rich, and 44 % are dissatisfied with the way democracy works overall. At a time when the concept of “illiberal democracy” is being successfully pursued in Hungary and elsewhere, the question is how meaningful the low level of rejection of democracy is, since this label can be used to describe very different forms. In a recent Allensbach poll, 31 % of those surveyed said they were living in a pseudo democracy, while in East Germany the figure went as high as 45 %.³

Behind these figures lies another problem. If one considers factors such as level of education or social status, it becomes clear that democratic fatigue and scepticism, as well as authoritarian aspirations, have a social dimension too. To put it simply, the lower the level of education and social status, the more strongly these attitudes are represented. However, this should not lead to a social marginalization of the problem, as the values of the other groups do not give cause to sound the all-clear either, especially since their social and political influence is correspondingly greater. As the figures show, the COVID pandemic has exacerbated this social dimension and further damaged trust in democratic institutions. One consequence of these developments may be a growing rejection of liberal democracy. The yearning for a strong leader who can act independently of parliament and elections was also expressed by 17 % of respondents, significantly more than in 2019.

Such survey results, in combination with corresponding electoral trends, offer starting points for historical parallels. In Germany, it is above all the Weimar Republic that has long been apostrophized as crisis-ridden, and its end is cited as a warning. The crisis year of 1923, with its wheelbarrows full of worthless money, provides iconic images of the fear of a loss of prosperity. The final years of the Weimar Republic, when support for it waned, the National Socialists won over enormous numbers of voters, and national conservative and liberal bourgeois forces finally offered them power, serve as a foil for interpretation and as a warning sign on the wall against which the rise of right-wing extremism and right-wing populism is interpreted and discussed.

In the 1950s, the phrase “Bonn is not Weimar”, based on the book published in 1956 by the Swiss journalist Fritz René Allemann, was still in use, not without an echo of an incantation. Its title soon became a catchphrase used at

3 “Fast ein Drittel der Deutschen glaubt, in einer ‘Scheindemokratie’ zu leben”, in: Spiegel online: <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/deutschland-fast-ein-drittel-glaubt-in-einer-scheindemokratie-zu-leben-a-19c81d38-cb1c-4d69-a001-8cfd4155cbcb> (28. 11. 2023).

times when democracy in the Federal Republic of Germany was thought to be in danger.⁴ Even today, not only is there a boom in current research and journalism on the Weimar Republic, which reports on the “history and present” of the “National Socialist seizure of power”,⁵ but sometimes cautionary parallel scenarios are also being developed.

Developments in Thuringia lend themselves to such historical parallels. Peter Reif-Spirek, for example, referred to the “long history of mentalities” in the region, where the NSDAP had been in power since 1930 under Wilhelm Frick, who later became Reich minister of the interior. Reif-Spirek referred to the long duration of such imprints, which are “to a certain extent stored in the political culture as a possibility”.⁶

II

There is no doubt that this is not about historical alarmism for the sake of (media) attention. The starting point for such historical references is not only superficially worrying developments and phenomena that manifest themselves in election results, racist violence, and numerous surveys and studies. However, the question arises as to the potential threat to democracy and the state of support for democracy. Are such voting decisions and opinions a brief flare-up in a fluid moment, or an expression and manifestation of longer-term changes and attitudes? Or to put it another way: when does selective disappointment or excitement about political decisions and the processes behind them turn into manifest and pronounced democratic fatigue and scepticism? And when does this reach a tipping point at which it takes on a momentum of its own that is hard to stop?

The results of the survey summarized above give cause for concern, especially as the crisis continues to accumulate and doubts continue to be expressed about the ability of the government and parliament to solve problems. It is feared that the ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court in November 2023, which prohibited the reallocation of tens of billions of euros from a fund to deal with the consequences of the COVID pandemic to climate and energy

4 For example, Marion Gräfin Dönhoff after the failed no-confidence vote against Willy Brandt, April 27, 1972. See: Marion Gräfin Dönhoff: In der Krise bewährt sich die Demokratie, in: *Die Zeit* No. 18, 1972, 5.5.1972.

5 Thomas Weber (ed.): *Als die Demokratie starb. Die Machtergreifung der Nationalsozialisten – Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Freiburg et al 2022.

6 See: Reif-Spirek, Peter: Gefährdete Demokratie oder: Die langen Linien des Thüringer Faschismus, in: *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 68 (2023), no. 11, pp. 83–90, here p. 83.

policy projects, among other things, will have a significant negative impact on social policy measures in the short and medium term. A worsening of the already tense situation confronting many people due to inflation, which has not been seen in Germany for decades, is likely to at least strengthen democratic fatigue. An increase in the rejection of democracy does not seem unlikely. Moreover, these overlapping crises, the economic consequences of which are being felt more keenly by the people, increase the fear of decline among the "middle class".

If we examine the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, certain correlations between economic crises and uncertain prospects on the one hand and the growing popularity of authoritarian and anti-democratic attitudes and parties on the other cannot be denied. Even minimal disruptions to the previously uninterrupted economic growth of the 1960s were accompanied by a series of electoral successes for the far-right National Democratic Party of Germany (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, NPD). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the situation was much more acute. Years of mass unemployment in the West, and within a very short time in the East too, along with a loss of identity, lack of prospects, and much more, were accompanied by the electoral successes of right-wing extremist parties such as the Republikaner or the German People's Union (Deutsche Volksunion, DVU), which entered numerous state parliaments in West and East Germany, starting with the Berlin House of Representatives in January 1989. Violence against migrants and Polish transit travellers and pogroms such as the one in Rostock-Lichtenhagen clashed with helpless state authorities and set the tone for the political debate on asylum policy and other issues. These historical constellations, which are only superficially considered, point to rather low crisis resistance in German society.

Here, too, historical references are sometimes taken up that go back further to a time when the accumulation of crises, the feeling of loss of control, violence, and anti-democratic attitudes condensed into a constellation that threatened democracy. The year 1923, which has gone down in history as the year of crisis, and the Great Depression beginning in October 1929 are central points of reference, especially since the latter is seen as a direct cause of the end of democracy and the rise of National Socialism. In times of rising prices and shortages, hyperinflation is often used to explain a particularly sensitive or hysterical reaction in parts of German society.

III.

Times of crisis bring a boom in conspiracy narratives, and where conspiracy legends flourish, antisemitism is not far behind. A look at history shows this: the Founders' Crash (*Gründerkrise*), the first major economic and financial crisis of the German Empire, the lost First World War, the crisis year of 1923, the Great Depression, the beginning of the 1990s, and most recently the COVID crisis. In all these times of crisis, the virulent antisemitism in society was very evident and often brutal. Antisemitic interpretations of the crisis went and still go hand in hand with conspiracy narratives. They are the common thread of German crisis history, from the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, and the Nazi dictatorship to the Federal Republic and the present.

The 2019 and 2022 surveys show a stable proportion of those who openly profess anti-Jewish attitudes, for example, those who agree with the statement that Jews have too much influence. Here, 11 % agree while a stable 65 % disagree. At the same time, there is a marginalization of antisemitism, with 16 % of respondents believing that hatred of Jews can only be found among immigrants. Although this figure has remained stable, the proportion of those who disagree with this statement has fallen significantly. While in 2019 this was still a narrow majority of 51 %, in 2022 only 39 % of respondents rejected this view. Reactions following the attack on Israel by Hamas terrorists on 7 October 2023 suggest that the numbers would be even clearer now. This trend carries the risk not only that a non-migrant majority will overlook or downplay its own antisemitism, but also that racism and Islamophobia will spread more widely through a seemingly innocuous accusation of antisemitism. Statements to this effect by some leading AfD officials in recent years have already shown the way.

The 2019 and 2022 surveys also show that Islamophobia and racism are persistent phenomena at a high level. More people agree (43 %) than disagree (36 %) with the statement that they feel foreign in their own country because of the allegedly large number of Muslims. Other questions also show that more people oppose Muslims and their right to worship freely than support it.

Similar trends can be seen in attitudes towards immigrants – or, more precisely, *against* immigrants. An increase in the crime rate (44 %) and the exploitation of the welfare state are seen as the main motives for immigration (55 %). Asylum seekers' claims of persecution in their countries of origin are largely rejected by 29 % of respondents.

On the one hand, there are long-term influences and lines of development, and on the other, there are momentary phenomena, eruptions, and collapses that are reflected in the polls – so far, so banal. These, in turn, influence the “deeper” layers of development, and in some ways continue to have less visible effects, even if current phenomena such as violence against migrants or

the electoral success of right-wing populist and far-right groups are on the decline. The racist violence, which in some cases developed into pogroms, and the electoral successes of right-wing extremists at the end of the 1980s and in the first half of the 1990s during the so-called “years of the baseball bat” are, despite their temporary decline, a never completely sealed ground of resonance and experience that could be renatured and made fertile in a new form, for example in 2015/16 or during the COVID pandemic. For three decades now, right-wing populism, anti-democracy, racism, and antisemitism have proved to be increasingly adaptable and versatile, able to connect with youth cultures, and in some cases far removed from the former jackboot extremism. This “old” right-wing extremism of the old Federal Republic was a relatively rigid ideological conglomerate of old and easily recognizable neo-Nazis. This was countered by a large and stable democratic centre.

Like other studies, the polls now show not only a firm and growing radical core, but also an increasing distance from democracy, a fatigue with democracy in the centre. This is expressed in a greater acceptance of, or desire for, a strong leader and in diminishing trust in democratic parties and their representatives, in the media, and in democratic institutions.

This retreat of the centre is crucial because it is often the beginning of or the catalyst for a development in which radical anti-democratic and racist positions are normalized as acceptable viewpoints. This leads to a significant shift in discourse, with radical forces and their issues gaining dominance. This goes hand in hand with a strong presence on the ground, for example in clubs or parents’ associations in schools and kindergartens. There, right-wing populism and the longing for homogenization and isolation are given a “neighbourhood face”,⁷ which means that the sometimes seemingly helpless and abstract criticism at the political level in Berlin, Erfurt, or other political centres comes to nothing. As much as the right-wing populist ideology of exclusion is full of resentment and hatred towards foreigners, in the neighbourhoods it is manifested as resentment and hatred with a human face. So far, this has proven to be quite resistant to attempts at exclusion from the democratic discourse, as well as to pedagogical efforts and political education work.

In addition, the centre and thus the entire spectrum of public debate has shifted to the right, as Thilo Sarrazin’s bestseller *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany Abolishes Itself, 2010) and the discussions about it have made clear. For a while, this shift was also evident in the Monday after Monday demonstrations of the self-proclaimed “Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident” (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, Pegida), a motley crew of notorious racist right-wing extremists, antisem-

7 Reif-Spirek: Gefährdete Demokratie, p. 86.

ites, and politically disillusioned so-called “angry citizens” (*Wutbürger*). They long for a time when many things seemed fine to them – without migration, without the impositions of globalization, and without the climate crisis. Some leading representatives of the Social Democrats, the Christian Democrats, or the Christian Socials thought they could get a grip on this movement by adopting some of their statements or at least showing a high degree of understanding and thus legitimizing such “authoritarian rebels” (Erich Fromm) to a certain extent.⁸ This has been done again with some of the same cast in view of the protests of the so-called *Querdenker* (lateral thinkers, unconventional thinkers, mavericks, contrarians) during the COVID pandemic in 2020 and 2021. The erosion of the demarcation to the right was later expressed in joint votes of liberal and conservative parties with the right-wing populist Alternative for Germany.

However, the perception that the COVID pandemic has acted as a driver of conspiracy theories is not borne out by the survey results. On the contrary, in 2022, 30 % believed that secret organizations control politics in Germany, in contrast to 2019, when 40 % of respondents agreed. And 42 % agreed with the statement that the media systematically lies to the population in 2022, compared to a clear majority of 50 % in 2019. Despite these declines, however, this is still a high proportion (one-third) who agree with such general conspiracy narratives.

IV.

As diverse as the composition of groups such as Pegida or the “Querdenker” may seem at first glance, they have one thing in common beyond all differences – longing for a “homogeneous nation”,⁹ in a sense an ethnocentric to racist “retrotopia” (Zygmunt Baumann) in which the core of Nazi ideology, the racially pure ethnic community, is preserved and lives on in a modernized form. This backward-looking utopia of an ethnically homogeneous society proves to be a bridge in several respects. On the one hand, it creates intersections and alliances from the extreme right to the centre, through which further

8 See: Benz, Wolfgang: Aufstand der Patrioten? Vormarsch der Rechten? Krise der Demokratie? Fremdenhass und Wutmenschen in schwierigen Zeiten, in: ibidem (ed.): *Fremdenfeinde und Wutbürger. Verliert die demokratische Gesellschaft ihre Mitte?* Berlin 2016, pp. 11–28, here p. 17.

9 See: Arnold, Sina u. Sebastian Bischoff: Als wir noch Wir waren. Die “homogene” Nation des Rechtspopulismus und der Neuen Rechten in Deutschland, in: Benz, Wolfgang (ed.): *Fremdenfeinde und Wutbürger. Verliert die demokratische Gesellschaft ihre Mitte?* Berlin 2016, pp. 45–68, here p. 47.

themes of the enemies of democracy can be normalized and established. Second, it is the bridge or path that connects the old right-wing extremism with right-wing populism and replaces the fixation on historical National Socialism without making it disappear completely. The vocabulary used to fight liberalism and universal human rights, and to propagate the longing for a homogeneous nation, is used to update the old ideology and maintain the link.

These bridges are built by using terms that modernize and sometimes encode the old catchwords of the racist and antisemitic discourses of the Nazis and other extremely nationalist groups. In this way, they become more connectable beyond their own ideological camp, and the ideology behind them seeps into the centre of society. This is exemplified by concepts such as the “lying press” (Lügenpresse) or an alleged “great replacement” (großer Austausch). The label of “great exchange”, according to which an ethnically homogeneous German people is to be replaced by migration, is a further development of the terms “Volkstod” (death of the people) or “Volksmord” (murder of the people), which were used in the 1990s and 2000s in the far-right and right-wing terrorist milieu and were more directly linked to the Nazi terminology and ideology of the 1920s and 1930s. The antisemitic basis was also retained in the term “great replacement”, since the originators and drivers of this process were previously seen as “world Jewry”, today coded as “globalists”, “global elites”, or similar.¹⁰

The results of the 2019 and 2022 surveys show that such terms and the attitudes they refer to are not a marginal phenomenon. At 45 % in 2019 and 40 % in 2022, the proportion of those who believe that the German population will be replaced by immigrants in the long term, that is, that something like a “great replacement” is taking place, is slightly lower but still very high and about as high as the proportion of those who reject this statement as unlikely or rather unlikely.

The numbers are like the 42 % mentioned above who accuse the media of systematically lying. This means that they are attached to the catchphrase “lying press” or at least very openly inclined towards it. This works in a similar way to the “great replacement” as an antisemitic code and has a long anti-democratic tradition in Germany, going back to the German Empire, where it already had an anti-Jewish thrust. This was openly expressed during the Weimar Republic with the militant term “Jewish press” (“Judenpresse”). National Socialists and other nationalist groups used it to denigrate the democratic liberal

10 Gideon Botsch: Rassenbürgerkrieg. Antisemitismus und die mörderische “Volkstod”-Paranoia, in: Onur Suzan Nobrega/Matthias Quent/Jonas Zipf (ed.): Rassismus. Macht. Vergessen. Von München über den NSU bis Hanau: Symbolische und materielle Kämpfe entlang rechten Terrors. Bielefeld 2021, pp. 147–158.

press. During the COVID pandemic, this fusion of anti-democratic attitudes with antisemitism and conspiracy narratives was once again openly displayed in street demonstrations by so-called lateral thinkers. The large number of “concerned citizens” (“besorgte Bürger”) who participated in these demonstrations symbolized the openness of part of the middle-class and alternative milieu to these ideological set pieces.

V.

The history of the Federal Republic of Germany could also be written as a success story, as a history of progress in the liberalization of society, because it was the white majority society that took care of its own history. The perspective of migrants and other minorities, such as homosexuals and others, remained marginalized until recently. Just as foreign workers and their families were for a long time kept at a distance, both spatially and socially, in parallel societies, research on racism, xenophobia, and the like also took place in isolation from research on the history of the Federal Republic. The firm anchoring of racist attitudes and patterns of behaviour in everyday life, their continuities, and the traditional lines of right-wing extremist violence were thus almost completely omitted from the common historical narratives of the Federal Republic, or were only mentioned in passing.¹¹ The rise of right-wing populism and right-wing extremism in Germany and the entry of the AfD into the German Bundestag in 2017 served as a wake-up call in parts of contemporary history research.¹² The cyclical surprise in politics and the media at racially motivated violence and its acceptance in some parts of the population also has its roots in the marginalization of the “other” history of the Federal Republic.

The history of coming to terms with history in the Federal Republic of Germany was and is sometimes glorified as a story of progress from public silence about National Socialism to a culture of remembrance that is exemplary for the world. The research on individual federal ministries, courts, police forces, secret services, or companies, for example, which was often denied for decades and only carried out in recent years, has been ignored. With very few exceptions, empirical research on the Holocaust and the various degrees of knowledge and participation in German society did not take place until the 1990s; debates on the murder of the Jews took place mostly away from the public

11 For example: Ulrich Herbert: *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert*, München 2014.

12 For example: Norbert Frei/Franka Maubach/Christina Morina/Maik Tändler: *Zur rechten Zeit. Wider die Rückkehr des Nationalismus*, Berlin 2019.

eye, within the narrow confines of specialized scholarship, and were lost in the abstract. This also applies to public debates such as the *Historikerstreit* in the mid-1980s.

These glaring gaps were also caused by the policies of the past, which not only allowed the functional elites of the Nazi regime to go largely unpunished, but also welcomed them with open arms in the authorities, courts, police, etc., and allowed them to continue their old careers. At the same time, formerly persecuted exiles who wanted to return were often brusquely rejected or faced numerous obstacles. In addition, the fact that there was continuity not only among the elite, but also throughout society, hindered a critical reappraisal. For several decades, the society of the Federal Republic of Germany was largely the post-Nazi Volksgemeinschaft, which, together with the murder and expulsion of Jewish and liberal journalists, writers, scientists, musicians, and others, had and had to have far-reaching consequences for the liberal constitution of post-war German democracy.

Despite this resistance, a critical culture of remembrance, commemoration, and research has developed – not least thanks to the active support of former victims of political and racial persecution. This development, which was particularly noticeable in the 1980s and 1990s, has been under constant attack ever since. Critical historiography and a culture of history stand in the way of efforts to resurrect nationalism in a makeshift new guise, just as the memory of the Holocaust has so far contained antisemitism, at least at the political level.

However, 22 % of respondents reject the idea that Germany was primarily responsible for World War II (2019: 17 %), and as many as 40 % are in favour of ending discussions about the Holocaust and World War II (2019: 37 %). The obstacle to critically reappraising history is beginning to erode.

VI.

The attitudes expressed in the surveys offer many points of reference, if not for historical parallels, then at least for the historical references that have been pointed out here. The accumulation of crises in 1923, the growing popularity of extreme right-wing organizations, inflation and the collapse of the middle-class, rampant antisemitism and conspiracy narratives, the longing for a strong hand to maintain order, and the growing rejection of democracy can, at least superficially, claim plausibility.

However, the differences between the historical culmination of the crisis and the later collapse of the Weimar Republic are often ignored in the parallels, which are often invoked only as slogans. The brutalization of a large part of society during the First World War and the subsequent fighting in some bor-

der regions and within the German Reich, the lack of a democratic tradition, a widespread revisionist and anti-democratic view of history, and much more could be mentioned here.

The central difference, however, is the knowledge of the further course of history, the rise of National Socialism, the establishment of the dictatorship, the war, the Nazi occupation, and the Holocaust. It is therefore not without reason that the activities and propaganda of right-wing extremists and right-wing populists are largely directed against critical research on contemporary history and Holocaust research, which began much later. This can be seen, for example, in the image of the Wehrmacht and the war, which was further glorified in the right-wing extremist *Deutsche Nationalzeitung* (German National Newspaper), and against whose supposed denigration neo-Nazis and right-wing extremists marched and carried out attacks at the Wehrmacht exhibition of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research in the mid-1990s. More recently, it was Alexander Gauland, then parliamentary group leader and now honorary chairman of the AfD, who proclaimed in 2017 that we could and should be proud of the achievements of German soldiers in World War II. Elsewhere, he disparaged the Nazi dictatorship as a “bird dropping in German history.”

In this way, the stigma of the Holocaust and the Nazi dictatorship is being erased in a more subtle form, but with the same intention as in previous decades, because it stands in the way of their own ideological goals – to create an ethnically homogeneous nation-state proud of its past and ruled in an authoritarian manner. The polls show that there is already greater support in some areas, even in the centre, which is eroding. Back then, it was largely the centre, driven by fears of decline and loss, whose fatigue with, and eventual rejection of, democracy paved the way for the Nazis to come to power. So far, however, the political and social centre in the Federal Republic has been very stable, capable of consensus across the political spectrum, and constructive in securing democracy. Whether this will continue to be the case in the face of much tougher distribution struggles and an escalating crisis seems to be an open question today.

Manès Weisskircher

The Rise of the AfD During the Fourth Wave of Far-right Politics: Putting the Case of Germany in an International Perspective

Introduction

In western Europe, the fourth wave of far-right politics after the Second World War is marked by the growing strength of far-right political parties and the normalization of their political claims (Mudde 2019). Even the Federal Republic of Germany – for a long time the exception to the rule – eventually saw the electoral breakthrough of a member of this party family. While the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD, Alternative for Germany) narrowly missed the five-per-cent electoral threshold in the year of its foundation, 2013 (4.7%), the new challenger party was clearly voted into the Bundestag both in 2017 (12.6%) and in 2021 (10.4%). For the 2024 Bundestag election, the AfD labelled party leader Alice Weidel even as their 'chancellor candidate,' indicating the far right's growing self-confidence.

In Germany, not only the public, but to some extent also the scholarly debate on the reasons for the rise of the far right, its key features, and its consequences, has often been quite inward-looking. Some observers interpret the electoral success of the AfD mainly in relation to the country's Nazi past, for example, by emphasizing real or alleged similarities between the AfD and historical fascism – even though far-right parties have grown strong in most other western European countries too, including in societies with quite different political developments in the first half of the twentieth century. Other pundits single out far-right strength in eastern Germany, the former territory of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), by trying to understand the regional far-right success through the lens of the communist past – often overlooking the fact that other western European far-right parties are at least as popular in their respective subnational strongholds as the AfD is in eastern Germany. In this respect, Germany might be more akin to another large and populous country, the United States, where many debates, for instance on the MAGA movement and Trumpism, are also often quite self-centred.

This chapter seeks to put the rise of the far right in contemporary Germany into a broader perspective in order to discuss national peculiarities and internationally shared features of the case under observation. Drawing lessons from other western European experiences improves our understanding of the

German situation precisely because the Federal Republic was a latecomer to electorally successful far-right party politics. Such a perspective also allows us to recognize what is still special about the case of Germany: there, the far right is strong not only in the electoral arena but also in non-electoral politics, which includes social movement groups, intellectual circles, online milieus, and also violent actors (Weisskircher 2024). Both non-electoral and electoral politics – as well as their interaction – will be a constant theme throughout this chapter.

Even though parties such as the AfD are usually labelled “populist radical right” (Mudde 2007) in the comparative political science literature, this chapter mainly uses the term “far right” as an umbrella term. It captures the ideologically heterogeneous and blurry actors and points to their internal diversity in terms of stances towards democracy and the extent to which they engage in hate speech and the delegitimization of political opponents (Pirro 2023, Volk and Weisskircher 2023). Moreover, the chapter benefits from the 2022 survey data on political attitudes among the German population at large (Ziegler and Schulz 2023a), which are used to illustrate the demand-side potential that forms the backbone of far-right mobilization.

The chapter discusses six different dimensions that are key for understanding the fourth wave of far-right politics in contemporary Germany: (I) the delayed electoral breakthrough of a far-right party, (II) the broad variety of interconnected far-right political players, (III) eastern Germany as a regional stronghold, (IV) the importance of the ‘refugee crisis’ and non-European immigration for understanding far-right success, (V) climate change and energy as an emerging political issue for far-right mobilization, and (VI) the exclusion of the far right by other actors as a key dimension of ‘militant democracy’ in Germany.

(I) The delayed electoral breakthrough of a far-right party

The Federal Republic of Germany has long remained ‘immune’ to an electorally successful far-right party – in contrast to the two western European post-fascist states of Austria and Italy (Art 2006). However, it was not necessarily always different voter preferences that explained the diverging path for (West) Germany during the different ‘waves’ of far-right politics after the Second World War (On the concept, see Mudde 2019; on its application to the German case, see Weisskircher 2024). This was already visible during the first wave, when (neo?)-fascists organized politically, not without significant public support: however, after celebrating several instances of regional electoral success, the Sozialistische Reichspartei (SRP, Socialist Reich Party) was legally banned in 1952. More than a decade later, a second wave of far-right

politics saw a new generation of activists, many of them forming the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD, National Democratic Party of Germany). The new party came quite close to entering the Bundestag: founded in 1964, the NPD attracted only 2 % of the vote at the national elections of 1965 but was voted into seven regional parliaments from 1966 to 1968. Given the party's subnational track record, it was widely expected to enter the Bundestag in 1969. However, ultimately, 4.3 % of the vote was insufficient – after the electoral defeat, the party collapsed and needed more than three decades to enter a regional parliament again. However, if the electoral threshold for entering the German Bundestag had been lower, history might have developed quite differently: in Austria, only 4 % of the vote would have been required to celebrate an electoral breakthrough. Also, in Italy, about 4.5 % of the vote, a result similar to the NPD, brought the far-right Italian Social Movement seats in both legislative chambers at the elections of 1968. Therefore, focusing on historical reasons related to Germany's Nazi past to explain the delayed electoral breakthrough of a far-right party in the Federal Republic is insufficient. Instead, specific institutional choices made during the drafting of the Basic Law in 1949 were crucial: a strong constitutional court with the power to ban political parties and a high electoral threshold. Furthermore, 1969 could have been a critical juncture, but this was narrowly avoided – reflecting what social scientists call “contingency”, or to put it more bluntly, a slice of luck: had the NPD electoral campaign been only slightly more successful, the history of far-right party politics in the Federal Republic might have developed more in line with other western European countries.

In the 1980s, the first ‘modern’ far-right parties focusing on anti-elitist ‘populism’ enjoyed electoral success in western Europe, marking the third wave of far-right politics: the Front National became an increasingly relevant domestic player, while Jörg Haider took over the FPÖ and revamped it. Many other countries followed, the entry into government of far-right parties in Italy and unseen electoral success of the Belgian far right being important examples from the 1990s. In Germany, however, Die Republikaner (The Republicans) remained a flash party, with some temporary success, for instance in southern Germany, Berlin, and at the EP election in 1989, where the party's 7.1 % constituted a record nationwide far-right result at that time. However, the strong exclusion of the far right by the established centre-right parties, as well as left-wing countermobilization, contributed to the marginalization of far-right forces during that period (Art 2006). Moreover, their inability to form a single, united party was also detrimental to their long-time success (Decker 2000). Even in eastern Germany, it was not one but two different parties – the NPD and the DVU – that gained seats in some regional elections in the late 1990s and in the 2000s.

While most western European countries saw the electoral breakthrough of the far right during the third wave of far-right politics, Germany's experience was rather similar to that of Portugal, Spain, or Sweden. There, breakthrough occurred only in the 2010s, during the fourth wave, which was marked by the 'normalization' of far-right parties elsewhere, including participation in government. Importantly, the AfD did not emerge as a typical populist radical right party, but as a neoliberal right-wing party (Arzheimer 2015). Such a history of party transformation is similar to those of the major far-right parties in Denmark and Norway, which emerged as neoliberal anti-tax parties, or in Switzerland, where the SVP was formed as an agrarian party. The AfD was initially dominated by neoliberals and conservatives, criticizing the Merkel government, her alleged turn towards social democracy, and her Eurozone policies. This beginning was relevant for the party to take off – a strong anti-immigration platform might have prevented the recruitment of former CDU and FDP members and 'respectable' professors, who were key for the formation of the new challenger.

Today the AfD is the focal point in Germany's far-right scene. Importantly, unlike in other countries, its rise was not linked to charismatic leaders such as Jean-Marie Le Pen, Jörg Haider, or Nigel Farage. Instead, the AfD party organization is marked by an absence of strong and charismatic leaders, relying on a relatively inclusive and decentralized party structure that regularly breeds not only internal but also public conflicts (Heinze and Weisskircher 2021). Ever since its foundation, the party has acted as an issue entrepreneur, benefiting from opposition to mainstream responses to political crises (Hansen and Olsen 2024). In 2021, the party managed to get re-elected despite the unfavourable context of the COVID-19 pandemic. While the AfD did lose some voting shares, from a long-term perspective, the more important fact was the party's clear re-election. Still, the party briefly struggled in the first half of 2022, at the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, when it not only suffered from relatively low poll numbers, but even dropped out of the Schleswig-Holstein regional parliament in May 2022. However, the party's fortunes quickly changed. In early 2025, the AfD is polling second nation-wide, with about 20% of support.

(II) The broad variety of interconnected political players

Before the electoral breakthrough of the AfD, Germany was once portrayed as case of 'extremism without successful parties' (Backes and Mudde 2000) – a description that points to the relevance of the non-party far-right scene. In organizational terms, the contemporary far right in Europe is a broad church

of political parties, social movement organizations, and subcultural milieus (Mudde 2019). For a long time, many western European societies with strong far-right parties saw little far-right activism on the streets – in fact, research emphasized an inverse relationship between far-right strength in the electoral and the protest arena (e.g., Hutter 2014). During the fourth wave of far-right politics, however, Germany has developed quite differently: far-right actors inside and outside the legislatures – of major and minor relevance – are quite successful at mobilizing and often have close ties to each other (Weisskircher 2024).

Key players within the AfD have even adopted a movement-party strategy approach, actively trying to cooperate with anti-immigration groups, protestors against the politics of the COVID-19 pandemic, or opponents of wind parks, amongst others (Heinze and Weisskircher 2021). In this respect, the AfD stands out: the FPÖ, for example, has long avoided close ties with far-right protestors – though this has recently changed to some extent, over the course of the ‘refugee crisis’ and the rise of Generation Identity, but especially during the pandemic, when protestors against responses to the COVID-19 pandemic mobilized on the streets.

The Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA) have been the major case of an anti-immigration social movement protest, starting to mobilize – and at the same time peaking – in the city of Dresden in the winter of 2014 and 2015 (Volk 2020). With about 20,000 followers over several months, PEGIDA was one of the biggest far-right protests in recent western European history. Other local anti-immigration protest groups in Germany that have gained traction are Zukunft Heimat (Future [of the] Homeland) in southern Brandenburg and many local initiatives, often forming protests against the creation of accommodation centres for asylum-seekers.

The COVID-19 pandemic also underlined the importance of far-right street politics beyond the issue of immigration (Grande et al. 2021, Nachtwey et al. 2020, Heinze and Weisskircher 2022). Protest against the government measures during the pandemic, first the ‘lockdown’ policies and later the vaccination, involved a high number of new political actors propagating conspiracy theories and antisemitism, sometimes linked to pre-existing far-right groups.

Moreover, online platforms such as Telegram, Facebook, or their own ‘news’ websites are of strong importance for almost all major far-right players in Germany, with issues such as immigration, crime, gender, climate, and the COVID-19 pandemic being particularly relevant (Hoffmann and Rone 2024). Online activism has broader consequences: for example, a digital campaign by Generation Identity activists has motivated the AfD to mobilize against the Global Compact for Migration (Klinger et al. 2022).

While it was the French Nouvelle Droite, and most prominently Alain de Benoist, that have shaped the intellectual debates also within German far-right

circles for many decades, by now far-right ‘knowledge production’ has become increasingly vibrant inside Germany too. The Institut für Staatspolitik (IfS, Institute for State Policy) as the main ‘think tank’ published books as well as the magazine *Sezession* (Backes 2024).

The most severe form of far-right action is violence against minorities and political opponents. Here, the case of Germany stands out negatively: from 1990 to 2015, Germany saw particularly high cases of right-wing terrorism and violence compared to other European countries (Ravndal 2018). The aftermath of the sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year’s Eve 2015/2016 saw another temporary spark in violence against immigrants (Frey 2020). State representatives have increasingly been the target of violent action (König and Jäckle 2024).

(III) ‘Eastern Germany’ as a regional stronghold

In general, far-right actors have been stronger in the east than in the west of Germany – the AfD is about twice as strong in the territories that constituted the German Democratic Republic (Weisskircher 2020). This asymmetry between the west and the east also matters for non-party activism: PEGIDA was founded and was strongest in the Saxon city of Dresden. Other protest groups such as Generation Identity or Zukunft Heimat have also been active mainly or exclusively in the east. The IfS operated from a village in Saxony-Anhalt. Violent incidents have also been more frequent in the east (König and Jäckle 2024).

However, far-right strength in the east is not necessarily a consequence of long-term historical experience as some scholars, who focus on a *longue durée* perspective on the region of East Elbia, suggest. They point, for example, to an enshrined ‘fear of the other’ as a consequence of being a border region between Germanic and Slavic populations since the Middle Ages, which serves here as an explanation for the strength of the far right in contemporary politics (Kollmorgen 2021). However, this might be historical cherry-picking rather than a fruitful explanatory approach: Saxony, for example, now known as a far-right hotspot, was a stronghold of the labour movement in the 19th century and was even labelled the “Red Kingdom”. In 1863, Ferdinand Lassalle founded the General German Workers’ Association (ADAV, Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiter-Verein, ADAV) in the Saxon city of Leipzig. Based on this experience, we could also wrongly expect the region to be a left-wing stronghold today. And indeed, in 1990 many SPD politicians hoped for a strong result in the first elections after the fall of the SED – but it was the CDU that became the dominant force in the region.

It is more promising to understand the strength of the far right in the east by focusing on developments in recent history (Weisskircher 2020): the heritage

of the GDR is one of economic divergence, while the neoliberal transformation politics of the 1990s have brought new socioeconomic insecurities such as periods of mass unemployment in the 1990s and early 2000s. Experiences with immigration have been much more limited during the GDR, with no *Gastarbeiter* movement in the 1960s and 1970s. At the same time, eastern Germans experienced a sudden increase in immigration since the mid-2010s. Moreover, elite transfer from the west to the east has led to a strong dissatisfaction with representation, with many eastern Germans feeling treated like ‘second-class citizens’.

Some empirical studies provide interesting insights into eastern German particularities: Manow (2018) shows that in the Bundestag election of 2017 the AfD fared better in electoral districts with less unemployment in 2000 – independent of the economic situation at the time of the election. This observation points to the importance of “economic memory” and long-term feelings of insecurity. Beyond economics, the share of the population holding nativist attitudes is higher than in the west, which serves as strong predictor of far-right support at the individual level (Arzheimer 2024, see the section below). Stances on the functioning of democracy are far more negative in the east than in the west: in 2022, half (51.5%) of the eastern German population say that they are dissatisfied, although in the west the number is still substantial at 39.9% (Ziegler and Schulz 2023b).

Still, in the 1990s and 2000s, it was not primarily the far right, but PDS/Die Linke, that is, the successor party to the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei, SED), that was able to attract the support of those dissatisfied with reunification and (the functioning of) democracy. Participation in regional government and an increasingly ‘Green’ profile have prevented the party from retaining this role – today, the AfD occupies the position of the eastern German protest party (Olsen 2018).

Importantly, however, the focus on eastern Germany comes with some caveats that are often neglected in both public and academic debate in Germany. First, far more eastern Germans (68.2%) than western Germans (52.2%) say that the country has benefited from the 1989 border opening (Ziegler and Schulz 2023b). This imbalance points to the substantial dissatisfaction with ‘reunification’ in western Germany, highlighting existing resentment towards the east, even though this has not become a particularly salient issue for the western German population. Second, it is important to note that the far right has also been increasingly successful in western Germany: in the Hesse regional elections in 2023, for example, the AfD received 18.4% of the vote and became the second-strongest party in the regional legislature. Third, a strong subnational variation in far-right support exists not only in Germany, but also elsewhere. Parties like the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ, Freedom Party

of Austria) or La Lega or presidential candidates like Marine Le Pen have had quite different shares of the vote across different regions. While in Germany, the country's east is often framed as a particularly exceptional affair, the AfD's results in the east are not higher than the nationwide share of far-right parties abroad, implying that they are more akin to other cases of far-right success than exceptional. And while the specific conditions in the east certainly boost far-right success, most of them are specific local manifestations of broader political conflicts concerning globalization and immigration.

(IV) The importance of the 'refugee crisis' and non-European immigration

While immigration has long been politicized in Germany, the 'refugee crisis' in 2015 proved to be a transformative event in party competition (Gessler and Hunger 2024). Elsewhere in western Europe, already established far-right parties gained even more support in the mid-2010s. In Germany, the period marked the electoral breakthrough of the AfD. Two years before 2015 and mobilizing mainly against Eurozone politics, the AfD still failed to enter the Bundestag – but two years after 2015, this time mobilizing against the politics of the 'refugee crisis', the AfD easily entered parliament. Correspondingly, the AfD electorate was more sceptical of immigration in 2017 and 2021 than it was just after the party's foundation (Hansen and Olsen 2024).

Importantly, the refugee crisis points to the relevance of immigration from outside of the EU, in particular from the Middle East and Northern Africa. The AfD has not politicized migration flows within the EU as much as other far-right parties did just a decade earlier. Significant minorities of the German population favour a complete ban on immigration by Muslims: 17.8% in the west and 22.2% in the east (Ziegler and Schulz 2023b). But survey numbers indicate the widespread popularity of anti-immigration positions well beyond the AfD vote: much higher shares of the population state that they feel like "foreigners in their own country" because of Muslim immigration: 41.1% in the west and 47% in the east approve of this statement, while only 38.1% in the west and 32.1% in the east reject it (Ziegler and Schulz 2023b). Similarly striking are the strong majorities that explicitly approve of the view that immigrants are slowly "replacing" the German native population – a statement that is strongly reminiscent of the far-right Great Replacement conspiracy: 45.4% of the respondents in western Germany and 42.9% of respondents in eastern Germany agree with it (Ziegler and Schulz 2023b). At the same time, views on Ukrainian war refugees are comparatively liberal: in both western (58.4%) and eastern Germany (54.7%), similarly strong majorities think that Germany

should host them, while only 14.3 % in the west and 18.8 % hold clearly negative views (Ziegler and Schulz 2023b).

The focus on non-European immigration corresponds to a broader ‘civilizational’ turn in far-right ideology (Brubaker 2017). It is insufficient to describe the contemporary far right as nativists or xenophobic nationalists alone (Mudde 2007) – they are also pro-European nativists, emphasizing a positive but exclusionary European identity (Caiani and Weisskircher 2022). PEGIDA’s name, for example, reflects such an ideological shift: the Patriotic Europeans – not Germans – mobilized against the Islamization of the Occident.

(V) Climate and energy as emerging issues

In recent decades, far-right parties have never focused solely on the “single issue” of immigration (Mudde 1999), but they have also campaigned on topics such as economics, European integration, and political corruption. Recently, they have taken advantage of several crises where they have been able to oppose mainstream politics, most notably the case of the COVID-19 pandemic (Wondreys and Mudde 2022). The issue of climate politics has been another case in point, with an increasing number of far-right parties propagating climate denialism (Forchtner 2019), of special importance for the far right in Germany. A key reason for that is the high public salience of the issue in the context of Germany’s energy transition (*Energiewende*).

Importantly, the AfD has denied human-made climate change and strongly mobilized against the *Energiewende* by criticizing state intervention in the economy such as subsidies for renewable energy as well as environmentalists such as the Green party or Last Generation activists. It already rejected such energy sources in its first electorally successful regional campaigns in 2014. The party’s *Grundsatzprogramm* in 2016 provided a comprehensive rejection of the *Energiewende*. Interestingly, while the party suffered from many internal conflicts during the first decades of its existence (Heinze and Weisskircher 2021), climate denialism was hardly in contention.

Still, within the broader German population, the explicit denial of human-made climate change is a fringe position, lower than the electoral reach of the AfD: in the west, 11.4 % of the population doubt climate change is human-made; in the east the share is 14 % (Ziegler and Schulz 2023b). Importantly, climate denialism has a clear ideological bent: 28.1 % of those who classify themselves as ideologically right-wing doubt human-made climate change (Ziegler and Schulz 2023b). When it comes to more concrete political conflicts related to energy, larger shares of the population may be mobilized against climate action: 41.1 % of western Germans and 43.2 % of eastern Germans state

that they “support demonstrations against high energy prices and inflation” (Ziegler and Schulz 2023b).

Ekkberg et al. (2023) argue that far-right obstruction against specific climate policies might be a bigger challenge than climate denialism. And indeed, the AfD has strongly mobilized against specific climate action policies, for example against wind power – a strategy with positive effects for the party: individuals that are more hostile towards renewables are also more likely to sympathize with the AfD, while the party is electorally stronger in municipalities with more new wind turbines (Otteni and Weisskircher 2022). The AfD saw the opportunity to criticize the *Energiewende* also in the context of Russia’s war against Ukraine: the rejection of the accelerated expansion of renewable energy infrastructure was an important dimension of far-right mobilization against increased energy prices and inflation more generally.

Far-right denialism has also mattered beyond party politics. EIKE (European Institute for Climate and Energy, Europäisches Institut für Klima und Energie) is a climate denialist think tank, founded in 2007 and now located in Jena. EIKE has ties to The Heartland Institute in the United States and, more importantly, to the AfD, some EIKE figures having been active for the latter. Still, the organization has only a limited budget; one of its main activities is regular YouTube videos propagating climate denialist positions, which reach only a limited audience. *Die Kehre* (The Turn) is a quarterly that has been published since 2020, initiated by far-right activists close to the AfD, and discusses environmental and climate issues. In its second issue, Alexander Gauland gave a long interview on sustainability. While the AfD has also tried to make ties with local “not in my backyard” protestors against wind turbines, cooperation has probably remained the exception rather than the rule.

While many far-right parties in western Europe have moved towards positions sceptical of climate change (Forchtner 2019), the issue is particularly salient for the AfD. Already in 2019, at the peak of Fridays for Future mobilization, Alexander Gauland emphasized, after focusing on the rejection of Eurozone and immigration policies, opposition to “so-called climate protection” as the next major topic for the AfD (Welt 2019). Correspondingly, the AfD is comparatively negative in its opposition to renewables. In comparison, the FPÖ, for example, has remained much more ambivalent. In 2017, the Austrian party still welcomed the use of renewable energy sources in its electoral manifesto. Also, the party never mobilized to such an extent against wind power as the AfD has done – it was often positive about this energy source. However, in recent years, the FPÖ too has become more sceptical about climate action, probably learning from the case of Germany. While immigration has most certainly remained the core issue of the AfD, climate and energy are other relevant issues for the party – yet to be linked to the issue of climate refugees.

(VI) ‘Militant democracy’ and the exclusion of the far right

The normalization processes during the fourth wave of far-right politics have led to the increasing participation of far-right political parties in government all over Europe and beyond (Mudde 2019). In this respect, however, Germany has remained exceptional. Its mainstream parties have long shied away from cooperation with far-right challengers such as Die Republikaner or NPD and instead relied on a strategy of anti-pacting (Art 2024). The same has been true in the case of responses to the AfD; even though parties have struggled to find effective strategies to curb down the rise of the new party, they have generally refrained from cooperation (Heinze 2020).

The ideational basis for this rejection is “wehrhafte Demokratie” – “militant democracy”, a concept proposed by Karl Loewenstein (1937a, 1937b), a Jewish lawyer and legal scholar in the Weimar Republic who fled from National Socialism to the United States. As discussed above, Germany’s constitution allows the banning of anti-constitutional parties – this applied to the SRP in 1952 – and has a relatively high electoral threshold of 5%, preventing the NPD from entering the Bundestag in 1969. The Office for the Protection against the Constitution is a key player in this regard – given the country’s federalism, this also holds true for the regional offices. In three eastern states, the regional offices regard ‘their’ AfD branches as “gesichert rechtsextrem” (“certainly extreme right”). In early 2024, an increasing number of politicians from other parties even called for the party to be banned. In the past, the NPD had to undergo two ban procedures before Germany’s constitutional court (2001–2003 and 2013–2017); both, however, were unsuccessful (Backes 2019).

A key issue for the immediate future is whether German mainstream parties and especially the centre-right will sustain its exclusionary position towards the AfD. Inside eastern German CDU branches, there are some minority views that favour cooperation. In February 2020, the election of FDP candidate Thomas Kemmerich with the votes of AfD and CDU as prime minister in Thuringia caused a political earthquake in Germany, at least for a few days. Ultimately, Kemmerich had to step down. The CDU then started to tolerate a left-wing minority government formed by Die Linke, the SPD, and the Greens. In some instances, however, the CDU and the AfD legislatively cooperated in Thuringia. After the regional elections in the eastern German states of Brandenburg, Saxony, and Thuringia in the autumn of 2024, the CDU, as well as other parties, continued to exclude the AfD, despite its strong electoral results. So far, within Germany’s center-right, those forces rejecting coalitions with the AfD have remained in charge.

Outlook

The chapter has discussed six different dimensions that are key for understanding the fourth wave of far-right politics in contemporary Germany and put them into the larger European context: (I) the delayed electoral breakthrough of a far-right party, (II) the broad variety of interconnected far-right political players, (III) ‘eastern Germany’ as regional stronghold, (IV) the importance of the ‘refugee crisis’ and non-European immigration for understanding far-right success, (V) climate change and energy as an emerging political issue for far-right mobilization, and (VI) the exclusion of the far right by other actors as key dimension of ‘militant democracy’ in Germany.

To be sure, there are many other important dimensions to Germany’s far right which require in-depth study. For example, apart from climate change, mobilization against gender-related policies is another emerging topic for the AfD and for Germany’s far right more generally. Here, we can observe contradictory developments. On the one hand, many far-right forces have become less discriminatory about homosexuality. AfD co-leader Alice Weidel is married to a woman, some key party figures accept equal marriage – and even instrumentalize homophobia by linking it primarily to Muslim immigrants, in line with the stances of other far-right players in Europe (Berntzen 2020). On the other hand, the AfD and other actors increasingly mobilize against LGBT activism and related liberalization policies, also on the local level – framing “Gender Gaga” (“gender lunacy”) as key problem of our societies, often coupled with harsh discriminatory language.

Since 1945, the Federal Republic of Germany has long been one of the exceptions in western European politics because of the lack of an established far-right party – quite unlike the post-fascist states of Austria and Italy, but long similar to countries such as Portugal, Spain, or Sweden. Today, far-right parties have entered parliament in all of these states. Still, to some extent, Germany has remained quite exceptional within Europe, especially because of two developments: in general, mainstream parties including the centre-right CDU/CSU still refuse to cooperate with the AfD. Moreover, the rise of a far-right party in the 2010s did not curb non-electoral far-right activism, such as in street politics and in increasingly visible intellectual circles. To the contrary, Germany’s far-right scene has gained strength both in the electoral and in non-electoral arena. For the future of far-right politics in Europe, it will be important to see whether other countries will adopt these movement-party strategy approach, that is, with strong far-right forces outside of parliaments too – or, which seems rather unlikely at the moment, whether other countries will follow Germany’s *Brandmauer* (firewall) model against the far right, with mainstream parties refusing to cooperate with them.

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Árpád von Klimó

What Democracy? Hungarian Public Opinion Twelve Years into Viktor Orbán's Authoritarian Regime

The shift towards an increasingly authoritarian, “illiberal” political system since 2010 has entailed efforts to control political and juridical institutions, the media, and the academic sphere¹ as the Hungarian government under Viktor Orbán has systematically taken control of the media system and marginalized or silenced independent or oppositional voices.² In this context, government-orchestrated narratives have been dominating the Hungarian information landscape in an attempt to shape public perceptions on issues such as national history or the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine.³ This article investigates how Hungarian state propaganda and restrictions on free speech might have influenced Hungarian attitudes towards democracy and authoritarianism, as well as historical memory, by analyzing online survey data from 2022. To gain a deeper understanding of the 2022 survey findings, I will compare them with results obtained in other European countries that have not experienced a similar authoritarian turn. We might anticipate a significant divergence in attitudes compared to countries with functioning democratic institutions and a stronger protection of liberal values, such as Austria or Czechia, but do the results confirm such expectations?

Additionally, I will compare the 2022 results with my analysis of an earlier Hungarian survey (December 2007) which was conducted during a period of more democratic pluralism and liberalism, albeit amidst a time of crisis.⁴ Has

1 For a recent, systematic investigation of the various aspects of the authoritarian transformation, see: Barlai, Melani, Florian Hartleb, and Dániel Mikecz. *Das politische System Ungarns*. Nomos, 2023.

2 For a short overview, see chapter V in Barlai, *Politisches System*, pp. 111–120.

3 Urbán, Ágnes, and Gábor Polyák. “How public service media disinformation shapes Hungarian public discourse.” *Media and Communication* 11.4 (2023): 62–72. The authors found several false statements which have been repeated over and over, including that it was Ukraine that “provoked” the Russian invasion, or the claim that “only Hungary” wanted a “peaceful solution” while the West supported war, etc.

4 At the end of 2007, 58 % of Hungarians felt they had no influence on politics, which was the highest percentage in the four countries under investigation. See: Klimó, Árpád von Ch. 4.3. Hungary, in: Rathkolb, Oliver, and Günther Ogris. *Authoritarianism, History and Democratic Dispositions in Austria, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic*. Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2010, 79–90, here: 82.

the illiberal transformation of Hungarian democracy since 2010 led to a discernible shift in Hungarian attitudes towards democracy and authoritarianism, and has it influenced the perception of historical events like the Holocaust and World War II? To my surprise, the results reveal a far greater complexity of Hungarian public opinion today and prevent a straightforward correlation between attitudes and the regime's propaganda.

In conclusion, I will analyze the 2022 survey in the context of contemporary Hungarian history.

(1) The authoritarian system amidst liberal democracies

One might initially assume that the authoritarian regime established in Hungary over the past decade has negatively influenced Hungarian attitudes towards democracy, leading them to diverge significantly from those observed in countries with better-functioning democratic and liberal institutions. However, despite (or because of?) the regime's influence on the media and public debate, a surprising 70 % of Hungarians expressed support for "democracy as the best form of government" in 2022. This represents not only a 10 % increase since 2019, but also surpasses the Czech Republic and positions itself just 1 % below Poland, which also faces democratic challenges. Even if the Hungarian support for democracy is still 9 % lower than in Austria, the rise of this positive attitude requires explanation. Since Viktor Orbán claims that his regime is a democracy, Fidesz supporters also consider themselves democrats, though not necessarily "liberal" ones. Hans-Georg Heinrich argues that right-wing populists rather claim to struggle for a different democracy in the name of "the nation/the people" against cosmopolitan, liberal elites.⁵

Or, one might question whether this opinion poll actually reflects discontent with the government's authoritarian tendencies or could even imply conformity. The contradiction could be explained by the concept of an "illiberal informational autocracy".⁶ An illiberal informational autocracy is a regime that uses propaganda and disinformation to control the information available to its citizens. This control allows the regime to shape public opinion in its favour. According to Péter Krekó, the creation of a Fidesz-controlled "Media Authority and the courts paved the way for the huge media acquisitions that helped to

5 Heinrich, Hans-Georg. "From Horthy to Orbán: Neo-Authoritarianism in Hungary." *New Authoritarianism: Challenges to Democracy in the 21st century*, (2019). <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/53298>. 100–28, here 101.

6 Péter Krekó has analyzed the Fidesz regime using this concept: Krekó, Péter. "The Birth of an Illiberal Informational Autocracy in Europe: A Case Study on Hungary." *Journal of Illiberalism Studies* 2.1 (2022): 16–37.

create an information environment where the government enjoys a hegemonic role but not a monopolistic one”.⁷ This hegemony led to a situation where propaganda messages resonated with a significant portion of the population, with support reaching beyond the Fidesz voter base. While the government’s influence on public opinion might hold true for certain issues, its impact is surely not universal across all significant political questions.

This discrepancy becomes evident when we examine the high level of public support for Hungary’s membership in the European Union, a stark contrast to the government’s often negative and anti-EU propaganda.⁸ In the 2022 survey, both in Poland, where the authoritarian government has recently been voted out of office, and in Hungary, where Fidesz won another landslide victory in the 2023 elections, relative majorities expressed greater satisfaction with democracy at the European level than within their own nations. In Poland, 43 % held this view, compared to 31 % in Hungary. This suggests that these segments of the population might perceive authoritarian tendencies within their own countries as problematic. Notably, Hungarians express exceptionally low trust in politicians (9 %), highlighting the opposition’s weakness too. A closer look at certain policy issues revealed that most Hungarians are both pro-EU membership and, at the same, against further integration and in favour of stronger national sovereignty within the EU, which could again indicate limits and successes of government propaganda.⁹

Another survey result prompts caution regarding claims of widespread manipulation of public opinion in Hungary. Support for a “strong leader”, at 36 %, is relatively moderate and even lower than in core European integration countries like Italy (46 %) and France (41 %). This may suggest that the Hungarian authoritarian regime’s propaganda does not significantly reinforce authoritarian attitudes within the population. Additionally, anxieties or anomie seem to be widespread across Europe, including in established Western democracies like the Netherlands (as shown by Geert Wilders’ success), potentially contributing to the rise of authoritarianism, a phenomenon surely not solely attributable to Viktor Orbán and his media hegemony.¹⁰ Over the past three decades, feelings of anomie, or the perception of lacking political influence,

7 Krekó, “The birth”, 70.

8 In the spring 2023 (99) Eurobarometer Survey, 54 % of Hungarian respondents expressed “trust” in the European Union, which is 7 % higher than the EU average, although 41 % also trust their national government.

9 These are the findings of: Bíró-Nagy, András, and Áron József Szászi. “Perceptions of the European Union’s Policy Impact: Europeanisation of Public Attitudes in Hungary.” *East European Politics and Societies* (2023): 08883254231196317.

10 For the history of the concept, see: Deflem, Mathieu. 2015. “Anomie: History of the Concept.” in *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences*, second edition, Volume 1, edited by James D. Wright. Oxford, UK: Elsevier, 718–721.

have even notably declined in Hungary. This decrease, from 81% in 1993 to 45% in 2022, might be attributed to the country's relative stability as a member of the EU and NATO.¹¹ Despite this decrease in recent years, Hungary still exhibits the highest level of anomie in the surveyed countries, with 55% of respondents feeling politically powerless (a 1% increase since 2019). And, even more telling: only 9% of Hungarians expressed the opinion that "an individual can have influence on the development in her/his country" (2-1), by far the lowest number compared to other countries. In contrast, Czechs, Austrians, Germans, French, and Italians experience significantly lower levels of anomie, with figures of around 30%. As the government consolidates its control over institutions and media, the majority of the population continue to grapple with feelings of political alienation and powerlessness.

Drawing conclusions about the specific influence of Hungary's political regime on popular attitudes towards historical memory remains similarly challenging. Do the survey results primarily reflect the influence of regime propaganda, or do they reveal pre-existing popular sentiments that the regime has appropriated and subsequently reinforced?

This ambivalence is obvious in the discussion about the Second World War and the Holocaust (Fig. 2-39). Only Hungarians demonstrate significant support for the statement that "the discussion should end" (38% fully agree, 59% agree, and only 17% disagree), while disagreement dominates in all other countries, especially in the UK (68%, Czechia 44%, and Poland still 40%). While national narratives that emphasize "victor" (UK) or "victim" (Poland, Czechia) roles might contribute to the observed differences, even in defeated and complicit nations like Germany and Austria, relative majorities oppose ending the discussion (44% in both cases). Furthermore, the divergence of Hungarian responses from the trend observed elsewhere has widened since 2007, as we will explore later.

Also, support for the statement "the discussion of World War II should be ended" requires nuanced interpretation. While it may reflect right-wing sentiment in some contexts, it can also represent a critical stance against political manipulation. In Poland, for example, this viewpoint might criticize the PiS government's exploitation of anti-German sentiment through demands for war reparations. However, in Germany, the influx of immigrants from the Middle East, particularly Syrians and Afghans since 2015, has led to a complex and evolving understanding of World War II and the Holocaust within certain segments of the population. This could sometimes even be manifested in antisemitism, and 44% of the respondents agreed with this statement in

11 Quoted in: Körösenyi, András. *Government and Politics in Hungary*, CEU: Budapest 1998, 15.

2022 (32 % disagreed).¹² Hungarian government representatives even boasted that Jews were much safer in Hungary compared to Germany after the Hamas attacks and the rise of anti-Jewish violence in many Western European countries in the fall of 2023.¹³ On the other hand, antisemitic attitudes seemed to be three times higher in Hungary (37 %) compared to Germany (12 %), as an Anti-Defamation League survey conducted in the winter of 2022/23 showed.¹⁴ The picture becomes even more complicated when we look at its converse: positive attitudes towards Jews are also relatively high (39 %) in Hungary (at the same level as in Czechia and Italy), according to our survey, which is still lower than in Germany or Austria (52 % and 54 % respectively).¹⁵ The idea that Jews have “too much influence on public opinion” has also declined since 2019: down to 20 % (from 24 % in 2019), while the number of those who contradict this statement has slightly risen from 28 to 31 %. In short, Hungarian public opinion is rather split on the question of Jews or “Jewish influence” and has a stronger proportion of people with antisemitic attitudes.

The Hungarian government presents Hungary as a victim of German aggression during World War II. This view focuses on the German invasion in 1944 but ignores the significant support for the pro-Nazi Arrow Cross regime by many within Hungary’s elite and population. This skewed perspective is evident in the government-built monument in Budapest, which emphasizes the “rape of Hungary” narrative.¹⁶ At the same time, this is a good example of government propaganda which amplifies ideas and sentiments already very popular among many Hungarians.

Fewer Hungarians (41 %) than Czechs (48 %) and Poles (64 %) express a positive opinion on the “opening of the borders in 1989” (2–38). It not easy to interpret these differences because the question could be understood in various ways: while Czechs were not allowed to travel to the West after the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, Hungarians had more and more opportunities to travel across the Iron Curtain. Most respondents would probably understand it as an opinion about the communist system in their country. But the experiences of communism in these countries were very different, not only in 1989, and perspectives differed even more in the post-communist decade of the

12 Stender, Wolfram. “Das antisemitische Unbewusste. Zur politischen Psychologie des Antisemitismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.” *Antisemitismus in der Migrationsgesellschaft*, Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung: Bonn, 2020, 21–40. Our survey: 2–62.

13 Even long before the Hamas attacks, Hungarian government circles spread this message: https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/culture_society/research_danube_institute_antisemitism_hungary_safest_for_jew_in_europes/

14 https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/2023-05/ADL-Global100-2023_o.pdf

15 Figures 2–60 (positive) and 2–61 (negative).

16 Eröss, Ágnes. “‘In memory of victims’: Monument and counter-monument in Liberty Square, Budapest.” *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 65.3 (2016): 237–254.

1990s, when the memory of communism was shaped. The relatively negative view of 1989 in Hungary could either be an expression of the negative memories of the 1990s, when hundreds of thousands experienced economic hardship and social decline, or show the impact of Fidesz propaganda: while their 2010 electoral victory was celebrated as a “national revolution”, 1989 was interpreted in contrast as an event that was rather marked by continuity with the communist dictatorship.¹⁷

Data from recent polls align with the recent analysis by Ivan Krastev, suggesting a potential north–south divide within Eastern Europe on the response to the war in Ukraine.¹⁸ While Poland and the Baltic states stand firmly behind Ukraine, nations like Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia appear hesitant to support military aid and sanctions against Russia. This discrepancy is particularly evident in a poll by the Bruegel Institute, where almost 60 % of Poles considered sanctions “necessary to support Ukraine”, compared to only half as many Hungarians. Notably, a majority (40 %) of Hungarians believed the sanctions were not worth the negative economic impact.¹⁹ Our own survey (2–81) further highlights this divide, with only 16 % of Hungarians supporting a stop to gas and oil imports from Russia, compared to a resounding 65 % of Poles. While this could be interpreted as confirmation of the anti-sanction narrative promoted by the Orbán regime, it is important to acknowledge that a significant portion (31 %) of Hungarians remain critical of their government’s response to the invasion (2–81). Since 2009, Orbán himself has turned from a critic of Putin’s policy to someone who argues for a “pragmatic” relationship, based on the importation of oil and gas and nuclear technology from Russia.²⁰

(2) The impact of state propaganda since 2010?

Deciding whether Hungarians’ differing opinions reflect government propaganda or amplify pre-existing views is challenging. Comparing public opinion before the 2010 Orbán victory and today could reveal the regime’s impact after over a decade in power.

While three-quarters of Hungarians still profess “democracy” as their preferred form of governance, it remains unclear whether this translates to sup-

17 On the negative interpretation of 1989, see: Harms, Victoria. “A Tale of Two Revolutions: Hungary’s 1956 and the Un-doing of 1989.” *East European Politics and Societies* 31.03 (2017): 479–499.

18 ZEIT Stiftung, Keynote by Ivan Krastev, Russia’s Invasion in Ukraine – War in Europe or War on Europe? (March 2023). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2s_stYo8No.

19 <https://www.bruegel.org/analysis/european-public-opinion-remains-supportive-ukraine>

20 Heinrich, “From Horthy to Orbán”, 109.

port for Orbán's "illiberal democracy" model. Similarly difficult to interpret are Hungarian attitudes towards EU membership, which have undergone a stark shift since 2007. Back then, only 37 % considered membership "a good thing", while 43 % remained undecided and 17 % expressed negativity.²¹ This earlier scepticism was arguably fuelled by post-accession disillusionment, following inflated expectations in the lead-up to joining the EU in 2004. In contrast, today's high approval rate could suggest either the ineffectiveness of the government's anti-EU propaganda or, more interestingly, Hungarians' ability to separate their general endorsement of EU membership from the government's harsh rhetoric.

The next question I would like to focus on is the question of the "authoritarian character" or the diffusion of "authoritarian ideas" in Hungary today compared to 2007. Here, we encounter a notable change in the support for a "strong leader": a 16 percentage point increase compared to 15 years earlier in the number of Hungarians endorsing the need for a strong leader, indicating a potential rise in authoritarian attitudes, potentially linked to the influence of the illiberal regime and its sustained propaganda efforts. Interestingly, the figure of 36 % falls roughly in line with the estimated percentage of strong supporters behind the governing party, which has been Orbán's core base instrumental in his four consecutive electoral victories. And, the figure corresponds to those 35 % of Hungarians who favoured Vladimir Putin as a leader (with 44 % opposed).²² In a similar vein, signs of aggressive authoritarianism were already strong in Hungary before 2010. In 2022, 81 % (strongly or fully agree) of Hungarians (2-18) called for tougher punishment of criminals, in comparison to 78.2 % in 2007. However, the percentage of those who disagree with this grew from only 7.5 % in 2007 to 17 % in 2022. The 2022 survey also revealed that a very low 9 % of Hungarians believe individual citizen can influence their country's development. This figure represents a notable 14 % decline since 1993.²³ There is, unquestionably, a deepening alienation from the political system.

Memory politics present another area where Hungarian attitudes diverge from the other European countries in our survey. Notably, Hungarians express a stronger desire to move past discussions of World War II than citizens in the surrounding democracies. While a direct comparison between the 2007 and 2022 surveys is hampered by slight differences in the questions' wording, some trends seem apparent.

21 Standard Eurobarometer 67, spring 2007. National report Hungary, 11.

22 Heinrich, "From Horthy to Orbán", 110.

23 Based on a survey accomplished by Bruszt and Simon in 1994, quoted in: András Körösenyi, *Government and Politics in Hungary*, CEU: Budapest 1998, 15.

Self-criticism regarding Hungarian complicity in the Holocaust appears to have declined. In 2007, 22% acknowledged their country's responsibility for and even potential profiting from the mass murder of Hungarian Jews. This figure is not directly comparable to responses in the 2022 survey. However, the continued presence of a desire to end World War II discussions, rising slightly from 53% in 2007 to 59% in 2022, suggests a potential shift in attitudes that warrants further investigation. On the topic of World War II remembrance, Austria and Hungary have diverged markedly since 2007: while a Hungarian majority for moving away from discussions on World War II has grown, Austria has witnessed a notable 10% decrease, which underscores a widening gap between the two populations' approaches to historical memory.

Since the first survey on authoritarianism in 2007 and Viktor Orbán's 2010 electoral triumph, Hungarian political attitudes have undergone a remarkable shift. Anomic and authoritarian views appear to have grown, while self-critical national remembrance has decreased. This coincides with Hungary's transformation into an authoritarian system with weakened checks and balances. Political opinions have become more anomic, more authoritarian, and perhaps more cynical, and national remembrance less self-critical. It appears as if the regime's propaganda has strengthened pre-existing trends in the country, which is tautological, to some extent: Orbán won a landslide victory because he manipulated existing prejudices and frustrations, but his regime and its propaganda have further amplified these trends.

Conclusions

Hungary in 2007 was a young democracy confronting a deep crisis: nascent authoritarian tendencies, anomie, and disillusionment with the EU. At the time, we interpreted this crisis in the context of disappointments about EU membership, and retained an optimistic perspective on a continent unified in democratic and liberal terms. But the transformation of this fragile democracy into an authoritarian system controlled by a single majority party and a strong authoritarian leader since 2010 aligns with a far grimmer vision of Europe's future. This pessimism has been fuelled by a series of cataclysmic events: the 2008 financial crisis, the rise of an isolationist US president hostile to European integration, Brexit, and most of all: Russia's devastating invasion of Ukraine. It is this dramatically changed political climate that has even led some, particularly among supporters of former President Trump, to view Orbán as a pioneer, or even a prophet, who foresaw the decline of the liberal world order.²⁴

24 More generally: Deegan-Krause, Kevin, Kurt Weyland, and Raúl Madrid. "Donald

Orbán rose to power through elections, subsequently consolidating his control through legal means which, in the long run, undermined the principles of liberal democracy and defied the separation of power. However, the more concerning question is: why did Hungarian society, the Hungarian people, who had gained the freedoms of a liberal democracy only in 1989, give it up without much resistance only a quarter of a century later? Surely, Fidesz orchestrated the transition to an illiberal state in a methodical manner, taking measured steps and pausing when external pressure or domestic protests mounted. However, as our surveys conducted in 2007 and 2022 demonstrate: a significant portion of Hungarian society, though not the majority, has consistently supported Fidesz and its policies, even as the Orbán governments began to weaken checks and balances and dismantled safeguards of democratic pluralism.

There are a number of explanations for this:

First of all, the “change of the systems” (*rendszerváltás*) of 1989 was not based on a popular uprising or a revolution, but was the result of a process negotiated between some of the Communist elites and parts of civil society, as well as being accompanied by advice and financial incentives from the European Community and the United States. There was no storming of the Bastille, no opening of the Berlin Wall, no Maidan that brought the dictatorship down. The main event in 1989 was the re-burial of some of the leaders of the 1956 uprising, most of them Communists who had turned against the Stalinist system enforced on the country in 1948. Most Hungarians did not feel that this was something they had actively contributed to, hence the high level of anomie in 1993, after the “liberation” from communism. And hence, as early as 1994, the return of large parts of the former Communist Party to power, now in the context of a Socialist–Liberal coalition. Democracy came over most Hungarians; it was not something they had fought for.

Secondly, there was the complex relationship with the West, or rather: the Hungarian discourse about the West, meaning mostly: the image of Western Europe and the United States as a coalition of wealthy, powerful elites who are proud of their liberal ideals even if they do not always follow them. Since the Hungarian Revolution and the “freedom fight” of 1956 became the central focal point of public commemoration, many Hungarians were reminded of the “betrayal of the West” in 1956, when Hungarians who had begged it for military support were left alone to fight the Soviet military machine. This narrative was also, of course, ideologically manipulated, but it was a very popular

Trump and the Lessons of East-Central European Populism.” *When Democracy Trumps Populism*. Cambridge UP: 2019 (<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108692793>): 60–83. Focusing on Orbán: Enyedi, Zsolt. “Right-wing authoritarian innovations in Central and Eastern Europe.” *East European Politics* 36.3 (2020): 363–377.

idea in Hungary. Then, around the centenaries of World War I and Trianon, strongly amplified by the Orbán government in 2018 and 2020, came another round of historical discourses in which the West (especially France) appeared as a power that could be accused of “betraying” the Hungarians. In the face of the 2015 refugee crisis, with millions fleeing conflict in the Middle East seeking refuge through the Balkans, Orbán revived the historical trope of Hungary as the ‘antemurale Christianorum’, invoking anxieties about cultural protection against a perceived influx of outsiders while the West (here: Angela Merkel’s Germany) could be accused of dreaming a multicultural utopia which a large majority of Hungarians rejected.

The existence of these anti-Western reflexes seems to have influenced the mixed responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, when refugees were warmly supported but the Ukrainian fight to be accepted within the European Union as part of the West was regarded with mistrust and gave Orbán the opportunity to claim that the West had (again) betrayed an Eastern European people by pushing the Ukrainians into a hopeless war against the Russian war machine.²⁵ At the same time, the conflict could be connected to Orbán’s ongoing critique of the treatment of the Hungarian minority in Ukraine, particularly since Kyiv’s 2017 ratification of the more restrictive language law.²⁶ This conflict has to be understood in the wider context of Orbán’s policies towards Hungarian minorities in neighbouring countries which, at the same time, evoke memories of Trianon.²⁷ Orbán is mostly trying to use the conflict to portray himself as a shrewd statesman who secures energy imports for his small nation while also standing out as a politician concerned about peace. This is a message that resonates among many in the region (Serbia, Slovakia, eastern Germany) while widening the gap with the northern part of Eastern Europe (Poland, the Baltic states), where concerns about Russian military threats are growing.

In a wider historical perspective, Hans-Georg Heinrich has placed Orbán in a line of continuity with Horthy and Kádár, the other two long-time Hungarian strongmen of the twentieth century.²⁸ Heinrich understands the authoritarian regimes that have been dominating Hungarian politics in the

25 Merabishvili, Gela. “Orbán’s three perspectives on the Russian-Ukrainian War.” (Tbilisi, 2023). <https://ugsp.ug.edu.ge>

26 Sadecki, Andrzej, and Tadeusz Iwański. “Ukraine–Hungary: the intensifying dispute over the Hungarian minority’s rights.” (2017). ceeol.com.

27 For a broader perspective on these policies: Marác, László. “Empowering Hungarian Ethno-Linguistic Minorities in Central-and Eastern Europe.” *Belvedere Meridionale* 28.2 (2016): 21–37.

28 Heinrich, “From Horthy to Orbán”, 111. He emphasizes that all three were authoritarian but not extremely violent. Also, they were all regarded as protectors of the Hungarian nation against foreign enemies.

contemporary period as an expression of the country's economic and social backwardness. This might be going a bit too far and is too deterministic. We should not forget that history is an open process. There are always unexpected twists and turns.

Marta Vukovic | Susanna Bastaroli |
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Reckoning with the Past: Victims, Heroes, or Perpetrators? Italians' Perceptions of WWII History

Introduction

Recent research has increasingly investigated the relationship between perceptions of one country's past on the one hand, and national identity, antisemitism, the success of right-wing populism, or the support for radical right parties on the other (Liu & Hilton, 2005; Caramani & Manucci, 2019; Neundorff & Pardos-Prado, 2023; Antoniou et al., 2020). In this essay, we follow these recent lines of investigation and study citizens' perceptions and elaboration of their country's past, where elaboration is defined as "the establishment of a specific collective memory and its progressive objectivation" (Caramani and Manucci 2019, 1162). We focus on the individual level, exploring how individuals perceive from today's perspective the country's role during World War II and the Fascist past. These perceptions are analyzed in relation to socio-demographic factors such as age and education, as well as political ideology and attitudes toward political authoritarianism. To explore this, we look at the Italian case in detail, relying on unique survey data collected in 2019 and 2022. Overall, we pursue the following research question: how do Italians perceive their country's involvement in different aspects of World War II almost eighty years later, and what are their motivations?

We begin the essay by providing an overview of the collective memories formed in the aftermath of WWII in Italy, emphasizing the absence of a unitary narrative. Next, drawing on the conceptualization proposed by Carmani and Manucci (2019), which explores how countries can reinterpret and share memory in various ways, we examine the typology they developed at an individual level. Specifically, we explore how different groups of Italians perceive their compatriots during World War II – as victims, heroes, or perpetrators – and whether there are differences in views depending on age, education, and ideological positioning. We conclude with some general reflections on how *individual perceptions of history* can be understood and conceptualized.

Italy's involvement in WWII: Narratives, perceptions, and myths?

Italy's role in WWII remains a subject of contention and complexity. As both occupiers and the occupied, Italy found itself entangled in the intricate dynamics of the conflict. Initially aligned with Nazi Germany as part of the Axis powers, Italy pursued imperialistic ambitions and occupied territories across Europe and Africa. However, as the war unfolded, Italy faced internal divisions, culminating in the fall of Mussolini's regime in 1943. Subsequently, Italy became a battleground, experiencing occupation by German forces and resistance movements. The multifaceted nature of Italy's involvement in the war underscores the challenges in defining a singular narrative, reflecting the nuanced and contested history of this period (Manucci, 2020). What adds to the ambiguity of the role of Italy in WWII is a stream of diverging narratives that emerged in the post-war period and persist to the present day.

Indeed, in the aftermath of WWII, Italians were often depicted as reluctant participants in the war who did not harbour hatred towards the enemy. Both civilians and soldiers were said to have protected Jews from the racial laws during this period, and their role in the Holocaust and war crimes were minimized (Forlenza, 2012). Historians adopted a slogan of "Italians, the good people" (*Italiani, brava gente*), which intended to spread the myth of the good Italians who were rather victims of the Nazi regime (Clifford, 2013). An example in popular culture is the Oscar-winning movie *Mediterraneo* (1991), set against the backdrop of WWII, which revolves around a cohort of Italian soldiers who find themselves stranded on an island. The movie has been criticized for omitting to portray the brutalities committed by Fascists during WWII, and for perpetuating the myth of "the good Italian".

The reality is that two long and violent decades of Fascism profoundly shaped generations of Italians. Benito Mussolini's repressive regime was widely popular, especially before Italy's involvement in the Second Italo-Abyssinian War in 1935 and WWII (De Felice, 1974). "Il Duce" and the Italian King served as important reference points for national identification in a country that was still young and heterogeneous, having been unified only a few decades prior to Mussolini's rise to power in 1922 (Scurati, 2020).

After the fall of the Fascist regime in 1943 and its final collapse in 1945, Italy found itself *orphaned* and *bereft* of leadership – politically, socially, and geographically divided. In the aftermath of WWII, the country urgently needed new *heroes* and unifying narratives to shape the next chapter and realize the dream of a peaceful democratic future. Mussolini's aggressive patriotism was replaced by the narrative of an all-Italian, Antifascist war of national liberation – the "Resistenza".

The official narrative of WWII in Italy framed the struggle as Italians fighting and ultimately destroying “Nazifascism” – a single term that depicted Mussolini’s regime as a puppet state under German occupation – thereby liberating themselves from this “foreign tyranny” (Pavone, 1991). This collective memory was shaped by the broad governing coalition of Antifascist parties, along with Antifascist artists and journalists. In the immediate postwar period, new monuments, street names, performances, films, songs, and novels quickly emerged, celebrating the heroic *war for liberation* and honouring its martyrs.

A new national holiday, April 25, was established to commemorate the “Day of Liberation”. However, significantly, nothing of particular historical importance occurred on April 25, 1945, suggesting that even from the outset, this national symbol stood on unstable ground (Ballone, 1995). Over time, the holiday struggled to fulfil its intended role, eventually being boycotted or ignored by large segments of society, who saw it as too aligned with the left. Despite this, the core value of the Resistenza – Antifascism – remains the foundational principle of the Italian Republic. It is embedded in the Italian Constitution of 1948 and served as the unifying force for the diverse Antifascist parties and political groups that made up the transitional government after 1945 (Barile, 1996).

However, the Resistenza, for which many young Italian women and men fought and died, was never truly a *national movement*. First, it was geographically limited, concentrated mainly in the northern part of the country during 1943–45, after the sudden armistice of September 8, 1943, when the region was occupied by German forces and governed by Benito Mussolini’s *Fascist Republic on Lake Garda* (Repubblica Sociale di Saló, RSI) (Ginsborg, 2003). Second, the war *against* partisans was fought primarily by Fascist paramilitaries, making it largely a conflict between Italians themselves. This internal war, marked by extreme brutality and hatred, deeply affected civilians, leaving scars that remain unhealed to this day (Pavone, 1991).

For decades, referring to Italy’s postwar period as a *civil war* was considered right-wing revisionism, even in historical scholarship. It was not until the 1990s that this concept gained broader acceptance, largely due to the monumental work of historian and former partisan Claudio Pavone (Pavone, 1991). Pavone’s thorough analysis of the Resistenza portrayed it not only as a patriotic war of liberation and a class struggle but also as a civil war, sparking intense public debates (De Felice, 1997). The emotional reaction to his work revealed just how fragile Italy’s national identity, built around the Antifascist resistance, remained even after decades of democracy.

But it went beyond mere historical memory: the *longue durée* of this civil war deeply shaped the country’s postwar history and extends far into the twenty-first century. This was evident from the outset: the official end of WWII and the fall of Fascism did not put an end to the violence within Italy. In the

name of political ideologies, both Fascists and Antifascists continued to murder, torture, and rape. Chaos and violence prevailed, with personal vendettas and political hatred intertwined. The fear of civil war was so intense that, in the name of appeasement, Justice Minister *Palmito Togliatti* (a communist) declared an “Amnesty” on June 22, 1946, for all political crimes committed during and after WWII. Fascists and their collaborators benefited most from the “Amnistia Togliatti”, as no Fascist was ever held accountable for their actions. Not a single trial was held for individuals responsible for crimes against humanity or peace or for war crimes (Woller, 1996; Palmer Domenico, 1991).

So, for the sake of internal peace, Italy never really *defascized*. Fascism quietly persisted alongside democracy, yet its presence was pervasive. Former Fascist party members, even those with notorious pasts, became civil servants, politicians, military leaders, police chiefs, professors, and teachers. The influence of Fascism lingered in the topography of Italy’s cities – in street names and monuments (Rizzo & Campi, 2022). *Warriors* of Mussolini’s Fascist Republic, RSI, even established their own party, the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano, MSI. This party cultivated Fascist nostalgia, memories, ideology, language, and resentment, remaining on the political fringes for decades – until 2022. MSI was the predecessor of Giorgia Meloni’s ruling party Fratelli d’Italia (FdI), which won the 2022 general election. MSI founder Giorgio Almirante was Meloni’s political mentor, and she still admires him – a fact she often emphasizes (Meloni, 2021).

Returning to the postwar period: in the new Cold War climate, the powerful Communist Party (PCI) gradually took control of the narrative and memory of the Resistenza. The Communists reframed the fight against Fascism and Nazi Germany as an Antifascist workers’ struggle, downplaying and ignoring the fact that representatives of all parties and beliefs had participated. In PCI discourse, “Fascists” become synonymous with anticommunists. The PCI effectively turned April 25 into its own celebration, waving red flags and singing communist songs, which alienated large parts of the political spectrum and deepened social division.

The postwar reconstruction, economic growth, and boom temporarily suppressed societal divides and tensions, but this stability was short-lived. By the late 1960s, as the first signs of social and economic crisis emerged after years of prosperity, old sectarian hatreds resurfaced, passed down to a new generation (Ginsborg, 2003). This generation transformed Italy – especially the north – into a battleground. Political murders, abductions, and terror attacks became part of daily life. The streets of major cities, particularly Milan, turned into arenas for clashes between far-right and far-left groups. Factories, schools, and universities were occupied, and bombings in Milan, Bologna, Rome, and Florence shocked the nation (Montanelli & Cervi, 1991). Hundreds of innocent

civilians were killed during these “anni di piombo” (*years of lead*), a period of violence that lasted until the early 1980s. This traumatic chapter remains largely repressed in Italy’s collective memory.

Street violence gradually diminished in the 1980s, as radicalism gave way to Silvio Berlusconi’s hedonism. However, the divisions never disappeared, particularly in how history is interpreted. Both sides remained committed to their own versions of events, each claiming that the other had stolen their memory by monopolizing the narrative. This ongoing conflict over historical interpretation partly explains the rise of Giorgia Meloni’s neo-fascists. When Meloni and her *Brothers of Italy* discuss *appeasement*, they are advocating for a *revision* of the historical narrative (Scurati, 2024).

Historical perspective and individual characteristics

Given the ambiguities in the public discussion of WWII and the various historical narratives, it is important to explore the views on Fascism from an individualistic perspective, as it may vary substantially across citizens and generations. We do so by relying on a typology developed by Caramani and Manucci (2019) at the *country level*, applying it to the *individual level*.

Caramani and Manucci identify various strategies countries use to reinterpret their past – so-called re-elaboration strategies – differentiating between four types of historical re-elaboration: *culpabilization*, *heroization*, *victimization*, and *cancellation* (2019: 1164). They may assume responsibility for the past atrocities committed by the country’s regime (culpabilization) (a), versus denying any responsibility for the Fascist past, and seeing the country as a mere victim instead (victimization) (b). Other individual perceptions may include the notion that the country tried to fight off any Fascist tendencies (heroization) (c), or even erasing any link to the country’s problematic past (cancellation) (d). We believe that, despite the dominant national narrative, there is likely to be variation in how citizens perceive and reinterpret history within a country.

Based on this typology by Caramani and Manucci (2019), we analyze the extent to which Italian citizens fall into each category, and how these categories are then related to various socio-demographic and attitudinal factors. Overall, we expect that citizens classify their country’s Fascist past differently, and that these individual differences vary according to age, education, ideology, and views on political authoritarianism. By doing so, we aim to obtain an overview of current historical perceptions within Italian society, the varying perceptions of Italy’s Fascist past, allowing us to speculate on current political developments. To gain a comprehensive insight into Italians’ perspectives on Italy’s role during WWII, we use unique survey data collected in 2019 (and 2022) in

several European countries, Italy being one of them (Rathkolb et al., 2019). Respondents were asked a range of questions about their country's past, from which we selected four items that allow us to closely measure, at the individual level, the classification proposed by Caramani and Manucci (2019). Where possible, we also compare across time to observe whether historical perception – and thus the narrative – remains stable or is subject to variations.

To measure the re-elaboration strategy of *culpabilization*, we ask Italians how much they agree or disagree with the statement, “Italians share responsibility for the crimes of the Second World War”. If respondents agree with this statement, we categorize them as high on culpabilization. To measure victimization, we use the item asking whether “Italy was liberated by the Allies in 1943–1945”, where agreeing with the statement indicates that the respondents view Italy as the victim of the war, rather than as an active perpetrator. Responses to the question about whether “many Italians profited from the murder of Jews” are used to measure heroization (when respondents disagree with the statement) as well as culpabilization (when respondents agree). Finally, we measure cancellation by asking respondents whether they believe that “the discussion about the Second World War and the Holocaust should come to an end”. Agreement with this statement suggests a willingness to silence uncomfortable truths about the war, whereas disagreement indicates a readiness to take responsibility, which is why we also use this item to assess culpabilization when respondents express disagreement.

We are aware that some of these items do capture better than others the underlying categories and that sometimes they even capture several categories depending on the responses given, but they will nevertheless enable us to discern important tendencies about the varying degrees of contention associated with different aspects.

Importantly, in our empirical analyses, we mainly focus on the data collected in 2019, where all items have been measured. For some items – namely, whether Italians share responsibility for the crimes of WWII (culpabilization) and whether the discussion about the Holocaust and World War II should be ended (cancellation and culpabilization) – we also analyze data from the 2022 collection to determine whether Italians' perspectives on history have shifted in recent times or if historical narratives remain relatively stable over time. This is particularly significant, as recent political events in Italy may have influenced how Italians view history. Specifically, in 2022, Giorgia Meloni, the leader of the Fratelli d'Italia assumed the role of Italian prime minister, with the party receiving 26 % of the vote in the general election of 2022 and increasing its share to almost 29 % in the European Parliament elections in 2024. Thus, by conducting analyses of these two cross-sectional surveys from 2019 and 2022, we can provide insights into the following question: are there signs that Italians

are changing their individual collective memories to embrace more notions of the cancellation, culpabilization, victimization, or heroization of their own people in light of recent political events, or are their views of history stable and independent of political shifts?

Typology	Measurement Items	Response Scale	Interpretation
Heroization	"Many Italians profited from the murder of Jews"	1: Completely agree 2: Somewhat agree 3: Partly agree/disagree 4: Somewhat disagree 5: Completely disagree	Disagreeing indicates heroization
Victimization	"Italy was liberated by the Allies in 1943–1945"		Agreeing indicates victimization
Culpabilization	"Italians share responsibility for the crimes of the Second World War"		Agreeing indicates culpabilization
	"The discussion about the Second World War and the Holocaust should come to an end"		Disagreeing indicates culpabilization
Cancellation	"The discussion about the Second World War and the Holocaust should come to an end"		Agreeing indicates cancellation

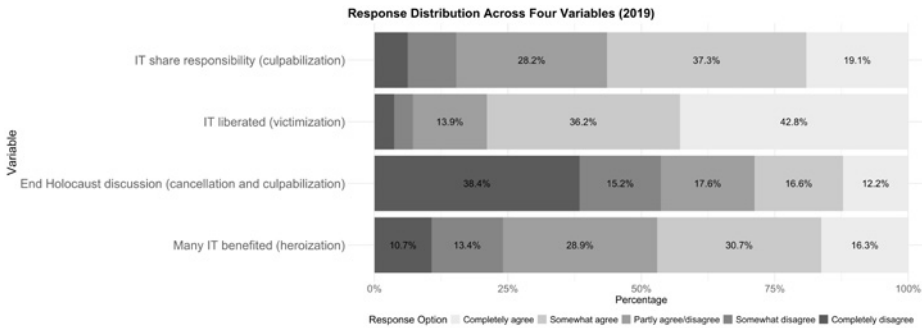


Figure 1: All four items in 2019

All responses to the four items in 2019 are listed in Figure 1. The items addressing Italy's responsibility in the war as well as the question whether to continue the discussions about the Holocaust show that a majority of Italians clearly oppose the cancellation of the past and support the view of Italy's being culpable of WWII crimes. More precisely, the majority of respondents (56.4 %) completely or somewhat agree with the statement Italy bears responsibility for the crimes of WWII (culpabilization). Around 27 % express partial agreement/disagreement, while only roughly 15 % somewhat or completely disagree. Meanwhile, regarding cancellation/culpabilization, in 2019 over 53 % of Italians either completely or somewhat disagree that discussion should be ended (culpabilization), while approximately 29 % either completely or somewhat agree that the discussion should be ended (cancellation), and almost 18 % maintain an ambivalent stance. Therefore, the majority of Italians seem to recognize both their country's responsibility in WWII and also that the problematic past should have a place in the public and continue to be discussed. However, the results also show that this view is not unitary and that some parts of the population are less willing to accept responsibility and more in favour of ending discussions.

Turning next to the item regarding *whether many Italians materially benefited from the killing of Jews* (heroization when citizens disagree, culpabilization when citizens agree with the statement), 47 % completely or partially agreed with this statement (culpabilization), while approximately 24 % completely or partially disagreed (heroization), and a notable 28.9 % of citizens expressed ambivalence.¹ Thus, most Italians seem to categorize their country's past on the dimension of culpability while the notion of heroization is shared only by a minority.

Finally, when exploring the notion of victimization, we observe that a clear-cut majority, namely almost 80 %, either completely or somewhat agreed that Italy was *liberated* by the Allied powers between 1943 and 1945, while only around 7 % completely or somewhat disagreed, and 14 % remained ambivalent. From these first descriptive results we can clearly state that Italians consider their country to have been occupied by Nazi-Germany – and thus a victim – instead of recognizing that Italy was part of the Berlin–Rome Axis based on an agreement between Hitler and Mussolini in 1936.

How stable are these historical perceptions? For two items, namely *whether Italy carries responsibility for the crimes of WWII* (culpabilization) and *whether the discussion about the Holocaust and WWII should be ended* (cancellation), we can see in Figure 2 that historical perceptions remain fairly stable. In contrast

1 It is interesting to note that a rather large portion of respondents had no opinion on the matter, some 15 % choosing the “don't know” option.

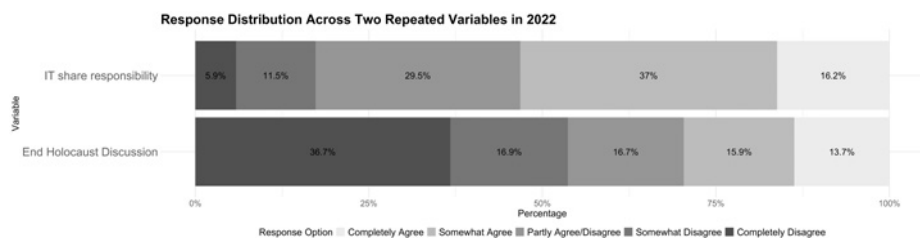


Figure 2: Two items measured again in 2022

to 2019, in 2022 results indicate a slight decrease in those who completely or somewhat agree that Italy is responsible for the crimes of WWII (minus 3 %), while the share of people disagreeing increased by around 2 %, with the middle category showing a marginal increase. These results point to a slight decrease in a general willingness to assume responsibility, but the shift is not large. With regard to ending discussion, we see the same pattern: we can observe almost no changes over time. There is slightly more agreement that Holocaust discussions should be ended, but this can be summarized in the realm of statistical uncertainty. As results are almost identical over time, we conclude that Italian citizens do have rather stable perceptions of history, though they re-elaborate slightly differently on the country's Fascist past. While culpabilization and victimization are overall clearly dominating strategies, some signs of heroization but very little cancellation are also observable among Italian citizens. It thus seems that Italians are mainly divided over the question of whether the country was a perpetrator or a victim – something that is also visible both in the various historical narratives and the narratives of political parties.

How individual perceptions of history differ across age and education

How one perceives the past can be influenced by many factors. Amongst others, scholars emphasize the importance of education (McCully, 2012), lived experience, or the role of political elites (Núñez & Dinas, 2023). In this essay, we take a closer look at how respondents' age, education, ideology, and levels of political authoritarianism relate to their perceptions of history.

Starting with age, we divided the respondents into five groups: 18 to 29 years, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, and those older than 60. Overall, as seen in Figure 3, there are some variations across age groups, but they are not substantial. First, when it comes to the notion of culpabilization, a clear majority across all age groups embraces the idea that Italy shares responsibility for the

crimes of WWII, with respondents either completely or somewhat agreeing. Younger cohorts, in particular, assume greater responsibility, with around 60 % of those aged 18 to 29 agreeing, compared to 54.8 % of those over 60. Additionally, a clear majority across all age groups is in favour of continuing the discussion about the Holocaust, showing a refusal to deny Italy’s role in the war, and willingness to assume responsibility. However, individuals born between 1970 and 1990 (aged 30 to 49) are slightly more inclined toward cancellation than other age cohorts.

Figure 3 also highlights a widespread perception of victimization across all age groups, where they believe that Italy was *liberated* by the Allies, though younger generations display slightly more nuanced views compared to older ones.

Finally, when respondents from different age cohorts are asked whether Italians were good people who did not profit from the murder of Jews, discrepancies emerge in their responses. Around 53.4 % of those over 60 completely or somewhat agree that many Italians profited, whereas only 38.2 % of those aged 18 to 29 share the same view. One possible explanation for this discrepancy could be that older generations, especially those who lived closer to WWII, have a more intricate understanding of the mechanisms of war, including how individuals may have benefited from it. Their temporal proximity to the events and direct exposure may have created a more nuanced understanding of who much profited off of others’ suffering, why, and how much. Overall, it is striking to see that across age groups, a large portion of respondents respond with partly agree–partly disagree, showing that on this issue, no clear historical perception prevails amongst Italians of all age groups.

Turning to education, which we categorized using three levels – low (up to middle school diploma), middle (vocational education or high school di-

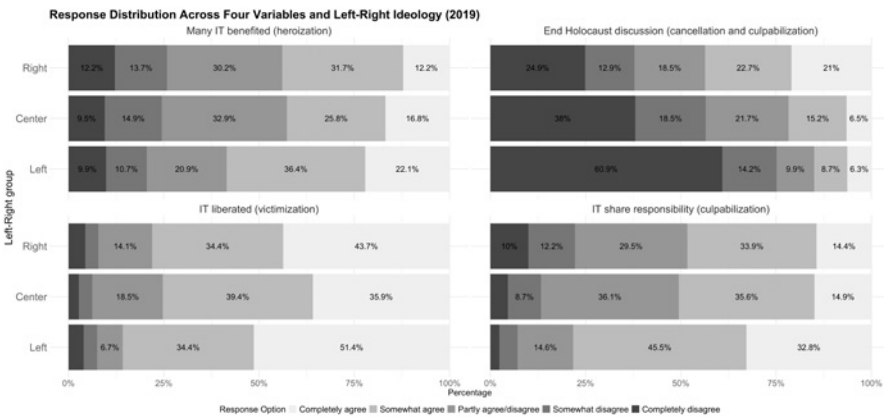


Figure 3: Age differences and historical narratives

ploma), and high (graduate or postgraduate diploma) – based on the seven available categories, the patterns largely mirror those observed for age, with a few notable differences. Most notably, the top-right panel of Figure 4 shows that citizens with higher levels of education are more likely to embrace the notion of culpabilization. They are more likely to disagree with the statement that discussions about the Holocaust should come to an end and are more inclined to somewhat or completely agree that Italians share responsibility for the crimes of WWII compared to their less educated counterparts. Specifically, while 46.5% of those with lower levels of education somewhat or completely agree that Italians bear responsibility for the crimes, this figure rises to 64.5% among those with higher education.

They seem to support the notion that Italy's role in the Holocaust should not be denied more than the lower educated. However, it needs to be pointed out that across all educational groups, cancellation is rejected. Also, we do see a clear majority amongst all educational groups agreeing that Italy needs to assume responsibility for the crimes of WWII, and thus a clear role of culpabilization is assumed.

As shown in previous figures, the narrative of victimization is prevalent across all educational groups. However, there are still some slight differences based on education level. More of those with higher education reject the notion that Italy was a victim (8.5%) compared to those with lower levels of education (6.2%).

Regarding the notion of heroization, those with lower levels of education are more likely to say that not many Italians materially benefited from the murder of Jews, compared to their more highly educated counterparts. While 52.9% of those with higher education somewhat or completely agree that many Italians profited from the murder of Jews, only 41.9% of those with lower education share this view.

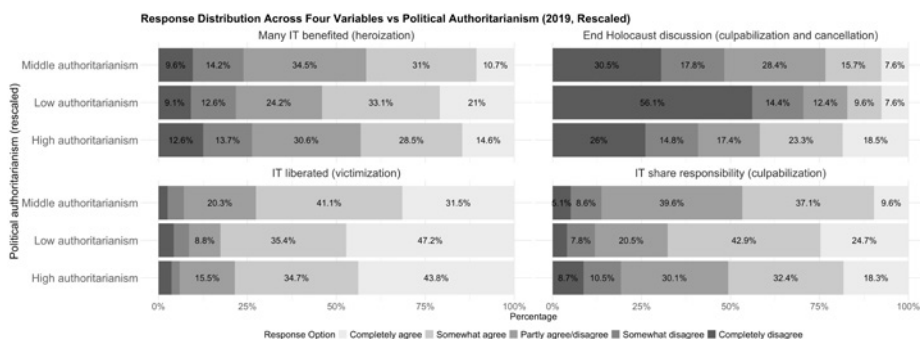


Figure 4: Education groups and historical narratives

While there are no large differences across ages and levels of education, some notable differences are worth summarizing. Individuals with lower education embrace victimization and heroization narratives slightly more than their highly educated counterparts.

In general, the differences across age groups for all four concepts are not large. While there are some variations, such as younger cohorts showing slightly more support for culpabilization and older ones leaning a bit more toward victimization, these discrepancies are not large. The largest differences are observed in responses to the item regarding whether Italy shares responsibility for the crimes of WWII (culpabilization), though even these differences are not substantial. Younger cohorts show slightly more support for culpabilization, with 60 % of the youngest group (18–29) somewhat or completely agreeing, compared to 54.8 % of those over 60. Interestingly, the age cohort of 30 to 39-year-olds is most likely to support cancellation, with around 33 % agreeing that discussions about the Holocaust should come to an end, compared to other age groups.

How individual perceptions of history differ across political authoritarianism and ideology

After the analysis of the socio-demographic factors and individuals' perceptions of history, we focus on political attitudes, such as ideology and political authoritarianism, and their relationship with individual perceptions of history.

When exploring political ideology, the literature regularly focuses on the left–right ideology and how respondents classify themselves on the left–right dimension. We rescaled the eleven-point scale into three categories: values from 0 to 3 were coded as left-wing, 4 to 6 as centre, and 7 to 10 as right-wing.

We further ask how left–right ideology and collective memories are connected. Figure 5 reveals notable variations. Most strikingly, regarding the notion of cancellation, there is a clear divide between those identifying as left leaning and those on the right or in the centre. Left-leaning respondents overwhelmingly strongly reject (by completely agreeing with the statement) the idea of ending discussions about the Holocaust (60.9 %), while only 24.9 % of those on the right do the same. Respondents in the centre express support for Holocaust cancellation, though this is less clear-cut compared to those on the right.

Regarding culpabilization, we observe variations along the ideological spectrum. Respondents on the right – and to some extent those in the centre – are less likely to agree that Italy shares responsibility for the crimes of WWII, with many choosing the middle response category, “partly agree/partly disagree”.

In contrast, responses from citizens on the left are much more decisive, with a clear assumption of responsibility, leading to higher culpabilization scores among left-leaning respondents. While around 70 % of those on the right completely or somewhat agree that Italians share responsibility for the crimes in WWII, over 77 % of their left-wing counterparts hold the same position. This is to say that the notion of culpabilization is strong along the ideological spectrum, but individuals on the left are nonetheless more likely to embrace this notion than their right-wing counterparts.

Regarding victimization and heroization, we observe fewer differences across the ideological spectrum. The belief that Italy was liberated by the Allies in 1945 is widely shared across the population and ideological groups. More individuals on the left of the political spectrum somewhat or completely agree (85.8 %) that Italy was *liberated* compared to their right-wing counterparts (78.1 %), which is not too surprising given that Italy was under Fascist rule and partly occupied by Nazi Germany. Interestingly, respondents locating themselves in the centre show the lowest value, some 75.3 % agreeing with this statement. On the question of whether Italians gained materially from the killing of Jews, we see slightly more culpabilization (i.e. less victimization) among left-leaning citizens. Some 58.5 % of left-leaning respondents believe that many Italians benefited from the murder of Jews, while only around 44 % of right-wing individuals hold the same view. Additionally, among the centre and the right, we observe the same pattern found in the socio-demographic variables: along with a significant portion of respondents placing themselves in the middle, there is on the one hand a rather large share of respondents falling in the category of culpabilization, but on the other hand, re-elaboration strategies for heroization are also present.

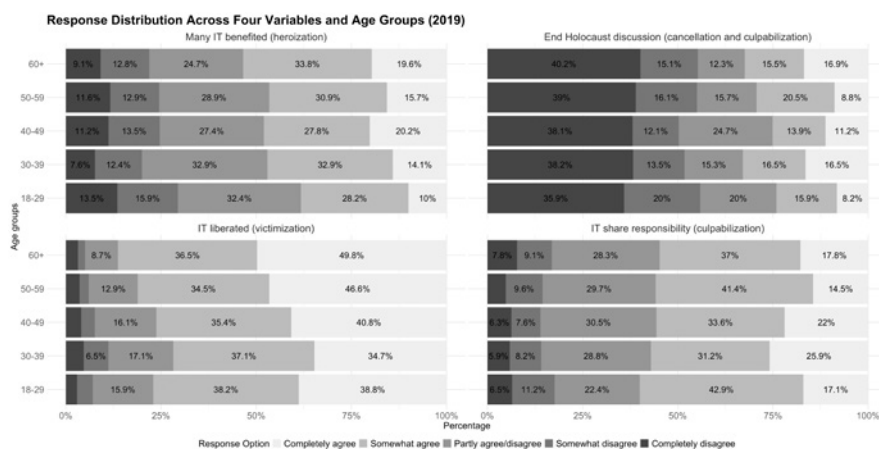


Figure 5: Ideology and historical narratives

Among all the variables, the most notable differences across respondents emerge when connecting individuals’ historical perceptions with political authoritarianism. We measure political authoritarianism using the question “There should be a strong leader who does not have to bother with parliament and elections”, presented on a five-point agree–disagree scale. We recoded the responses into a three-point scale as low (somewhat and completely disagree), ambivalent (partly agree/disagree), and high authoritarianism (completely agree and somewhat agree).

As Figure 6 shows, starting with culpabilization, it is notable that regardless of the level of political authoritarianism, there is widespread agreement that Italy bears responsibility for the crimes of WWII. Only a small proportion completely reject this idea, though stronger opposition is found among individuals with high levels of political authoritarianism. While 67.7% of those on the left completely or somewhat agree that Italians share responsibility for the crimes in WWII, only 50.7% of their counterparts hold the same view.

Regarding cancellation, respondents low in political authoritarianism are the most opposed to ending discussions about the Holocaust. Specifically, 56.1% of those with low levels of authoritarianism completely disagree with the statement that the discussion should come to an end, compared to only 26% of those with high authoritarianism scores. Those with moderate levels of authoritarianism fall in the middle, with 30.5% completely disagreeing with the statement. These results underscore that citizens with higher levels of political authoritarianism are more inclined to favour the strategy of cancellation in their re-interpretation of the past.

Regarding victimization, no significant differences across the degrees of political authoritarianism are observed. There is, once again, a widespread percep-

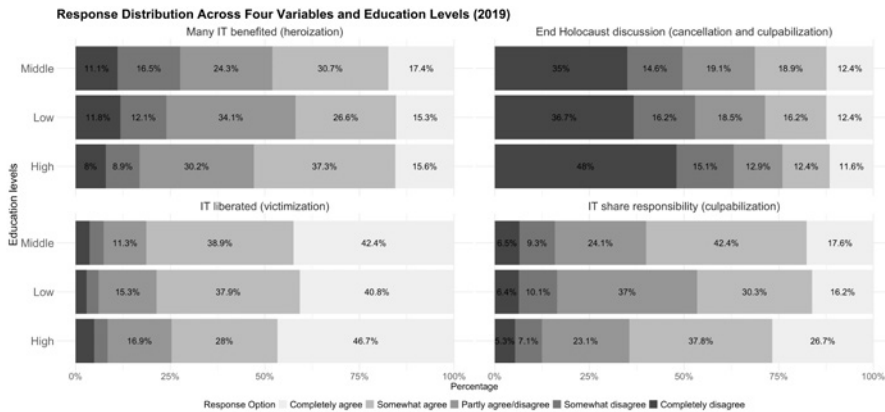


Figure 6: Political authoritarianism and historical narratives

tion among Italian citizens – regardless of their socio-demographic background or political attitudes – that Italy was a victim rather than a perpetrator. However, it is interesting to note that slightly more individuals with lower levels of political authoritarianism completely or somewhat agree that Italy was liberated (82.6 %) compared to those high in political authoritarianism (77.5 %).

Some variation along the spectrum of political authoritarianism can also be observed with respect to whether many Italians benefited from the killings of the Jews (heroization). The heroization re-elaboration strategy appears slightly more prevalent among citizens with high political authoritarianism scores – 26.3 % compared to 21.7 % among those with lower levels of authoritarianism.

In summary, political ideology appears to play a somewhat meaningful role when it comes to individual perceptions of history. First, right-wing individuals support more cancellation, more heroization, but less culpabilization and less victimization than their left-wing counterparts. This ideological divide is particularly evident in their willingness to accept responsibility for Italy's role in WWII, with right-wing respondents showing greater reluctance to acknowledge culpability or material benefit from the atrocities, instead favouring narratives that emphasize national heroism and downplaying guilt.

Additionally, the impact of political authoritarianism on historical perceptions is even more pronounced. Those with higher levels of authoritarianism not only reject culpabilization and victimization narratives, but also favour more cancellation and heroization. This suggests a more revisionist approach to historical re-elaboration on the part of those who support political authoritarianism. Left-wing and less authoritarian individuals demonstrate a greater willingness to confront the darker aspects of the past, showing more support for culpabilization and less support for the cancellation of history. Additionally, they express more support for the victimization narrative and less for heroization compared to their right-wing and more authoritarian counterparts.

Conclusion

Which strategies do Italians have for re-elaborating on their Fascist past? Which strategies in terms of history classification do they use? And which variations can we observe across social groups and political attitudes? Embedded in a historical overview of public discourses and narratives amongst Italians, these were the guiding research questions of this essay relying on unique data capturing Italians' historical perceptions.

Our results reveal that Italians indeed have various strategies for re-evaluating their country's past, with all four dimensions – culpabilization, heroization, cancellation, and victimization – being present, though varying in strength.

Given Italy's past and the various narratives after WWII, this is not too surprising. In more detail, around 56% of Italians hold the view that Italy shares responsibility for the crimes committed during WWII, over 53% oppose the notion that discussions about the Holocaust should come to an end, and 47% reject the notion that Italians did not benefit from the persecution of Jews, showing that the perception of culpabilization is widely shared amongst Italians. At the same time, victimization is also widely supported, with almost 80% believing that Italy was liberated by the Allied powers between 1943 and 1945. Heroization shows more contention, with about a quarter of the population embracing it, and differences across education (lower), ideology (to the right), and degree of political authoritarianism (higher degrees). Interestingly, a rather large share of respondents appears ambivalent about this item. Turning to cancellation, only a small portion of Italians fall into this category (around 25%), indicating that the Fascist past still plays an important role in today's Italian society. Given the various historical narratives, however, it may be that cancellation has different meanings across societal groups, as also indicated in the differences across ideology and political authoritarianism.

It is important to note that these dimensions are not mutually exclusive, as individuals can hold different views depending on the specific historical aspect being examined, creating nuanced perspectives across the population. Additionally, it is worthwhile noting that attitudes have remained relatively stable between 2019 and 2022, suggesting that perceptions of WWII history have not significantly shifted in recent years, independent of recent political events, also indicating that differing historical narratives are kind of deadlocked in the various societal groups.

In terms of socio-demographics, we do not observe major differences across age and educational groups, providing an additional indication that historical narratives are rather stable at the individual level too. Meanwhile, political ideology and authoritarianism play a larger role with regard to varying historical narratives. More precisely, left-wing individuals and those with a low degree of political authoritarianism show a greater willingness to confront the darker aspects of the past, supporting culpabilization and opposing cancellation. These groups also re-elaborate the past by adhering more to the notion of victimization and less to heroization compared to their right-wing and more authoritarian counterparts.

This political divide is particularly significant. It suggests that even nearly eighty years after the end of WWII, Italians lack a unifying collective memory of their totalitarian past. Several developments during the postwar period help explain this phenomenon. First, the highly politicized narrative of the *Anti-fascist* struggle was monopolized for decades by the political left. Second, the absence of a thorough *defascistization* in society, politics, and popular culture

allowed Fascism to persist in the shadow of democracy. Italians never had the opportunity to confront their past on a legal level; for instance, Fascist criminals were never prosecuted, unlike their German Nazis counterparts. Lastly, the Civil War between 1943 and 1945, along with its traumatic “resurrection” during the era of terrorism from 1968 to the early 1980s, has continued to resonate into the 21st century. Its wounds remain painful and continue to divide the country.

Italy’s neo-fascist prime minister Giorgia Meloni reflects this fractured historical memory. While she has clearly and repeatedly condemned Benito Mussolini’s Racial Laws of 1938 and acknowledged the Fascists’ co-responsibility for the Holocaust, she stubbornly refuses to recognize the significance of Antifascism as a fundamental principle of Italy’s Republic, often avoiding the term altogether. For her, “historization” equates to “end of discussion” (cancellation). As a result, Meloni leaves open the question of whether Fascism – and in particular its key figures, such as Benito Mussolini – should be condemned in all its aspects, and whether Antifascism is truly a core value of the Italian Republic.

This revisionist attitude is prevalent amongst a significant portion of society. Although Italians often see themselves as victims of WWII, the narrative of the fight for national liberation – so forcefully promoted after the war – managed to resonate with only part of the population and political spectrum. Meloni has capitalized on this ambiguous relationship with the past. However, she was not elected because of her party’s Fascist roots; rather, she was elected because these roots did not deter her voters. This relativization of both Fascism and Antifascism poses a serious threat to the future of Italian democracy and creates a fertile ground for the electoral success of right-wing parties.

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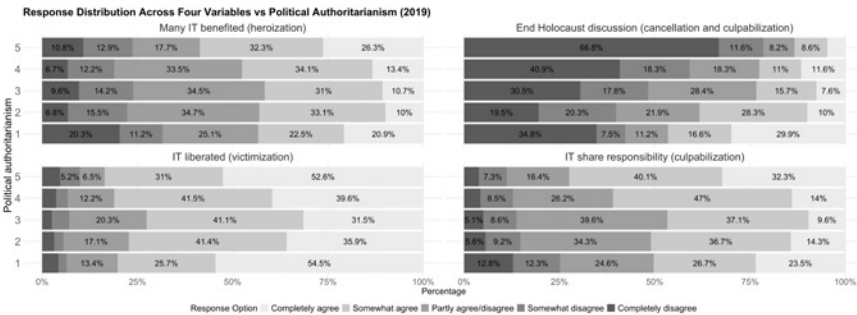
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Appendix



Political authoritarianism and individual perceptions of history (before rescaling political authoritarianism)

Bartosz Wieliński

Authoritarian Infection in Poland. A Recovery Report

The autumn of 2015 marked the beginning of a dark period in recent Polish history. The democratic change of power – nothing unusual, it would seem – opened the door to a creeping assault on Polish democracy, the rule of law, and Poland's membership of the European Union. As a result of divisions within the centre-right and the left, the Law and Justice (PiS) party, although it won 35 % of the vote in the elections, had an absolute majority in the new parliament. A few months earlier, Bronisław Komorowski had lost the battle for a second presidential term after an extremely inept election campaign. He was succeeded by a young, widely unknown PiS politician, Andrzej Duda, who quickly turned out to be an orthodox Catholic, a hardened eurosceptic, and, even worse, a puppet in the hands of PiS president Jarosław Kaczyński.

PiS began its rule with an almost immediate attack on the Constitutional Tribunal and the public media, which were subordinated to the party and rapidly turned into a propaganda organ that began to carry out a ruthless campaign against any opponents of the authorities. Then, in the months and years that followed, the fire was directed at the Supreme Court and other institutions of the independent judiciary, education, universities, and NGOs. Finally, in the summer of 2021, the attack on the independent media began. Demonstrations by opponents of the government – such as protests by women demanding the lifting of the abortion ban introduced by the PiS-controlled Constitutional Court – were brutally suppressed by the police. Politicians of the opposition politicians were under surveillance by special services using the Israeli Pegasus spying system, which was designed to be used against the most dangerous terrorists.

Of the eight dark years, 2022 seems the darkest. It was then that the shadow of war hung over my country, where the intensive dismantling of democracy and the rule of law was underway, where the authorities were treading increasingly boldly along an authoritarian path, approaching the point where Poland's membership in the EU would no longer be an option. At the time, the Polish gallows humour, full of sarcasm, shrugged: "as if we were still missing it." After seven years of anguish with Kaczynski and his camarilla, on top of that another threat emerged: Vladimir Putin and his army, then considered the second in the world. In February 2022, any bad scenario seemed not so much possible as likely. And Poland, mired in an internal conflict with a quasi-mafia gov-

ernment that was – under the guise of nationalist propaganda – misusing and stealing money belonging to the state, was completely unprepared for it. The PiS government intended to take advantage of the powerful international crisis to permanently strengthen their position and stifle Polish democracy. We were fully aware of this.

That's why I remember 2022 as a particularly dark year.

The survey presented shows that as many as 85 % of my compatriots perceived a physical threat to Poland's security from imperial Russia. However, I'm a bit surprised that in this very comprehensive poll on democracy in Poland, questions about the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its aftermath were included only at the very end. Paradoxically, in 2022, nothing had a greater impact on my country's future as a liberal democracy than the question whether Ukraine would survive a Russian blow or – according to the Russian plan and, unfortunately, the assumptions of Western intelligence services – collapse.

It is possible, after all, to draw parallels between the escalation that Putin had been perpetrating since 2014 and the policy of provocation led by Hitler leading up to the war. In 2022, it was clear that just as Hitler did not keep his promise to stop after seizing Austria and Czechoslovakia, Ukraine is not Putin's ultimate goal. And that after conquering it, he would move against Moldova and the Baltics, and Poland would also be on the list of targets. And not only Poland; after all, Kremlin propaganda even mentioned the restoration of Russian influence in the former GDR.

In the summer of 2021, we read with disbelief Vladimir Putin's article on the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians, claiming that the two countries were "one historical and spiritual space" whose paths had diverged due to the plotting of "certain forces". But, Putin asserted, that divergence was temporary.

We analyzed the provisions of the ultimatum issued to the US and NATO a few months later with growing dismay. Putin demanded not only a halt to the expansion of the Alliance, but the withdrawal of its forces from the former Eastern Bloc countries, which, having thrown off the Soviet yoke in 1989, were returning to their place in Europe. Accepting the ultimatum would mean that Poland and the entire eastern flank of NATO could station virtually no Western military aircraft without Russia's consent. Troops sent after 2014 would have to be withdrawn; we would be left at Putin's mercy. My editorial colleague Wacław Radziwiłowicz, a renowned expert on Russian politics and a longtime correspondent in Moscow, wrote at the time that the Russian ultimatum had the smell of Yalta. At that Crimean resort in February 1945, the big three, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, British prime minister Winston Churchill, and US president Franklin D. Roosevelt, decided the future of Central European countries by placing them under the Soviet boot for half a century. Putin's Russia seeks a return to the concert of powers, the demarcation of spheres of influence and

their impermeable borders, for this is the only way it can protect itself from inevitable implosion. And it was not going to ask the countries to which bloc they wish to belong. Just as no one asked Poland or Czechoslovakia in 1945.

I, as a journalist most often dealing with Germany, saw Putin's ultimatum from a different perspective than Radziwinowicz. I associated it with the Munich Conference of 1938, where the then concert of powers gave up Czechoslovakia to Hitler for a scrap of paper on which the German dictator promised peace. The promise didn't even last a year.

Putin had already attended a similar conference in 2015 in Minsk, where he pledged to withdraw his troops from parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in eastern Ukraine that Russia had *de facto* seized a year earlier. He did not keep his word. Instead, he was faithful to the rhetoric he presented to the international public at the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest, when the Alliance's admission of Ukraine as a member was debated for the first time in its history. "Ukraine is an artificial state", he claimed at the time, asserting that a large part of its population was actually Russian. These insulting words were not perceived by anyone as an announcement he would follow in Hitler's footsteps. Invasion, bombing hospitals, kidnapping children, executing civilians. No, no one had enough imagination for that at the time ...

The PiS government was well aware of what was being cooked up by the Russians. On November 19, 2021, the head of US national intelligence, Avril Haynes, flew to Warsaw. She met with then Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and showed him irrefutable evidence that Russia's attack on Ukraine was inevitable. That Putin had made a decision on the matter, was gathering forces, and trying to pull the wool over the world's eyes. The fact that this kind of information was provided by the Americans not through diplomatic channels, but directly, and through such a high-ranking official, showed the critical seriousness of the situation.

Political rationality would dictate in such a situation ending all disputes within the country and with allies and prepare for war. What did the PiS government do? Prime Minister Morawiecki sold some real estate and bought high-interest state bonds. But other than that, he acted as if no warnings had come from the US. Two weeks after Haynes's visit, leaders of Western European populist parties linked to Putin's Russia landed in Warsaw to discuss building a better Europe. PiS politicians were united by their deep resentment of the institutions of an open society or the European Union. Marine Le Pen, head of France's National Unity, which a few months later would be openly supported by the PiS government in its fight for the presidency, was driven around Warsaw in a government motorcade as if she were the head of state. After the meeting, she declared that Ukraine was part of Russia's sphere of influence ...

In December, the PiS government hit out at Polish allies. The German minority living in Poland had its funding for native language instruction cut. The parliament also passed a law leading to the expropriation of the US owners of the private TVN television network. According to defence plans drawn up by NATO a decade earlier, it was German and American divisions that were to come to Poland's aid in the event of a Russian invasion. PiS ignored these issues on the eve of war.

Army reforms initiated in 2014 by the previous government – immediately after Russia annexed Crimea and snatched part of the Donbas from Ukraine – were put on hold. The neglect of air defence modernization was particularly dramatic in its consequences. In December 2022, one of the Russian cruise missiles fired at targets in western Ukraine intruded into Polish airspace and came down, having flown several hundred kilometres. The Polish military was unable to intercept the missile or even determine where it fell when it ran out of fuel. It was not found until six months later.

It could have been predicted at the time that the outbreak of war in Ukraine would mean a massive refugee crisis. That hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians would flee the invasion and bombing. The Polish–Ukrainian border is more than 500 km long; it was clear that most refugees would pass through it. It was possible to prepare people and infrastructure reception points and accommodation. The Americans, among others, sent 1.7 thousand paratroopers from the rapid reaction force to prevent a humanitarian disaster. Poland waited ... It was also clear that Russian aggression would have repercussions on the energy market, especially since Russia was the main supplier of gas, oil, and coal to the Polish market. At the end of 2022, it turned out that there was no coal in the country; the government was hastily pulling the raw material even from Colombia, and the biggest Polish railroad company harnessed to distribute it around the country was on the verge of bankruptcy.

I look at the results of the survey and have the impression that Poles were aware of the seriousness of the situation and the unpreparedness of the state. And they knew who the culprits were.

At the end of the critical year, as many as 76 % of citizens were dissatisfied with the government's work. A year earlier, there had been 10 percentage points fewer bad evaluations of Prime Minister Morawiecki and his ministers. It should be remembered, of course, that PiS governments were marked by ineptitude on many issues other than security policy, and this was reflected in the polls.

I remember the first day of the war very well. On February 22, I went to bed after one in the morning. Before going to sleep, I wrote down a short dispatch about the last dramatic appearance of President Zelens'kyi, who, unsuccessfully trying to make contact with Putin, finally decided to speak to the Russian peo-

ple, warning them that in the event of an attack, Ukrainians would not flee but shoot at Russians. That was the last time I saw Zelens'kyi in a suit. Henceforth, he has worn military uniform. I went to bed hoping that everything would end in a war of nerves. I was snapped out of my short sleep around half past five in the morning by an editorial colleague. "It's started," I heard in the earpiece. Half-conscious, I turned on the computer. In the first hours of the invasion, the fall of Ukraine seemed a foregone conclusion. US intelligence forecasts assumed that the Russians would take control of Kyiv within 72 hours. Radosław Sikorski, the current head of Polish diplomacy, admitted in an interview a year later that he too did not believe the country could be defended: "I assumed that Ukraine would lose the invasion, but would win, after some ten years, a guerrilla war. Our neighbouring country would turn into the Afghanistan of the 1980s. But it turned out that the Ukrainians were more battle-hardened and effective than anyone thought. It must also be admitted that both the United States and Europe did more than anyone expected."

Why was this a critical moment in terms of Poland's future as a democracy? Because the PiS government intended to play the Russian invasion in Polish domestic politics. The term "political gold" had been in the Polish dictionary for several months. In August 2020, when the civic dignity revolution in Belarus erupted after the rigged presidential elections, Deputy Foreign Minister Paweł Jablonski convinced Prime Minister Morawiecki to engage unequivocally on the side of the opposition there in order to crush the opposition at home. "This is political gold", Jablonski argued, regarding the blatant abuse of foreign policy for domestic purposes. In 2022, no one in Warsaw remembered the Belarusian opposition any more, but the concept of "political gold" returned with full force.

The PiS government was not – like previous ones – a friend or advocate of Ukraine. Relations between Warsaw and Kyiv relations worsened after 2015, because PiS, ignoring geopolitical issues, strenuously instrumentalized the tragic Polish–Ukrainian history. (In 1943, in Volhynia, Ukrainians murdered between 50,000 and 120,000 Poles; our neighbours have not faced up to the crime to this day). Morawiecki had never been to Kyiv since he became prime minister. After the war broke out, the government threw itself into helping. The West debated sending the Ukrainians their tanks for almost a year, and it took two years for the Ukrainians to receive modern aircraft. Poland handed over its tanks and fighters – of Soviet manufacture, of course – almost immediately.

Back in March 2022, Kaczyński and Morawiecki set off on a train trip to Kyiv, where Russian troops were still standing and which was being bombed. Western leaders did not dare take such a step for several more weeks. At that time, a stream of refugees flowed across the Polish–Ukrainian border. Within days, more than 3 million people, mostly women with children, fled to Poland.

Polish mobilized civil society and local government rushed to help, organizing aid, housing, and transportation to various places in the country for the refugees. Here the government did not help directly, but it did not interfere either.

After years of several campaigns against war refugees (one of the reasons for PiS's electoral triumph in 2015 was the shamelessly hateful rhetoric against people following the Balkan route), the authorities raised the border barriers for them. There was no epidemic as Kaczynski had threatened, crime did not increase in Poland, the economy did not collapse ... As a result, as can be seen in the surveys, the anti-refugee rhetoric was challenged. In 2019, as many as 40 % of respondents were against immigration by Muslims; by the end of 2022, there were 10 percentage points fewer supporters. The question of whether Islam and Polish Christian culture are compatible with each other was answered positively in 2019 by 45 % of respondents. In 2022, 36 %. The changes in values are not spectacular, because the questions touched on the issue of Islam, while the general attitude to migration in Poland was changing. It became clear that our country, hitherto a country of emigration, was becoming a country that attracts migrants.

With the help of great social mobilization and sacrificial aid to refugees in the spring of 2022, Poland became a moral superpower. In the face of the Russian threat and the drama of struggling Ukraine, PiS's attacks on the foundation of Polish democracy, the beating of demonstrators, and the authoritarian course of power were forgotten. At the time, I published an op-ed that the war Russia had started was a good time for the Polish government (the word "opportunity" somehow didn't pass my lips) to end the conflict with the European Union and get off its anti-democratic course, since Poland had managed to gather so many favourable opinions. Since we are dealing with the greatest threat to state security since 1945. Writing these words, I knew it was a cry in the wilderness. The PiS government has never been interested in reviews from abroad; international policy was relegated practically immediately to a role subordinate to domestic policy. The signals that PiS politicians were sending to foreign countries were actually directed to PiS voters in Poland. And this is what unfortunately happened in the case of aid to Ukraine.

Somewhere in a neglected office building on Nowogrodzka Street in Warsaw, where the PiS headquarters is located, it was decided to unleash a huge campaign blaming the war on ... Germany. And to make "political gold" out of this.

It should be immediately stipulated that the theses put forward by PiS were to an extent supported by the facts. Germany bears enormous responsibility for its political blindness. Politicians in Berlin believed that it was necessary to tie Russia to Europe (read Germany) economically as much as possible, so that Russia could not turn away from Europe and its values. Big business rubbed its

hands, because the policy of “*Annäherung durch Verflechtung*” (drawing closer through interdependence) meant not only access to the Russian market, but cheap Russian gas and cheap oil.

The West kept on dreaming in the late spring of 2008, when Dmitry Medvedev became Russian president, promising to build Western-style rule of law and democracy in Russia. In the summer of the same year, Russian troops bombed Georgia, four years later Russian police brutally suppressed demonstrations in Moscow, and six years passed and Russia seized Crimea and started a war in Ukraine. In fact, German policies have led to the West’s dependence on Russian raw materials, symbolized by the Nord Stream gas pipelines. Russia has thus gained access to money, technology, and key Western politicians. Gerhard Schröder, whose infamous legacy the German Social Democrats are still unable to deal with, is a symbol of the spread of Russian influence across Europe. Poland and other countries on NATO’s eastern flank desperately warned Germans about naivety concerning Russia. I remember the outrage in Berlin when in 2006, Radosław Sikorski, then defence minister, warned of the shadow of the German–Soviet Rappalo deal hanging over Nord Stream. Germany ignored the warnings.

But does this mean that they bear responsibility for the Russian invasion of Ukraine? For the crimes committed by the Russians in Bucha, Irpin, or Izjum? This is pure absurdity. But such a thesis was repeated like a mantra by PiS politicians in 2022. At the same time, they attacked Berlin for delaying the transfer of armaments to the Ukrainians and for trying to diplomatically persuade Putin to end the war and withdraw from Ukraine. “You have debated so much with Putin. What did you achieve? You don’t negotiate with criminals. Would you negotiate with Hitler?”, Morawiecki publicly asked Scholz, sending a signal to Poles that he was dealing harshly with German cowards and traitors.

The Polish government then rented cars pulling lorries with billboards criticizing German policy towards Ukraine and sent them to Berlin. The state budget paid for a huge campaign on the Internet.

Germany is an ideal enemy for PiS because of the tragic German–Polish history. During the occupation, about 6 million Polish citizens were killed, and the Germans carried out the Final Solution in the death camps established in occupied Poland. Warsaw, in retaliation for the outbreak of the uprising in August 1944, was razed to the ground on Hitler’s orders. Many Polish towns and villages shared a similar fate. Since its inception, PiS has questioned the institution of Polish–German reconciliation, instrumentalized the past, and attacked its western neighbour. In 2021, PiS had another reason. Donald Tusk, the former prime minister and president of the European Council, returned to Polish politics with the intention of removing Kaczyński and Morawiecki from

power. And he was the ultimate target of this big anti-German campaign. The idea was to thwart his plan to remove PiS from power.

Already in 2006, PiS, during the campaign ahead of the then presidential election, stigmatized Tusk as a German by spreading manipulated information about his grandfather's service in the Wehrmacht. (In fact, Tusk's grandfather was forcefully drafted into the Nazi army as a concentration camp prisoner. He deserted and joined the Polish Army fighting alongside the British and Americans in Western Europe.) PiS exploited this false blemish between 2007 and 2014, when Tusk first headed the Polish government. After his return in 2021, PiS lost all restraint. Tusk was portrayed as a traitor and a German agent, as the ultimate enemy of Poland.

According to the narrative served by the government, Germany was supposed to make a deal with Russia: Putin was to occupy Ukraine by force within three days, and Germany, thanks to the fifth column led by Tusk, was to seize power in Poland. Kaczynski himself warned Poles against turning the European Union into a Fourth German Reich where proud Poland would be stripped of all independence and degraded to a mere Reichsland. On the wave of this campaign, the PiS government on September 1, 2022, the eight-third anniversary of the German invasion of Poland and the outbreak of World War II, officially announced that it would demand that Germany pay 1.3 trillion euros as war reparations. In doing so, the government ignored the fact that Poland renounced reparations from Germany in 1953.

This hysterical anti-German campaign and the government's constant playing with history is probably the reason that Poles are remembering more intensely. In 2020, 40% of those surveyed did not want to end discussion of World War II and the Holocaust. This is two points higher than in 2019. At that time, 38% were in favour of ending historical settlements. In 2022, the figure stood at 34%. The fact that Poland was Hitler's first victim was, is, and will be treated as an axiom in Poland. Such, after all, are also the facts. Interestingly – here I digress – the answers to the question about the merits of the communist system that was introduced in Poland after the war would suggest that there is no phenomenon analogous to East German *ostalgie* in Poland.

The great anti-German campaign against Donald Tusk would not have been possible had it not been for the fact that PiS had full control over public radio and television. Kaczynski secured it back in the winter of 2015. Less than a month after the formation of the PiS government, the Sejm and the Senate swiftly amended the laws governing the management of Polish Television (TVP) and Polish Radio, along with its sixteen regional radio stations. In no time, the bosses were changed, the new ones carried out an unprecedented purge of journalists – several hundred people were fired or forced to leave – turning the public media into propaganda stations in a truly Russian style.

At this time, the abovementioned Wacław Radziwińowicz was deported from Russia and returned to Poland. Watching TVP news programs, he said he felt as if he were watching programs in Russia, only they were in Polish.

Television has quickly become known as a “*szczujnia*”, a contemptuous term used to describe media whose sole purpose is to trash political opponents. The PiS-controlled editorial boards leaked all kinds of dirt on opposition politicians, making them out to be criminals and traitors and attacking their families. The same applied to journalists, artists, and NGO activists. In 2019, the hatred oozing from TVP led to a tragedy. After a six-month campaign of attacks, opposition-linked Gdansk Mayor Paweł Adamowicz was stabbed to death at a public charity event. The murderer later exclaimed that in this way he was taking revenge on the politicians of Adamowicz’s formation. But despite the cause of his death, PiS did not stop using the public media in the political struggle.

Week after week, PiS television and radio propaganda became increasingly brutal and ruthless. And effective. Estimates in 2020 showed that the state media were the main, albeit not the only, source of information for as much as 43 % of the Polish population. Hence if the TVP warned round the clock that the opposition wanted to bring refugees to Poland, that the European Union was a threat to Poland, and that Tusk was a German agent, many people accepted this vision of the world.

Reich Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels used to say that a lie repeated a thousand times becomes the truth. It is a disgusting historical paradox that precisely his methods have been forcefully implemented in PiS-ruled Poland. In the media it had seized, PiS replaced journalists with functionaries faithful to the party. The newcomers had to demonstrate their loyalty to the authorities every day; they could lose their jobs for a critical Facebook post or for asking a politician from the ruling camp an inconvenient question during a live interview.

Thanks to the unleashed media machine, PiS was able to mobilize its voters in small towns and in the countryside and thus win the next elections: local elections in 2018, European and parliamentary elections in 2019, and finally the presidential elections in 2020. To ensure Andrzej Duda’s second presidential term, the PiS-controlled media received a special subsidy from the budget to the tune of 500,000 euros. During the crucial phase of the campaign, one could report the impression that TVP was not working according to Russian models, but imitating television in North Korea. Promotion of Duda was pushy and shameless. His rival Rafał Trzaskowski, on the other hand, was constantly attacked. In the end, he lost to Duda by 400,000 votes. Had it not been for the support of TVP in Poland, we would have had a different president. Hence the OSCE, which monitored the elections, deemed them unfair.

In the same way, PiS rolled out a campaign against Donald Tusk. Its symbol became the phrase “für Deutschland” (for Germany), repeated on government TV. In 2020, Tusk, as head of the European People’s Party (a European party of centre-right groups), recorded a several-minute message to the congress of the German Christian People’s Party (CDU), which belongs to the EPP. “Your style of government has been a blessing not only for Germany, but also for all of Europe, including your eastern neighbours, and as a Pole I know what I’m talking about”, he declared in German. From the entire speech, the propagandists from TVP cut out only two words, “für Deutschland”. And they pasted it in all material devoted to Tusk or the Civic Coalition. The TVP viewer was supposed to get the impression that everything Tusk does is “für Deutschland” and not for Poland. The topical propaganda was supplemented with nightmarish subliminal messages. In the film shots showing Tusk, the colour balance was always turned up so that the film had a red tint, giving it a sinister expression. Tusk was even given horns to make him look like the devil, or shots were shown straight from the camera lens showing Tusk’s silhouette in crosshairs, as if the head of the opposition were a target to be shot off. In the era of the war in Ukraine, Tusk was constantly glued to Germany, which, as was known from other propaganda messages, supported Putin and bears responsibility for the Russian onslaught and war crimes. Pictures of Tusk and Putin, taken when Tusk was prime minister, were often shown in this context. In the barrage of accusations hurled by the PiS media, it was sometimes difficult to know whether Tusk was a Russian or German agent.

In the survey, the question of whether the media lie to Poles was placed in the “conspiracy theories” section. I fully understand this decision. In Western European countries, such theories are spread by power-hungry, anti-system populists to convince citizens that governments are not fair to them and need to be changed. The same tricks were used before 2015 by PiS. And after taking power, Kaczyński did exactly what it had warned against. Therefore, in Poland, lying to citizens by the media was not a conspiracy theory but a reality. Only about 15 % of respondents question this thesis. Furthermore, between 2019 and 2022, the number of people who say that the media were lying increased. This data stands in sharp contrast to the results on other issues classified as conspiracy theories. Poles reject the theses that people are not responsible for global warming or that there is to be a so-called population swap with migrants from Africa and the Middle East. It is interesting, however, that in 2022 we observed an increase in people believing that Poland was being run by the secret service. Perhaps this was the effect of the so-called “respirators affair”?

At the beginning of the pandemic, a lack of respirators was painfully felt in every country. In Poland, it was the intelligence service that was charged with organizing the equipment needed for intensive care units. 35 million euros

were spent, but the ventilators supplied were unusable. The money was never recovered, and the middleman involved in the deal left for Albania, where he died and his body was cremated. This story, suitable for a spy movie script, may have influenced the views of my compatriots.

The “respirators affair” is not the only infamous episode from the pandemic that cast a shadow over the PiS government. Billions of zlotys were spent on buying unusable masks and other protective equipment through mysterious middlemen, on setting up temporary hospitals that hosted not a single patient, on hastily setting up vaccine production lines that never worked. Billions went into the accounts of people affiliated with particular ministers; there were no results. Instead, there was ubiquitous propaganda about problems in the fight against coronavirus in Italy or Germany and successes in Poland. At first, the government implemented pandemic restrictions blindly. In the spring of 2020, it was even forbidden to go to forests and visit graves. (Despite this, Jarosław Kaczyński was photographed at his mother’s grave, and although he was threatened with a hefty fine, he remained unpunished.) A year later, the restrictions were loosened, with successive waves of coronavirus taking a deadly toll. The result: 200,000 excessive deaths. People were aware of the government’s ineptitude. The survey found that as many as 70% of Poles surveyed distrusted the government and its party TV. In contrast, trust in scientists, the military, and the police remained high.

I think that if it were not for the crisis on the Polish–Belarusian border (in the summer of 2021, the Lukashenko regime began to attract immigrants from the Middle East and Africa to Belarus and then smuggle them into Poland) and the Russian invasion in Ukraine, support for the PiS government would have fallen significantly. However, PiS, thanks to media propaganda, was able to induce the so-called flag effect. In Polish reality, however, this phenomenon did not mean an increase in support for the ruling camp during the crisis, but a halt to the decline in support. This happened because Ukraine did not collapse in a matter of hours. Ukrainians managed to defend Kyiv and retake areas in Kharkiv and near Kherson. Fear of a Russian invasion weakened, and people began to get used to war.

Kaczyński, on the other hand, was losing ground. In 2019, the bloc formed by PiS and the two minor satellite parties *Solidarna Polska* (Solidary Poland) and *Porozumienie* (Agreement) seemed monolithic. In 2021, this rock began to crumble, and PiS threw *Porozumienie* out of the government, forcing the party’s deputies to abandon it by blackmail or simply buying positions in state companies. PiS did not have a majority in parliament; it bought votes from unaffiliated MPs by offering them or their family members positions or subsidies. The scale of political corruption in Poland has become common knowledge. It turned out that virtually every ministry has its own fund with which it buys

support or pays for the election campaigns of its politicians. In a shameless way, sometimes even in the light of the cameras.

The war in Ukraine was supposed to put a lid on these problems of PiS's and create the conditions for the party to win the third consecutive parliamentary elections. When the government's pro-Ukrainian commitment failed to yield the expected results, the authorities began to cool relations with Ukraine. All the more so when Kyiv quickly reconciled with Berlin and Paris. The anti-German card remained in play. Tusk remained an increasing threat to PiS. In the late spring of 2023, Kaczyński decided to discount the effects of the propaganda campaign and end Tusk's political career with one blow. The Sejm swiftly passed a law on a special committee to investigate Russian influence in Polish politics. The committee combined the role of a prosecutor's office and a kangaroo court and was to investigate whether the politicians ruling Poland were Russian puppets. And if this turned out to be the case, such a politician would receive a ten-year ban on holding any public office. Such a verdict would not be subject to appeal. The legislation establishing such a body was in flagrant violation of the Polish Constitution, European law, and conventions protecting human rights. For PiS, this did not matter. The first defendant to appear at the hearing was to be Donald Tusk; the committee would then deal with his associates. The verdicts were to come in a flash. The commission's final report was to be published just before the parliamentary elections, in the autumn of 2023.

At the same time, a documentary series on Tusk's and his associates' ties to Putin's Russia began airing on public television. The creator of the series, not coincidentally, was the chairman of the committee on Russian influence, Prof. Sławomir Cenckiewicz, a PiS supporter and fanatical conspiracy tracker who has been preaching for years the thesis that Russian agents have infiltrated Polish politics. President Duda signed the law, but a few days later sent amendments to the Sejm, reducing the commission's powers. This happened under pressure from the US, which did not want a Russia-like breach of democracy on NATO's eastern flank.

Tusk then took advantage of PiS's months-long mobilization against him to harm Kaczyński's party. He acted in a similar way to how an Aikido fighter uses the strength of an opponent to defeat him. On 4 June, the anniversary of the first free elections in 1989, he rallied supporters for a huge march in Warsaw. Half a million people flooded the streets in the Polish capital. The Polish democratic community showed strength and infected the country with enthusiasm. PiS propaganda had no response to the march, except for more insults and insinuations. Two weeks before the elections, on October 1, Tusk called for another march. This time, a million people rallied in Warsaw. The political change could not be stopped. Some 74 % of eligible voters went to the polls on

15 October 2023. Such a high voter turnout is unprecedented in modern Polish history. Although PiS won the elections, it was unable to either form an independent government or build a coalition. Kaczynski dragged out the surrender of power until December 13; his party colleagues used this time to distribute billions of zlotys among their supporters and allies.

Was the 2022 survey a harbinger of a democratic upsurge? They show that Poland's democratic foundation, despite the efforts of the PiS propaganda apparatus, was very solid. 69 % considered democracy with all its flaws to be the optimal political system. 42 % of respondents believed that the individual is able to influence politics. 36 % believed that getting involved in politics makes sense. These are high values for Poland. Restricting freedom on the internet was supported by 19 % of respondents, smartphone surveillance and censorship by only 7 %, and banning demonstrations by 7 %. Two-thirds of respondents opposed the use of violence to achieve political goals.

At the same time, there was a high level of frustration about the functioning of Polish democracy and growing frustration with the European Union. I explain the latter indicator by the fact that Polish democrats felt growing resentment toward Brussels over the passivity of EU institutions toward the destruction of the rule of law and democracy in Poland. We referred to this phenomenon as "Polish euroscepticism". I explain the growing need for a strong leader, evident in the survey, as a reaction to the incompetence of the PiS government and a longing for power that is causal, not merely occupied with propaganda. So I would not take this as evidence of the rise of authoritarianism. Just like the opinions of Poles regarding the death penalty or the deprivation of rights of convicted criminals, this is a result of the trauma of the times of transition, when the state in Poland was unable to deal with organized crime. While the times of gangs in Poland are over, the bad memories remain.

To sum up, from these results we can see that Poland has remained at its core a democracy. But if I had encountered them a year ago, I would not have concluded from them that Poland's turn back from the path towards authoritarianism is a foregone conclusion.

Misha Glenny

Interview on the Authoritarian Trends in Great Britain and the EU

Rector Misha Glenny in Interview with Oliver Rathkolb,
Vienna 24 November 2023, Transcript

OR: Against the background of this opinion poll, but also taking into consideration other political developments, other surveys, and your knowledge of many European societies, how would you describe the current trend and situation for parliamentary democracy in Europe?

MG: Well, we're talking two days after the election in Holland, in which Geert Wilders secured the strongest vote with about 23.5 %, which was significantly higher than Timmermans' socialist group coalition. I had anticipated something like this, but not to the extent that we saw in the results of Germany's regional elections, the *Länder* elections, in Bavaria and in Hessen. Bavaria was important because the total percentage vote of far-right parties split between two of them, AfD and then the local Bavarian populist party, Freie Wähler, was almost 30 %, which is noteworthy. With regard to Hessen: here the AfD won 18 % of the vote. Hessen is a territory that I know somewhat because I went to school there for three months as a sixteen year old. And it is one of the most stable and on the whole I would say balanced economies in western Germany. And the fact that you can get 18 % for the AfD in a territory like that really astonished me. Korbach, the little town where I went to school, scored 22 % for the AfD. And it's quite astonishing to think that a town as prosperous as Korbach would vote that highly for the AfD. So, when Holland came along, it was depressing but not surprising. The implications – before I go into the trends – the implications are serious because it is damaging the prospects of coherent European strategies in advance of next year's raft of elections, culminating in the presidential election in the United States in 2024.

The trends you have showed me suggest we are facing a serious and dangerous challenge in Europe and in the United States over the next eighteen months. Now, having said that, what struck me immediately about the trends was that democracy was viewed positively as a system. So, it is not the system as such that people appear to be angry and upset about and alienated from. It is the way that it functions.

And that breaks down further still, i.e. how does democracy function in your specific region.

OR: I would also come back to this very interesting case in Hessen because I completely agree with your view that it still has, despite all the economic problems, a prosperous status from an economic perspective. But nevertheless people have started voting AfD.

MG: Yes. People have started voting for the AfD despite the taboo that existed up until now. And it was a cultural taboo in part, where the western Germans would say, you know, “That’s an Ossi thing; it’s nothing to do with us.” Clearly, the collapse of political consensus in eastern Germany is even more dramatic with the emergence of Wagenknecht. Earlier this year I went to the Leipzig Book Fair and then drove around Wittenberg, Jena, Halle, and Weimar – Weimar is an exception for obvious reasons. But take Halle for example. There has been a lot of investment in Halle and yet this region is now the sort of vanguard for the AfD and for Wagenknecht. Die Linke is more or less dead, and so there is space to be filled, which both the AfD and Wagenknecht appear capable of doing.

OR: What do you think is pushing the Germans towards the AfD, even within economically socialist stable environments. What’s the attraction?

MG: I think that we have to look at it, first of all, as a cultural phenomenon rather than an economic one. I think we should take the economy out of it. There is a sense of a lack of control. The migration question in Germany is really central because of 2015. Now, what I think happened was that Germany absorbed the migrants of 2015 relatively successfully and those migrants started contributing to the economy in a positive way. Integration has been quite impressive and if you go to Berlin or Frankfurt or even smaller places now, it’s beginning to look a little bit more like France or Britain, in terms of the type of people that you see. But it’s the most recent wave of migrants – not from Ukraine but from the Global South – combined with the Ukraine war, which I think has had a real impact.

OR: And what is also interesting, just to add, I see also here with students [unclear] for the first time our two boys, they are around thirty years old, they really fear war, for the first time in their lives.

MG: So, that’s interesting as well. My oldest son is half-Serbian. He has been living in Belgrade but has just decided to leave Belgrade. Having been brought up in England, he wanted to see what it is like living in Serbia, and he says he actually feels better and more secure in England than he does in Belgrade. That is partly because a lot of things have been stirred up in Serbia recently with certain events generating a lot of popular opposition and now there is a large Russian population in Belgrade. But it is also partly because it feels closer to unsettling events like Ukraine.

But back to the more general point. There are political issues. There is again, in your data, the lack of trust in politicians. So, this is clearly where you see

significant differences, a significant discrepancy between the commitment to democracy and the commitment to the way it is practised. And I just want to look for the figures on [...]

But also, clearly you saw in – yeah, here we are: “Die meisten Politiker sind vertrauenswürdig.” So, if you look at that, what is interesting is, opposition to that is highest in Poland and Hungary. The UK I thought was surprisingly positive. The only one which rates politicians higher is Germany. So, Hungary and Poland have both experienced sustained periods of populist rule. In both countries there has been a significant curtailing of rights and freedoms and a more open culture of corruption, particularly in Hungary. I’ll be honest, the material tended to confuse me a little. But actually, when I look at it now, Poland and Hungary are not so bad, so populist government doesn’t necessarily translate into disaffection with politicians.

But I know from personal experience that in the United Kingdom, the outcome can be very different. In Brexit, the populist right posited an achievable goal as their programme – a goal with multiple consequences, almost all of which were negative. As a failure in so many ways, successive Conservative governments had to ‘own’ Brexit. Because of its failure and the sheer incompetence of those Tory administrations, this has led to widespread disillusion in the UK. This is why the United Kingdom is different from Poland and Hungary, because what Orbán and Kaczyński first aimed to do was to undermine the institutions – first, you need to disable the democratic mechanisms of accountability both through institutions and through elections. This means that when the major policy changes are introduced, you can’t do anything about them, because elections have been rigged, checks and balances have been rigged, the media has been rigged. Kaczyński failed to do this in time. I think you can see that Poland is much more divided, the opposition is much stronger than is the case in Hungary even though the opposition controls Budapest. In Hungary, the rural population, the small town population is solidly behind Orbán.

OR: Can I just ask a quick question concerning Poland? Do you think that all of this international European really strong opposition to changing the independence of high judges and so on – do think that this also had a positive effect on the Polish case?

MG: I think the main thing driving the Polish election result was the fear that Kaczyński was becoming more anti-European. In the past five years, there was a large influx of people returning from the United Kingdom. So, at the height, which was about 2012/2013, we had over a million Poles in the UK. Something in the region of 400,000 or 450,000 have returned to Poland. They are often multilingual, more liberal, younger, and they are more organized, and this had, I argue, a distinct electoral impact in Poland. The urban population in Poland is decidedly more cosmopolitan and influential than is the case in

Hungary, especially outside Budapest. And you also have the age demographics as well. What we notice in the United Kingdom at the moment is that one of the reasons why those who would like to see the United Kingdom back in the European Union (now at 58% and steadily growing) is simply because the Brexit voters are literally dying. And the support for the EU amongst the young generation coming into the electorate is overwhelming, and we're talking 75 or 80%.

OR: And it will take how many years do you think?

MG: Ten years I think before – and I think that with the competition between the United States and the European Union, the business elite in the United Kingdom will realize that the UK does not have enough financial firepower to compete with these two big blocks and it must seek accommodation with the EU. The worst thing that could happen next year for Britain is for the Conservatives to win the election and for Trump to win the election because then what Trump will try to do is to secure a trade union with the United Kingdom, which will be extremely damaging to British interests in particular; he will pressurize the government into expanding private sector participation of public services with US involvement, especially the NHS.

I think, however, that is very unlikely. Back to Poland – the issue of the judicial system proved important in Poland. But even more striking was how state television and state radio were mobilized by Kaczyński in a hate campaign against Tusk and still the PiS was unable to win. Kaczyński also made that fatal mistake of trying to blunt *Konfederacja*'s appeal by assuming some of its extreme right-wing positions, particularly on migration. Here in Austria, we have seen a similar trend with the ÖVP trying to combat the growth in support for the FPÖ by adopting some of its rhetoric. Over the past five to ten years, we have observed that if you act as the Conservative Party has in trying to out-Farage Nigel Farage, you will undermine your electoral base. I think that happened partly in Poland as well.

What one hopes is that the opposition in Poland will be able to secure a constitutional break –

OR: This is really, I think, in some European countries, a problem, including Austria, that we still have in some of our constitutions a very strong president. In Poland even stronger ...

MG: Waldheim, by the time he was elected, had no power, it was completely destroyed, but on the whole, you know, Austrian presidents have been very careful and judicious in how they ...

OR: From the point of view of constitutional law for example, the Austrian president could without any reason immediately get rid of the government and then nominate his chief of cabinet for chancellor, and propose his cabinet, and it will be accepted and appointed by the president. This cabinet can ask the

president to dissolve parliament and have elections. I think it takes a week. And this is really this lesson from the late 1920s ...

MG: Exactly! And with Heinz Fischer or Van der Bellen with their obvious commitment to constitutional propriety, that's all fine. But when you get someone else coming in with a more cavalier attitude, it can become very dangerous.

Talking of Austria, I note that 16% prefer a strong leader without having elections and a parliament, this was really peculiar – where was the Austrian 16% collapse? – Oh yes, I think it was in COVID. So, that really struck me. I mean, first of all, there's the Austrian result, where there is very little trust in the government. I was also struck by the Polish result, where there was very little trust in the government. Hungary much more. But – and Germany very positive, relative to everyone else. Italy, it's understandable because the whole thing started in Italy and actually the Italian government moved very rapidly once the situation in Bergamo was getting out of hand. I think that if you were to do this again now, the trust in the UK would be significantly reduced because we're having this COVID inquiry live – you can watch it on YouTube – and it's really astonishing to see how disorganized they were and also how – what a very bad decision maker –

OR: Germany – public opinion completely changed within the last few months.

MG: Yes, I think that's right as well. You get one issue like the Wärme issue, which Habeck fell foul of – a single issue and it completely changes people's perception. In all of these countries now, I would say Ukraine is going to become more and more important with regard to public opinion and support for government policies – it is likely to decline steadily.

They still think they can fight a war they can win. But Wilders, Fico, and I fear now the AfD, are going to score points because of Ukraine and there will be huge pressure on governments to stop their support for Kyiv. What I think people don't know is that Germany and France for example are in very rapid discussions with the government in Kyiv to set up armaments factories inside Ukraine, German armaments companies, and so there is a sort of *Verquickung* of the relations now, that is going to actually have an economic impact, which may shift the debate. Wilders is very outspoken and the Palestine–Israel question will also have a significant impact. Wilders has received lot of support in the past from Netanyahu. He got some funding from the Israelis and he was allowed to use the Israeli embassy in Den Haag for meetings. Equally, Orbán and Netanyahu coordinated the anti-Soros campaign. They used the same political communications team that Netanyahu recommended to Orbán, an American team but Jewish interestingly enough, they're the ones who came up with the posters of George Soros. That is now happening again, but Orbán is

supporting Israel fervently whilst at the same time playing up the Jewishness of Alex Soros. There are now posters of Alex and Biden ...

Orbán plays on the antisemitism whilst at the same time dealing with Netanyahu. What's clear is that Netanyahu doesn't care about antisemitism in Europe as long as it's of technical and strategic value to him. Netanyahu has much to answer for.

The Palestine–Israel issue has impacted on the United Kingdom and France, most importantly, but also on Germany. As soon as it blew up with the attack on Israel on October 7 and as soon as the IDF began the campaign in Gaza, there was huge pressure from the start for all manner of institutions to come out and say, "We need to have a ceasefire, we need to demand a ceasefire." So, these were all people on the left obviously, and on the right, you know, it's Israel, Israel, Israel. Here in Austria, it's very low key – France and Britain, who, much forgotten, are the colonial powers who started this mess in the first place, and so this is impacting on European politics. It's an additional polarization.

These are all factors which are going to emphasize the lack of trust in politicians and strengthen the assumption that all politicians are corrupt. Then there is the issue of experts, as defined in the question, "Would you prefer to have experts for the new government?" Interestingly, the populists have always attacked experts and technocrats. As the Tory minister Michael Gove put it, "We've had enough of experts." This has been seized on, notably in the pandemic, as a means to undermine scientific approaches to matters of economic or social importance.

Yet, people still seem to like the idea of technocratic governments. I think that is partly by default because they think all politicians are corrupt.

We have at the moment, it seems to me, a very complex picture of four or five major issues, some international, some domestic, which will be accentuated over the year of elections, 2024, and will also be contingent on issues like how the Ukraine war goes, what happens in Palestine, whether a migration policy emerges that can start to convince the electorates. So, the question then is, what do you do about that?

But let's try to look at the positives. The positive is that the great populist experiment of Brexit has failed. What this has done is that even with explicitly anti-EU movements, Wilders, Le Pen, Meloni, they have changed their position. They have looked at the United Kingdom and seen what deregulation means after forty years of regulatory integration, and they say: Thanks, but no thanks.

So, from that perspective the EU is unlikely to face frontal attacks from any populists who come in, but nonetheless I think you see more of the fragmentation that we've seen around migration regarding other issues as well. So, the sense I get from Macron is that Macron thinks that in its present form the EU

is no longer functioning. And that you have to weaken it in order for it to survive, and that he identifies the single market as the most important thing. So what you have with the European political community is you'll have a sort of hard core of inside committed euro users, particularly in Scandinavia, Benelux, Germany, and France and then looser relations elsewhere.

And I think this is strategically under consideration because von der Leyen has been weakened, Germany is in a weak position. Its inability to use that 60 billion euros that the constitutional court has turned down means that the coalition government going into next year with rising support for the AfD and so on will not have as much financial fire power as it thought it was going to have. So, Germany will be looking in on itself rather than outwards at Europe. Wilders probably brings enlargement as hoped for in the western Balkans to a halt for the foreseeable future, and certainly for Ukraine and Moldova. Whether you can still salvage the western Balkans in this respect is unlikely but not impossible, and it remains contingent on Kosovo and Serbia coming up with some form of functioning deal. There is some positive movement in that direction, slow but in the right direction at the moment.

So, what I think will happen is that liberal and progressive forces will adapt to these new circumstances. Donald Tusk's return to the European Union will take place under the radar, slowly and incrementally. You are not going to see any dramatic moves. But you will also have a positive impact in terms of Poland, once the government is formed, and that will give new spirit to Brussels, I would have thought. But what can you do from country to country in terms of any shifts towards the far right? Well, let's remember that democracy is very important to people. How do you then present the choices that have been made in the turn to the right as a danger to the thing that people cherish? And here I think you can look at the United Kingdom again, because although Brexit has been taken out of the political discussion, there is widespread recognition that all of the post-Brexit prime ministers, Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, Rishi Sunak, have been a failure. And even though there is no direct mention of Brexit, the British electorate, I think, have understood that Brexit plays a big role in this failure.

So, how do you then communicate to people the failure of populism without actually mentioning it? That I'll leave to the political marketing people. But I think that's the key.

OR: You can measure it day by day on all levels, and also this, what you described with Poland, this unbelievable brain drain of young people, well educated on all levels, be it university, be it in the service sector, and so on, which is really promising a disaster ...

MG: And so you've got the move to the right in countries like Bulgaria. And what that did, that brain drain, you lose 10%, 15% of your population every

year from Bulgaria, the economically active, the more dynamic, those better with languages, and so on. And then certainly the Macedonia issue becomes an issue of sovereignty, and Bulgarian sovereignty against Brussels, against Macedonia and so on, and that appeals to an older electorate. So that age issue is important –

OR: I think this is something that most of the analysts completely omit, they skip demographic setup, and it is so important.

MG: Right now in the UK, Germany has this as well, so does France, we have the immigration figures for last year, largest migration, legal migration ever, well over half a million to the United Kingdom, from a Conservative Party which has been promising ever since David Cameron to reduce it to tens of thousands, and now we're talking about hundreds of thousands every year. Why is that? Because we don't have a large enough labour force.

So, you have to have this migration: industry demands it. Yet that leads to political problems. So, what's really interesting about Europe is if you were just moving pieces on a board, it would be easy. You need people to work here, you have people in Libya who are very prepared to do those shitty jobs which no one else will do, and it is a very, it's a perfect fit. But politics gets in the way of this. It is interesting listening to the discussions in the UK about migration because that connection is never made. It's as you state, in the analysis it's disregarded, in everyday conversations it's disregarded. We have as close to full employment as you can get in the UK now, and people don't make the connection between the root causes of migration and these facts.

What is really worrying of course beyond Europe is that Trump is now talking about internal reform. He no longer cares about Mexicans and stuff like that, he will bomb Mexico he said and so on. But instead, he's talking about the traitors within. So we have seen a step change in Trump's rhetoric towards a full-blown fascist rhetoric. And you haven't seen that even with Orbán, he doesn't use that language. Vučić certainly doesn't, Kaczyński keeps quiet on the whole.

And what's interesting is he can change the system bit by bit, as you say Orbán has done, without actually changing the constitution. And because he's packed the Supreme Court successfully, Obama must take some blame for that, I think Biden should take the blame because Biden could bring in a couple of people if he wanted to, but also Mitch McConnell, as Mitch McConnell prevented the appointment of Merrick Garland, that was a criminal thing to do. So, because he has the Supreme Court effectively in his pocket, because the Republican assemblies in – state by state are introducing gerrymandering and preparing to fix the electoral college, we could see essentially an undemocratic coup take place in the United States next year, or, you know, in the months following the election. And then, you know, how much power does Europe have to resist all of this? Not much.

OR: Then we are squeezed in [between] a new America and China, and also when you look at the Global South, India ...

MG: India is – it's dreadful at the moment. And Lula will swing with the Chinese, although he'll probably keep good relations with the United States as well.

Othmar Karas

How to Reduce Authoritarian Trends in Europe? Three Concrete Strategies for Stronger Liberal Parliamentary Democracy

Multiple challenges and authoritarian trends

Europe and the world are in crisis mode. For some years now, we have been experiencing the biggest simultaneous transformative challenges since the end of the Second World War in 1945. We are confronted by wars, conflicts, and terrorism, notably Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the dire situation in the Middle East. Both have revealed striking political misjudgements in the past and have upended the world order – including the global energy, production, distribution, and financial systems. Just before the “Zeitenwende”, we were struck by the unprecedented global COVID-19 pandemic. We are hit by inflation, the cost of living and energy crises, the unresolved issue of asylum and migration, and dependencies and thus the risk of blackmail. We are experiencing the severe consequences of climate change. Artificial intelligence is on a path to potentially disrupt entire industries. There is the urgent need for enhanced competitiveness, security, and independence. And we are in the midst of striving for fair green and digital transitions – with all its humanitarian, economic, and social implications.

As if that were not enough, liberal democracy, alongside fundamental rights and the rule of law, has come under pressure, outside and inside the European Union – and with it our very basis for peace, freedom, social cohesion, and trust in our society. Authoritarian tendencies, disinformation, and interference in democratic processes are on the rise. What all these multifaceted challenges have in common is that they are highly complex and cannot be solved alone, nor with a “simple solution”. Everybody who claims that there are simple solutions to the challenges is misleading us. However, we know from the past: those who are not doing well, who are dissatisfied and who have lost trust, are more receptive to simple messages. Those who provide simple messages, on the other hand, do not want a solution. Populists and nationalists benefit from the “non-solution” of the problems. Politicians have it in their own hands to break this vicious circle by realizing the potentials of European cooperation, strengthening its economy, prosperity, effectiveness, and efficiency: further European Union integration could generate over 2.800 billion Euros per year – for example by reducing policy fragmentation, completing

the Single Market, and establishing a Capital Markets, Energy, Health, Security, and Defence Union.¹

So, is history repeating itself? Mark Twain allegedly said, “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” The important thing is that we learn from it and do not make the same mistakes again. As a matter of fact, we can only overcome the challenges if we strengthen our cooperation across national borders and beyond party politics and ideologies. In Europe, all four levels of liberal democracy – local, regional, national, and European – must assume their respective responsibilities. In short: our success depends on our ability to work together effectively to develop common solutions, to find political majorities, and to shape our future together.

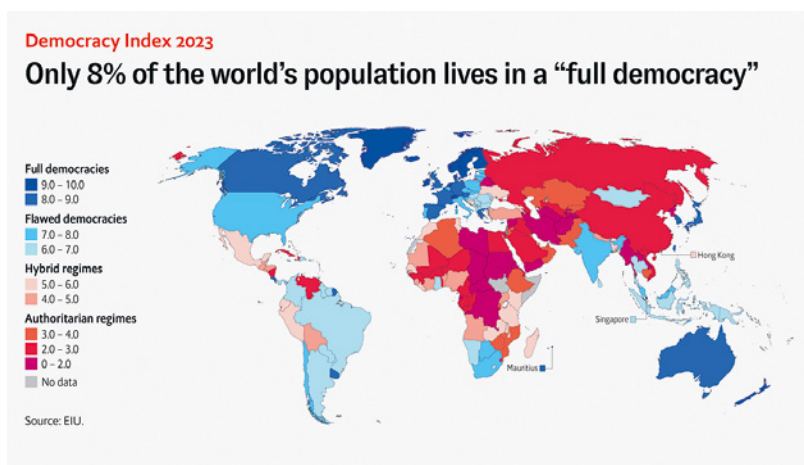
The former President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, once aptly noted, “We all know what to do, but we don’t know how to get re-elected once we have done it.”² We should take this to heart, not least in the context of a record elections year, during which around half of the world’s population is asked to the polls, facing fundamental decisions between authoritarianism and liberal democracy. In this spirit, the tenth term of the European Parliament is the opportunity to prioritize necessary further integration of the European Union over short-term polling concerns. It is essential to fight for a stronger liberal parliamentary democracy which is resilient to authoritarianism. The diverse challenges must be faced with more courage, honesty, and responsibility – not by hiding behind phrases, but by clearly addressing the concerns and fears of the citizens to find solutions together. I strongly believe that individual parliamentarians are called upon to follow this very principle. Parliaments at the heart of liberal democracy are challenged to credibly fulfil their role as an independent institution within a functioning structure of the separation of powers. And, besides politicians and institutions, society as a whole – citizens, businesses, media – is likewise put to the test. Because the achievements of the past cannot be taken for granted. We need to value them, fight for them, and defend them, every day.

1 European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS). Increasing European added value in an age of global challenges. Mapping the cost of non-Europe (2022–2032). PE 734.690. February 2023. Retrieved 7 June 2024. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/734690/EPRS_STU\(2023\)734690_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/734690/EPRS_STU(2023)734690_EN.pdf)

2 The Economist. The Quest for Prosperity. Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister of Luxembourg and President of the Eurogroup. 15 March 2007.

Liberal democracy under pressure in Europe and the world

The facts point in a clear direction: liberal democracy is under pressure, across the world. According to the recent democracy index by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU),³ democracies are globally declining. Only about 8 % of the world's population reside in a "full democracy", 45 % in a democracy of some sort. Around 40 % of the world's population live under authoritarian rule – a fraction that has been creeping up in recent years. At the same time, the condition of fully free and fair elections prevails in only 43 of the 76 countries holding elections in 2024. The overall index, which provides a snapshot of the state of global democracy, registered a decline in its total score from 5.29 in 2022 to 5.23 in 2023. There are reversals in every region of the world except for Western Europe, whose average score improved – albeit by the smallest margin possible (0.01 points). The main driver for preventing any recovery after the pandemic was the increasing prevalence of conflict. Indeed, there are currently more conflicts worldwide than at any time since 1945, according to the Global Peace Index of the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP).⁴



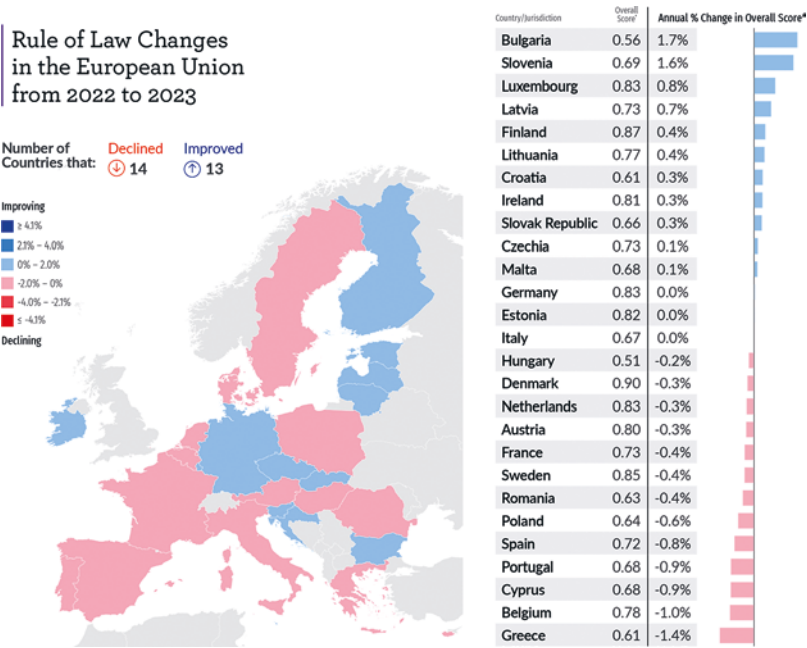
Source: Democracy Index 2023 by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)⁵

- 3 Economist Intelligence Unit Limited: Democracy Index 2023: Age of conflict. 2024. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/democracy-index-2023/?utm_source=eiw-website&utm_medium=blog&utm_campaign=democracy-index-2023
- 4 Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). Global Peace Index 2024. Retrieved 7 June 2024. <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/GPI-2024-web.pdf>
- 5 Economist Intelligence Unit Limited: Democracy Index: conflict and polarisation drive a new low for global democracy. 15 February 2024. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.eiu.com/n/democracy-index-conflict-and-polarisation-drive-a-new-low-for-global-democracy>

We can feel it: a lot of what we have been experiencing lately once seemed unthinkable. Who could have guessed that the post-war order – based on multilateralism, the recognition of sovereignty and treaties – would be wiped out by a single act: Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022? All treaties since 1945 – from the Charter of the United Nations to the European Convention on Human Rights and the Budapest Memorandum – have been ignored and violated, and trust has been destroyed. Who could have predicted the deadliest day for Jewish people since the Shoah – the despicable attacks by the terrorist group Hamas on 7 October 2023 – and the subsequent war and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza? Who would have imagined that in the United States representatives would be elected who still believe that the presidential election was stolen from them – four years after this election and despite judgements to the contrary by all the courts? Who would have guessed that elected representatives would contribute to the storming of the United States Capitol? All these events should strengthen our conviction of what liberal democracy is, who we are, what we stand for, what we cannot accept and what we must be prepared to fight against. And that no past achievements will automatically remain self-evident for all times.

The pressure on liberal democracy comes not only from outside but also from undesirable developments within the European Union. There are political actors in the Member States that trample on European law, ignore common values, and legitimize their actions with a democratic majority. One important metric for a functioning liberal democracy is the functioning of the rule of law. EU law is what makes the EU free, fair, and equal. The English term “rule of law” expresses this aptly: the rule of law means that politics too is bound by the law and that law determines politics. It is therefore not surprising that the “mini-Trumps” in Europe, who want to weaken democracy, often start by attacking the rule of law. According to the most recent global Rule of Law Index by the World Justice Project (WJP),⁶ 78 % of the world’s countries saw a decline in the rule of law from 2016, with legislatures, judiciaries, and civil society losing ground on checking executive power globally. Index scores on governmental accountability and checks and balances fell in 74 % of countries over seven years. Even though the European Union remains a stronghold for the rule of law, as states have regressed less compared to countries in other regions, 14 Member States of the EU registered a decline between 2022 and 2023.

6 World Justice Project – Rule of Law Index 2023, Overall score. A higher overall score reflects greater compliance with the rule of law principles. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/downloads/WJPIndex2023.pdf>



Source: Rule of Law Index 2023 by the World Justice Project (WJP)⁷

This development is reflected also in the assessments by the European Commission. Since September 2020, the EU’s independent executive arm has published annual rule of law reports assessing the rule of law in the Member States within four pillars: national justice systems, anti-corruption frameworks, media pluralism, and other institutional checks and balances. The latest editions of 2022 and 2023 also make country-specific recommendations to all Member States, something the European Parliament had reportedly been calling for.⁸ The report from 2023 paints a mixed picture:⁹ While 65 % of the previous year’s

7 World Justice Project. Rule of Law Index 2023. 2023 Insights. Page 58. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/downloads/WJPInsights2023.pdf>

8 European Parliamentary Research Service (DG EPRS). The European Commission’s annual rule of law report: From a monitoring tool to a comprehensive recommendations mechanism? Briefing PE 745.706. March 2023. Retrieved 30 May 2024. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/745706/EPRS_BRI\(2023\)745706_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/745706/EPRS_BRI(2023)745706_EN.pdf)

9 European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: 2023 Rule of Law Report. COM(2023) 800 final. 5 July 2023. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52023_DC_0800

recommendations had been fully or partially addressed, systemic concerns prevail – in particular in Hungary and Poland.

A recent study¹⁰ edited by Professor Oliver Rathkolb from the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna provides interesting insights on the concrete implications – namely satisfaction with and trust in democracy and politicians. If we compare surveys in the Member States from 2019 and 2022, citizens' satisfaction with a functioning democracy is either constant (e.g., Germany, France, Hungary), increasing (e.g., Italy) or decreasing (e.g., Austria, Poland, Czech Republic). In my home country, Austria, in particular, there is a large decline of 16 % from 2019 to 2022. In some countries, satisfaction with one's own country is larger than that with the EU (e.g. Germany, France, Austria). In other states, it is the other way round (Poland, Hungary). At the same time, there is a large mistrust of politicians. Only very few respondents agree with the notion that most politicians are trustworthy – the highest approval was found in Germany (19 %), the lowest in the Czech Republic (9 %). Approval for a "strong leader" who does not need to worry about a parliament and elections is particularly strong in Italy (46 %) and France (41 %). In Germany and Austria, on the other hand, it is lowest (17 % and 16 %, respectively), which may be explained by history and the use of the word "Führer" in German in contrast to "leader" in English. It is striking, however, that approval for a strong leader has increased in all countries.

Even merely subjectively, populist, nationalist, and extreme actors who put polarization and blockades before the search for common solutions are on the increase. Their supposedly "simple" – often emotionalized – answer does not do justice to the complexity of reality. A "democracy of sentiment" threatens a "democracy of responsibility". In a vicious circle, law is being broken, values are being violated, freedom of speech is being restricted, and parliaments are being weakened and silenced through emergency powers – this was not just restricted to the COVID-19 pandemic. The guarantee of separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, and freedom of opinion, media, and the press is coming under pressure. Trust in politicians and democratic institutions has been lost. The principal strategies and tactics of the enemies of democracy are the same everywhere, it seems.

10 Ziegler, Petra. Schulz-Tomančok, Andreas. *Autoritarismus, historische Wahrnehmungen und demokratische Dispositionen in Österreich, der Tschechischen Republik, Frankreich, Deutschland, Ungarn, Italien, Polen und dem Vereinigten Königreich: Methodik und vergleichende Ergebnisse der Online-Umfragen 2019 und 2022*. 2024. Preprint of an article from a study by the Vienna Institute For Culture and Contemporary History and Arts in cooperation with the Fritz Bauer Institute and the Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main. Rathkolb, Oliver (ed.), *Authoritarian Trends and the Rebirth of Parliamentary Democracy in Europe*, to be published in the autumn of 2024.

Disinformation and interference in democratic processes

What is more, disinformation, “fake news”, and electoral interference are a daily reality and used as weapons by authoritarian regimes and actors. The European Parliament Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM), for which I am responsible in the Bureau as First Vice-President of the European Parliament, has analysed the coverage of eleven national elections in Europe in 2023. It proved that disinformation about the electoral process was spread in every single one of these elections.¹¹ Moreover, the European External Action Service (EEAS) has identified thirty-three cases of foreign interference in elections in 2022 and 2023.¹² Clearly, it is not only Putin’s Russia that wants to destroy liberal democracy and destabilize the European Union. There are also Putin’s friends within the Member States that manipulate, polarize, and divide. No political group is immune to these enemies of democracy. According to a recent Eurobarometer survey,¹³ 81% of Europeans believe that foreign interference in our democracies is a serious problem that needs to be addressed.

In fact, the list of election interference is long: two days before the parliamentary elections in Slovakia in September 2023, an audio recording was circulated on Facebook in which Michal Šimečka, a former colleague in the Bureau of the European Parliament, purportedly talked with a journalist about manipulating the election.¹⁴ Even though it was a fake, it took some time before the recording was labelled accordingly. The pro-Russian party, and therefore Šimečka’s direct opponents, won the election by a small margin. The New York Times uncovered links between the Autonomous Community of Catalonia and the Kremlin as well as interference in the run-up to the 2017 referendum.¹⁵

11 European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO). Report on Disinformation narratives during the 2023 elections in Europe. November 2023. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://edmo.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/EDMO-TF-Elections-disinformation-narratives-2023.pdf>

12 European External Action Service (EEAS). 2nd EEAS Report on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Threats. January 2024. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2024/EEAS-2nd-Report%20on%20FIMI%20Threats-January-2024_o.pdf

13 European Parliament Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM). Eurobarometer: Citizenship and democracy: Flash Eurobarometer 528. April-May 2023. Page 4. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2971>

14 CNN. A fake recording of a candidate saying he’d rigged the election went viral. 1 February 2024. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/02/01/politics/election-deepfake-threats-invs/index.html>

15 New York Times. Married Kremlin Spies, a Shadowy Mission to Moscow and Unrest in Catalonia. 3 September 2021. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/03/world/europe/spain-catalonia-russia.html>

And the Kremlin granted a loan of 9.4 million euros to Marine Le Pen's party in 2013,¹⁶ among other things.

To assess these multifaceted threats, the European Parliament created a new Special Committee on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union in early 2022, which was prolonged until August 2023 and developed various recommendations.^{17, 18} As one of the consequences, ahead of the 2024 European elections, the European Commission adopted a "Defence of Democracy" package,¹⁹ including a legislative proposal to enhance transparency and democratic accountability of interest representation activities on behalf of third countries as well as recommendations for promoting free, fair, and resilient elections. With the objective to sensitize Members and their staff, the European Parliament's services published a *Disinformation and cybersecurity handbook*.²⁰

Some rulers also abuse churches and believers for their political purposes. The wars, conflicts, and terrorism have shown how close the connection between misconduct by politicians and religious actors can be. Patriarch Kyrill, for example, is an instrument of Putin who follows his same very "unorthodox" policy on the war of aggression against Ukraine – the expansion of the region and of the Russian Orthodox Church.²¹ Some political actors instrumentalize Islam, the terror attacks, and the migration flows for their political gain. Furthermore, social media plays an important role in transporting the conflicts. Instead of strengthening dialogue and respect for human dignity,

16 The Washington Post. A Russian bank gave Marine Le Pen's party a loan. Then weird things began happening. 27 December 2018. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/a-russian-bank-gave-marine-le-pens-party-a-loan-then-weird-things-began-happening/2018/12/27/960c7906-d320-11e8-a275-81c671a50422_story.html

17 European Parliament resolution of 9 March 2022 on foreign interference in all democratic processes in the European Union, including disinformation (2020/2268(INI)). Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0064_EN.html

18 European Parliament resolution of 13 July 2023 on recommendations for reform of European Parliament's rules on transparency, integrity, accountability and anti-corruption (2023/2034(INI)). Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0292_EN.html

19 European Commission. Defence of Democracy – Commission proposes to shed light on covert foreign influence. Press release. 12 December 2023. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_6453

20 European Parliament Directorate-Generals for Communication (DG COMM) and for Innovation and Technical Support (DG ITEC). Disinformation and cybersecurity handbook for Members. March 2024.

21 Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ). Ein heiliger Krieg für Großrussland. 8 April 2024. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/wladimir-putins-pakt-mit-der-kirche-kyrills-heiliger-krieg-fuer-russland-19636893.html>

it is frequently abused to increase divisions. These and other developments were addressed during the various activities that I organized between 2022 and 2024 in my capacity as First Vice-President responsible for the religious and non-confessional dialogue based on Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU).²²

Three concrete strategies and actions to strengthen liberal democracy against authoritarian trends

The answer to all the aforementioned challenges and threats is ensuring a strong, resilient, and future-proof liberal parliamentary democracy. Peace, freedom, and democracy, however, cannot be taken for granted. The ethical and moral progress over the past decades is not a law of nature. The achievements of one generation can be lost by the next. Therefore, we must do everything in our power to strengthen these – our – achievements. This is, according to Immanuel Kant, a “shared task and responsibility”, one that “does not cease with the death or resignation of a politician”, one to which “all people of goodwill” are obligated and which we must regain every day.²³

At the state ceremony on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the proclamation of the German Constitution on 23 May 2024, the President of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, rightfully said,²⁴ “Yes, our democracy is a success. But it is not eternally guaranteed. We can’t look to others to protect it. We must protect it ourselves. It’s up to each and every one of us!” And he underlined further: “Self-assertion is the task of our times. But we will only be able to stand our ground as a strong democracy. And that is precisely why we now need citizens who are not apathetic towards our communities. Who say what

22 European Parliament. Webpage on the Article 17 TFEU Dialogue with Churches, religious associations or communities, philosophical and non-confessional organisations. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/en/be-heard/religious-and-non-confessional-dialogue>

23 Popper, Karl R. *Alles Leben ist Problemlösen: Über Erkenntnis, Geschichte und Politik*. Piper, 1995. Vorwort 1994.

24 Rede des Deutschen Bundespräsidenten Frank-Walter Steinmeier beim Staatsakt zum 75. Jahrestag der Verkündung des Grundgesetzes am 23. Mai 2024 in Berlin. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Reden/2024/05/240523-Staatsakt-75-Jahre-Grundgesetz.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2. For the official English translation cited here, cf. “The Basic Law and the Peaceful Revolution, what a great fortune that is to have in our hands” Speech by Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at the ceremony to mark the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Basic Law. Retrieved 8 October 2024. <https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/EN/Frank-Walter-Steinmeier/Reden/2024/240523-basic-law-75th-anniversary.html>.

they think, express their concerns, but who can distinguish between justified criticism and all-out attacks on our political system.” Fortunately, the latest Eurobarometer survey²⁵ on citizens’ perceptions about the European Union shows that 73 % of EU citizens believe that the European Union has an impact on their daily lives. This is a higher figure than at the beginning of the previous legislature. This means that citizens know and understand that the decisions taken in Brussels and Strasbourg matter. Recognizing the impact of the European Union is probably what motivates us most to exercise our right to vote.

Now more than ever, it is necessary to protect, strengthen, and promote liberal democracy, fundamental rights, and the rule of law. Liberal democracy needs strong parliaments, the enforcement of the rule of law, independence of the judiciary, a functioning separation of powers, the guarantee of freedom of opinion, the media and the press, and fact-based, independent, trustworthy information. All the people of “goodwill” must join forces to take a clear position for these core principles across all national, party-political, and ideological borders. This is not self-evident: we can only strengthen liberal democracy worldwide if we also do our homework within the Member States and within the European Union. You are not credible if you point the finger at others and are not prepared to ensure justice, trust, and security at home.

To this end, three concrete strategies and actions to strengthen liberal parliamentary democracy against authoritarian trends in Europe follow.

1. Develop a common understanding of liberal democracy

First, we need a common understanding of what we mean by “liberal parliamentary democracy” and by the “separation of powers”, what role is played by whom, and what our common goals, principles, and standards are. We need to implement political will in our actions and through our work. The basic prerequisite for this is undoubtedly a community of law and values – defending peace in freedom, liberal democracy, rule of law, respect for the dignity of every human being, tolerance, solidarity, and subsidiarity. These achievements, laid down inter alia in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, protect diversity, pluralism, and freedom and enable cooperation, social cohesion, and unity.

25 European Parliament Directorate-General for Communication (DG COMM). Eurobarometer: European Parliament Spring 2024 Survey: Use your vote – Countdown to the European elections. April 2024. Page 10. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3272>

In that respect, one should deliberately use the term “liberal” democracy, to distinguish it from an “authoritarian, illiberal” democracy – which hides its nondemocratic practices behind supposedly democratic institutions and procedures. This malpractice has been exemplified by Hungary’s Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who legitimizes his nondemocratic actions with his political majority and – after winning re-election for the first time in 2014 – described his views about Hungary’s future as an “illiberal state”.²⁶ The former Prime Minister of Poland, Jarosław Kaczyński, has systematically attacked the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law in Poland – for example by establishing an illegitimate tribunal for judges.²⁷ In fact, a common understanding of liberal democracy is not a simple question of majority or minority, but a question of protecting minorities, of justice and equality. Furthermore, a common understanding can never be a simple “one-party system”, but must be a system of compromise, dialogue, and respect for common rules and values and the separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

We have come a long way and should not belittle ourselves: the European project goes hand in hand with a remarkable democratization and parliamentarization process. European democracy is unique, as is the European Union with common values and a common legal order. It unites around 450 million citizens and comprises various institutions at the European, national, regional, and local levels. At the European level, the European Parliament is the only multinational parliament in the world with directly elected members and legislative powers – the heart of European liberal democracy and testament to the values that bind our European Union, “united in diversity”. We should make ourselves aware: at the recent European elections, there were more people eligible to vote than the number of inhabitants of the United States of America. The Members of the European Parliament are directly elected representatives of the citizens, not representatives of the national governments. There are no automatisms, but hard work to find majorities across political and national borders. Neither one political group nor the members of one nationality are powerful alone in the European Parliament.

European democracy further comprises the European Council as the body of the heads of state or government, the Council of the European Union as the

26 Viktor Orbán. Speech at the 25th Bálványos Free Summer University and Youth Camp. Tusnádfürdő (Băile Tușnad), Romania. 26 July 2014. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://2010-2015.miniszterelnok.hu/in_english_article/_prime_minister_viktor_orban_s_speech_at_the_25th_balvanyos_summer_free_university_and_student_camp

27 European Parliament. Poland: Constitutional Tribunal is illegitimate, unfit to interpret constitution. Press release. 21 October 2021. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20211015IPR15016/poland-constitutional-tribunal-is-illegitimate-unfit-to-interpret-constitution>

chamber of the Member States and co-legislator, the European Commission as the executive body, and the Court of Justice of the European Union as the supreme judicial body. At the national level, there are the national parliaments, governments, and courts. And there are the democratic institutions at the regional and municipal levels. Together, these four levels of European liberal democracy form the basis for cooperation, decision-making, and citizen participation in the democratic process.

Action: Strengthen parliamentarism and implement the *Charter on the Role of Parliaments*

Without strong parliaments, there can be no strong democracy. The parliaments have a key role to play as they are at the heart of liberal democracy, bringing together elected members who represent the sovereign of the citizens. Parliaments are responsible for their representation, for legislation, control of the executive, the budget, and providing a space for the political discourse and public debate – ensuring transparency, accountability, and respect for minorities. Internally and externally, a common understanding about the role of parliaments in a liberal democracy is needed – not least due to the common external developments and challenges: be it the necessity for developing common standards on fighting foreign interference and disinformation, crisis management, and digitalization, or for sharing best practices on promoting and further developing liberal democracy in the EU enlargement process and beyond.

As First Vice-President of the European Parliament responsible for relations with national parliaments, parliamentary democracy, and modern parliamentarism, I have therefore initiated a common *Charter* outlining the fundamental principles and the key elements of modern parliamentarism inherent to a liberal democracy.²⁸ The Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments (EUSC) – i.e., the Presidents of the European Parliament and of the national parliaments of the EU – welcomed the initiative at their meeting in Prague from 24 to 25 April 2023.²⁹ At the subsequent Global Conference to commemorate the International Day of Parliamentarism on 30 June to 1 July 2023 in León, I was invited to present the principles of the aforementioned

28 IPEX. The Conference of Speakers of the EU Parliaments. Spain 2024. Meeting documents. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/conferences/eu_speakers/home

29 Conclusions of the Czech Presidency of the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments (EUSC). Prague. 24–25 April 2023. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/download/file/8a8629a88808f839018809fbcdbcd0009/EUSC+Prague+Presidency+Conclusions+final+EN.pdf>

Charter, as underlined in the adopted *Declaration of León on parliamentarism*.³⁰ In the end, the final draft comprises three chapters, ten key principles and 30 core elements of parliamentarism, answering questions such as: who are we, the parliaments of the European Union? Why is there no liberal democracy without us? What is our role? How do we work? And what do we need? What do we want to preserve, or renew and carry into the future?

The *Charter* was finally acknowledged at the EUSC in Palma from 21 to 23 April 2024 with a political commitment. In the Presidency Conclusions,³¹ the Speakers commit themselves to continuing to foster modern parliamentarism on the basis of the proposed *Charter*, for example by conducting debates in all the national parliaments and in the European Parliament. These debates should preferably be held before the end of 2024. This means that for the very first time, the parliaments of the European Union have jointly advanced on the role of parliaments in a functioning democracy reflecting on possible ways to strengthen modern parliamentarism – paving the way for a common definition and understanding of all parliaments concerning their role in this endeavour. Now is the time to implement and further develop this political will – all the more so in light of the current challenges and with a view to encouraging citizens to make use of their right to vote in all elections.

2. Ensure a stronger toolbox to protect democracy, rules, and values

To protect our liberal democracy, fundamental rights, and the rule of law, we need a strong toolbox of various measures. The European Union has continuously evolved in this pursuit – based on its foundation of the Treaties and “Copenhagen accession criteria”, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights. While the latter has been ratified by all EU Member States and serves as so-called “external” control mechanism, the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which came into force along with the Treaty of Lisbon in December 2009, is the binding internal catalogue of EU-specific rights.³²

30 Declaration of León on parliamentarism. León. 1 July 2023. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.congreso.es/backoffice_doc/prensa/notas_prensa/99181_1688138271277.pdf

31 Conclusions of the Spanish Presidency of the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments (EUSC). Palma. 21–23 April 2024. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://secure.ipex.eu/IPEXL-WEB/download/file/8a8629a88f754432018f768c9cf30000/Conclusions+of+the+Presidency+EUSC+Palma+ENG.pdf>

32 European Parliament. Factsheets on the European Union. The protection of Article 2 TEU values in the EU. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Website of the Euro-

Various institutions have different responsibilities and tasks to enforce these common rules and values: the Court of Justice of the European Union ensures compliance in the interpretation and application of the Treaties. The European Commission as the “Guardian of the Treaties” assesses the situation across the Union (e.g. by means of the aforementioned annual rule of law reports). It can issue warnings, impose fines, and take Member States to the Court of Justice of the EU. The European Parliament fights rigorously for democracy, fundamental rights, and the rule of law in its role as European legislator and has several additional tools at its disposal (e.g. initiating the Article 7 TEU procedure and legal action, setting up special and investigative committees, and dismissing the European Commission). The European Court of Auditors controls the proper collection and use of EU funds. The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) investigates cases of fraud, corruption and serious misconduct. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) provides independent, evidence-based advice. The European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) takes action against major cross-border crime. And the Council of Europe has an anti-corruption monitoring mechanism (GRECO) and its Venice Commission is playing a leading role in ensuring the standards of European constitutional law.

There are three main instruments to ensure the adherence to democracy and the rule of law in the European Union: firstly, the European Commission can take legal action by launching infringement procedures against Member States that do not implement EU law. It may also appeal to the European Court of Justice to impose severe fines. Overall, however, over 90 % of cases are resolved before a referral to the Court becomes necessary.³³ Secondly, the Article 7 TEU procedure makes provisions for suspending voting rights in the Council. While this procedure has been launched against Poland (by the European Commission in December 2017³⁴) and Hungary (by the European Parliament in September 2018³⁵), the Council has adopted neither recommendations nor

pean Parliament. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/146/der-schutz-der-werte-gema%C3%9F-artikel-2-euv-in-der-eu>

33 European Commission. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions: Enforcing EU law for a Europe that delivers. COM(2022) 518 final. Page 21. 13 October 2022. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://commission.europa.eu/document/b75864fo-8516-4ff0-9e2a-c3e8a57bbfb_en

34 European Commission. Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION on the determination of a clear risk of a serious breach by the Republic of Poland of the rule of law. COM(2017) 835 final. 20 December 2017. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52017PC0835>

35 European Parliament resolution of 12 September 2018 on a proposal calling on the Council to determine, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Treaty on European Union, the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is found-

conclusions. Due to the fact that sanctions must be adopted with unanimity (excluding the accused Member State), both countries were able to cover up for each other. On 29 May 2024, the European Commission announced the intention to close the Article 7 TEU procedure against Poland, as it considers that there was no longer a clear risk of a serious breach given the reform efforts under new Prime Minister Donald Tusk.³⁶ Finally, since 2021, the EU Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism has ensured serious financial consequences in the event of rule of law violations affecting the financial management of the Union. Here, the Council decides by qualified majority, leading to successful proceedings against Hungary.^{37, 38}

Action: Improve the EU's decision-making processes and tools

This whole toolbox of measures must be consistently, thoroughly, and objectively implemented, enforced, and improved. There can be neither double standards nor hesitation concerning any misconduct. One cannot heal an infringement by allowing another one. Nothing less than the credibility of the European Union as a community of rules and values is at stake. This is also reflected in the outcome of the Conference of the Future of Europe: in the course of the largest dialogue process in history, European citizens have put a particular emphasis on the democratization and parliamentarization of the European Union.³⁹ The results call for the setting-up of a convention for Treaty reform, to make the European Union more capable of acting, more independent, and more social and competitive both internally and externally. A call that has been answered by the European Parliament⁴⁰ and the European Com-

ded (2017/2131(INL)). Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2018-0340_EN.html

36 European Commission. Commission decides to close the Article 7(1) TEU procedure for Poland. Daily News. 29 May 2024. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/mex_24_2986

37 European Commission. EU budget: Commission proposes measures to the Council under the conditionality regulation. Press Release. 18 September 2022. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_5623

38 Council of the European Union. Rule of law conditionality mechanism: Council decides to suspend €6.3 billion given only partial remedial action by Hungary. Press Release. 12 December 2022. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/12/12/rule-of-law-conditionality-mechanism/>

39 Conference on the Future of Europe. Report on the Final Outcome. May 2022. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20220509RES29121/20220509RES29121.pdf>

40 European Parliament resolution of 22 November 2023 on proposals of the European Parliament for the amendment of the Treaties (2022/2051(INL)). Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0427_EN.html

mission,⁴¹ but which – as too often is the case – is still awaiting implementation by the Council, and thus the Member States.

At the same time, the European Union needs to reform its decision-making processes and tools. Above all, we need to move from the unanimity principle to qualified majority decision-making. National vetoes due to inner political tactics weaken the EU and only help the nationalists, populists, and blackmailers. The blockades by Orbán, Kaczynski, and co. are unacceptable: vetoes of the EU long-term budget, of support for Ukraine, and of sanctions against Russia. What is more, due to the unanimity principle the Article 7 TEU procedure is a blunt sword. The European Parliament therefore calls for a reform to impose sanctions by qualified majority decisions among the Member States. At the same time, the involvement of the European Parliament should be strengthened: just as in the activation of the procedure, the Parliament should also be able to initiate sanctions. In a similar vein, the Rule of Law Conditionality Mechanism should be improved. As originally requested by both the European Commission and the European Parliament, a proposal to impose sanctions should already be deemed adopted unless the Council decides to reject the proposal by qualified majority.⁴² Here too, the European Parliament should be fully involved in all phases.

3. Fulfil political responsibility:

Solve and argue, don't copy and pander

When it comes to the political way of dealing with authoritarian tendencies, politicians are, above all, well-advised to find concrete solutions to the various challenges and transformation processes. Since the “non-solution” and subsequent dire economic and social conditions are a breeding ground for the populists, nationalists, and extremists, it is crucial to realize the huge efficiency gains of more European cooperation. Only by completing the European single market for goods and services, efficiency gains of up to 829 billion euros are possible; a strong Capital Markets Union could realize up to 470 billion euros,

41 European Commission. 2022 State of the Union Address by President von der Leyen. Speech. 14 September 2022. Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ov/SPEECH_22_5493

42 European Parliament. Amendments adopted by the European Parliament on 17 January 2019 on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States (COM(2018)0324 – C8-0178/2018 – 2018/0136(COD)). Retrieved 30 May 2024. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0038_EN.html

an Energy Union up to 294 billion euros, a Defence Union 75 billion euros and a Health Union 46 billion euros.⁴³ Politicians have it in their own hands to realize these possibilities for a more competitive, prosperous, and efficient European Union.

At the same time, it is important not to only hear the “loud” minority, but to listen to the “quiet” majority. As a matter of fact, the pro-European forces in the political centre of the European Parliament – i.e. Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Liberals and Greens – have always had a stable political majority over the last decades – even though it has become smaller over time. Of course, this does not mean that one can rest on this majority. On the contrary, it cannot be taken for granted and must be defended and enhanced. However, I am strongly convinced that the political forces in the centre are much closer aligned with each other in their political understanding of the European idea and of liberal democracy than with any of the extremes.

The “reflex” to copy and pander to the populists does not pay off. Quite the opposite: during the recent election campaign in the Netherlands, for example, the new leader of the liberal party, Dilan Yeşilgöz, said she would not exclude Geert Wilders’ far-right anti-EU and anti-Islam Freedom Party (PVV) from coalition negotiations, unlike the previous party leader Mark Rutte.⁴⁴ Geert Wilders then benefitted from a boost in the polls and won the election by a large margin, more than doubling his seats in parliament.⁴⁵ Legitimizing the extremes makes them more appealing, it seems. In the event of doubt, the original is chosen, not the copy. It is crucial to address all the worries and fears of the citizens in the political debate. However, one should not lapse into “simple”, emotionalized answers which cannot do justice to the complexity of reality. One needs to argue, explain, and communicate the “bigger picture”, even if it is more exhausting.

This task culminates in the importance of political responsibility. The essence of liberal democracy is the pursuit of compromise and the best possible outcome. Consequently, political responsibility is much more than adherence to party politics and the rule of law. Political responsibility can be reduced to neither criminal law nor membership in a political party or group. While polit-

43 European Parliamentary Research Service (EPRS). Increasing European added value in an age of global challenges. Mapping the cost of non-Europe (2022–2032). PE 734.690. February 2023. Retrieved 7 June 2024.

44 Politico. Schaart, Eline. Dutch election: Far-right surge gives Geert Wilders late boost. 21 November 2023. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.politico.eu/article/netherlands-dutch-election-geert-wilders-far-right-freedom-party/>

45 Kiesraad: hertelling geen invloed op zetelverdeling of gekozen kandidaten. 4 December 2023. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://www.kiesraad.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/12/04/kiesraad-hertelling-geen-invloed-op-zetelverdeling-of-gekozen-kandidaten>

ical parties and groups nominate their candidates and mobilize their members and supporters, they are instruments of liberal democracy, not a means to an end in themselves. In English, a distinction is made between polity (structures), politics (processes), and policy (content). However, this differentiation is often missing in politics. Some equate “party politics” and “politics”, while there is clearly an important differentiation to be made.

Action: Do what you say, and say what you do

In politics, it is essential to take a position for what one believes is right and necessary. If you are able to communicate to people that you stand behind it, you can convey credibility – and that is the prerequisite for trust, in politicians and in democratic institutions. To achieve this, one also has to be prepared to debate with others, to campaign for one’s convictions and to make compromises – in line with the principle “Do what you say, and say what you do”. This is exactly why it was very important to me to campaign for the European Parliament as an institution in the run-up to the 2024 European elections. Even though I had decided not run at these elections,⁴⁶ I used the opportunity and my function as the First Vice-President of the European Parliament to raise awareness about the work of the European Parliament and the importance of the European elections by touring all nine Austrian federal states, getting in touch with countless citizens.

In my twenty-five years in the European Parliament, I have learnt and experienced a lot. I have engaged in countless political negotiations, particularly in the sphere of economic, monetary, and financial market regulation – often extending very late into the night. This backbreaking work may not always be glamorous, but it is crucial for democracy, putting the relentless quest for optimal solutions at the centre. The results of the recent elections highlight a growing demand for substantive policies. People and causes were winning and it is high time for politics that prioritise content, cooperation, and compromise. This common understanding is vital and we must preserve it diligently.

My personal answer to the question “What is the European Union?” has changed over the years and over time. In 2000, however, the European Union gave itself a motto, and I always come back to how aptly it answers this question: “United in diversity”. Because we are not all the same, and that is a good thing. The European Union makes rules for around 450 million citizens with different languages, traditions, cultures, histories, and experiences. Thus, Europe is always compromise, listening and striving to understand each other,

46 Othmar Karas. Personal statement. 12 October 2023. Retrieved 30 May 2024. <https://othmar-karas.at/persoennliche-erklaerung/>

and looking for good common solutions. Let us always be aware of this responsibility and shape honest, sincere, courageous politics. Let us stand up every day and act according to our convictions, not according to daily party political tactics. And let us fight with all our might against stupid nationalism.

When, if not now – in the midst of unprecedented challenges and pressures on liberal democracy – must we go forward as the political centre, clearly taking position and standing up for our principles, rules, and values? Placing content, facts, and solutions at the heart of politics is and remains the best remedy against the enemies of liberal democracy and of the European Union. One should not squint left or right but work together across national borders and beyond party politics, understanding the European Union as the answer, not as the culprit. While the path ahead is demanding, it is truly enriching and filled with the promise of contributing to a more courageous, resilient, and efficient European Union – to a stronger Europe in the world.

Larry Diamond

Is US Democracy going to fail?

Oliver Rathkolb: Well, the first question is more a general one. As you know, all the media said that before the series of elections started all over the world, in thirty countries, that this will end in an increase in authoritarian and anti-democratic regimes. Recently, Francis Fukuyama, however, stated that the trend is not so clear. As predicted in January 2024. How would you see the global trend right now before the US elections?

LD: I think there is a lot of validity to Frank's assessment in that article a couple weeks ago in Foreign Affairs. One way of stating it is it could have been a lot worse so far. In thinking about this long year of elections. I like to start in October of 2023 with the Polish elections, because those elections were so important. They really started the season of elections around the world. And that was the single most important positive turning point, where an illiberal, authoritarian-inclined political party, Law and Justice in Poland, was seeking a third term in government. If it had gotten another four-year parliamentary term, and in particular, if it had somehow gotten the ability that Viktor Orbán got very early on in Hungary to amend the Constitution, the ruling party could have done even much more serious damage to democracy in Poland.

And also when you have an illiberal, authoritarian-minded party governing, the longer they're in power, even without the ability to unilaterally amend the Constitution, the more they degrade constitutional and rule-of-law norms, and the more they stack the civil service and related institutions with their illiberal allies. So time is an element here, and I think the rotation of power back to political forces and a political leader who are committed to democratic constitutionalism and the rule of law was a very, very important development for Europe and for democracy globally, not to mention for Poland.

And then we've had two other elections that I think have gone reasonably well; some of the highlights include a political leader who's very committed to democracy and fighting corruption, Arévalo, winning the presidency of Guatemala against all odds. It isn't clear that he's going to have the power to overcome vested, corrupt, and authoritarian interests in this small Latin American state, but nevertheless, it was a victory for democracy. Then, the Turkish municipal elections earlier this year went about as well as democratic forces around the world and in Turkey could hope for in terms of the authoritarian Justice and Development Party, the authoritarian ruling party, being dealt electoral setbacks in virtually all the major cities. In the most important city, Istanbul, the incumbent, who is the most important democratic opposition leader in Turkey,

Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, was re-elected with a larger margin of victory. And there were some other hopeful results, for example in Senegal, where the ruling president, Macky Sall, tried to unconstitutionally extend his stay to another term in office and failed, and then his candidate lost in the race to succeed him.

Sall tried to upend the Constitution. He tried to and did prevent his principal rival from running in the presidential election. And yet, the person that was designated to stand in as the opposition candidate won. And that happened in Venezuela, too, where Maduro banned the opposition leader, Marina Machado, from contesting, and the united opposition drafted a retired diplomat to run. And he won in by a 2 to 1 margin. But it is a mixed picture because, first of all, we're still trying to get to a point where the authoritarian regime in Venezuela under Maduro is experiencing sufficient pressure globally to realize that they have to honour the result of the election, and no one doubts what the result is.

The opposition has produced officially validated returns from over 80% of the polling stations in Venezuela showing an opposition landslide victory. The question is whether the international community is going to be able to summon the coordinated pressure to force Maduro to respect the results of the election.

There was also a manipulated election in Pakistan earlier this year. The former prime minister, Imran Khan, was, prevented from running. And the military still dominates the political system. In India, which had national elections this past spring, the, ruling, authoritarian-minded party, the BJP, suffered setbacks and lost its unilateral majority. The BJP is another illiberal populist, nationalist, religious chauvinist party, bearing a lot of similarities to the Justice and Development Party in Turkey. But Modi got another term as prime minister. Will the loss of the BJP's unilateral majority sober them up and cause them to pull back from the authoritarian trajectory that they were on? I don't really see evidence of that right now. So the bottom line is, I'm a little less optimistic and a little less positive than Frank.

Yes, there have been some good developments and good trends. In South Africa, the ANC, the ruling party and the state itself, had grown very, very corrupt. The ANC lost its absolute majority in parliament. They were forced to go into coalition with the principal liberal opposition party. I think that's a positive development as well.

If you weigh all this globally, then it's a very mixed picture. It's kind of a jump ball. Liberal democracy is in a very deep and existential contest with illiberal and authoritarian forces. And if we want to pivot back to your neighbourhood, we're seeing the evidence of that in two and soon to be three eastern German states, where deeply illiberal if not authoritarian political parties have made significant, if not stunning electoral gains.

I don't know what you call Alternative for Germany. The way I characterize it is that it may not be a neo-Nazi party, but it has neo-Nazis in it, and it's certainly permissive of, too tolerant of, and too excusing of the Nazi past and the Nazi legacy.

And then you've got what's happening in these East German states now, which is uncomfortably reminiscent of the Weimar Republic. I hardly need to say this to you; I'm sure you could expand at great length on the dilemma of the Weimar Republic, that as the establishment parties lose public confidence and electoral support, the momentum drifts in both directions to the authoritarian left and the authoritarian right.

And even though neither of them may have a unilateral majority, the centre is hollowed out. And by the centre, I mean the centre in very broad terms, from reasonable left to reasonable right. At least political parties whose commitment to the democratic constitution is not in question. So, my biggest concerns right now are about Europe and the United States.

I'd say that if you think about democracy globally, we can survive a period of time where Turkey or even India or even Brazil under Bolsonaro veer in an authoritarian direction. But if major European states or the United States veer in deeply illiberal and authoritarian directions, that has pretty ominous implications for the future of democracy globally.

OR: Yeah, you are absolutely right. And what's also striking is that the game is very strong in former strongholds of the Nazi Party, the early Nazi Party pre-1933, and also, as you said, it's Hungary, but it's also Slovakia again, then now we just had regional elections in the Czech Republic, also with a major shift, to the right, who are now also trying to unify in the European Parliament.

I completely agree with your very detailed overview, and granted, it is very difficult to say because I think there are national differences, but could you sum up maybe the main reasons why people are more or less giving up on liberal democracy, which means giving up the chance to vote against the government in the next elections.

What are the reasons why, and why is this option for change not attractive to many voters. And as we saw it in Germany recently, unfortunately, also for many young voters. So, again, I think it is a familiar story, but with some important twists. The familiar aspect is that I think there are a lot of voters who are unhappy with the status quo economically and socially, who don't see the established political forces and the established political parties, ruling parties, ruling coalitions, but maybe even feckless or tired political oppositions offering them policy hope and policy alternatives.

LD: They either see their economic and social conditions as declining or, if they're young, they see their opportunities blocked. Obviously unemployment

is a big factor here, but unemployment, unattractive employment, and just a lack of hope and promise, I think is one important factor. And we know that in Europe, in Britain, with the Brexit vote and the vote for Farage, even though it didn't do very well in terms of the number of seats he won in the first past the post system, and, in Germany, in France, in the United States, areas that are suffering from de-industrialization and declining job opportunities for working people and the middle class, these are areas that are ripe for a populist backlash. So economic performance, and a sense of policy hope, dynamism, and responsiveness are important factors here.

Then there is the more recent controversial issue of immigration. We've had a lot of immigration, historically in the United States, and it's not like Europe hasn't experienced it. But Europe is now experiencing more radically diverse immigration of peoples and cultures. Historically, Europe was not nearly as multiracial as it is becoming. And while Europe fought religious wars in the distant past, the cultural and religious gap between Islam and Christianity can today seem quite new and stark. If you're a French national, you've had a fairly coherent type of community in terms of religion. And suddenly, you have a lot of Muslim immigrants that are changing the culture and the balance of religions in a way that you feel is kind of threatening your national tradition. That could be fashioned into a new and strengthened sense of overarching French national identity. Or it could be exploited by populist forces into being perceived as a threat. The Muslim populations in France are not as well integrated into society as they are, say, in Britain, and this failure of integration, along with some problems of crime and so on, have been feeding the rise of the National Rally (Marine LePen's party). In a lot of cases, it's just raw material that can be exploited by illiberal populist forces.

I'm a believer in immigration. Advanced industrial countries are going to need more immigration from the global South, because their societies are aging and the ratio of workers to retirees is becoming fiscally unsustainable. Europe needs more young workers. And the innovation that comes with youth. European countries need the infusion of talent and dynamism and striving that comes with immigration. If immigration is planned, and managed well, it could be a net plus. But to strengthen rather than polarize a society, immigration has to be planned and managed. There's got to be some intentionality to it so that society has time to breathe, to become acculturated, to adapt, to assimilate, to integrate diverse peoples into a stronger nation. Some of what's happening, is that rapid immigration is creating stresses that are difficult to manage, and fertile soil for xenophobic, populist parties. It's all happening too fast, too abruptly, and without sufficient control and management. To be an effective state, a state has to have control of its borders. And so while, philosophically, I have fairly liberal views about immigration and I think we as advanced indus-

trial democracies need immigration, voters are also saying we want reasonable controls over the time and pace.

And some of the elected governments do not seem to be very effective and responsive in that regard. So, this is a major factor feeding the populist backlash. One other new factor feeding populism is social media.

OR: Yeah. That's my next question.

LD: I think, of course, there's always been scope for the technology of the day, whether it came after the printing press in terms of books and broadsheets or it came with radio, there's always been scope for new media of communication to be exploited and turned into production of rumours, conspiracy theories, what we would now call disinformation, and to turn disinformation or propaganda into political exploitation. But social media affords opportunities for scope and scale and immediacy and mimicking of reality, particularly now in the age of artificial intelligence, that just dwarfs what previously existed.

OR: They have a very strong emotional power. Yes. Because of images, whether they are right or not. And, I think this emotional power is really strong right now and will be in the future.

LD: Yes. We could expand on the different dimensions of it, but the way that social media is facilitating the psychic emotional reaction against a lot of these trends and also enabling people to find one another and mobilize together and share their grievances on social media is a powerful factor. And then it also enables or supercharges the potential for other authoritarian states, particularly Russia, to amplify and exploit this. And there's been some funding coming from Moscow to some of these illiberal, authoritarian parties. But the greater Russian impact is probably the disinformation.

OR: And I think for a long time, especially in Europe, but also partly in the US, we have completely neglected this Russian impact factor. Because we saw they have no technology. We as Europeans and so on. But, I completely agree. They really are able to dig into this feed. For social media. And we see it too, we conducted public opinion polls. The question of whether other Europeans are prepared to stand with Ukraine against Russia. And the only countries really with a clear-cut majority are Poland, due to historical reasons. And Great Britain. The rest of Europe is not so happy. Yeah. With the governmental policies and in the background, I think, there is really quite a strong Russian, impact, in fact, because they also have a lot of money in Europe still around here. I have one question. What we also tried to find out in our public opinion polls is whether COVID and the reactions to COVID shutdowns and so on have strengthened authoritarian traits. How do you see this? Did COVID play a role?

LD: I think that it is a really good question. And it's an empirical question that requires real evidence, serious research to answer this. And I haven't done

the research, so my answer can only be speculative. I think that COVID has certainly not helped these trials, and I think it has accelerated them in at least two respects. Number one, most countries in the world – this is certainly true of the United States – struggled to manage this problem. A lot of what they needed to do or felt they needed to do was impose lockdowns, close schools, and keep people from interacting with one another face to face. This was all very dislocating, socially and economically. It's very hard to have a smashing success in dealing with a public emergency. So if there's a flood, if there's a hurricane or, God forbid, a pandemic again, people are likely to be frustrated with the state's response. It's never going to be perfect. And so it can leave a legacy of resentment that people died, that there was suffering, there was dislocation and a lack of an adequate response and compensation. Beyond that, though, I think there's a second factor that's maybe deeper: the lockdown policy was very socially and physically isolating.

We have in the current era in advanced industrial societies what's been called – and it's particularly among the younger demographic, but it's broader than that – an epidemic of loneliness. People don't have the social face-to-face social connections that they once did. The internet has also been a big factor in this.

When people are lonely and they don't have a lot of social connections, they may become more available for extremist recruitment online. They're looking for meaning, and they're looking for connections, maybe in all the wrong places. But if they if they find meaning and they find connections or solidarity in conspiracy theory networks or extremist networks, they're going to glom onto that.

There is something else that we're only beginning to understand the impact of. In the wake of COVID – and I know this with confidence only in the United States, but I can imagine that it may be true at least in parts of Europe – people are no longer coming to the office. Now, if they if they have blue-collar work, if they have manufacturing work, if they have work that can only be done in a factory or a physical plant, that's different. But a lot of office workers are working from home now part of the time or all of the time. And this too may enhance the epidemic of loneliness and the lack of social connections. I don't think we have a good grasp sociologically of what this means, but I'll speculate as a sociologist: it's not good. And I'll just say one other thing that harkens back to Robert Putnam's book, *Bowling Alone*, on the decline of social capital in the United States and the more recent work he's done as well.

I think in a lot of advanced industrial societies there's been a long-term trend of declining social capital and connectedness, for the US, and I think possibly for continental Europe. Part of what's been lost is what Putnam calls bridging social capital. What was once called, in the literature, cross-cutting social cleavages, where a person would be a member of a trade union or a political party,

or community organization, but that group might have been composed of people of different religions, or different relevant characteristics. And if you were interacting in a lot of different groups and those groups were diverse in their membership, then you were potentially pulled in different ways. Your political party organization or identity might pull you in one way. Your membership in a community organization or even in a bowling league might pull in another way. And you had diverse forms of friendships and social interactions that cross cut political divides. If you don't have bridging social capital, if you don't have cross-cutting social cleavages, if you have fewer organizational involvements, fewer face to face ties that are meaningful to you, and if they all reinforce one another in terms of the type of people you're interacting with, then you're much more likely to get social and political polarization.

OR: Absolutely. We have a very good article by Sherry Wu, who did this study on town hall meetings in textile factories in China and at Princeton University. And the interesting finding was that even if you have at the beginning of working week a well-moderated twenty-minute meeting on a Monday, after six weeks, you see that within this community, most of them were women, in the textile factory, you suddenly had a decline in authoritarian, apathetic attitudes because they could speak to each other with an outside moderator. And this discussion continued within their friends and colleagues. And, and I think this is a very important message you have elaborated on. And we saw it with our students during COVID. Yeah, many of them. And they are all this internet generation. They were desperately looking to get out of their apartments and even had quite a number of psychological problems, because they were really contained here. My last question is the most difficult one. And I think you are asked this every day: where is the US moving before the elections and afterwards?

LD: You know, obviously,

OR: I'm sorry, I think you're fed up of hearing this question.

LD: I'm constantly rethinking. Yeah. It's just – it's a difficult question to answer reliably. We'll be much better able to answer this after November 5th.

OR: You can rewrite it then. We still have been some time.

LD: But I would say, point number one, I think, with some degree of confidence, I believe that Biden would have lost the presidential election to Trump. And I think the reason why he would have lost it is the combination of general anti-incumbent sentiment, as we still climb out of the difficult legacy of COVID economically and socially. The combination of the feeling the country is on the wrong track. A lot of the problems we've been talking about, of immigration and lack of adequate economic opportunity, we're also facing a very serious housing crunch. I think you have this problem in Europe, too. It's becoming increasingly difficult for middle-class people to find a home that is

adequate, dignified. Not necessarily beautiful or massive, but adequate, within a reasonable commuting distance to work. And to feel like you have some security in life. You own your home, you have some future – I think home ownership is an important foundation of social stability, or even just the ability to find a place to live that isn't impossibly distant from where you might work.

So there's been this problem, too. And so the combination of Biden's age and perceived lack of vigour with all of the objective challenges made it highly likely that he would lose even to Trump. So, his getting out of the race in late July really did transform the race. It's gone from a race where it seemed highly likely that Trump would win to a race that is more uncertain, particularly after the September debate, where Trump was revealed to be as empty and mean-spirited a personality as he in fact is.

I think the dynamic has changed and the odds now favour Kamala Harris victory. But the odds favour her victory only very modestly. And that's a comment on the erosion of democratic culture and the depth of political polarization in the United States – that even with all of the outrageous statements and revelations of the illiberal and authoritarian values and intent that Donald Trump has articulated, and even with his record of having tried to overturn a democratic election in 2020, and, even with his obvious, shocking character flaws, 47% of the country indicates a readiness to vote for him. In many polls, maybe even 48 or 49%. And, though it's probable that he will lose the popular vote again for the third successive time, he has a decent chance of winning the Electoral College. Of course, part of the sickness, the vulnerability, the democratic shortcoming of the United States is that we don't have a direct election for president, and it's possible for the loser of the popular vote to be elected president.

But putting that aside, it is very deeply troubling to me. And putting partisanship aside, putting ideology aside and just asking the question: is it possible for a candidate who has both expressed in his rhetoric and evinced in his behaviour a hostility to democratic norms to be elected once again as president of the United States? And the fact that it is quite possible is, to my mind, a deeply disturbing reflection of where we are at in the United States.

And then you've got all of the threatened violence against election officials, all of the conspiracy theorizing and rumour mongering and readiness to violence by extremists on multiple sides. The United States is going through a very difficult period. I think there will be a partial deflating of the authoritarian balloon if Trump is defeated.

But even Trump's defeat, and the inauguration of another Democratic – capital D for the Democratic Party – president isn't going to put an end to this. We're a very polarized country with a lot of readiness on the part of highly partisan and angry citizens to stretch or violate democratic norms in order to

serve their political agenda or defend against what they see as existential threats from the other side. We've got a lot of work ahead of us, not only on the policy side, but on the culture side and on the bridge building side to try and back away from the precipice of catastrophic polarization.

If Harris wins, it's going to require a lot of work on her part to try to reduce this toxic polarization and build bridges of cooperation to Republicans who might be willing to accept that challenge.

OR: Absolutely. Right. Maybe a brief, very difficult last question from my side is: do you think, if Trump should be elected, that the ruling of the Supreme Court will influence his political behaviours?

LD: Yes, of course. I have no doubt of that. I think what isn't clear to me is whether Trump's policies, his economic policies, maybe some of his foreign policies, will be constrained by more pragmatic impulses the way they were for most of his previous term in office. I don't think that's inconceivable. A lot will depend on who he appoints to major positions. But my prediction is that he is going to weaponize the Justice Department and other elements of the federal government against his opponents. I think there's a very strong chance that he will deliver a revenge presidency in which presidential power will be unleashed in very abusive ways against his critics.¹

OR: Okay, Larry, thank you so much. It's always a great pleasure hearing and listening to you.

¹ This interview was conducted prior to the re-election of Donald Trump as President of the United States of America.

Sherry Jueyu Wu

Group Participation, Localized Democracy, and Authoritarianism

Authoritarianism

Following World War II, researchers in social psychology and other social sciences embarked on a significant inquiry into the psychologies of followers of fascist regimes and the roots of racism centred around the United States and Europe. One focus is on people's attitudes toward societal authority and justice. At the heart of this exploration is the concept of authoritarianism – a tendency to be deferent to authority and to be intolerant of deviance from existing social hierarchies (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1981; Pettigrew, 2016).

Authoritarianism is conceptualized as both a durable personality trait and a unifying ideological framework. It encompasses interconnected attitudes related to authority, justice, and social hierarchies. Authoritarianism is believed to be in part heritable from parents, but also shaped by accumulated social experience and political context over time.

Rooted in psychoanalytic theories, early research on authoritarianism suggests that it emerges early in life and is linked to an avoidant attachment style (Adorno et al., 1950; Altemeyer, 1981). Some suggest that individuals who exhibit authoritarian tendencies may have difficulty forming close emotional bonds and may avoid seeking comfort or support from others (Hopt, 1992). Research further claims that authoritarianism is a durable personality trait, meaning it tends to persist over time across different situations. Additionally, a longitudinal behaviour-genetic study suggests that authoritarianism is inheritable across generations, with strong correlations observed between authoritarianism levels of young adults and those of their parents (Ludeke & Krueger, 2013).

It's important to note that while some scholars view authoritarianism as a stable personality trait, others emphasize a more dynamic social perspective. External factors, such as the current environment, can influence the manifestation of authoritarian tendencies. **Subsequent research** has explored structural correlates of authoritarian attitudes (Pettigrew, 1999; Duckitt, 1989). For instance, **increased perception of societal-level threats**, such as economic downturns and elevated fear of crime, **positively correlates with authoritarian attitudes** (as noted in Pettigrew, 2016; 1999; Sales, 1972.). It's important to distinguish authoritarian attitudes from attitudes toward a *specific* authority figure or an institution. There is ample evidence showing that attitudes to-

ward a particular authority figure or institution can be shifted with situational interventions (Criag & Richeson, 2014; Sprong et al., 2019); Tyler & Weber, 1982; Tyler et al., 1992). In contrast, early research shows the relative stability of generalized authoritarian attitudes over the lifespan. In this way, theories from psychology concur with theories from political science (Alford et al., 2005; Dahl, 1956) that generalized attitudes toward authority and justice are shaped by a prolonged experience of learning and socialization. As part of a generalized ideology or “syndrome”, these attitudes develop from the breadth of a person’s experience, including age, education, and social class, and are motivational in nature (Kelman & Barclay, 1963; Pettigrew, 1999; Stone et al., 1993). Therefore, the interplay between genetic disposition, early socialization experiences, and situational influences contributes to the complexity of authoritarianism (Schnelle et al., 2021).

Ideas about the roots of an individual’s authoritarianism can be traced back further to the work of Adam Smith and Karl Marx. Both scholars accentuated the role of long-term social experience, particularly the organization of daily work, which gradually shapes attitudes toward generalized authority and justice (Marx, 1867; Smith, 1827). Using their work, later theorists argued that the lower socio-economic groups like factory workers were “trained to subservience” during their lifetime occupation, since it is among this group that authoritarian personalities are most frequently found (Dahl, 1956).

None of these theories suggest that generalized attitudes toward authority and justice can be changed over the short term. Rather, this body of work predicts that generalized authority and justice attitudes change in light of perceptions of a large societal threat, or from long-term experience with one’s family, social and economic status, and occupation. However, a separate area of theoretical work, also focused on the role of experience, suggests that generalized authority and justice attitudes can be shaped by the structure of specific social contexts (i.e. the workplace) over a relatively shorter term.

Workplace participation: A training ground for social attitudes

Ideas about individuals’ participation in their work groups, citizen groups, and religious groups have fascinated a wide range of scholars – from economists interested in the effect of participation on economic development to organizational scientists interested in the structuring of groups in workplaces to political theorists interested in the democratizing effect of participatory groups.

A brief history of participation research. The idea of workplace participation can be traced to as early as Rousseau and other political theorists on

the role of industrial democracy and civic engagement (Pateman, 1970; Rousseau, 1968). Noticeably, there might be several societal changes that correlated with the development of different forms of participation research. First, the post-Second World War period witnessed a new era of worker participation, including the 1950s and 60s work at the Tavistock Institute in England, the Yugoslavian system of self-managing socialism, and systems of co-determination and representative workers' councils and the rest (Deutsch, 2005). Parallel efforts from a research team led by Kurt Lewin, the founder of experimental social psychology, examined group decision-making in the Harwood factory in West Virginia in the United States (Lewin, 1947). In the 1970s, the great amount of information flow and workplace innovations drove an enormous growth of participation research and practices in the Global North (Heller et al., 1998). After a major recession in the 1980s, issues of efficiency, productivity, and economic competitiveness – prominent challenges in a recession – became a primary focus in workplace participation. Changes in the nature of work – particularly from manufacturing to knowledge-based work and the shift toward non-unionism and individualism – saw workplace participation shifting focus again with “employee empowerment” becoming prominent in the 1990s and employee commitment and engagement taking over in the last decades (Gollan and Xu, 2015; Royle and Fox, 2011; Wilkinson et al., 2010).

Influenced by Rousseau (1968) and writings within political philosophy, Carole Pateman, a political scientist, proposed that participation in decision-making and management processes at work can shape individuals' attitudes (Pateman, 1970). When people actively engage in their daily work, they develop more confidence in their ability to influence outcomes (also called political efficacy). As a result, they become less deferential toward authority and existing justice systems. Workplaces play a crucial role in this process, pushing individuals to spend most of their time in relationships of superiority and subordination. Pateman's theory suggests local social structures significantly impact people's psychological qualities. Workplaces that encourage workers to participate in decision-making and management processes can even influence long-standing attitudes and personality traits.

In psychology, Kurt Lewin, commonly known as the founder of experimental social psychology, proposed that social groups can form their own unique environments, which he called “cultural islands”. These “cultural islands” emerge from shared experiences within the group (Lewin, 1947; Lewin et al., 1939). To explore this idea, Lewin studied a group of factory workers who participated in more democratic work procedures (where everyone had a say) rather than a strict top-down autocratic approach. The workers responded positively to this change, but whether they could carry these changed attitudes beyond the workplace remains unknown.

Worker participation is a popular concept, but causal evidence is historically rare; the little experimental work that exist has been Western-centric. Little research has been conducted in non-Western societies, especially those that are subject to non-democratic governments. What are the effects of participation in groups? How does the experience of a participatory group change one's relation with those around them? To answer these questions, we conduct field experiments in different contexts and with different populations to test the influence of increasing the participatory nature of groups over long-term behaviour and attitudes, both within organizations and in broader society (Wu & Paluck, 2020; 2022a; 2022b; Wu et al., 2024). As far as we know, this was the first instance where researchers experimentally investigated whether local participatory practices could influence attitudes toward societal authority and justice across various contexts.

China experiment on workplace participatory practices

We examine the hypothesis that participatory (vs. hierarchical) group practices make individual workers more productive by conducting a series of field experiments investigating group influence on behaviour change in one of the world's largest textile manufacturers in China (Wu & Paluck, 2022a; 2020). The research focused on two sets of outcomes: a) behavioural productivity and b) generalized attitudes toward authority and justice (Wu & Paluck, 2021). Below, I briefly describe the study procedures and findings.

Study Context. Our first study took place at a factory in the Chinese branch of a multinational apparel manufacturer. The factory is divided into departments, such as cotton spinning, dyeing, and sewing. We selected all seven sewing departments (65 work groups or close to 1800 workers) as our study population because employees in these departments work in groups. Sewing workers are paid by piece rate – the more they produce, the more they earn – so a worker's gross salary directly reflects her productivity. Within the sewing groups, each employee works on her own task, which is related to her co-workers' tasks (workers are predominantly female). For example, one worker may be in charge of sewing the sleeves of a hoodie while another is in charge of sewing the hood pieces. Groups who coordinate well (e.g., efficiently pass on finished pieces to the next worker) can work faster; however, coordination is not the only determinant of worker productivity. We observe variances within groups, where some workers can work faster and earn more than others. Workers rarely transfer to a different group after they are hired, and each sewing group has its own supervisor who oversees group work.

Research Procedure. Factory management requires each group to have a daily morning meeting in which the supervisor summarizes the previous day's work achievements, recommends individual and group working strategies, and announces goals for individual workers. All workers attend their group meetings. This was where we introduced our experimental manipulation – changing the work groups' existing 20-minute morning meeting structure. Essentially, these work groups were randomly assigned into two conditions: a) an observer control condition with status quo meetings in which supervisors spoke, workers listened, and a researcher observed, and b) a participatory meetings condition in which the group's supervisor stepped aside and listened quietly to workers discussing work-related problems, ideas, and personal goals. Below I list the detailed procedures of these two experimental conditions. It is important to note that the conditions were randomly assigned – meaning there should be no systematic difference in teams' behaviour or attitudes *prior to* the experiment. Therefore, any observed difference in people's behaviour and attitudes should be attributed to the experiment – the change in the participatory nature of the meeting structure.

Observer condition (control). To control for the working groups' simple awareness of the research study, a research assistant (RA) conspicuously monitored each of the control for the same number of meetings as the treatment groups during the experimental period. The RA did not encourage any change in meeting routine. She described herself as part of the research team visiting the factory to learn management strategies from the production floors. For the duration of the experiment, RAs silently observed as supervisors led the morning meetings, which were typically 20-minute lectures on the group's production accomplishments and on working strategies for the near future. The supervisor announced goals for each individual worker at the meeting's end in terms of the number of pieces each worker should complete and wrote each worker's goal on a whiteboard where all group members could see it.

Participatory meetings (treatment). The basic structure of the meeting was changed to active worker participation. RA facilitated the meeting for 20 minutes in the presence of the supervisor. She encouraged all members of the group to participate in a discussion about production-related issues in the supervisor's presence. Supervisors were informed in advance that they should refrain from speaking during the discussion and, in particular, that they should not interrupt the workers. During the discussion time, workers were specifically encouraged to share work experience and production strategies for their own tasks, such as how to prepare piecework, where to put finished or unwanted pieces, or the best way to pass finished pieces to the next worker in the group. RAs were trained to redirect any non-work-related conversation to production-related issues. RAs set the expectation for the meetings at the start of the first treatment meeting by saying:

We encourage everyone to speak up. Just voice out whatever's on your mind about your work, such as issues yesterday or in the past week, the difficulties you have at work, or things you think will help you and others. I may ask some questions, and there are no right or wrong answers. Whatever you share will be helpful for us and for the group.

Following this discussion, the RA announced the week's order information, so that workers could set their individual production goal for the week. The participatory meeting ended with the RA encouraging each group member to voice her own goal for the week. Each worker received a piece of paper so that she could think of a goal, and write it down, and then announce her goal to the group when it was her turn.

Results on Productivity. Because the workers work by piece rate, which means the more they produce, they more they earn, their salary before taxation and fees represents their productivity. We collected data on their piece-rate salary and the market value of the products. Our results were anything but mixed. Among workers encouraged to speak up, productivity increased more than 10% during the six-week study, and the productivity gains persisted for another nine weeks after the study concluded.

When individuals were encouraged to express their opinions, they not only experienced greater job satisfaction but also felt more in control of their work. In contrast, workers in the control condition who adhered to management directives without any worker input did not have the same positive outcomes. Additionally, workers in groups who were encouraged to voice their thoughts felt a stronger sense of appreciation for their team and perceived greater respect within the group.

During and after the study, workers filled out detailed surveys, allowing us to understand the factors behind increased productivity and job satisfaction. Interestingly, it did not appear that improved job skills drove these gains. Instead, we found that the mere opportunity to express themselves – regardless of the content – played a significant role.

It was estimated when workers spent 25% more time discussing production matters (without problem-solving), their wages or productivity increased by approximately \$58 USD compared to the control groups that didn't engage in such discussions. Interestingly, even talking about nonproduction issues (like cafeteria food quality) had an impact. A 25% increase in voicing those concerns led to over a \$30 USD weekly wage boost. This led us to conclude that the driving factor in the productivity gains and the heightened job satisfaction was having a chance to speak and, ostensibly, be heard. And it wasn't necessarily what was said that mattered but the opportunity to speak.

Results on Social Attitudes. Four weeks after the study ended, the workers

responded to a set of statements designed to assess their levels of authoritarianism and their perceptions of justice in society. Using a six-point scale (1 = disagree, 6 = agree), they rated statements such as "Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn" and "By and large, people deserve what they get." Additionally, they indicated their level of engagement with news and politics.

When they considered questions related to authoritarian attitudes, the overall score was 4.05, indicating a slight bias toward respecting and obeying authority. However, individuals whose voices were encouraged during participatory meetings were less inclined to conform (average score of 3.87) compared to the control group (with a score of 4.20). The effect size, measured four weeks after the experiment, was approximately one standard deviation on the survey measurement scale, a pretty sizable effect compared with other psychological studies.

Perceptions of a just world held to the same pattern. The workers who had a chance to voice their opinions during meetings were less likely to believe in a just world compared to the control group (with scores of 3.86 versus 4.10).

The different workplace atmospheres appear to have influenced how employees interacted with the world beyond the factory. Those involved in participatory meetings expressed greater interest in political participation (scoring 4.06) compared to the control groups (scoring 3.80). Additionally, they reported higher engagement in family and social life (scoring 4.54 versus 4.41).

These findings provide rare experimental support to early political theories of participation effects on orientations toward larger societal democracy (e.g., Pateman, 1970; Rousseau, 1762). Speaking to this literature, our results suggest that groups in a workplace may indeed be a training ground for the development of political and social attitudes toward hierarchies and democratic institutions.

US Replication

Westerners might assume that Chinese garment workers are a unique population, existing in a more authoritarian society compared to US workers. The prevailing perception is that people in the US freely voice their concerns and aspirations. Consequently, even a small amount of empowerment could significantly impact the garment workers' broader perspective on authority.

Intuitions may not hold true in this case. Wu conducted a comparable experiment at a US university, involving 172 staff members from 32 academic departments. While the control departmental groups continued with their usual meeting structures, a separate set of departmental groups followed a participatory meeting protocol closely modelled after the Chinese approach.

Would the American workers be less affected by the invitation to speak up? In fact, the impact on American workers was remarkably similar to that observed in the garment factory across the globe. Administrative staff who actively engaged in weekly group participatory meetings also expressed reduced authoritarianism and a diminished belief in a just world.

In both studies conducted in China and the United States, we observed a common thread between these two drastically different settings: the regular opportunity for individuals to express their opinions. Surprisingly, this factor influenced people's perspectives across vastly different cultural contexts: encouraging participation at work appears to shape one's broader worldview, transcending cultural norms.

Potential Universalism of the Power of Worker Participation

In China, an authoritarian political system prevails. The results from the Chinese factory study could be interpreted as an effect of high contrast – where a democratic-style meeting took place in an authoritarian society. However, intriguingly, similar findings emerged in the US parallel study, despite vastly different workplace and societal contexts. The US study involved American university staff, situated in a liberal university within a Western democratic society. These staff members actively participated in familial, social, and political life. Surprisingly, their belief in generalized authority and justice also decreased following the participatory meetings intervention. Notably, the average level of authoritarianism among the Study's administrative staff was already low, with few individuals showing unconditional deference to authority. Yet, participatory meetings further reduced treatment staff's reported authoritarian attitudes. It appears that the implementation of regular opportunities for voicing opinions in group settings – regardless of context – may drive attitudinal changes toward authority and justice.

In both experiments, what was structurally common for the participants was that they held support roles within their respective organizational hierarchies. Whether as factory workers or university staff members, they operated under the supervision of direct managers and perceived their role as supportive (either to the factory or to faculty and students). These roles are often underappreciated and unrecognized within their local organizational contexts. Recognizing and inviting the voices of employees in such roles could be especially empowering. Future research should explore whether a lower-status structural position is a prerequisite for significant treatment effects to emerge.

Recent experiment on civic engagement

Moving from worker groups in organizations to citizen groups in civil societies, our research continues to examine the thesis that participation has powerful effects on behaviours and attitudes, even among groups of strangers. I extend my earlier research to examine: do local participatory institutions in authoritarian environments lay the foundations for democratic accountability? To what extent does participatory decision-making in one narrow domain – local community budgeting – influence participants' broader civic attitudes and behaviours?

We conducted an intervention on participatory decision-making, reaching over 20 million residents in China. Working closely with the Equity and Participation Center in China, a local non-profit organization, we designed and tested a novel community-based citizen participation procedure in the public budgeting domain, which allowed local citizens to voice their opinions and participate in the collective decision-making process regarding the public budgeting plan of the local government. Specifically, residents formed community deliberation groups and were invited to propose, deliberate, and vote on public service projects over the course of the intervention period. All registered community households could suggest proposals as to what public projects were needed. The community funds and budgeting process information was disseminated to the public via diverse channels such as a newly developed online platform, posters, flyers, public information boards, and local community meetings. Residents might call in "local experts" to help them assess and evaluate community budgeting proposals. For example, a construction worker might become the "local expert" to review a village road proposal.

We investigate whether increasing citizen participation in this particular domain will impact broader civic behaviour and generate demand for accountability from the governments over the long term. We tracked hundreds of local communities and collected a representative sample of 7,851 participants' civic attitudes and behaviours as well as their general societal outlooks at different intervention time points across communities from early 2021 to 2022.

Results. We find that participatory decision-making in community budgeting increased a wide range of civic engagement behaviours outside of the budgeting domain six months following the start of the intervention. Citizens exposed to participatory deliberation took part in more civic actions, ranging from donating blood and doing community volunteer work to petitioning local government officials.

Participatory deliberation with local community groups also increased citizens' ability to raise constructive feedback to the central governments. Contrary to the literature from comparative politics that found Chinese citizens always report higher satisfaction with the central government than the local

governments (Cunningham et al., 2020; Tsai, 2007;), we find that after experiencing participatory deliberation, treatment residents voiced more critical feedback to the central government compared with the local governments. Citizens' ability to raise concerns and constructive feedback in public venues is a foundational step toward establishing democratic accountability from leaders and institutions.

These changes were accompanied by a more positive societal outlook and increased satisfaction with the country's policies. The study demonstrates the power of democratic practices on behavioural and attitudinal changes and suggests that interventions like this can propagate in authoritarian regimes.

China is an interesting yet unlikely place to study democracy. Yet, bringing China into the discussion will likely bring insights and raise more questions for future research. Why would an authoritarian regime adopt democratic practices that might risk authoritarian rules? From our results, there is reason to think that local democratic practices might propagate in authoritarian regimes because even though they encourage pro-democratic attitudes such as accountability-seeking, they have an even larger effect on the provision of public goods and the evaluation of authoritarian public policy. To our knowledge, the participatory budgeting initiative in China ranks among the world's largest in terms of scale, preceded by a decade of smaller pilot programs across various regions.

Future research should explore the generalizability of these results and the long-term impact of citizens' social and behavioural outcomes, as well as impacts on authoritarian resilience. What is the lasting impact for an authoritarian regime where the government may welcome individual feedback or frank criticism, but not collective action against it? Can local participatory decision-making scale up democracy more broadly, or contribute to authoritarian resilience? Providing causal answers to these questions could inform policy-makers' decisions on the allocation of hundreds of millions of dollars annually towards programs aimed at promoting civic engagement and public participation.

Conclusion

The ongoing rise in authoritarianism in many parts of the world, increasing levels of social inequality, and a lack of interest in political participation have reinvigorated the question of how to build responsive citizenship and encourage participation at the local as well as national levels.

Projects aimed at localizing development have yielded mixed results, with some even bringing backlashes and reinforcing existing divisions (Mansuri & Rao, 2012). Little empirical research has examined the role of culture and the developing environment of a local participatory institution (Beuermann

& Amelina, 2018; Touchton & Wampler, 2023). We argue that contexts and how interventions are implemented – the source and perceived meaning of the intervention, the responsiveness of the institution, and the processes of group deliberation – have a critical impact on the success of participatory practice. From our results, participation integrated into everyday activities and nested within one's local groups effectively drives behavioural and attitudinal changes. When citizens are invited to deliberate and collectively make decisions about the welfare of their own work groups or communities, they will likely experience an increased sense of agency and political efficacy. This is consistent with what Mansbridge calls a “deliberative system”, where discussion and participation continue outside formal spaces as informal conversations between citizens and their representatives (Mansbridge, 1999). This direct participation closely connected to everyday life changes the nature of participation from a rhetoric ritual to a consensual collective experience. People will more readily change how they think about societal issues when they are exposed to others' views and actively influencing and being influenced by their group. In contrast, participation in silos or participation disconnected from people's lives may be less likely to bring substantive behavioural change.

Altogether, our findings support the wisdom of earlier political theories on the spillover effect of local participation. Perhaps surprising is that an entire workplace or community overhaul may not be the minimum change necessary to influence workers' and citizens' outlook on society. Our research suggests that a temporary change in experience in individuals' work life or group deliberation can have a modest but enduring impact on social views considered so stable that they are often described as personality traits. Echoing Rousseau and Pateman, future research should continue exploring whether local participatory experiences can not only change general attitudes, but also cultivate a more participatory democratic norm and active citizen engagement in the civil society.

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Rita Czapka | Sebastian Huber

“Democracy has a Future” – Views from the Perspective of Writers

This defiantly optimistic title, neither willing nor able to hide the concern behind it, was given to a matinee presenting and discussing the findings of this volume at the Burgtheater in Vienna on 17 March 2024. After Professor Rathkolb had contacted us and proposed presenting the study at the Burgtheater, we hit upon the idea of initiating a small European writing project parallel to the survey and its scholarly analysis. We decided to ask authors from each of the countries represented in the survey to contribute a prose text addressing the topic of the survey or a single, particularly striking, finding in their country. These texts would enter into a dialogue with the empirical data and political analyses on stage. In the course of this process, we extended invitations to authors connected to more than one place and language. For instance, Terezia Mora is from Hungary and writes in German, Tena Štivičić, born in Zagreb, has long been a British citizen and lives in Scotland, Sabine Gruber is from the South Tyrol and grew up speaking German and Italian, and Katrin Röggla was born in Austria, but for many years she has lived in Berlin and Cologne.

The result was an event that from today's perspective – following a year of rather disquieting election results on European as well as on international levels – remains an extraordinarily dense and stringent depiction of the contradictory developments in the European democracies. On the one hand, this was a result of the diversity of the perspectives, styles, and atmospheres of the literary texts, but it was also due to their dialogue with each other and the incisive political analyses by the impressive panel members: Misha Glenny, rector of the Institute of Human Sciences, Cathrin Kahlweit, Central and Eastern Europe correspondent at the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Sylvia Kritzinger, professor at the Department of Government at the University of Vienna, and of course the initiator of the study, Oliver Rathkolb, from the Department of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna and the Vienna Institute for Cultural and Contemporary History and Arts (VICCA). Chaired by Markus Müller-Schinwald from the event's media partner Ö1, the panel's analyses provided a framework in which the authors' texts could be understood as decisive poetic contributions to a European-wide discourse. Hence we were most delighted and grateful that Oliver Rathkolb offered to include these texts in the present volume in order to continue the dialogue between the different languages and types of texts beyond the event itself. Should anyone wish to

gain an impression of how they sounded when read by Annámária Lang, Tobias Moretti, Martin Schwab, and Marie-Luise Stockinger, recordings remain available at 2019–2024.burgtheater.at (“Online-Lesungen zu Demokratie und Autoritarismus”).

The event was opened by the text “THE PACK” by the French author and animal rights activist Jean-Baptiste Del Amo. Del Amo has already won the Prix Goncourt for his first novel *Une éducation libertine*, and *Animalia* shocked readers with drastic depictions of a pig slaughterhouse and the consequences that violence against animals has for the humans involved. “THE PACK”, developed on the basis of a series of photographs taken by young migrants, gives a voice to a group of people “sans papiers”, without a name, without a fate, and without a biography. The members of the “pack” are barred access to the architectures of prosperity, are marginalized and robbed of their individuality. In Del Amos’s erotically charged imagery, it is this that gives them their unbridled strength and vitality.

Kathrin Röggla’s dialogue “Winter Time” illuminates the same topic from the opposite perspective. In the winter of 2023, German and Austrian right-wing extremists, industrialists, and politicians met in a villa in Potsdam to discuss their misanthropic plans for an ethnically homogenous society. Born in Austria and having lived for many years in Germany, the author and vice-president of the Academy of Arts in Berlin has two voices reflect on proceedings in a fashion reminiscent of the “Pessimist” and “Optimist” in Karl Kraus’s *The Last Days of Mankind*. Both consume a lot of media and consider themselves aware of what’s going on in society as a whole, the one helplessly alarmist (“they’ve ...”), the other indifferently lethargic (“That’s not true”), both of them playing down the real danger.

Little Sabina is born with a large head in the South Tyrol. But will it be large enough to grasp all the conflicts, contradictions, and the potential riches of two languages and identities? Sabine Gruber was born and grew up in Meran, and her autobiographical text “Double Head” relates her childhood and adolescence in the South Tyrol, on a linguistic and cultural border that would extend through the young woman insofar as people tried to categorize her as clearly belonging to the German-speaking half of the population, giving rise to her bilingual resistance to clear-cut demarcations.

Where there was once an internal European border under strict surveillance, today the narrator in “Essay on Mud” by the German-Hungarian writer and Büchner Prize winner Terézia Mora is prevented from continuing on her way towards Lake Neusiedl by the temporary fencing of a building site. Before it a couple of men from a security firm, behind it an EU-funded reserve (sorry: retreat) for the super rich, on which work appears to have stalled because the

money has dried up. The nearest access to the lake? In Mörbisch in Austria. A “true story” about borders – old ones (between East and West) and new ones (between rich and not so rich). The subtitle: “The Thieves, the Liars, the Cowards, and the Land”.

In “The Last Day of the War”, the Slovak journalist and author Michal Hvorecký relates how, along with everything else, war destroys literature and even the capacity for literary imagination. In war, every word seems to degenerate into propaganda: “Was it not books that had determined the trajectory of the army drones?” And yet it is literature alone, in this case poetry, that is able to render a situation beyond war imaginable. For war is not over when the last shot has been fired. If war is ever to be over, one must have dreamt of its end.

In her originally untitled text, the Polish author Dorota Masłowska writes with great verve about hatred as a psychological, economic, and political phenomenon. Her piece was written before the last elections in Poland, but her conclusion that creating enemies and objects of hatred can serve on the one hand to heighten the individual’s sense of self and on the other hand to produce social attitudes and exclusive feelings of belonging, and that governments repeatedly use them to this end, is not bound to a certain country or (what has since become) a certain moment in history. From Masłowska’s post-socialist perspective, it becomes particularly clear that hate is also a feeling of longing for lost authorities.

However, that hate is also something that sells, that increases clicks and circulations, that the media thus repeatedly help to normalize fascist tendencies and have an economic interest in doing so (at least in the short term) is examined by the Austrian writer and professor of “language arts” at the University of Applied Arts Vienna Gerhild Steinbuch in her text “Cover Boy”. She describes the photo on the cover of the Austrian news magazine *Profil* from February 2024 depicting the leader of the right-wing extremist “Identitarians”, Martin Sellner. “It’s just an image”, begins Steinbuch’s artistic text, discovering, or rather uncovering, how the medium’s purported desire to warn its audience about the self-proclaimed movement serves as a pretext, as “an excuse for repeating it”, for popularizing and normalizing it. The texts by Röggla, Masłowska, and Steinbuch are closely connected by their critiques of the use of language and their reflections on media phenomena in European democracies.

The final literary text to be presented at the event was written by the Zagreb-born Tena Štivičić, who has long since lived in the United Kingdom and has taken British citizenship. Examining neoliberal promises to women and demands made of the latter, “Us” ends with an emphatic appeal for self-assur-

ance and awareness of fundamental human qualities. Hence it also serves as an appropriate conclusion to the present text:

Because we are warmer. We are wittier. We have a soul. We've seen a lot. We have history. We know how to cope with trauma without losing our sense of humour. We have passion. We know how to laugh, how to kiss, how to touch without fear. We like to help, we like to do a favour, we like to share food, we like to treat. We're not mean, we're jolly. We're relaxed, we're reliable.

We are not Them. We are Us. We have God on our side. We are still not lost.

P. S.: We commissioned nine texts, all of which were read at the event. To learn from Mussolini is to learn to defeat the little Mussolinis, is how one might summarize the essayistic piece “Fascism and populism” by the Italian media theorist and writer Antonio Scurati, whose large three-volume biography of Mussolini has received a lot of attention and whose piece demonstrates the parallel mechanisms between the rise of Mussolini and the success of today’s populists.

Jean-Baptiste Del Amo

The Pack

Call us as you wish.

If we ever bore a name, we forgot it. If this name has ever appeared on a birth certificate, a passport, we have lost it. Perhaps it has sunk into the belly of the sea. Perhaps a smuggler kept it to blackmail us.

Perhaps this smuggler is now crying while secretly contemplating the photograph of our childish face. Perhaps he cherishes the memory of our childish face. Or perhaps we just burned it because what use would it be here?

We change our name as we please.

Sometimes we are given one at random: Shorty, the Lamé, Nuthead, Maradona, Chief, Redskin, Ballsy. Our identity no longer resides in our individuality but in the pack we form together. This is how they call us around here. They say we are dogs. Stray dogs. Of the yellow and scraggy kind, with coat eaten by scabies and breedless, carrying their mongrel carcasses to the outskirts of the cities, to the dusty roadsides, always spurring suspicion, out of fear that they might rip your garbage cans or your children open or that they'll spread the scabies on you.

We are those of the pack, those of the margins. The margins of your summer residences, of your apartments with sea view, of your homes with their entry codes. The margins of your factory-cities and their well-run machines and swept sidewalks (because you do not want to see the sum of the garbage you produce, and pour away, out of your sight, where we roam, sleep, live, piss, love).

We sometimes cruise down to the city, as if breaking into your shopping malls, your glowing arcades, your pedestrian streets, your public squares, holding each other by the neck, heckling, sharing a same cigarette, laughing, screaming for the sole pleasure of watching you shiver, turn your gaze away and speed up your steps.

Sometimes you hear us howling like wolves until the early hours of the morning in a crash of broken bottles, kicking into your garbage containers, your billboards, and you tremble with fear behind your windows, in your deep beds, worried about the threat we could represent for your little savings so duly, so fiercely piled up.

We retreat at dawn, vanishing as quickly as the shadows dissipated by the rising day. We return to our borders, those that you have consciously established, consecrated by your architectures, those to which you assign our conditional freedom.

In the tepid corners of abandoned buildings, in the dormitories of shelters, in abandoned rooms, we find a little rest, our intertwined bodies bathed in the full light of the day while a curtain quietly flutters in the suspended bare space above our dreams.

Indolent, we unveil our true nature, we look like what we are: teenagers. We are fifteen years old, sixteen years old, seventeen years old, twenty years old; some of us have a mother somewhere who only yesterday was feeding them from the full of her breast; a toddler younger sister; or the intact memory of a classroom bathed in sunlight in the torpid hours of the afternoon.

We later plunge into the rough day whose bite we experience on our shoulders. We walk to the beaches through agaves and prickly pear trees, along dusty no man's land littered with cinder blocks, carcasses of household appliances and shards of bottles.

We stick our chest out and stretch the muscles of our arms. There is nothing else to do here but play war or love. We grab our genitals when talking about girls, those seen in the city, those who will one day marry us. We sometimes conceal under martial arrogance the desire that secretly draws us towards the forbidden body of one of us, one we have kissed one day, out of sight, under a tin roof, or rubbed against their flat stomach. And in the evening, under a damp sheet, we spread our warm seeds over our wrists.

We lift that one to be celebrated after a game of ball that leaves us covered in sweat and dust; we grab our arms, our wrists, our thighs, and we streak our sides with the traces of our hands when facing each other in a fight or setting our sight on the one of us who we'll throw into the water for a good laugh. We are certain to be in this world and to be alive.

We dry half-naked in the rocks, passing a bottle of lukewarm Coca-Cola or a smuggled cigarette from hand to hand, from lips to lips. We smoke while looking out beyond the sea, to the land we

have left or to the one we promise ourselves we will reach. For our old hopes are still moving. Neither the heat nor the dust nor boredom have worn them out. We whisper promises, oaths, and then spit on the sand.

When the sky catches fire, we return to the rut of the stony path, the soles of our sandals flapping on our heels, we laugh wholeheartedly, the salt powders our skins, the smell of our sweat mixes with that of the groves of cistus and everlastings and the acrid smoke of a distant brush fire. Hunger twisting our stomachs, we put an arm over a shoulder, we hold each other by the waist and walk at the same pace. We are now one, obscurely struck by a binding feeling of fraternity; by the majesty conferred to us by our youth; by our irreducible freedom, our savagery.

Sabine Gruber

A Double Head

I was born with a large head. Perhaps I realised, before I was even born, that a large cranium could be only an advantage in that homeland of mine alongside a border. When beholding it, nobody could ever take it for a round or pointed head. The head was so big that its shape didn't matter; it had enough room for two heads. And my mother was relieved just to have survived the difficult birth.

I was baptised while still at the hospital and given the name Sabina, which, etymologically, bears no relation to a big head. According to legend, Sabina was a Roman noblewoman who was converted to Christianity by her slave Serapia. In the end, both their heads got the chop: first the slave was arrested and beheaded, followed, a few years later, by her martyred mistress, my namesake.

Today, I don't believe it was a coincidence that I, with my large head, was given the name of a decapitated lady and that I was named after a Roman aristocrat and not after Margarete Maultasch, the sole heiress of Tyrol, even though I was born less than five kilometres from Tyrol Castle as the crow flies.

While my mother was recuperating from her birth-related injuries in the maternity ward and I was sleeping away the time until our discharge in the infant ward, my father was entrusted with registering my birth at the local municipality. The registrar may have been a sympathiser of the *Bumser* (the South Tyrolean Liberation Committee), those violent South Tyrol activists who championed the separation of South Tyrol from Italy, or perhaps he had himself been a victim of Mussolini's Italianisation policies – nobody knows for sure today. But I was told the official shook his head when looking at my baptismal certificate and without a second's hesitation turned the final vowel from an *a* into an *e*. *The kid is not Italian, after all.*

In this way, a Germanic head was dropped atop the beheaded Roman lady, and my father, overwhelmed by paternal joy and unable to think clearly, raised no protest.

In the 1960s, everything was painstakingly separated in South Tyrol. Everything was suspect, even individual letters of the alphabet. Accordingly, even though my mother was friends with an Italian woman who had a son my age,

she was in no doubt that I should attend the German-speaking kindergarten, whilst her Italian friend's child, who had become my best pal, would attend the *asilo italiano*.

She had not reckoned with my head. The story goes that, at enrollment, I threw myself on the floor screaming and only calmed down after I was promised that I would not be separated from my Italian chum.

Consequently, the fair- and curly-haired child donned a dark grey standard-issue pinafore and henceforth fervently sang *Giro, giro tondo, gira il mondo*.

Although, according to the prognostications of the German-speaking cultural and educational separatists, the little girl's world and language should have fallen to pieces, in line with the last verse of the aforementioned nursery rhyme – *Giro, giro tondo, casca il mondo* – and although her parents had been told that the early change of language would leave her with a muddled identity and corrupt her mother tongue, she soon wrote the best German essays and later became a writer.

But before that, the girl was taught that she was not allowed to say *Walsche* for *Italian*, that the Italian first names of her father and mother on their identity cards dated back to the fascist era, that she need not be afraid of the rifle salutes of the marksmen celebrating the birth of the Virgin Mary nor of the marching parade of the *Alpini*, the former mountain infantry.

Her immediate environment and her parents were at pains to protect the girl from ethnic animosities. But they still did occur at times: once she asked for a *gettone* in a bar because she urgently needed to make a phone call. She was chased out because she had not used the German term for a token (*Telefonmünze*). Another time a flaxen-haired Italian postman, whom she had spontaneously addressed in German to ask for a few stamps because of his appearance, reprimanded her with the words *Parla italiano, siamo in Italia*.

While the real world saw fences being put up in school playgrounds and bans on exchange lessons between German and Italian-speaking schools, the child created her own world, inventing German and Italian-speaking characters, fictitious friends with whom she played in her head that offered plenty of room for all and sundry.

In 1980, Bertolt Brecht's play *Round Heads and Pointed Heads* was performed in South Tyrol. The Viennese director Götz Fritsch had German, Italian and La-

din-speaking South Tyroleans perform the play – a parable that dealt critically with the Nazi regime. The round-headed *Czuchs* represented the Aryans, the pointy-headed *Czichs* the Jews. The South Tyrolean adaptation of the play had the *Czich* language represent *Italian*.

School performances of the play were banned and people railed against the *language jumble*. The South Tyrolean People's Party's policy of separation reached its zenith with the election campaign slogan "*The more distinctly we separate, the better we understand each other.*"

School hours and break times were different between the German-speaking and Italian-speaking schools in order to prevent pupils from socialising. At all political levels, the emphasis was on closing ranks against each other and on ethnic unity.

The young woman was not yet of age when the census took place in 1981. Her parents went over her head and declared her to be German-speaking. *You're ruining your future. Don't be pig-headed!*

The introduction of the proportional representation system was intended to ensure that public positions were filled according to ethnic quotas. The young woman thought that what counted was character and professional expertise; she did not want to be classified according to ethnic criteria.

As Claus Gatterer wrote in 1981, *I make an effort to think through and assess certain situations not only with my Tyrolean noodle, but also with an Italian head.*¹

Did he also have two heads hidden in one? A double head?

In 1978, still in my girlhood, I had travelled to Rome to work in a hotel. During my breaks, I visited Saint Sabina, who is laid to rest under the high altar in the eponymous basilica. Whenever possible, I spent time in entirely Italian-speaking cities, moving to Venice for several years after my studies, always in search of that lost letter *a*, of the other language, of the possibilities of a pluricultural life, of a multinational European normality, which should not mean forced assimilation, but acceptance, respect, diversity on the basis of democratic rules, always looking for a hat that fitted.

The young woman no longer wanted to stay in a country where all social, political and cultural issues were ultimately subordinated to the ethnic rationale, where people worshipped the holy family and the crucifix in the corner of the living room, and where there was little or no room for other ways of life, where togetherness was not seen as an opportunity but as something one was condemned to endure.

Admittedly, the number of *double heads* did swell over time. They joined forces, but they are still in the minority.

The country opened up to the world far too slowly, and it did so mainly for financial reasons. The cosmopolitan openness in the service of tourism was in stark contrast to the closed ideological ranks in domestic affairs. Although tensions between the German-speakers and the Italians decreased after the implementation of far-reaching autonomy rights, there is certainly no *convivenza*, or convivial togetherness. It is merely coexistence.

Today, it is no longer the Italians whom people in this province are afraid of, but rather a few migrants who might taint the village idyll that has been polished to a high sheen for the tourists. Traditional customs and practices and the South Tyrolean identity have long turned into box office hits, a lucrative brand.

When Giorgia Meloni and her right-wing party Fratelli d'Italia came to power in January 2023, the provincial governor Armin Kompatscher, once open-minded and in favour of a cosmopolitan and pluralistic South Tyrol, declared that there were still fascists or neo-fascists in Fratelli d'Italia and that his party hence wanted nothing to do with them.

Yet even in the 1920s, German-speaking businesspeople manifested no contact phobia when it came to fascism; at present, 62% of South Tyroleans are satisfied with Giorgia Meloni's work. The economy thinks primarily in terms of its profits and is in denial about the fascist inheritance. The provincial government now includes precisely those that they never wanted to have anything to do with, that they fought against because they feared Italianisation. They are partners in the provincial government, although it would have been possible to put together a left-liberal majority.

The radical turn to the right is defended by citing the expansion of autonomy and Meloni's promise to restore lost prerogatives. The Fratelli d'Italia are following the fascist tradition and their national conservatism is anything but minority-friendly.

I was born with a big head.
It's not big enough.

- 1 Gatterer, Claus: Über die Schwierigkeit, heute Südtiroler zu sein (On the difficulty of being South Tyrolean today). Speech given on the occasion of receiving the South Tyrolean Press Award on 31 January 1981, self-published by the *Kontaktkomitee für's andere Tirol*, sponsored by: Südtiroler Hochschülerschaft, 39100 Bozen, Schlerngasse 1 and Michael-Gaismaier-Gesellschaft, 6026 Innsbruck, Postfach 66, p. 28.

Translated from the German by Susanne Watzek

Michal Hvorecký

The Last Day of the War

I no longer remember how I experienced the last days of the war. Lots of people know exactly where they were and what they were doing at the moment the army of occupation unexpectedly started withdrawing from its bases. I couldn't understand at first what was going on when I heard bells tolling and sirens screaming from the steeples and churches in Bratislava, as well as ringing out digitally from mobile apps. What I will never forget is the feeling that swept over me, sitting at my computer as the eagerly awaited news reached me. A protracted nightmare seemed at last to have come to an end. The news unleashed a wave of emotion throughout Central Europe. Many had been on tenterhooks, anticipating the announcement. Others were scared. My homeland was teeming with collaborators. There was something in the air. Peace was in sight at last! The enemy government had finally decided to surrender the territories it had seized.

Ceasefire! The War Is Over! – screamed the headlines. Thousands streamed into the streets like herds of wild animals. People wept, laughed, drank and danced through the rest of the day and the night, and continued into the following night and the one after that. It seemed that the party would never end.

My city was in a state of feverish excitement. Crowds were roaming the capital looking for a past world that no longer existed. There were no trains or cars to be seen. There was no teaching in the schools. The internet worked only intermittently and the connection was poor.

How long I had yearned for this day! And yet, while the masses in the streets cheered, I felt as if a mass grave had burst open. I couldn't weep or laugh, I couldn't drink or dance. I was like a sleepwalker who had lost her bearings. I felt lonely. For me the war was not over. It was as if the propaganda had poisoned me with distrust that I was unable to shake. Fighting with arms may have been over but surely it would continue with the help of fake images, films and news, the enemy's main strategy for many years. We had lost the war as well as the truth before we fully realised that a war was being waged. I was no longer able to quickly detect a sophisticated hate message and would let it sneak into my head and take over my thoughts. It would be a while before people stopped looking for a leader who would inspire the kind of ideas and spur them to the kind of action they would have dismissed as sheer lunacy if it had come from anyone else. His brain was a genius of destruction.

Over the following days many of our people who had volunteered for the front in the neighbouring country returned home. But you were not among

them. I clung to the hope that you were waiting for me somewhere. What I found instead was the empty shell of our flat and the dreadful stench of ashes lingering in my mouth. In the heat of the summer I learned that an everlasting winter was still there inside me. Since you had gone, I hadn't been able to write. I couldn't manage a single paragraph, or even a single line or word for years. The app that had alerted us both to air raids used to make me feel a little closer to you. I could hear the distant sound of the same warning siren that you heard. I knew when you had to find the nearest shelter and when you were allowed to leave it.

Instead of writing, I would just read. After a few months, I was no longer able to read either, no longer able to take stories that were made-up. There was no effort of imagination able to surpass the everyday reality: ever since heavy fighting broke out along the entire front line, nothing was more like fiction than the enemy's war propaganda; no story, however savage, was as steeped in violence as the president's speeches. What was the point of all the fictional stories if they taught no one anything, either about the past or about the future?

Was it not books that had determined the trajectory of the army drones?

After the winter counteroffensive ended, I was no longer able to think straight. How was I to live alongside a generation that had been inculcated with barbarism? What if there wasn't a single uncontaminated thought left in their heads? How was I to fight collective amnesia?

I no longer knew where I was coming from or how I was supposed to go on living and working. One day, after what seemed like an eternity, I glanced at my bookcase and picked up a collection of poems that I'd been meaning to read for years but couldn't bring myself to. I closed the window and my empty room fell silent. I proceeded to immerse myself in this, the most radical of all literary genres, and was immediately transported, following the poetry wherever it took me. I was feverish, I suffered and wept, I laughed, drank and danced through the rest of the day and through the night.

I started to underline stanzas I found moving or puzzling, I would leaf back to check my understanding, or forward to assuage my curiosity. I would read lines written by a variety of poets, male and female, those who had died on the front and others who managed to express so much within a limited space. Their words opened up new worlds of possibilities, translating the fighting into poetry and making time stand still. Their writing was a declaration of love for language – poetic, personal, dreamlike, but also political, captivating, and intimate, familiar yet unfamiliar at the same time. The poets who composed these lines seemed to have lost their capacity to think, just like I had. So they sang instead. And through their songs they found a way of making their memories live on even after they themselves had been eradicated. Years ago, some had written about this last day, too, about the end of the war we all longed for

and which was bound to come. They thought about what was to be done when it was finally over, what would need to be tackled first and what would have to be let go. About how the war might end and what it would leave behind. No one, though, dared to write about that which would be gone forever.

This is how I experienced the last days of the war: by reading about them, listening to their sound, and dreaming.

Translated from the German by Julia Sherwood

Dorota Masłowska

We're good people

Yesterday I had to cross paths with someone who had once seized an opportunity to stab me in the back. The motherfucker had done it just as I was turned away, occupied with fending off other attacks; such a position is often tempting to those who are already at the ready: at some point they'd visualized the motions, practiced them in their thoughts, and then all that's left is waiting. People like him know you have to make your own luck. Such an exposed back screams to them: Hey there, sucker. Now! *Now!* And if you ask me my impressions, it's hard to say. Because it's really hard to examine it as it's happening. So I only saw it afterward, after my tormenter was already done and puffing with satisfaction, flexing, proud of himself, panting, as if after slogging it out on the court for the whole game he'd finally shot a basket. There was also a bit of shamefaced applause. Oh well, so we say: mess with the bull, get the horns. High fives with your buds, a manly sporty feeling, the locker room that then reeks of coward. I didn't say anything back, because it's hard to speak in such a situation. Someone with a knife in the back is overcome with melancholy, a peculiar stupor, one's cleverness paralyzed. Though later tons of insanely scathing things come to mind that, then and there, could have answered for everything.

This delayed momentum broke down into poisonous, radioactive small change within me. How unfortunately it went: anger and contempt proudly held back were exchanged for something that, as I understood yesterday, is ordinary hatred. I was still wavering, because you know? I had always avoided that feeling, economizing, skimping, saying I can't afford it, I don't have enough, whether out of coyness or superstitious dread or self-care, that downward-facing dog. Maybe all of it, so that I could now go large: I hate this person. So that I could now blow my fucking life savings on him.

But no sudden moves, either. This is a calm hatred that requires no applause, that knows no pride. It's patient. It's not kind. But it doesn't want anything big for itself. It's somewhat in awe of itself. Its set of pieces is limited, it avails itself of the TV dinners that language offers to be reheated in its microwave. Upon seeing the son of a bitch I therefore paste Frankensteins together from what there is: ass, shit, genitalia. People talk about obscenities being "juicy" or "caustic," but if you want to know my opinion, they're a barren, dried-out tank where one quickly sees bottom. A genital-fecal poetics ... Potentially a sex work ... Sex workers, sex, its brutal terms – I sculpt and sculpt, shape and shape; I am diligent, devoted, and insatiable. In my imagination, I am creating pliable grafts, cross-breeds, hybrids, I turn them in my thoughts like Rubic's

cubes, I assemble and reassemble. Ultimately I feel that this whole toxic grind is reaching a grim climax within me. I spare nothing, and this mug is simply like old Adidas high-tops stinking in my foyer. And it's a little like a film cut short: I don't know what's happened, what has actually occurred, what I've been up to and with whom. Like after each full moon: all I have is the new moon, fine as a clipped fingernail, and emptiness, a roaring emptiness. A rather unhelpful state of being, as if I've spent hours brandishing a knife with no hilt, just all blade.

This is my Google review of hate. An intense flight, but a rather low one. I give it two stars, the first for the low price: it arises in the brain on its own. I wanted to try it: it's ultimately the Number One high in Poland today. Mega afterburn. It has us all flying now, we're rolling on it from morning to night. The first dose is free. The next one's also free. They're all free. High availability: you pluck it from the air, just like that, from the internet, from the paper that the lady at the newsstand tosses contemptuously into your face, from the television, which uses false, faked material to arouse phobias, paranoias, and resentments. It's a relay. The zombie bites, and then you trundle along, intoxicated and debased, wanting to jump down the throat of everyone you meet. And you don't know when another zombie appears, and another, and you don't know that you're already seething in a triangle of hate, a hate-filled gangbang, no one can tell whose biting whom, destroying whom, finishing them off; the important thing is that you feel this invigorating power. The blood is livelier in the veins, the pupils dilate, the canines and claws grow out. One goes all aquiver, like on a hunt. One feels huge, even if he's not huge. He feels important, even though he's not. Powerful, though he's powerless. Our government really comes in handy for identifying this collective need. It ensures the supply, it inspires and encourages its use. The stores are filled with bread, but here it is, the olympiad we've been promised! Cheap, self-reinforcing, for those on a budget: the people, skillfully stimulated and unleashed upon themselves, produce the toxic fix in their own heads and stupefy themselves on it!

You hesitate a bit at first, of course, you're afraid, you hold back, this is a Christian country, after all, where the lost traveler is greeted with bread and salt, and the saints appear on trees and shattered windowpanes, in cornflakes and kielbasa. We're good people! But there are certain limits. Which have long since been crossed. We are getting up off these eternally scraped knees!

The hierarchies of the transformation and post-transformation have left masses of people at the bottom, they haven't gotten anywhere, nor will they. Hatred and contempt are the only tools at their disposal for regulating the unsatisfying balance of power; only with them can they drag down those who've gone too high, steal from the rich and give to the poor. Or at least just steal from the rich, and preferably from the poor, too, and right away. From politi-

cians and refugees, celebrities and single mothers, the wealthy and the homeless, and all kinds of other traitors and turncoats. From anybody, you sucker! Here! Now! The internet, of course, is eager to monetize it, offering its arenas to this endless, gloomy olympiad.

Why isn't it an olympiad of freedom? That's what we'd been fighting so fiercely for, after all. But that was like meeting the most wonderful bride, awaited these centuries: it's cool that she arrived, but we somehow have nothing to talk about. She's kind of uglier than she was supposed to be, and we don't know how we fit. We're overwhelmed with agoraphobia! And you know it's kind of weird without that hand leading us by the nose. It was so warm and strong that we're ready to make a mockup of it! We're holding ourselves, squeezing ourselves, smothering and hounding and raping ourselves, in complicated retrospective choreographies, in cinematic remakes of trauma. Call it what you like: karma, a curse. A tumor with the metastases of a state that proclaims Christ as its king while taking advantage of the fact that the poor man cannot speak.

Translated from the Polish by Benjamin Paloff

Terézia Mora

Essay on Mud

In my memory I'm wearing wellies for the ankle-high mud and sunglasses for the blinding sun. In this attire I come down from the vineyard, from the edge of the wood to the shore of the lake. I walk at right angles to the paths of the red stags and hinds, which are also stags. Small stags. First woodland, then wine, then meadow, then pasture, then reeds and a canal leading in a straight line to the lake, a tarmac path beside it. A hollow in the path where the barrier used to be and the border guards stood, later the bus stopped here before going on to the lido, the stilt houses with reed thatching and the little harbour. Now temporary fencing runs along here. A barrier, a caravan, two watchmen.

A board on the bank of the canal doesn't tell me who has been building what here, since when and with whose support, just how they imagine it will look: two big marinas, a four-star hotel, two dozen holiday homes, car parks, tennis courts. And golf courses, helipads, rocket launch pads, serpentariums, terrariums, dolphinariums, sharkariums. (Only joking with the latter, but you never know.) There is also supposed to be a lido again. A lawn for sunbathing, parasols, gravel where you enter the water before it returns to ankle-high, then knee-high mud. No one goes further out on foot.

What it doesn't say anywhere, but what we know, is that they have been working on it for three years (or is already four?). A state investment. That is, they're building as long as they receive money from abroad (the EU).

That also means that they don't communicate with anyone, that nothing is transparent, that they don't take into consideration environmental requirements, that tenants were dispossessed and the cost of dispossessing them was quietly passed on to them. One day, the majority of the stilt houses burnt down. I stress that the latter stands in a separate sentence.

The latest we know is that the business has come to a halt. That they are not really building anything any more. All sorts of environmental fanatics got in their way (ducks, toads, snakes, herons, turtles, eels, reeds, halophytes, orchids and organizations) and then the money also dried up. In short, it remains uncertain when they will be finished, when we can go down to the lake again. This spot is the only access on the Hungarian side.

Now I'm standing there, in wellies, with sunglasses, next to me the board with the vacuous visualization, before me the barrier and the fencing and the two watchmen.

They're tall, fat men in T-shirts and shorts, their arms and legs tattooed.

I do what I always do when I start up a conversation with someone in Hun-

gary. I act as if I know nothing. When I do this, my voice is higher than when I feel secure.

So I ask in the woman's voice of an unknowing stranger when one will be able to get to the lake again.

Neither of the tattooed giants know. The construction work is progressing only slowly, unfortunately.

Why's that?

Because of all the mud.

Aha. And where does all this mud come from?

From Austria. But they knew back in Versailles how to secure the better part of the lake for themselves. The part with all the water.

How? Did they have any say in it? Didn't they lose the First World War? (The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy vs. Austria – I don't need to get started on the difference here.)

They weren't losers!, shouted the muscle-bound giants. They didn't lose anything! They even won something! They left us with the mud!

A car comes rolling up. Hungarian number plate. The man behind the wheel asks through the wound-down window where one can get to the lake.

In Mörbisch, say the giants.

The car turns and drives off. We're still standing there, between visualization, barrier and fencing, beneath the sun, surrounded by mud. A tattoo on the forearm of one of the giants displays a combination of some or other runes and a cross. If I were a good journalist, I would ask what it is. But I don't want to arouse suspicion. Both of them are twice as big as me.

I just say, Pity.

Ah, says one of the giants, hardly anyone used the beach anyway.

I turn and walk back. I avoid the village, I prefer to walk along the meadows on its edge. I don't want to risk running into the mayor. I still haven't given up to them a fifth of my property, which they wanted for free. For a road they might build and might not. True story. Subtitle: The Thieves, the Liars, the Cowards, and the Land.

Translated from the German by John Heath

Kathrin Röggla

Winter Time

A: The clocks will be turned back tonight, so they say.

M-L: So it is the old men from the East then. Don't say anything now, but that's how it is. They've got this poster girl from Cologne, they've got this Identitarian from Austrian, they've got these 120 from the Reich, they've got this dentist from Düsseldorf, they've got this middle-class IT entrepreneur, they've got this AfD wing of the army, they've got this judge from Baden-Württemberg, or was it Rhineland Palatinate, they've got this NRW woman from the Values Union – Values Union! – they've got this member of parliament and Hessen, they've got Hessen, North Hessen, South Hessen, whatever, the Vogelberg district, Kirtorf, they've got these adolescents from everywhere.

A: That's not true.

M-L: They haven't got these adolescents from everywhere, they've only got some of them. The others, we've got here, haven't we. But they've got these farmers' unions, they've got agriculture, they've got the countryside, the vast countryside.

A: They haven't got the whole countryside.

M-L: They haven't got the whole countryside, but they've certainly got eastern Germany, look at the polls, 36% here in the East are considering voting for them. And then Bavaria. They've also got the countryside in Austria. Look at the polls. They've got the countryside everywhere. The countryside is fascist. And if they haven't got it, then they drive out the other parties. Look at the polls. They've got the squares, they've got the villages and remote streets, they've got the entrance to Netto and the village lime tree, they've got the petrol stations and motorway services, they've got the sports grounds and hotel foyers.

A: They haven't got the sports grounds. They haven't got the company entrances, they haven't got the schools.

M-L: They've got the language. They want sovereignty over discourse. They want to coin terms. They take every tool, every idea from the left and appropriate it. Liberty, homeland, subversive, anti-establishment, thinking, enlightenment, activism, they're hijacking the entire language.

A: That's not true.

M-L: Think of the codes of conduct, that'll be next. Came from MeToo, came from left-wing groups, and now? A good instrument of liberal politics? Think of the accusation of antisemitism. That too can be an outstanding tool for getting rid of critical voices. Or the concept of liberty. Always popular. They enjoy

standing up for a liberty that just means crudeness. They enjoy it. They enjoy showing how others have moral double standards. They enjoy accusing others of the idiocy they see everywhere these days.

A: Well I don't see anything. Can you be more specific?

M-L: They say the federal chancellor thinks he's smart, the economics minister thinks he's smart, the foreign minister thinks she's smart, but we're smarter – I follow this woman on Instagram. I'm on Facebook with this bloke. She poses with tractors, she uses the farmers' demonstrations. He uses the covid deniers, she uses the esoterics and naturopaths, they use the critical minds –

A: Oh come on!

M-L: Come on yourself: if someone is proven to be constantly lying and is considered all the more authentic for it, we've seen that before! Think of Trump, think of Trump, think of Trump!

A: I'm not going to think of Trump. I also know it from a different side altogether.

M-L: ... If someone constantly makes untrue claims, so thick and fast you can't keep up to disprove them –

A: ... But I also know that in other contexts. Simply making claims in quick succession, you're pretty much taught that in any management training seminar. And at some point you hear yourself saying you argue entirely on the basis of facts. "Facts, facts, facts, I'm just like a journalist", you suddenly hear yourself saying even though you know you're wrong.

M-L: They say you notice it in one place, something's not right there. Let's say the figures aren't right, from a demo. And then you read studies, obsessively read studies. They say they've woken up now. They say we're still sheep. They say now the penny's dropped.

A: Ah, it hasn't for you yet?

M-L: And meanwhile the poster girl staggers from the covid deniers to Roger Waters to the farmers, she states thinking is her hobby and her harmlessness is always connected to resolve. We can't make her picture sharper. Is she now saying, I'm Sophie Scholl?

Suspended policemen. Powerlessness for full pay. Chat groups that simply existed and still do. Endless events. Deaths without testimony. The picture doesn't stand still. There wouldn't be any consequences either. What remains is a leaden lack of consequences.

They have the fear. They own all the fear.

A: Incorrect, they claim we're fearmongering, that we're the monsters.

M-L: That's what I'm saying, they accelerate fear. It's getting ever faster. They imitate each other's fearmongering. They copy everything the other does while we still spend forever debating whether we're allowed to prohibit something. As if there still weren't any evidence. But there's no longer any shortage of pictures.

As if you always have to wait for the ultimate proof.

Wait until things are guaranteed to turn bad.

They say they're the Jews of yesteryear. They say we're shooting, but it's they who have the weapons, they've all got weapons. Everyone in the army takes something home with them. There are contacts to weapon shops. So-and-so many rounds of ammunition have been found in such and such a place. They're finding entire weapons depots, weapons cellars, weapons stores.

A: Not all of them have weapons.

M-L: They have the weapons, they ramble on about the Day X that's coming. They'll be faster. We're always too slow. We're always too democratic while they're rapid.

A: Authority is rapid.

M-L: And what will I ask: say, do you have any pictures? Have you filmed the whole thing? Where are your secret cameras? In the Bundestag? In the hotel? In the station restaurant? It's very public places these days.

As if we still need pictures.

"Because we still don't see anything. Can't you make it sharper? We're still in the middle of a blur."

We've long stopped being in a blur and we're certainly not in the middle of it.

"Because we have to be sure. You know full well that if these proceedings to ban them were unsuccessful, the damage would be immense. We have to protect ourselves."

We no longer have time for being completely sure.

A: You must admit the picture's still shaky. It isn't lined up properly.

M-L: The raging CDU man who considers himself hard done by. Because the CDU isn't the extreme right and doesn't want to be associated with the extreme right. But he's standing next to the CDU bloke who took up a fire arm. The Values Union woman was also at the secret meeting. The Values Union man who wants to be part of everything. The free voters, there's forever new groups. And here we sit around discussing whether to take away Björn Höcke's fundamental rights.

What are they up to now? Preparing for war – no idea how I should put it now, it sounds absurd. Somehow storming the parliaments, somehow doing something with power cuts, kidnapping, and shootings.

Target practice, of course, one has to get fit.

Like pressing pause on a bad fairytale that no one can imitate. That belongs to them alone.

They were all in the army. They still haven't hung up their fantasy uniforms. They've all finished their operational headquarters in their heads.

For a long time they were silent, were silent during every trial, but now they're talking a lot. You know what it means when they talk a lot. The people who talk are those who feel safe. When right-wing extremists feel safe, they start to talk. Then they suddenly talk a lot. They burst at the seams. That's what's happening now. Look at how they're talking. They're roaring like bears. They're howling like wolves. They're talking like any wild animal they can think of.

A: Ah, if animals could talk. The real animals hang back, pale. The real animals don't turn back the clock. The real animals don't speak their language by heart, they haven't learnt their gestures by heart, they don't know their techniques by heart, their strategies. They don't have their culture war as if on a string. They're shouting, "That's enough!" But what does that mean?

M-L: Soon, everyone will probably have a potential murderer.

A: No. You can only find something if you're looking for it.

M-L: The clocks will be turned back drastically, so they say.

But really drastically: you'll no longer know what time it is.

A: This time doesn't exist.

Translated from the German by John Heath

Antonio Scurati

Fascism and populism

Populism is a vague, generic word, often used imprecisely, sometimes even equivocally; a word-amulet, resorted to for linguistic exorcisms when faced with an elusive and disturbing, phantasmal and threatening reality; we carry it around in procession as was once done with the statue of the patron saint in the villages of the South in the face of a cataclysm or famine; we must handle it with caution (and even sparingly).

For my part, for several years now, as I have been striving to understand Mussolini narratively from the point of view of a 21st century writer, I have seen certain characteristics take shape that define the political physiognomy of populism and especially the shape of its leadership. They surfaced before my eyes within a bifocal gaze, turned simultaneously to the past and the present, taking on the appearance of real rules, that is, normative references of action. They are the precepts, the procedures, the political techniques that a hundred years ago allowed the Duce of Fascism, combined with squadron violence, to seduce Italy after raping her and even while he was raping her.

I will therefore try to identify some rules of today's sovereignist populism that echo Mussolini's fascist populism.

First rule of Populism: the populist leader states 'I am the people'. And, conversely, with a kind of logical-grammatical cramp, he affirms 'the people are me'. This omnivorous 'I' precedes every thought, argument, political programme; it entails a very strong personalistic accentuation. The entry into politics of this 'omnivorous I' is announced by a revolution in the language of journalism. The future Duce, in fact, well before founding his own newspaper, in 1912 was called by the province to direct *l'Avanti*, the newspaper of socialism, the same newspaper that the proto-fascist squadristi set fire to in April 1919.

Let us look, then, at the linguistic revolution that Mussolini brought to journalism. First of all, short sentences. Short, very short and syntactically elementary. Subject, verb, object complement. Every sentence a memorable, quotable saying, every sentence a slogan. Every sentence extractable from its context. No concern for historical coherence with what had been said by him before, nor with what will be said the next day and the day after; no concern for ontological coherence, that is, concerning the anchoring of words to reality; and all those high-sounding statements always preceded by 'I': I affirm, I promise, I threaten ... I. Assertive personalism substituted for complex, controversial discursive pluralism. Some might say that those articles were the forerunners of tweets. And they would not be wrong.

Me. I am the people. The people are me. Mussolini was the son of the people, it is true, but in this way the millions of individual lives were reduced first to a mass and then to a single person. It goes without saying that this is enough to define Populism as a strong anti-democratic tendency. For if I am the people and the people are me, whoever is not with me, does not belong to the people, is outside the people, is against the people, is its enemy. This first rule of Populism carries with it a strong anti-Parliamentary polemic – we will see it again at the end – because, of course, Parliament represents the multitude in singular multiplicity: the thousand differences, the many positions, one against the other, adversary, distinct, irreducible ... but, if I am the people and the people are me, Parliament is a waste of time, it is a place of corruption, of pathological degeneration, of useless chronic chaos.

The second law of Populism invented by Benito Mussolini is 'leading by following'. Mussolini has a formidable insight into what politics will become in the age of the masses, which was then beginning and now continues in its mature phase; he understands that the masses will be led by a leader who will not precede them, who will not stand in front of them, as the English word 'leader' would suggest; they will be, instead, in the domain of that leader capable of leading the masses by following them, standing one step behind them. The founder of fascism proudly said of himself 'I am the man of the after'; that is, I arrive a moment later on the scene of the political event. I do not precede, I follow. Out of metaphor, this means that the populist leader, like the Mussolini of the origins, has no ideas of his own, no unwavering convictions, no loyalties, no long-term strategies, does not lead the masses towards a distant, lofty goal, which he sees but the masses do not see. On the contrary, that leader knows only tactics and no strategy, he is pure tacticism, pragmatism, opportunism, he has no content, he is a vessel, a container, a 'hollow man' who exercises tactical supremacy in a vacuum. The young Mussolini was, in fact, republican, anti-clerical, D'Annunzio and socialist; he then became, according to expediency, monarchist, fascist, ally of the Church and traitor to D'Annunzio.

It was precisely this navigation by sight that made him a winner. If you are empty, in fact, if you have no principles, no beliefs, no loyalty, no ideas ... in politics you are tactically a winner. You are a winner because that empty vessel is filled with what you hear, smell, perceive by standing behind, coming a moment later. If you follow a crowd, if you come a moment after the crowd, if you stand one step behind it (not two, that would be too many), what do you perceive of it? The ideas, the hopes, the feelings encapsulated in facial expressions? No, those are all up front. You sense the moods, the ones you pick up with your nose, not with your head, not even with your heart. With your nose. And Mussolini knew this. He said to himself 'there's nothing to it, I'm like animals: I sense the weather coming'. I fill myself with the moods of the

people. 'Programmes are waste paper,' he asserted. Leave them to the socialists, their endless, inconclusive theoretical discussions. I fill myself with the moods of the people.

But when you reduce life to its moods, you almost always reduce it to its discontents. And what is the dominant discontent in life reduced to its moods? Fear. Fear and resentment. Here is the third rule: a populist leader practices a politics of fear. Another far-sighted insight of the populist Mussolini.

The Duce came from the socialist party and the socialist party was the party of Hope, which told ordinary men 'your children's lives will be better than yours, and your grandchildren's lives better than your children's lives'. The worldwide symbol of Socialism was the sun of the future, the radiant sun of a better tomorrow. Socialism promised the masses of the humiliated and offended a tomorrow of hope, a future of redemption and justice. Mussolini, who had been banished from that promise after his expulsion from the Socialist Party, eager to find a different path to power, understood that there is only one political passion more powerful than hope and that is fear.

In 1919, millions of men hoped for a better future, but those men had lived the last years of their lives in fear, in the trenches of the First World War, where you could hardly see the enemy, where Death rained down from the sky, where even Death was invisible and impalpable, insufflated into your lungs through gas. They had eaten, smoked, drunk fear, those men, and that fear accompanied them in civilised life. And what were they afraid of, once they returned to their homes? Of the hopes of others. Petty and grand bourgeois were afraid of the hope of the socialists, that is, of revolution; they were afraid of that future of redemption of wrongs. Mussolini, then, banished from Socialist Hope, in his post-war propaganda bets his entire stake on its opposite; he blows on fear, fuels it, magnifies it: Socialism is barbarism, Socialism is pestilence, Socialism is the horde. Socialists, even if they are very Italian, because they are inspired by the Russian revolution, are portrayed as invaders carrying the 'Asian plague'.

And here we encounter a subparagraph to the third law: the populist leader is capable of operating a sort of alchemical switch between fear and hatred; first he installs fear, he blows on the 'sad passions', on the sense of disappointment, of betrayal, on the resentment of the veterans struggling with the high cost of living and the struggle to make ends meet. He says: 'The threat is grave, it is looming, it is deadly; the danger is the socialists; they are invading foreigners encamped on the territory of the Fatherland. You must be afraid of them'. But then he makes a second devious move when that malignant little voice adds: 'But you must not merely fear them, you must hate them; it is not enough to fear, you must hate'. The populist gospel thus invites us to move from a passive, reactive, depressive feeling, such as fear, to an active, expansive, euphoric feeling, such as hate. When you hate someone you feel alive – the

same as when you love them, even more, perhaps. It is a sad truth, but if we do not recognise these things, we understand nothing of the populist seduction inherent in historical fascism, nor of today's sovereignists.

And here comes the winning game plan, and it is the fourth point. It is entitled 'brutal simplification of modern life'. Mussolini realised that his contemporaries felt crushed by the enormous complexity of modern life. And he understood something else: fascism not only has at its disposal the violence that annihilates the opponent physically, it can also avail itself of the brutalisation of political life that annihilates thought because this is of enormous relief to the masses. And, in fact, the propaganda is this: Reality is not as complex as the old liberals who preach the idea of proportional parliamentary representation claim; Reality is not as complicated as the socialists with their abstruse theories, Marxist doctrine, structure, superstructure, etc.; Reality is much simpler. Everything is reducible to a single problem, that single problem is reducible to an enemy, that enemy is identified in a foreigner, invading foreigner. The invading foreigner is killable. Problem solved.

One hundred years ago, fascist populism identified the 'simplifying enemy' in the socialist. Today it identifies him in the immigrant. The whole of political life, if reread within this simplifying perspective, is reduced to having an enemy to hate. And here comes a reversal of perspective, the winning game plan. The seductive, malignant little voice whispers to you: you don't have to look over your shoulder, you don't have to scrutinise with terror the sky above you, the forest beside you. Death does not come from all sides, as in the trenches, invisible, unknown, intangible. You only have to look ahead. There is your enemy, the invading socialist, and here, at your side, is me, the fascist with the truncheon. All reality boils down to this.

What a sigh of relief! Life is so simple: all you have to do is hate the socialist; here at my side, the fascist with the truncheon, ready to beat him up. What is the point of Parliament with its laborious complexity?!

And, indeed, it is no coincidence that the violent anti-parliamentary polemic, which portrays Parliament as a useless complication, a place of corruption and deception, a brake on political decision-making, characterises all populist movements at their origins. The archetype of every subsequent populist leader, Benito Mussolini, already in 1919 called the fledgling *Fasci di Combattimento* movement an 'anti-party', words that echo a hundred years later in almost all populist movements, right and left; he says of himself 'I do not do politics. I am the anti-politics'.

Finally, back to the beginning. All of this outlines the profile of authoritarianism's preference for democracy; a preference that Mussolini openly declares while today's populists deny it (or dissimulate it, as you prefer), while not shying away from eroding democratic institutions. The differences between

today's sovereignist populists and Mussolini's fascist nationalists are many and crucial – starting with the systematic use of physical violence – but what they have in common is the threat to the quality and fullness of democratic life summed up in the authoritarian centrality of the Leader, the leader in whom the people would incarnate themselves, that Leader who does not precede but follows, who practices a policy of fear, who then commutes it into hatred, who implements a brutal simplification of the complexity of reality. And who speaks through his own body.

This is Mussolini's latest far-sighted invention. Already in the 1920s, the Duce was the first to put the body at the centre of the political scene. Famous are the images of the shirtless Fascist leader threshing wheat among the peasants, swimming, gesticulating in a way that seems grotesque to us. And this generates one of the main misunderstandings about a terrible dictator too often dismissed as a ridiculous character. Not at all: even in gesticulating Mussolini is exercising his evil political genius; he understands that in the age of the masses, political communication will not be from head to head but will be an almost physical interaction, speaking from the body of the leader to the electoral body.

Fascism was not comedy, it was tragedy. When, in fact, the collective life of a country is routed along this path and everything is embodied in the body of this type of leader, what happens is that you cannot touch that body, you cannot reach it, you cannot analyse it. Above all, you cannot discuss it. You can only adore it, as millions of Italians did with Mussolini, or you can hate it, loathe it and slaughter it. As the Italians did with their Duce at the end of his parable.

Translated from the Italian by Barbara Bossi

Gerhild Steinbuch

Cover Boy

It's just an image. Stacks up, can do what we cannot. We stand around as a sluggish mass congealing in and of itself, laying itself on thick, oh yes, yes of course, we stand around and look at the image, look into it until it fills us. And how it fills us. It's just an image and it can do what we can't, it stacks and overlaps. Flops over the right edge, but respect!, you can see neither how he got there nor the effort it took, it looks entirely effortless, *he* also looks like that, unlike us. We wrestle with ourselves and are pretty exhausted, we wrestle with the language, which is pretty exhausted, *he* holds up the shield against it, it slides off it, he doesn't have to do anything with his relict of popular culture in his hands, there isn't anything you can do. The language skids along the smooth surface, rubs itself up and off, trims off a bit of itself, until it is just as smooth and shiny, just as intact. It stands in the light and the light is pretty bright and pretty glistening. He did that, him, effortlessly, unbreakably, ten thousand volts blast out of every corner, he stands on platforms he has built himself, out of wood, metal, travertine, out of unconstitutional foster fathers and general acceptance.

When the predecessors disappear, he's there when they have to disappear, at least temporarily, certainly not forever, when they have to withdraw because they said the unsayable once too often, screamed it, shouted it, and because with their shouting they had to be officially heard just this once, for *after all we stand by all the dates in our history and the deeds of all sections of our people*, the body of our people, which has always directed hatred outwards so that the so-called people's community truly surges. So before the convicted have to temporarily withdraw and before they withdraw from the pretty glistening light he has already stood next to them, walked alongside them, to the laying of wreaths, secret meetings, punchy public appearances, certainly punches, gone with them everywhere and crawled up the ladder, and has gained a foothold. Now he stands there, and unfortunately there's no longer a global wind blowing around him, the boundaries of the sayable have been stretched so far, space and the sky with the whole breezy blast have been so torn open that there's room for plenty and much can be spoken. Spoken and spread, copied, not distorted, it always remains clearly what it is, it always clearly pretends to be something else. The language, the image, the so-called movement. Nothing is merely an image, a sentence. Movement: claiming, veiling, shifting.

We say, Doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. It's just a word. It's just an image.
We don't notice anything.
We look inside, we walk past it, we stand in its midst, not realizing anything.

The image shows him with a cool undercut. Hello cover boy! Fitting, too. Covering and covering up, covering over and adopting, but in such a way that the fug somehow sounds like the fantastic present. The image shows him, then, and in it he is looking into a future that appears clear to him and is clear. After all, he has big plans whose real consequences he has knitted into terms, he the philosophy graduate who wraps his thoughts so firmly and fluffily in speech that in many places they're gladly accepted as a gift for his hosts. If you have a language that needn't belong to you and does the dirty work for you, it's not so bad after all. The image shows him, then, it shows masculinity the way you imagine masculinity, and misanthropy the way you don't imagine it, the way you can imagine it. In this respect he's so ordinary that he could be anyone, he's interchangeable, but the way he looks into the future on the cover of the newspaper he could never be us, that makes life easy for us, we lack this non-chalance, and if we pretend to be someone else, then it's only an impression, who we really are always shines through. We don't pretend anything, we're always lagging behind.

The image shows him, then, whose name we write, him, the head of a movement we sometimes call what it is but usually don't, we usually call it what he imagines it to be, how he has presented it. We write his name out, write it up, name the movement a movement even though it isn't one, write up the appearance so that a bit of its glow stays with us, so that someone stays with us and is interested in our stories, which are his stories, his words: we write that he is interested in interventions, describe violence as an artistic strategy, we nevertheless provide a warning, that suffices as an excuse, that suffices as an excuse for repeating it, suffices as an excuse for the fact that his language, his idea of language, which isn't his idea at all, that this idea of language that resides somewhere within us anyway has officially taken up residence, that it is permitted to reside here. When we make use of it, we don't wring it out, this language, we presume that our critical awareness is sufficient, pick out a few terms and pass them on, watch them as we do so, copy by copy by copy, as they appear as something else instead of as what they are, how *they* are what they are, enemies of humanity who allow their language to be taken from their hand, gladly lend the hand with which another person deals the blow.

The image can do what I cannot, we say, and always mean us, it stacks and overlaps, copies itself, spreads itself, copy by copy by copy, pretends to some-

thing, something that *they* are not and never will be. Notes on language and other acts of violence, let's say five years ago: the brutalization of language, language from above directed to below, that which cannot be said as sayable centrist discourse. Haven't got anything to add, constantly adding. The use of the terms, circumscription, wrapping, shielding from view. Continued and repeated use: within the right-wing extremists, the right wingers, the conservatives, within discussions, in my own language. I stand, then, look into the image that isn't just an image, write: how to speak uncertainly, hear what is spoken uncertainly. I copy, I blur, I resave, note on the reverse, fold, fall, bleach, travel along the tracks left by doing, keep on doing.

What else remains.

What awaits is ultimately unclear, has to remain unclear, has to nestle between copies, in margin notes, footnotes, on the reverse, precisely when the future seems clear, is clear to *them*.

Translated from the German by John Heath

Tena Štivičić

Us

She likes to say there is the time before and the time after.

She likes to say that once upon a time people would have needed a much greater distance to be able to identify so clearly this line that delineates the time before and the time after.

But we are living in this time, which keeps speeding up. Like a runaway train. No not like a runaway train, like a crashing comet. No not like that, because this isn't actually a fall, it is not destruction.

It isn't in her case, she says, and if it isn't in her case, it needn't be in anyone's case.

This attitude is, in fact, the key to her success.

It speeds up – exponentially.

That seems accurate. That actually seems historically accurate.

The time before was a dark time. The time after is a time of light.

And this is the key to her popular appeal. How many people are there around these days who would call our times the times of light? This is a risky move, is it not? One might be labelled one of those new age wackos.

Well, perhaps, she says.

Still, people are fed up of sinister prognoses, of warnings and floods and migrants. Of everything familiar indomitably dissolving. People need something positive.

But how does she mean, the time of light? Can this really be a time of light? Do we really only need to look beyond the looking glass?

There was something that an Aunt living in America had said to her when she was only a little girl, that defined her. There are two kinds of people, those who leave and those who stay.

Her Aunt worked in a boutique clothes shop and carried herself as though those clothes were her doing. Her outfits had an air of another world, unfamiliar and exciting, where everything was possible. Thin cigarettes hung suspended from her thin fingers and her gaze suggested she knew what that beyond the horizon world held.

This promise that somewhere else there are better things to be had was like a spell. It was only much later that I realised it was actually a curse.

To leave. To work in fashion, wear beautiful, different, bold creations. To live a beautiful, different, bold life. What an idea. That somewhere far away from all that is mine, where no one knows me, where I know no one, things will be better? And that all alone I would be able to make my ambitions come true?

She doesn't like to indulge in conspiracy theories, she says (perhaps somewhat unexpectedly), but would it be too cynical of to suggest that this idea is deliberately designed to fail?

This was a popular delusion at the end of the 20th century. That anything was possible. Women especially fell victim to this trend.

Yes, women collectively agreed to this pact of silence and tacitly adopted the 'party line': you can have it all, all you need to do is roll up your sleeves, plan well and ahead.

The truth is one can't have it all. But the truth is one needn't have it all. To have it all is a male principle, driven by testosterone. To have it all is not inscribed in female biology. To create human life in one's body, to bring it to the world and care for it – that's an undertaking of such magnitude, it expends so much physical and mental energy there cannot possibly be enough left over to race men to the top. That's okay. That's something to celebrate. That deserves better conditions and greater incentives. Because that's ultimately a more meaningful feat than the race to the top. Regardless of what you might find there.

To think one can do both is a poisonous pill, which has born millions of despairing, exhausted, confused women and men.

No, she doesn't have children, she says, because she was late to this realisation. Yes, of course she regrets it, she says, but she takes comfort in the fact that she might be able to help many, many other women to not make the same mistake. She will always love London, she says.

Naturally. How could I not love the place where the revelation took place? Yes, it is a paradox.

She had to have gone there, she had to have lived there. She had to have despaired so that she would come to understand.

London is a conceptual fallacy. A hundred headed monster who eats itself. Millions of desperate people barely coping in impossible circumstances so that a small, cash heavy elite would prosper further. It's the Tower of Babel where too many languages

prevent people from looking in each other's eyes. If you're asked for directions in the street your first thought is now – how is this person trying to scam me? Men feel irrelevant to the point of killing themselves. Infertile women kill themselves working. Mold grows in their tiny flats and kills their children. And each day boatfuls of strong, young men arrive at their shores.

Oh, it's not like she didn't try. She tried for two and a half decades. She tried to succeed in this fundamentally flawed system, where even those who succeed find no happiness.

Shouldn't all our alarm bells be going off? If even the successful are in despair?

This is why she came back, she says. So that she might take matters into her own hands.

To do it right here, in her own community. To act locally, instead of keep staring at the screen like a hypnotised robot and weep at the fate of all the Earth. No, she says, she is not insensitive. She is the opposite. The world would be a better place if we all rolled up our sleeves and committed ourselves to our immediate surroundings. If we actually cared for our closest fellow human beings with true human solidarity. They say she simplifies things. They say it's manipulative. They say politics is a complex human endeavour.

Sure, she says. But complex matter consists of many small and simple particles. This is all she's proposing. That we rewind until we get to them. Surely everyone can agree that this is sensible.

She is not an ambitious person, she says. Nor is she power hungry.

But I cannot, I cannot stay silent. To share this realisation is my civic duty. I am compelled to it as a woman, a Christian, a fellow citizen, a human being.

This is why she returned, she says. Because here there is still hope.

Because we are warmer. We are wittier. We have a soul. We've seen a lot. We have history. We know how to cope with trauma without losing our sense of humour. We have passion. We know how to laugh, how to kiss, how to touch without fear. We like to help, we like to do a favour, we like to share food, we like to treat. We're not mean, we're jolly. We're relaxed, we're reliable.

We are not Them. We are Us. We have God on our side. We are still not lost.

Translated from the original Croatian by the author Tena Štivičić

About the Authors

Jean-Baptiste Del Amo was born in Toulouse in 1981 and lives in France as a writer (and animal rights activist). He received the Prix du Livre Inter (2017) for his fourth novel, *Règne animal* (English: *Animalia*).

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