6 Impact

In this chapter, the impact of the extreme right on politics and society is examined. There is little doubt that the parties discussed above have made a considerable impact in Western Europe, although this has varied from country to country depending on the strengths and circumstances of extreme right penetration. Impact has taken different forms. For instance, in some situations in Western Europe (notably in Austria, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland), extreme right parties have entered government and shared direct access to policy making, albeit as junior partners. In other cases (notably Denmark and Norway), extreme right parties have stood outside government but have provided support to ruling parties and coalitions. Elsewhere (notably France), sub-national arrangements with the right have given the extreme right influence and access at regional and local levels. Furthermore, the strength and influence of extreme right parties via the ballot box and as exhibited through public opinion mechanisms have enabled them to exercise a pressure on other political parties and their policy agendas. In turn, political opponents have not sat idly by, faced with extreme right challenges. Rather, they have adopted measures and strategies to contain and reverse extreme right growth. Mainstream party strategies and tactics, therefore, may serve to constrain voters from supporting the extreme right. Without pretending to be exhaustive, these aspects are also examined below in order to highlight the reaction of establishment forces to extreme right prevalence.

Power and policy sharing

As was seen in Chapter 5, the more successful extreme right-wing parties have been able to draw upon the voters' support from

many quarters. Arguably, though, it is on the right or centre-right of the political spectrum especially (yet by no means *only*) that extreme right parties have given most cause for reflection over policy, strategy and tactics. Consequently, there is an interactive, dynamic relationship between the right and the extreme right (Schain 2006; Williams 2006: 18). Faced with the rise and challenge of the most successful extreme right organisations, mainstream right-wing parties in countries such as Austria and France have had to find ways and means of coming to terms with the new forces. In this context, various strategies have been available to the mainstream right. These have included ignoring, ostracising and/or playing down the challenge, so as not to provide the extreme right with too much publicity, insider status and legitimacy. Refusing to engage with the parties of the extreme right on their favoured issues has been part of the picture here. Alternatively, collaborating and/or coalescing with the extreme right at different levels, for purposes of winning or retaining office, has served as another strategy. Clothes stealing, in order to dilute the extreme right's policy appeal, is a further aspect of confronting and negotiating the extreme right. Of course, these types of strategies are not exclusive and they may all be applied at different, or even the same, times according to how party managers and strategists define the best approach. As one analysis noted, over 30 years of confronting the FN, the mainstream French right oscillated uncomfortably between the full range of strategies on offer (Schain 2006).

Without doubt, some extreme right-wing parties have acquired more legitimacy in recent years, especially where they have been accepted as coalition and policy-making partners at government level, notably in Italy, Austria, Switzerland and Denmark. In France, agreements have been negotiated intermittently by right-wing, mainstream parties at a sub-national rather than government level. As Schain (2006: 283) again has pointed out: 'In general, established political parties preferred not to engage with the FN in the formation of alliances either explicitly or implicitly. Nevertheless, from the very earliest days of electoral breakthrough, this became a position that was almost impossible to maintain.'

Moreover, *de facto* legitimisation of the extreme right has taken place when, via clothes stealing, mainstream parties have adopted the language, the arguments and the policies of the extreme right – prompting leaders such as Jean-Marie Le Pen to quip, 'why

settle for the copy, when you could have the original?' In this respect, some political observers have noted a discernible and creeping policy overlap between the right and the extreme right. As extreme right-wing parties have won support, mainstream opponents have tried to avoid being outflanked by them, adopting their policies and courting their electorate in the process. This pattern has been evident over several decades in different countries. In 1986, for instance, a famous statement by the prominent Gaullist ex-Minister of the Interior, Charles Pasqua, maintained that essentially the FN shared the same values and preoccupations as right-wing parties in France, but that it articulated them in a different way (Marcus 1955: 94). Indeed, as alluded to above, Le Pen's success in exploiting the anti-immigrant theme was facilitated by mainstream, right-wing (and other) parties' adoption of the issue (Eatwell 1998; Schain 2006; Silverman 1992). According to one assessment:

> Centre-right politicians have begun to inhabit the same discursive universe as their far right counterparts . . . The clearest example of mainstream politicians taking on the agenda of the far right is Austria [where] the Grand Coalition of the ÖVP and SPÖ . . . began implementing aspects of FPÖ policy well in advance of the formal arrival of the party in government in 1999. As an attempt to wrest the initiative from and thereby lessen the appeal of the far right, however, it proved a failure: Haider simply 'upped the ante' every time the government came up with proposals and legislation that came near to meeting his demands. When, for instance, the coalition put into place policy that concentrated on 'integrating' existing immigrants rather than inviting more in, Haider called for repatriation.
>
> (Bale 2003: 76–77)

As noted in Chapter 2, the FPÖ continued to progress in the 1990s, reaching its electoral nadir in 1999. At this point in time, the mainstream right accepted the FPÖ as a government coalition partner – with a Vice-Chancellor and Ministers from the FPÖ. One outcome of this collaboration was tougher legislation affecting immigrants and refugees. In 2005, the coalition government reformed the law on citizenship, tightening up the granting of

citizenship to immigrants. Immigrants married to Austrians and legally recognised refugees were now required to spend seven (not four) years legally resident in Austria before applying for citizenship and a language test was to be brought in too.

Much domestic criticism and protest had been levelled at the ÖVP for coalescing with the FPÖ and this spilled over into a wider arena, as the EU cold-shouldered Austria for a short time. However, for the purposes of the discussion here, it is noteworthy that (in the short to medium term at least) the strategy of coalition with the extreme right proved to be a winning one for the mainstream right. In the 2002 parliamentary election, after years of upward mobility and success, the FPÖ slipped back considerably to 10 per cent. The outcome of the 2002 election was the continuation of the ÖVP–FPÖ coalition, but with the Austrian extreme right divided, wounded and in a greatly weakened partnership role with the mainstream right. In fact, as noted above, the FPÖ split formally later in 2005. However, the collective vote of about 15 per cent for the *two* extreme right parties in the October 2006 parliamentary elections was up on the FPÖ's 10 per cent share of the poll in 2002. In short, there was still a future for the extreme right in Austria – with or without Haider as the key figure. Moreover, the ÖVP's unexpected defeat in 2006 left this mainstream party to reflect upon the long-term consequences of alliance with the FPÖ. Also, the prospect or reality of a grand coalition bedding down in Austria could provide the political opportunity structure for outsider parties like the FPÖ and BZÖ to exploit any convergence in the centre, by offering alternatives.

The choreography or dialectics of right–extreme right coalition building is then replete with ambiguity in that, at different stages, both sides can be said to benefit from favourable political opportunities. In the Austrian case, the ÖVP right-wing party benefited, in its confrontation with the mainstream left-wing SPÖ, from the availability of the FPÖ as a coalition partner. In a fashion, the FPÖ had delivered its working-class vote to the conservative mainstream. At the same time, the added value for the ÖVP was the fact that, in the short term, coalition politics lead to the mainstream right consolidating its hold on government power and seeing the size of the FPÖ's electorate reduced considerably. However, over the slightly longer time-span, coalition government with the extreme right ended in defeat for the mainstream right in 2006 –

an unhappy postscript to their exercise in power sharing with the extreme right.

The FPÖ, too, also benefited from the favourable opportunity structure of the mainstream right needing a coalition partner in 2000. This could be construed as an extreme right breakthrough and a significant measure of legitimacy for Haider's party. But, in the more medium term, there was a price to pay for the FPÖ's systemic involvement: namely, its slippage to 10 per cent of the vote in 2002 from its 27 per cent high share in 1999. Furthermore, the strains of office coupled with the attempt of the party to retain an opposition status lead to the split in the party. Partaking of office with mainstream parties, therefore, can backfire for a populist party of opposition like the FPÖ. Indeed, thereafter, Haider contested the October 2006 parliamentary election inside a new splinter party (the BZÖ), and the FPÖ was led by someone else. In short, coalition government politics was not easy for a party more used to playing the role of protest and opposition and the FPÖ never really came to terms with its new status. According to the Austrian political scientist Anton Pelinka, Haider's greatest strategic error was to enable the FPÖ to join the government in 2000, 'because he forfeited the protest vote. Responsibility in government can't be reconciled with populism' (*Guardian* 29 September 2006).

A much more terminal pattern of decline on the extreme right was apparent in the Netherlands. As illustrated in Chapter 3, the LPF performed exceptionally well at the parliamentary election in 2002 and subsequently went into coalition with the mainstream right. But elevation to the corridors of power proved to be an unhappy experience for the party. The testing experience of political office, the co-option of some of its agenda by the mainstream right, the loss of outsider/opposition status and the sudden deprivation of its (assassinated) leader proved to be difficult hurdles for the LPF to come to terms with. Thus, the party duly and rapidly receded as a political force in the Netherlands. The problems faced by the extreme right in office should not be surprising. As anti-system populist parties, in opposition to the establishment and to the mainstream political parties at the heart of it, they are well equipped to play particular roles that also incorporate an element of protest. When the transition to government office and policy responsibility is made, a new posture is called for, as the organisations on the extreme right exchange poacher for gamekeeper status.

For the extreme right, a relatively more successful and durable coalition partnership was apparent in contemporary Italy between 2001 and 2006. The AN and LN participated alongside Berlusconi's FI in the longest-lasting, post-war, Italian administration. When the Italian mainstream party political edifice imploded in the early 1990s, under the weight of corruption and popular disapproval, Berlusconi's nascent Forza Italia emerged as the main force on the right. The 1994 parliamentary election resulted in Berlusconi's coalition government, including the AN and the LN. Therefore, Berlusconi's need for partners resulted in a measure of legitimacy being conferred on his extreme right partners. The strategy of the new populist Italian right, as epitomised by Berlusconi, was to find the most likely partners to ally with in order to defeat the left-wing coalition forces. Concomitantly, there was an aspiration to step into the vacuum left by the sudden demise of the previously hegemonic Christian Democrats (CD). The professedly post-fascist AN and the LN fitted the bill in the mid-1990s and later too and, after a phase of left-wing coalition government in 1996–2001, the so-called Liberty Pole alliance (FI, AN and LN) came back into office following the 2001 parliamentary election. A sign of the continuing legitimisation of the AN was the elevation of its leader Fini to the post of Foreign Minister. Some eyebrows were raised throughout Europe at the thought of a political heir of Benito Mussolini now controlling Italian foreign policy.

In the Italian situation, the standing of the AN was boosted by the need for partners for the new populist mainstream right. At the same time, though, Italian right-wing extremism remained rooted in some of the AN's rank and file, but also in the ranks of the LN under Bossi (Ignazi 2004). So, on the evidence of the LN and AN in government in the 1990s and thereafter, has the 'strategy' of containing the extreme right failed in Italy? In truth, in contrast to the Austrian situation, the strategy of keeping the extreme right in check had not been such a strong feature of Berlusconi's game plan. Rather, he sought to use or draw on the AN and LN in order to win and maintain high office. Moreover, as one observer suggested, in relation to the FI and the AN, 'both are equally right-wing, populist and authoritarian' (Henderson 1995). So, it is no real surprise that the wealthy business and media mogul Berlusconi entered into arrangements that boosted the Italian far right. To a

considerable degree, they were both pushing in the same right-wing populist direction.

To what extent, then, has the extreme right in office – as junior partners – resulted in radical and distinct policy initiatives? As regards the record of governments that have included the extreme right, in part, the jury is still out. According to Mudde (2002b: 146–147), albeit writing in the *early* twenty-first century: 'So far, the actual threat of the extreme right has not materialized. In the most successful cases, such as Austria and Italy, the extreme right in government was hardly distinguishable from the mainstream right-wing parties.' But part of an emerging picture here is that, to a degree, the extreme and the mainstream rights' positions and discourses have been converging over recent years. There has been an element of growing together – and swimming and sinking together. Williams's focused study of the *impact* of radical right-wing parties finds that extreme right electoral and popular success, together with enhanced media coverage, has been matched by an increasing attention to immigration and asylum matters in the policies and parliaments of Western European countries (Williams 2006). In similar vein, another analysis contends that centrist and conservative parties have taken up 'tried and tested themes of far-right agitation' in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Denmark and the Netherlands – with the extreme (or far) right playing a 'bridge-building function'. Thus, 'issues such as immigration, cultural autonomy and public safety were resuscitated by the far right but found their way into the bourgeois mainstream' (Heinisch 2003: 103–109). In Austria, the programme and pronouncements of the ÖVP–FPÖ coalition government between 2000 and 2002 reflected some of the agenda of the extreme right party. The measures included financial support for a neo-conservative family agenda, tougher law and order initiatives, stricter controls on immigration and constant sniping against the EU. Indeed, in the years immediately leading up to the FPÖ's big electoral success in 1999, the path had been smoothed to incorporate such policy emphasis. As Williams (2006: 183–185) again explains, the FPÖ's discourse on the 'over-foreignization' of Austria prompted the political mainstream to bring in legislation that restricted immigration and asylum. Thus, 'The period from 1996–1999 reflects the increased pressure for action on the foreigner issue as the FPÖ framed it through linkages to crime and insecurity in preparation for its campaign of 1999.'

Again, in 2001 in Denmark, the new Liberal–Conservative government depended on parliamentary support from the Danish People's Party (DF). This was the first time since the 1920s that a Danish government had had to draw on support from the far right. The outcome of this particular arrangement was that the 2001–2005 Danish government governed via a process of policy coalition and contract politics, by which certain proposals were agreed upon. The DF became more integrated into the political system without foregoing its policies and – unlike the FPÖ, AN and LN – without actually joining the government. However, in 2001–2005, the 'blackmail potential' and influence of the Danish extreme right party was evident as immigration and asylum policy was tightened, notably with fewer residence permits becoming available, and rises in taxation halted (Pedersen 2005a: 1102–1103; Rydgren 2004). Moreover, the DF's role and performance during the 2001–2005 period were sufficient to earn it modest gains in the 2005 election to the Folketing. In Norway too, the steady rise of the Progress Party resulted in it becoming well positioned to exercise external pressure on government policy on taxation and immigration (Hreidar 2005). Thus, extreme right parties in Norway and Denmark 'have played a very large part in the tightening of immigration rules and the treatment of asylum seekers' (Lloyd 2003: 89). The winning formula message from these Scandinavian examples seems to be that influence can be exercised by remaining outside government but acquiring a role in policy making nonetheless. However, it would be important not to over-generalise from the specific here.

Elsewhere, Schain has argued that the extreme or radical right has served as a force in constraining policy development in a number of countries. For instance, the success of the French extreme right at local level in the mid-1990s had prompted mayors from the mainstream right to cut back on immigrant-focused housing and welfare programmes. This was because the voters' reservations about these measures played directly into the hands of the FN. In order to defuse support for the FN, a number of other initiatives were launched by the mainstream parties. These included stronger border controls, the reform of naturalisation legislation and the greater official focus on issues such as immigration and integration. Moreover, argues Schain, the story of immigration politics after 1983 is less about the struggle over policy orientation itself. Rather, it is about the struggle by established political parties on both the right

and the left to undermine the ability of the FN to sustain the initiative in portraying and defining these issues (Schain 2006).

In the above context, Eatwell introduces the notion of a 'composite ideology', whereby there is pan-right support for measures such as a strong state in the domain of law and order matters, a reduction in red tape, lower taxes, less immigration and a proud nationalism. All this is underlined by a populist dressing that (as Berlusconi illustrates) is not simply the preserve of the extreme right (see Bale 2003: 74–76). Similarly, Curran (2004) – in her study of 'the race-conscious legacy of neo-populist parties in Australia and Italy' – portrays this process of sharing ideas and styles as one of 'mainstreaming populist discourse'. Rightly, she argues that the success of extreme right parties cannot just be measured in terms of their actual vote. Rather, they have an impact on mainstream political discourse and styles of communication. Thus, Pauline Hanson's Australian One Nation party and Umberto Bossi's *Lega Nord*, despite experiencing some decline at elections, are seen to have had an influence on the tightening of the immigration and asylum policies of the Howard and Berlusconi governments respectively in recent years. Moreover, to some extent, the extreme right's populist style of communicating these policies has also been appropriated by the Australian and Italian Prime Ministers – each in their own respective ways.

Again, as regards the mainstream right, Bale (2003: 67) adds: 'By adopting some of the far right's themes, it legitimised them and increased both their salience and the seats it brought into an expanded right-wing bloc. Once in office, the centre-right has demonstrated its commitment to getting tough on immigration [and] crime and welfare abuse.' Bale contends, therefore, that the rise and mainstreaming of the extreme right is part of a process by which the centre-right parties have achieved their governmental majorities. Part of the argument here is that the influential extreme right parties in question make their working-class vote work for the right-wing parties as a whole – in return for legitimacy, policy compliance and positions. This practice can be seen then as a mixture of clothes sharing and clothes stealing.

However, the more successful extreme right parties have competed with and taken votes from not only the mainstream right, but also more widely across the spectrum. Whilst it may perhaps be an exaggeration to describe successful extreme right

parties as 'catch-all' parties, nonetheless they have often exhibited a more diverse and representative (of the population) electorate than have some mainstream, catch-all parties. The effect of this capacity of extreme right parties to fish widely in the electoral pool has meant that mainstream, office-seeking parties have been cautious about how they deal with vote-winning issues of the extreme right, for fear of losing votes to the latter. In turn, as populist, anti-establishment movements, extreme right parties have exploited the issues – immigration, Europe, security, etc. – that can be utilised to show up the elitist and out-of-touch nature of mainstream parties and politicians.

In a hard-hitting statement, the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) declared that the process of keeping up with the extreme right had gone quite far enough. Non-extreme right parties were warned of the dangers of incorporating into their presentations racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic discourses that, *inter alia*, threatened the long-term cohesion of society. ECRI's 'Declaration on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse' (17 March 2005) was aimed at countering this situation. The declaration thus expressed deep concern 'that the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic political discourse is no longer confined to extremist political parties, but is increasingly infecting mainstream political parties, at the risk of legitimising and trivialising this type of discourse'.

In this context, Rydgren has shown how established parties in Denmark have joined in on the anti-immigration discourse since the mid-1990s. For example, between 1997 and 2001 the Liberals attacked the Social Democratic government for its allegedly generous policy towards immigrants and asylum seekers. In turn and under pressure, the government pointedly tightened its policies and even its discourse in these domains and experienced internal divisions over the issues. At the same time, public-opinion polls in Denmark reflected the trend of these debates, with anti-immigration sentiment hardening sharply throughout the 1990s (Rydgren 2004: 493–495). In a not dissimilar context, Schain sums up the impact of the parties on the extreme right – they have served to influence the broader political discourse of other parties and society (Schain 2006; see also Schain *et al.* 2002b). To an

extent, their key issues have become society's big issues. As extreme right parties have gained wider legitimacy, they in turn have legitimised the focus on and mainstreaming of such issues.

An example of ongoing right-wing appropriation of extreme right terrain was evident in France in recent years. In November 2004, Nicolas Sarkozy was elected as president of the mainstream right-wing *Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle* (UMP). In a government reshuffle in 2005, Sarkozy was appointed Minister of the Interior and he promised to crack down hard on criminality. At the same time, he professed concern for ordinary decent French people and for the lower paid, as opposed to those on social assistance or illegal foreign nationals benefiting from emergency medical care. The media interpreted the Minister's stance as a conscious hardening of right-wing discourse, in order to attract the electorate of the FN. His entourage claimed too that the FN had regressed at the ballot box in local (cantonal) elections since Sarkozy was elected president of the UMP. Moreover, the successful election-winning strategy for the 2007 French elections, as expressed by Sarkozy and other UMP elites, was first to take the party to the right, apparently via a national-populist, welfare chauvinist and anti-immigrant discourse, before the adoption of positions that would be more reassuring to the political centre. In March 2007, for instance, Angélique Chrisafis (*Guardian,* 13 March 2007) reported that, 'As Mr Le Pen's anti-immigration discourse has filtered into the national debate, Mr Sarkozy has adapted [sic] his ideas, in recent days proposing a new ministry for "immigration and national identity".' Therefore, the French mainstream right's strategy vis-à-vis the FN could be seen again as one of clothes stealing and sharing.

To sum up, then, the emergence and success of the extreme right impacts upon mainstream rivals. The latter, at times, have felt compelled to adopt strategies to meet the challenge. In the process, a measure of legitimacy is conferred on extreme right parties and ideas. However, emulating the extreme right's discourse and/or sharing power and policies with it are not the only, still less the preferred, strategies of mainstream parties. In addition, there are mechanisms and opportunities available, which may be maintained or utilised in order to constrain the extreme right, and these aspects are dealt with in the next section.

Constraining and contesting the extreme right

In various countries there are in-built or constructed barriers to extreme right progression. For instance, in the UK, the first-past-the-post electoral system has acted as a deterrent against voting for smaller parties in general elections. If the small parties in question (such as the National Front and the British National Party) are particularly unattractive and unacceptable to the electorate, then the chances of winning seats in parliament are doubly difficult. Only recently has the BNP begun to win an appreciable, but still relatively small, number of seats at a *local* level, as the party has become somewhat more legitimate and professional than hitherto and has benefited from voter apathy or from split votes. In France, also, the two-ballot majority electoral system (*scrutin d'arrondissement*) has prevented the Front National from achieving hardly any seats in the National Assembly. When the Socialist Party's President François Mitterrand did tinker with the voting system and introduce proportional representation (PR), the FN's list reaped the instant reward of 35 seats in the French National Assembly (1986–1988). When the right-wing parties won the parliamentary election in 1986, though, the voting system was changed again to the two-ballot majority system – and the FN lost its seats in 1998, as a result. Thus, in the absence of PR, the FN points angrily to a systemic and institutional failure to correlate seats obtained with votes won.

Nevertheless, and unlike in the UK, a sizeable number of voters in France have continued to opt for the extreme right in parliamentary elections in full knowledge that the party voted for was unlikely to win seats. Thus the reality of zero or minimal parliamentary representation has not dissuaded voters from backing Le Pen and his party. With the voters' support, the FN acquired 'nuisance value' and could put pressure on parties to move closer towards its agenda on immigration. By retaining its candidates on the decisive second ballot of legislative elections (provided they had achieved the statutory requirement of 12.5 per cent of registered voters on the first ballot), the FN could force a triangular (i.e. left, right and extreme right) show-down. In effect, the latter served to split the overall right-wing vote and hand the constituency seat to the left. In this way, the FN could punish the right for ostracising it and refusing to do deals. In the 1997 parliamentary election

notably, in 76 such 'triangulars', the left won 47 of these and the right won 29 – with the left winning a parliamentary majority overall (Givens 2005; Hainsworth 1998).

By 2002, however, the right had hardened its anti-FN strategy, but at the same time achieved greater internal unity, not least by intensifying the practice of only putting forward *one* right-wing candidate on the first ballot of legislative elections, instead of two or more. Moreover, by refusing to be courted *at any level* (national, regional, local) by the FN, the mainstream right turned its back on some of the *ad hoc* arrangements and deal-making of the 1980s to early 1990s, at the same time disciplining any members who strayed from this strategy. Indeed, at the time of the 1998 regional and cantonal elections, some well-known right-wing figures were forced out of the mainstream right parties because of their accommodating attitude towards the FN (Knapp 2004).

In other countries, a specified electoral quota has served as a barrier to extreme right (and other small party) success. For instance, in Germany, the introduction of a 5 per cent minimum threshold has kept extreme right parties out of the Bundestag, although the fragmentation of the extreme right has also been a telling factor here. Similar quotas in other countries, such as Sweden and Greece, have had the same effect. Though to date, the 4 per cent quota in Austria has proved ineffective against the FPÖ and the BZÖ. When the quota was not applied for the first time in contemporary Germany, the extreme right was able to win seats on city and county levels in June 2004 (see Chapter 3). Though, it has been argued that the impressive regional gains for the extreme right in Germany recently do not necessarily represent a harbinger of future national success. The rationale for this viewpoint is that the circumstances behind the extreme right's success were particular to the post-communist, transitional context of the east of Germany. Significantly, the NPD is at its strongest here, wherein dissatisfaction with democracy and with taxing socio-economic conditions remains high among the population of the eastern German *Länder*. However, the NPD as an organisation has become quite extreme and arguably lacks the personalities or policies to benefit from favourable opportunity structures. Accordingly, then, 'the NPD is only willing and able to impersonate a democratic organization to a very limited extent. The party's ideological dogmatism is so strong that it limits its populist manoeuvrability considerably' (Backes 2006: 138).

Moreover, as Norris (2005) explains, the extreme right's chances of making a breakthrough in Germany are restricted by the machinery put in place to prohibit the existence of parties seen to be in contravention of the German Constitution and Basic Law. The Federal Constitutional Court is empowered to proscribe extremist, undemocratic organisations and this power has been used – for instance, to ban the neo-Nazi *Sozialistiche Reichspartei* (SRP) in 1952. Indeed, in 2003, the NPD itself escaped similar proscription on procedural grounds, due to the excess of undercover agents who had infiltrated the party's apparatus. Elsewhere too, measures have been put in place to impact on extremist parties. In Belgium notably, legislation has been enacted to enable racist and hate-mongering parties to be prosecuted. In 2004, the Flemish Bloc was closed down and fined for transgressing anti-racist legislation and for portraying foreigners as criminals, although its successor resurfaced shortly afterwards in the form of Flemish Interest. Other noteworthy restrictions that have impinged upon extreme right party presence include the requirement in France for presidential candidates to garner a number (500) of signatures of elected representatives (i.e. France's 36,000 mayors) in order to gain access to the ballot paper. In 1981, this regulation served to prevent a marginalised Le Pen from contesting the presidential election. Also, the non-return of deposits, as in the UK – for parties failing to win 5 per cent of the vote in a given constituency, can act as an effective deterrent on cash-strapped parties.

The above measures all relate to restrictions that are written formally into the laws and regulations of specific states. At a more informal level too, arrangements or agreements have been made that effectively target and ostracise extreme right parties. For instance, in Belgium, a *cordon sanitaire* and, in the Netherlands, a so-called 'purple alliance' of non-co-operation has been placed around extreme right parties by rival, mainstream parties. Again, in Austria from the mid-1980s to the mid-to-late 1990s, the leading, mainstream parties (first the SPÖ, then the ÖVP) adopted a policy of *Ausgrenzung*, which constituted excluding the FPÖ under Haider from any coalition making at national level. In France, too, the rallying cry of 'republican discipline' has been utilised at times by mainstream parties, in order to militate against slippage of votes towards the FN. As noted above, in 2002, it was used on

the second ballot of the French presidential election to help engineer Le Pen's crushing defeat by Jacques Chirac. All in all, then, extreme right political parties may possibly feel that a level playing field does not exist and that the cards are stacked against them often. Of course, as well as the above arrangements and practices, the nation-states of Western Europe have their own specific bodies and legislation in place to counter racism, inequality and the activities of right-wing extremist or radical right movements. These structures are too many to cover here, although some of them have been referred to above, notably as regards Belgium and Germany.

On a broader, more institutionalised level, there have been some noteworthy developments too. For instance, in a ten-year period that followed the inauguration of the first extreme right transnational party group in the European Parliament, the latter organisation conducted at least three focused reports on right-wing extremism: the Evrigenis Report (1985), the Ford Report (1990) and the Piccoli Report (1993). The European Union also set up a monitoring centre on racism and xenophobia (EUMC) based in Vienna. In 2007, the EUMC was subsumed into a broader Human Rights Agency. The EU's European Commission too has promoted a race directive in recent years to serve against racism within the EU. Also of note is the work of the aforementioned Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD).

Nonetheless, it has been argued that, the impact of restrictive practices is mixed. Therefore, a debate has taken place about the efficacy of official measures adopted to counter extreme right movements. Some voices have defended this approach as an effective one. However, as Minkenberg (2006: 44) suggests, the practice of utilising 'militant democracy' – or 'defensive democracy' (see Eatwell 2004a: 11) – against undesirable political actors may damage democracy if 'the fight against the radical right is limited to the institutional level'. The same author contends that alternative approaches emanating from within civil society may be more productive and more able to embed state action. Elsewhere, it has been suggested that studying the way liberal democracies engage with and conjugate extreme right politics still amounts to 'work in progress'. As Mudde (2004: 208) claims: 'Despite the huge academic interest in extreme right politics, still very little is known

about the various ways in which democracies and the extreme right interact with each other.'

What is clear though is that, in response to the rise of the extreme right and other related developments, civil society has witnessed the counter-emergence of a panoply of anti-racist structures, pressure groups, monitoring agencies, non-governmental organisations and the like. They add to the more official state councils, commissions and legislation. They are all to some extent by-products of the rise of the extreme right and reflect the impact that the latter has made on society. Non-state, civil society initiatives seek to impact upon extreme right movements and other organisations by contesting their discourses and constraining their success. In the UK alone, where the post-war extreme right has not done so well overall, a number of organisations, movements and enterprises have been set up to counter the far right. These have included the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), Stop the BNP, National Assembly Against Racism (NAAR), Institute for Race Relations (IRR), Rock Against Racism, Love Music Hate Racism, the Newham Monitoring Committee and Searchlight Magazine. Prominent examples of these types of bodies elsewhere include SOS Racisme, *Ras l'Front*, Crida and Reflex (in France); Anti-Fa in Germany and elsewhere, and UNITED (based in Amsterdam, but pan-European in focus). For reasons of space and focus, a detailed assessment of these many counter-organisations and initiatives is beyond the scope of this book. Suffice to say that collectively they constitute much of the armoury of a non-state 'militant democracy', constructed to counter *inter alia* the impact of the extreme right in their respective countries and beyond.