Much research in the social sciences provides ample evidence for the current rise of right-wing populist movements and related political parties in most European Union (EU) member states and beyond (Wilson & Hainsworth 2012). On the one hand, neo-Nazi movements are to be observed in the form of extreme far-right parties; on the other, a salient shift is occurring in the forms and styles of political rhetoric of these parties which could be labelled the *Haiderization* of politics. This volume attempts to explain why this transformation is currently taking place from an interdisciplinary perspective; moreover, various strategies of combating such movements will also be briefly discussed.

Right-wing extremism and right-wing populism are not new phenomena. Ever since the end of the Second World War, revisionist ideologies have circulated and been taken on board by neo-Nazi or right-wing extremist parties such as the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs/Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the French National Front/Le Front National (FN) and the British National Party (BNP). While resemblances to older, well-known ideologies can be traced in many of the ‘new’ right-wing discourses (Mammone 2009), it has been argued that right-wing populism differs from those other trends as it does not convey a coherent ideology but rather proposes a mixed bag of beliefs, stereotypes, attitudes and related programmes which aim to address and mobilize a range of equally contradictory segments of the electorate.

Moreover, we are witnessing the development of a ‘media-democracy’ across Europe and beyond, in which the individual, media-savvy performance of politics seems to become more important than the political process (Grande 2000). Accordingly, politics becomes simplified and dumped down to a few slogans apparently comprehensible to the broad public at large. As argued by Ellinas (2009), the media communication and appropriation employed in the recent success of populist-right parties cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, the disproportionate success of some of these parties, Ellinas claims, could be explained by the excessive exposure that these parties receive in the media, despite their lacking the required organizational and political structures (ibid.) (see chapters by Anderssen (Ch. 22), Krzyżanowski (Ch. 9), Nohrstedt (Ch. 21) and Oja and Mral (Ch. 19) in this volume).

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Hence, we argue, far-right extremism is overtly reliant on charismatic personalities and media-savvy populism. This is particularly relevant with respect to the growing apathy of the general public to mainstream politics as populist extremist discourses seem to fill the gap created by the public’s disenchantment with (mainstream) politics (Hay 2007, Wodak 2011a, b). In this same vein, Judt (2010) notes that what the ‘baby-boomer politicians’ have in common is ‘the enthusiasm that they fail to inspire in the electors of their respective countries’. He is even more concerned that politicians like Sarah Palin can only benefit from rising confusion and anxiety in the face of apparently unmanageable change (ibid.: 48). If one studies recent opinion polls (such as Eurobarometer), it becomes apparent that trust in mainstream politicians and governing parties has dropped significantly across Europe. Indeed only 29 per cent of European citizens trust their national governments as opposed to 34 per cent in 2007; in 2009, the numbers dropped even more: only 13 per cent of British citizens, for example, trusted their politicians, and 82 per cent believed that politicians were not telling the truth. In 2011, on average, 16 per cent trusted their national political parties, and the level of trust in several major EU countries (including the United Kingdom and France) did not exceed 10 per cent. Researchers point to two parallel phenomena that may help explain this change:

The so-called Berlusconisation of Europe (Ash et al. 2010). The latter is defined as ‘a happy-clappy populism mixing feel-good consumerism, ethno-nationalist sentiment and shallow hedonism with lamentable actions against immigrants, minorities, and the vulnerable in general’ (ibid.: 1).

The so-called Haiderization of Europe, a label drawing on the name of the former leader of the FPÖ, Jörg Haider, indicates the rise of right-wing populist parties in several EU member states (such as Austria, Belgium, Hungary, etc.) since the end of the twentieth century. These parties, which claim to speak for ‘the people’ and to oppose those in power, frequently endorse chauvinist and nativist ideologies which may lead to an overall ‘politics of fear’ (see also Richardson & Wodak 2009a, b, Wodak & Richardson 2012).

Indeed, the results of the most recent elections to the European Parliament, in June 2009, manifest a significant growth in right-wing extremist (and right-wing populist) parties, and thus related MEPs, for example, the British BNP, the Austrian FPÖ, the Dutch Party for Freedom/ Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV), the Hungarian Jobbik (The Movement for a Better Hungary/ Jobbik Magyarországi Mozgalom) and the Danish Dansk Folkparti (Danish People’s Party) have all won over 10 per cent of national votes. These election campaigns were accompanied by – sometimes indirect, usually quite explicit – xenophobic, racist and antisemitic propaganda in the respective nation-states. In some countries, like Hungary, violence against Hungarian minorities, such

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as Roma and Jews, has become part of everyday experience (Iordachi 2009, 2010; see chapter by Kovacs (Ch. 15) in this volume). In some other cases, such as Estonia and Latvia, extremist parties have not had much success simply because the mainstream parties have to some extent accommodated some of the radical rhetoric of the extreme-right movements and parties (Auers & Kasekamp 2009; see chapter by Auer and Kasekamp (Ch. 16) in this volume).

Indeed, various sociopolitical, socio-economic, ideological and structural factors contribute to such a general swing to, and success of, these extreme/populist right-wing parties, all of which endorse exclusionary chauvinistic and nativist ideologies within national and/or regional domains. There exist some case studies on various countries across Europe: For example, Bakic (2009) argues, on the one hand, that the attractiveness of the Serbian Radical Party to the lower social strata lies within the party’s populist appeal and, on the other, attributes the party’s appeal to an extreme lack of credibility of the ‘Left’ in post-communist Serbia. Ellinas (2009) focuses on the FN and investigates the function of media communication in its success (see chapter by Beauzamy (Ch. 12) in this volume). On a wider regional level, Bustikova (2009) studies extreme-right discourses and related parties in Eastern Europe, especially in the new EU member states. She states that contextual sociopolitical features, such as widespread corruption and an absence of political accountability, might play an important role in the popularity of extreme rhetoric, as these parties thrive on the back of a weak (or absent) rule of law (ibid.).

Other studies have looked at the cannons of inspiration for extreme-right parties. Bar-on (2008), for example, discusses the role of the Nouvelle Droite in national and pan-European identity politics since its birth in 1968 (see also Bar-on 2012). Peunova (2008) analyses the ideas of Aleksandre Panarin and his notion of Russian-nationalist Eurasianism, which has fostered several European extreme-right conceptualizations, for example of Nouvelle Droite intellectuals. Thus, Panarin should or could be considered a spokesperson for the European new right wing in Russia, along with the transnational nature of the extreme right (ibid.).

While general trends in European politics towards the Right are visible across the continent, the specific characteristics of various European countries, that is, their history, and political and social imaginaries, also play a significant role in each case. Hence, the rightist populist parties in Europe can be classified into some general categories (see chapters by Pelinka (Ch. 1) and Kallis (Ch. 4) in this volume): First, there are the rightist parties within the context of Western and post-communist Europe which, despite other crucial differences, share a clear past history of fascism; next are parties without a history of populist or revisionist roots; and finally come parties which seem to cut across traditional left- and right-wing politics and target a combined electorate (see chapter by Marsdal (Ch. 3) in this volume). Regardless of these differences, issues of race, immigration, national identity, welfare and social inequality are central to most of these parties, to varying degrees (see KhosraviNik 2009, 2010, KhosraviNik et al. 2012).

To understand the nature of right-wing populism from a scholarly point of view requires a critical look at the concepts of ‘populism’ and ‘right-wing politics’. Some studies argue that populism can be viewed as an aspect of the political persuasive
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rhetoric and ideology of parties on both the Right and the Left (Azmanova 2012). Nevertheless, right-wing populism is distinguished from other types of populism by its explicit or implicit sharp dichotomization of the social into an ‘Us identity’ constructed along national, regional, religious and ethnic lines versus ‘Them’ in various (and sometimes contradictory) ways (see KhosraviNik 2009, 2010). Mammone (2009) challenges the appropriateness of labelling the recent rise of a ‘new’ phenomenon and argues that populism is not the main and foremost feature of certain extremist parties. He maintains that the use of labels like populism should be avoided, as this may serve as an indirect and unintended form of democratic legitimation.

There are also ethical-philosophical/practical issues regarding whether or not such far-right parties should in any way be restricted by law beyond the electoral mechanisms (see chapter by Ruzza and Balbo (Ch. 11) in this volume). The problem with such measures would be that – on the one hand – the outlawing of such parties might be viewed as unfair intervention in the democratic process and – on the other – the efficiency of such measures could be challenged, as banning a party from official participation in the public sphere would not necessarily result in the abolition of its attractiveness, discourse and policies in society. However, there is also a philosophical dilemma, as in whether or not a party with inherently undemocratic, discriminatory and exclusionary policies can/should be seen as a legitimate entity in Western democracies. In other words, should such a party be allowed to assume power through democratic means? This is, we believe, a salient point whereby important aspects of (the efficiency, effectiveness and power of) civil-society movements across European countries should be re-examined.

This volume accounts for the most recent trends in European politics towards right-wing populism. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of modern extremist discourses – rather than relying on the methods of political science (see Mammone 2009) – it investigates the origins and different manifestations of these parties and movements across the EU and beyond from a comparative perspective (see also chapters by Beirich (Ch. 6), Boréus (Ch. 20) and Shekhovtsov (Ch. 17) in this volume). In this way, we bring together insights from political science, rhetoric and discourse-analysis, anthropology and media studies and attempt to explain the emergence and rise of this exceptionally complex phenomenon. Thus, the book adopts both a general European perspective from which the issues and developments are viewed and accounted for across EU member states, as well as providing a set of case studies and accounts of individual political developments by focusing on specific sociopolitical and historical contexts. Furthermore, this book integrates theoretical discussions on politics and European studies, such as the conceptualization of populism, fascism, racism, ethno-nationalism, risk society and neoliberal populism, with empirical in-depth case studies by analysing data from mainstream media, electoral campaigns, party propaganda and structured interviews. The appropriation of pop culture, new hybrid genres and new media in the recent political campaigns of populist parties are also analysed and illustrated in detail (see chapters by Betz (Ch. 5), de Cleen (Ch. 14), Krzyżanowski (Ch. 9) and Wodak (Ch. 2) in this volume).

In addition to the theoretical discussions and conceptualizations, the book analyses the unique nature of these parties in various contexts, apart from their
assumed similarities across Europe: how they have developed and/or been reinvented, how they have (re)organized themselves and what changes there have been in their rhetoric, perspectives and discursive strategies. The book also seeks to answer the questions of why and under what conditions these parties have managed to become successful on both national and European levels; moreover, special attention is paid to the interplay between the rhetorical/discursive aspects of these parties and the countries’ socio-economic, sociopolitical, historical and structural contexts. The role of the media in promoting right-wing populism as well as the commodification of politics are addressed in much detail in relation to the apparent success of these parties (e.g. the British BNP, the Austrian FPÖ, The Dutch PVV, the Hungarian Jobbik and the Danish Dansk Folkeparti) (see specifically Oudenampsen (Ch. 13) and Kovács (Ch. 15) in this volume).

Outline of the book

This book provides an overall picture of the dynamics and development of, and conditions for, right-wing populist discourses across Europe and beyond, including the very nature of the many meanings and notions of ‘populism’. Such an enterprise, however, would not be complete without specific detailed case studies at local, countrywide and regional levels. This is to avoid making sweeping assumptions about similarities in the sociopolitical dynamics of countries/regions in Europe and to accentuate the specificities of their differences in context, including past collective experiences and economic conditions/visions, as well as current international and national affairs. Having this general perspective in mind the book is divided into four sections.

The first section of the book consists of (more) theoretical accounts and conceptualizations regarding the ‘nature’ of populism, the development of right-wing populist movements in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and their relation to past histories, as well as the rhetorical mechanisms and orientation of their discourses. This section also considers issues on the EU scale and beyond, to include the United States of America.

Anton Pelinka’s opening chapter provides a rich theoretical account of the concept of right-wing populism and how it relates to other political perspectives and movements. It problematizes the notion of ‘people’ (demos) in the way it is exploited in populist discourses. Populism is theoretically characterized as an approach in politics which can be upheld by both Left and Right of the political spectrum. Pelinka explicitly defines what are to be considered right-wing populist parties/groups, as opposed to mainstream conservative political groups, and illustrates how their beliefs, programmes and discourses are entangled with anti-foreigner tendencies – in addition to the constructed ‘enemy within’ for opposing parties – in their inherently populist cycle of self and other categorizations. In the process of dichotomization of self and other, these parties draw on a vast array of real and constructed ‘differences’, functionalizing other religions, ethnic groups and liberal-minded parties/groups to international-level institutions, that is, the EU and global-level ‘financial capital’. Pelinka also provides a
typology of five tendencies in European right-wing populist groups and parties in terms of their past histories and revisionist agendas coming from Western or post-communist Europe, the nature of their traditional electorates and their economic agendas.

Ruth Wodak’s chapter on the Haiderization of Europe argues that the strategies and model of political communication which supported the rise of Jörg Haider in Austria are now at work throughout Europe. She maintains that, in addition to material practices and social dynamics which have contributed to the rise of right-wing populist groups, certain models of textual and visual rhetoric have also been ‘successfully’ adopted by various right-wing populist parties across Europe. Wodak emphasizes the changes in norms, practices and functions of political performance which are employed to construct, convey and recontextualize discrimination and exclusion across Europe through an array of meanings in all kinds of modes and genres of communication.

Thus, she illustrates how the new wave of right-wing populist parties exploits the ubiquity of ‘celebrity culture’ as part of globalized culture and resonates more with younger generations. Moreover, she states that a multi-methodical and interdisciplinary approach is necessary in order to investigate the apparent success of such parties in propagating their xenophobic, chauvinistic and antisemitic messages in a differentiated way. While drawing on comparative EU and national research, this chapter focuses on the similarities of rhetorical patterns and on the manipulative agenda-setting techniques in keeping with the various exclusionary discourses at work in a range of settings.

Magnus E. Marsdal’s chapter systematizes the dynamics of Left and Right in a ‘third way social democracy’. It focuses on the inroads that the Norwegian right-wing populist party – The Progress Party – has recently made and illustrates how and why a large proportion of the working-class electorate has decided to vote for this party. He categorizes the factors involved in voting decisions into ‘value politics’ (immigration, crime and foreign aid) versus ‘class politics’ (income distribution, employee power and taxation of the rich), in addition to voters’ leftist or rightist dispositions. Hence, he argues that right-wing parties can break through among previously leftist/working-class electorates when the consensus on economic policies obfuscates traditional notions of class politics. The groups with a propensity to move to the right are of course targeted in right-wing populist discourses.

Aristotle Kallis’ chapter elaborates on how the broad political spectrum has shifted to the right via the popularization of certain contentious debates on the role and consequences of Islam in Europe. Such a shift is substantiated when characteristics of ‘extreme’ right-wing discourses are incorporated into what is ordinarily considered the centre-right. He maintains that even though the shadow of ‘fascism’ has dominated the debates of the right-wing populist parties, usage of the term ‘fascism’ per se is unhelpful and misleading. Kallis explains that many radical populist right-wing parties have managed to distance themselves rhetorically from this symbolic notion and (re)construct themselves as mainstream political parties.

Meanwhile, there is a deeper connection between fascism and contemporary right-wing populism in terms of a strong concern with the perceived inefficiency of the modern political system and aspirations to glorify a constructed racial/national identity. In similar ways, the obsession with a powerful ‘total’ sovereign community resembles the fascist agenda which, in turn, is used to justify aggressive exclusion and
even violent discrimination against the constructed ‘Other’. Kallis’s chapter focuses on two case studies – the Lega Nord (LN) in Italy and the Greek Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos (LAOS) – as two manifestations of parties which label themselves ‘post-fascist’.

Hans-Georg Betz’s chapter attends to the role of Islam across Europe and its identity politics. He argues that confrontation with Islam has become a central issue for the political mobilization of various right-wing parties. Through a series of widely popularized controversies over the symbolic presence of Islam in public spaces in Europe, for example minarets, burqas and mosques, along with other high-profile Muslim-related global events, Muslims are constructed as the threatening ‘Other’. Moreover, right-wing popular parties also invest heavily in casting themselves as defenders of the ‘Christian West’, and its liberal democracy and respect for human rights, against the perceived totalitarian ideology of Islam. Betz concentrates on the Swiss ban on minarets controversy as a case in point and elaborates on the range of communicative strategies employed by the right-wing populist parties to incite collective fear among the public for their own political gain.

Heidi Beirich takes the debate beyond Europe – to the United States of America – and looks at transatlantic connections between radical right-wing groups, figures and parties. She illustrates that, despite differences, for example, the size and extent of participation of radical groups in national or local electoral politics in Europe, the rise in radical right-wing politics on both sides of the Atlantic has been triggered by similar causes (i.e. real or perceived rapid demographic changes through immigration and the pressures of a sour economy). She explores the links and close cooperation between some American and European extremist figures and groups through meetings, invited lecturers and tours, as well as at the ease with which these are facilitated by their computers. With all the debates and discourses surrounding European identity, such links and overlaps are becoming more relevant as Western radical groups are increasingly emphasizing a common bloc identity rather than a strictly national one. Radical populism in Europe taps into such a common identity based on an opposition to Islam, while a glorified identity in the United States is mainly fostered by the opposition to Latin-American immigration.

The second section of the book includes case studies of several ‘Western’ European countries in which populist right-wing parties have recently made some remarkable inroads. Case studies attend to the specific contexts of these countries as well as to particular historical developments, changes and the (re)emergence of populist right-wing rhetoric and discourses.

John Richardson and John Solomos attend to the nature and development of right-wing populist discourses in Great Britain. Richardson’s chapter accounts for the ways in which the BNP has been representing itself via party-related texts. He throws light on the duplicity and dishonesty of BNP discourse. While being ideologically coherent in its content, BNP discourse is duplicitous in terms of the contradictory claims it makes as well as in its surface messages vis-à-vis its ideological commitment. Richardson shows how a discourse approach to analysing party-produced ‘texts’ can reveal their internal paradoxes and radical commitments. This involves close analysis of layers of meanings in party texts (guidelines, speeches, policy documents, etc.) in
Richardson maintains that the BNP still draws strength from the racist fascist doctrine of Leese which involves, at its core, a racial-purification agenda.

John Solomos captures the historical development and transformation of right-wing populist parties in Britain. He draws attention to the changing forms of extreme-right mobilization in contemporary British society, for example, the BNP and the English Defence League (EDL), and discusses some of the challenges that these new forms of racist and populist mobilizations pose for anti-racist strategies. He argues that since the 1970s, and particularly in relation to the National Front in Britain, racist populist mobilizations have succeeded in presenting themselves as a social and political force, albeit on the margins. Solomos accentuates the ways in which ethno-populist discourses and practices are heading and argues for the necessity to raise awareness of these strategies, this being the best way to challenge the racist populist movements in the United Kingdom.

Michał Krzyżanowski concentrates on Austria. His chapter elaborates on the discourses of the Austrian right-wing populist party, the FPÖ, over the last decade. He accounts for significant changes in their discourses by analysing two specific periods: the late 1990s/early 2000s – when the party was in the government and under the patronage of Jörg Haider – and the mid-/late 2000s: when the FPÖ returned to opposition, under its new leader H.-C. Strache. In tracing such continuities, Krzyżanowski argues that the FPÖ has departed from an Austrian-specific imagery to a set of more internationalized arguments, for example, Islamophobia and strong Eurocentricism, in line with many other right-wing populist parties in Europe.

Britta Schellenberg focuses on Germany and elaborates on how the radical right wing has been repositioning itself in the German public space, considering the existence of strong fascist and anti-fascist discourses. Schellenberg accounts for the major orientations of these populist-right discourses, from National-Socialist oriented groups to élitist racist and xenophobic anti-Muslim groups, while also discussing possible future trends and the transformation of the country.

Carlo Ruzza and Laura Balbo analyse the situation in Italy, and focus on Berlusconi and Bossi. They problematize the notion of ‘populism’ in Italy by examining these two charismatic leaders and how they relate to their constructed ‘popolo’. They maintain that anti-immigration xenophobic attitudes and language are openly part of, and fully legitimized by, their policy proposals and public discourses. Their narratives and constructed ‘publics’ are very different. Ruzza and Balbo also consider the impact of the current economic crisis on public opinion.

Brigitte Beauzamy’s chapter classifies various explanations towards what is perceived as the sudden success of right-wing populism in France and the rise of the FN. The chapter covers many approaches in deciphering the phenomenon, from biographical studies of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s leadership to sociological studies of the FN’s electorate. These explanations also include socio-economic explanations of the perceived French fear of globalization and Europeanization which may have paved the way for the rise of populist discourses. Beauzamy’s main argument, however, is that these various dimensions of explanations – environmental/structural, organizational,
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Merijn Oudenampsen’s chapter considers various approaches to explaining the rise of Dutch right-wing populism. The chapter adopts a theoretical view to explain the Dutch swing to the right. The author outlines the shortcomings of the reflective approach by detailing aspects of the ‘mass culture debate’ and ‘behavioural tradition’. He argues that a constructivist approach to the interpretation of Dutch populism – which considers questions like how populism helps constitute the very identities that it represents – can offer a deeper and more fruitful understanding of the swing.

Benjamin de Cleen’s chapter analyses the rhetoric of the Flemish radical party, Vlaams Blok/ Vlaams Belang (VB), in Belgium. He focuses on the debate between the party and Flemish city theatres which have acted as strong voices against the VB. The chapter adopts a discourse theoretical methodology to examine how the VB represented those theatres, between 2005 and 2006, by investigating external communication texts as well as instances of what was reported in the mainstream media. De Cleen elaborates on the details of the main discourses used by the VB to criticize the city theatres’ discourses of ‘nationalism’, ‘conservatism’ and ‘populism’, and how they overlap and reinforce each other.

The third section of the book involves case studies from the former Communist European countries in which populist right-wing parties have recently become successful. This section draws attention to the fact that post-communist contexts and issues of transition, for example, the viability, reality, usefulness, nature, etc. of the ‘new’ order, play a crucial role in the formation, development and (re)emergence of right-wing populist groups. It could be argued that more room for ‘populism’ in the political spaces of these countries has existed since the monolithic authoritarian communist veil was lifted.

András Kovács’ chapter focuses on the recently formed Jobbik party in Hungary and its success in parliamentary and European elections. Kovács provides information on the specific sociopolitical context of the country and maintains that among the main reasons for Jobbik’s success are electoral volatility, the widening gap between political institutions and society and the decreasing authority of these institutions. Jobbik’s main discourse is built upon questioning the validity and usefulness of the ‘new democratic order’ advocated by left and centrist parties and groups. As such, the party specifically accuses the political élites of adhering to an authoritarian cliquey politics. Analysis of Jobbik’s electorate indicates that while in the prosperous regions the ‘losers’ (in the new order) constitute the major electorate, in poorer areas with large Roma populations a relatively well-educated and economically better-off group constitutes Jobbik’s core voters.

Daunis Auers and Andres Kasekamp’s chapter accounts for Estonia and Latvia. They point to several crucial contextual issues and map out the network of right-wing populist movements and parties and their electoral achievements. The chapter discusses three key radical right-populist dimensions: nativism, authoritarianism and populism; it also accentuates the role of language and rhetoric in the rise of the National Alliance. This is positioned in a long-standing political communication norm where explicit utterances of extreme radical propositions are freely expressed without the stigma
ordinarily attached to such rhetoric elsewhere in Europe. The chapter concludes by presenting an explanation of why radical right-wing discourses are more prevalent in Latvia than in Estonia by looking at societal, institutional and political differences.

Anton Shekhovtsov’s case study is about the Ukraine. He points to the differences in political public spaces in the industrial and former socialist states and maintains that, in general, the electoral participation expression of populist right-wing parties and tendencies has only become viable with the collapse of the former structure. As such, the presence of the radical right in the electoral system of Ukraine could be regarded as both a sign of democratization as well as a threat to it. Shekhovtsov accounts for the nature, rise and development of the All-Ukrainian Union ‘Freedom’ (Svoboda) party and elaborates on its organizational and ideological fabric, leading to its rise in popular support.

The last section of the book comprises five chapters which analyse the rise of right-wing populism in Scandinavia. Fryklund captures some aspects of the development of populist parties in the region; Oja and Mral provide a country-specific case study of Sweden; and Boréus and Nohrstedt take a comparative perspective to consider the media’s role in this. Andersson’s contribution is a case study of how journalists might manage to perform their professional duties when dealing with radical right-wing groups.

Björn Fryklund’s contribution provides information on the development of and changes in right-wing populist parties and groups in Nordic countries from a historical perspective. He argues that various sociopolitical issues and debates have contributed to the ‘successes’ of such parties in different periods. While in the 1970s the focus was on taxation issues, since the early 1980s the populist discourse has revolved around immigration issues. Fryklund argues that regardless of what the core contentious issues might be – for example, taxation or immigration – there are similarities through which a populist discourse may gain more visibility and/or popularity.

Simon Oja and Brigitte Mral focus on the Sverigedemokraterna (SD) (Sweden Democrats), a nationalist-populist party in Sweden. They trace the party’s upward trajectory in the electoral process from 1988 to 2010 when the party won 5.7 per cent of the vote, exceeding the threshold needed to gain representation in Parliament. It is argued that the party did not emerge from criticism of high taxes or bureaucracy, rather its historical heritage lies in racism and neo-Nazism, and the party has links to fascist and Nazi ideology through individuals and personal relationships. The SD has moved away from this complex background over the past few years and has, in many respects, become a different and ‘cleaner’ party, compared to when it was first founded. Oja and Mral elaborate on the arguments pro et contra allowing the SD into the media by specifically focusing on the debate about whether or not the SD should be allowed to buy advertising space in newspapers and on TV.

Kristina Boréus contributes a comparative analysis of nationalism and discriminatory discourses in Austria, Denmark and Sweden. She accounts for the interconnectedness of discourses of nationalism and discrimination and focuses on discursive aspects of discrimination. The chapter reports a discourse analytical study of election-campaign texts in the three countries. She concludes that discursive discrimination seems to be stronger – more overt – in the rhetoric of these parties in Austria as compared to Danish
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or Swedish campaigns. The author also links her findings to other scholarly literature on Swedish nationalism and argues that there is a higher degree of implicitness in the Swedish radical-right rhetoric as a communicative culture.

Stig Arne Nohrstedt focuses on the high-profile cases involving the publication of the Muhammad cartoons in Denmark and Sweden and the way they contributed to threat spirals, which could be exploited by right-wing populist groups. He sees these cases as key indicators of a new phase of modern society that might be called the 'threat society'. Mediated speculation regarding fears and dangers have created a culture of fear and thus a feeding ground for the rise of new right-wing populism. By focusing on these cases involving the (re)publication of the cartoons, the author suggests that the editorial decisions to publish the cartoons cannot be explained simply by the ideological profiles of the newspapers, but rather by a combined effect of the superficial journalistic scrutiny of the threat images promoted by the artists and the political context of an emerging threat society. Nohrstedt argues that a thorough study of the media's role in disseminating threat perceptions is a long-overdue necessity in order to counteract populist discourses which exploit real or constructed social uncertainties and fears.

The last chapter of the book is Christoph Andersson's contribution, which throws light on the difficulties and risks involved for journalists reporting on right-wing populist groups. As an experienced journalist, Andersson discusses the strategies that journalists should employ to fulfill their job to the highest professional standards, even though their personal beliefs and ethics may stand in stark contrast to the participants of such events. He emphasizes the role of good reporting and journalism when it comes to right-wing populists and suggests an innovative model to minimize threats and provocations.

References

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