

# Exposing the Demagogues

Right-wing and National  
Populist Parties in Europe

Karsten Grabow and Florian Hartleb (Eds.)



Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung





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The Centre for European Studies (CES) is the official think tank of the European People's Party dedicated to the promotion of Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.



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# Foreword

The European financial and—partly stemming from this—fiscal crisis is the most severe economic crisis to have occurred since the 1920s. As with every crisis of such dimensions, it has created insecurity and doubt about the existing political systems and institutional arrangements. These concerns are being exploited by nationalistic parties and the virulent media, and are solely focused on the national political arena. National self-interest and prejudices against European neighbours and fellow European citizens are increasing: southern Europeans are portrayed as averse to work and unwilling to reform, northern Europeans as lacking solidarity. Abusive comparisons with Fascism have even been made.

The boost to populist parties and the receptivity of the public to their messages have been facilitated by the current crisis. The magnitude of the electoral gains that populist parties have been able to acquire due to their anti-European slogans and programmes is surprising and worrying. They succeed by delivering apparently straightforward solutions, which are often derived from national interest, to what are actually complex political problems—solutions that have persuasive power amongst a broad audience. This kind of nationalist and anti-European rhetoric endangers not only economic prosperity, but also democracy.

The current study on populism, *Exposing the Demagogues: Right-wing and National Populist Parties in Europe*, by the Centre for European Studies (CES) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) has been published just in time. The editors, Karsten Grabow and Florian Hartleb, have combined detailed case studies from Western and Eastern European countries with in-depth transnational comparative analyses. They have succeeded in painting a picture of the recent success of populist parties throughout Europe's political landscape by displaying their facilitating and inhibiting factors.

The study also acts as a warning that we must not waver in our commitment to a strong European Union, the world's most successful community of peace and freedom. We must not forget that the EU transformed opponents and enemies into partners and friends in a very short period of time. If we leave the floor to Europe's populist parties—such as Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front or Geert Wilder's Party for Freedom—they will happily sacrifice everything we have achieved over the last few decades for their own political profit.

The CES-KAS study makes a valuable contribution to explaining this danger; the title *Exposing the Demagogues* is well chosen. As the individual chapters of the study demonstrate, the populists' anti-European propaganda is receiving more and more support from European citizens. Populists' characterisation of European politics as elitist and bureaucratic; their disapproval of any further steps towards European integration; and their dissatisfaction with financial solidarity transfers, which have most benefited the crisis-ridden states in the south of Europe—all of these factors have prompted electoral success for populists in many European states. Populist parties exploit a pre-existing lack of confidence that is increasingly causing European citizens to turn away from European politics and the political system. By doing this, the parties are intensifying the crisis with their populist views and rhetoric.

This complex of problems is aggravated by the lack of a truly transnational European public space where current problems can be discussed in an appropriate European context. The media in particular must move the focus of their attention away from the national political arena towards the European one. As long as politicians and the media focus mainly on the national level, it will be easy for populists, such as Le Pen, to sustain this disruptive, and ultimately destructive, form of politics.

The growing number of anti-European parties and their increasing electoral successes are worrying from a political point of view. They pose a threat to national Christian Democratic and conservative parties and to the European People's Party, which is highly committed to European integration. We must not encourage those who, in the face of current challenges, consider the European idea detrimental. We must tackle the populists on their own ground by exposing their slogans as nationalist propaganda and their programmes as unfeasible and even damaging if implemented on a European level. The examples of Sweden and Poland show us that the best way to beat the populist parties is through successful policymaking by the mainstream parties.

It is of equal importance that we increase our efforts to better explain generic policies and to regain the trust of Europe's citizens. We must better illustrate the measures we have chosen in response to the financial and fiscal crisis, and our achievements thus far. We must emphasise that a sustainable and enduring solution can only be reached through *more* Europe. In this regard we have to make it clear that Europe is much more than just a community of purpose.

If we do not succeed in this matter, all the achievements which we have accomplished in the course of European integration, and which today we take for granted, will be endangered at some point in the future. Such an outcome would also pose a threat to the peace of the European continent.

As Jean-Claude Juncker once said: 'Those who doubt Europe and those who despair of Europe should visit Europe's military cemeteries. There is no other place where one could get a better, more touching and more powerful feeling for what Europeans can bring about for the worst if they work against each other.'

Elmar Brok MEP





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# Preface

After the failure of Timo Soini, party chair of The (True) Finns, in the Finnish presidential elections of January 2012, or the moderate losses of the Danish People's Party in the Danish parliamentary election of November 2011, one could be forgiven for thinking that Europe's right-wing populists were in decline. But even if we take into consideration the setback of the Dutch Party for Freedom in the most recent parliamentary election of September 2012, it is clear that Europe's right-wing populists are far from being marginalised. In some countries they have even become the largest or second-largest parties, as in Switzerland and Norway. Marine Le Pen's National Front gained an impressive 17.9% of the votes cast in the French presidential election of April 2012. Although she failed to get into the second round of the election, her result was even better than that of her father 10 years previously. And a few weeks later, the National Front came close to breaking its 1997 record by winning almost 14% of the vote and two seats in the French parliament—making it the third-largest party in France.

Right-wing populists have become firmly established as relevant and serious political players, who exercise significant political influence, both on their country's politics and at the European level. What is remarkable is that the right-wing populists have recalibrated their propaganda, moving away from xenophobia to some extent and towards pronounced Euroscepticism, and that this recalibration has turned out to be quite successful. Whether in the Finnish parliamentary election of April 2011, the French elections of 2012 or even in the Netherlands, if we consider the reasons for this early election, criticism of 'distant' EU practices in general, and of further European integration in particular; open aversion to further financial transfers for crisis-shaken economies; and prejudice against 'too much power in Brussels' have brought the populists considerable electoral support.

For all actors involved in EU politics these signs should be taken seriously. They clearly point to a growing distance between the EU superstructures and modes of policymaking on the one hand, and the expectations and concerns of a growing proportion of voters in EU Member States on the other. As two political think tanks either directly involved in EU politics or deeply committed in the idea of European integration, the Centre for European Studies and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung have decided, not

for the first time, to devote attention to the right-wing populist parties' advance.

With this volume we wish to combine three objectives. First, to the existing studies of right-wing populist parties we wish to add an update that considers their most recent electoral results. Second, together with scholars from the countries under study, we wish to explore the reasons for the advance of Europe's right-wing populist parties. Far from being a completely new political phenomenon, the growth in the numbers and dimensions of right-wing and national populist parties is new and—from a political perspective—worrying. So, in addition to the two rather academic purposes of this volume, we also discuss the implications of the progress of right-wing populists for the parties of our party family, the European People's Party. Here two main questions are salient: First, how should the established democratic parties deal with right-wing populists in countries where the latter have become a powerful competitor? And second, how can right-wing populist ideas be prevented from spreading to and taking root in countries where they are currently still irrelevant? This discussion and our suggestions can be seen as the special value we offer beyond pure academic research for politicians at both the European and national levels.

This study is a joint project of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Centre for European Studies (CES). It was overseen at all times with great foresight and patience by our CES colleague Sara Pini, to whom we offer our sincere thanks. Moreover, we wish to thank Marvin DuBois and the Communicative English editing team for their careful work; the staff at Linguanet Brussels for their translation of two of the chapters; Juan José Aguirre De Uña at Raro Design for designing the cover; and the printing company, Drukkerij Jo Vandenbulcke, for the layout and printing. A special thank you is also due to our authors. Though some were working at very short notice, all delivered on time and with perfect quality. It was a pleasure to work with the entire team.

Karsten Grabow    Berlin  
Florian Hartleb    Bonn

January 2013

# Part I: Introduction



# Mapping Present-day Right-wing Populists

Karsten Grabow and Florian Hartleb

Europe's right-wing and national populist parties are thriving, despite a recent setback in the Netherlands. In 2010 the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna) gained parliamentary representation for the first time, while in Finland The (True) Finns (Perussuomalaiset)<sup>1</sup> quadrupled their result to win almost 20% of the vote in the parliamentary election of April 2011. In France, Marine Le Pen's National Front (Front National, FN) received close to 20% of the vote in the presidential election of May 2012, and a few weeks later gained parliamentary representation with a vote share of almost 14% after nearly 20 years of absence from the national assembly. In the Netherlands, after the meteoric rise of Pim Fortuyn a decade ago, Geert Wilders and his Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid) have become an important factor, attacking the traditional model of institutionalised compromise and the emphasis on multiculturalism in Dutch politics (Lucardie and Voerman 2012). In other countries too, right-wing populists hold or have held key positions within the political system. Until the end of 2011 the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti) tolerated a liberal-conservative minority government, and it was several years ago that the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP) not only became Switzerland's strongest party, but even gained a seat in the federal government.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, while we were working on this book, the Lithuanian Order and Justice (Tvarka ir Teisingumas) was in negotiations for government involvement. From this perspective, right-wing populists have become firmly established across Europe as relevant political actors (Hartleb 2011a).

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1 The party changed its English name in August 2011 in order to demonstrate an even closer bond to the 'common' Finns. The translation of its Finnish name, Perussuomalaiset, means exactly this, that is, the 'common' or 'ordinary' Finns (see Raunio 2012, 4, and the respective chapter in this volume).

2 Between 2004 and 2007 the SVP even had two members on the Swiss federal council. However, it lost one seat due to a division in the party's cantonal association in Graubünden, and this splinter group has since acted under the name of the Conservative Democratic Party of Switzerland (Bürgerlich-Demokratische Partei Schweiz).

## Introduction: Mapping Present-day Right-wing Populists

**Table 1 Countries with relevant<sup>3</sup> right-wing populist parties and their electoral results since the mid-1980s**

Country	Party/Parties (with founding year)	Electoral results, in per cent of votes cast (year of election in brackets)								Best position*
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ, 1956)	9.7 (1986)	16.6 (1990)	22.5 (1994)	21.9 (1995)	26.9 (1999)	10.0 (2002)	11.0 (2006)	17.5 (2008)	J (2000–5)
	Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ, 2005)	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.1 (2006)	10.7 (2008)	J (2005–7)
Belgium	Flemish Interest** (VB, 2004)	1.9 (1987)	6.6 (1991)	7.8 (1995)	...	9.9 (1999)	11.6 (2003)	12.0 (2007)	7.7 (2010)	
	Progress Party (FRP, 1973)	9.0 (1988)	6.4 (1990)	6.4 (1994)	-	-	-	-	-	
Denmark	Danish People's Party (DF, 1995)	-	-	-	7.4 (1998)	12.0 (2001)	13.0 (2005)	13.9 (2007)	12.3 (2011)	T (2001–11)
	The (True) Finns*** (PS, 1995)	6.3 (1987)	4.8 (1991)	1.3 (1995)	1.0 (1999)	...	1.6 (2003)	4.1 (2007)	19.0 (2011)	
France	National Front (FN, 1972)	9.9 (1986)	9.8 (1988)	12.4 (1993)	14.9 (1997)	...	11.3 (2002)	4.3 (2007)	13.9 (2012)	Second round of presidential election (2002)
Italy****	Northern League (LN, 1989)	-	8.7 (1992)	8.4 (1994)	10.1 (1996)	...	3.9 (2001)	4.6 (2006)	8.3 (2008)	J (2000–11)
Lithuania	Order and Justice (TT, 2002)	-	-	-	-	-	-	12.7 (2008)	7.3 (2012)	J
The Netherlands	List Pim Fortuyn (LPF, 2002)	-	-	-	-	17.0 (2002)	5.7 (2003)	-	-	
	Party for Freedom (PVV, 2004)	-	-	-	-	-	5.9 (2006)	15.5 (2010)	10.1 (2012)	T
Norway	Progress Party (FrP, 1973)	13.0 (1989)	6.3 (1993)		15.3 (1997)	14.6 (2001)	22.1 (2005)	22.9 (2009)		
Poland	Law and Justice (PiS, 2001)	-	-	-		9.5 (2001)	27.0 (2005)	32.1 (2007)	29.9 (2011)	S (2006–10)
Slovakia	Slovak National Party (SNS, 1990)	13.9 (1990)	7.9 (1992)	5.4 (1994)	9.1 (1998)	...	...	11.7 (2006)	5.1 (2010)	
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (SD, 1988)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5.7 (2010)	
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party (SVP, 1991)	11.0 (1987)	11.9 (1991)	14.9 (1995)	22.5 (1999)	...	26.6 (2003)	29.0 (2007)	26.6 (2011)	G, 2 seats (2003–8)

3 In this context a party is considered relevant if it has parliamentary representation at national level. In using this criterion, we follow Sartori (1976, 122–3) and Lijphart (1984, 115–17; 1999, 65–7). We did not include the Italian LN in this study for three reasons. First, for capacity reasons we could not conduct a full survey of all cases in Europe. Second, there is no shortage of good studies on the LN (see, for example, Betz 2001; Decker 2004, chapter II.1; Chiantera-Stutte 2005; Mudde 2007, chapter 3). Finally, the LN represents a particular sub-type of separatist and regional populism (Chiantera-Stutte 2005, 127). This type of party is represented in this book by the VB.



*Legend:*

- no seats or non-existent at that time
- \* Beyond simple parliamentary representation:
  - J = junior partner in a coalition government;
  - S = senior partner in a coalition government, party of the prime minister;
  - T = tolerated a minority government;
  - G = participation in government.
- \*\* 1981–2003: Flemish Bloc (VB).
- \*\*\* Until 1995 the Finnish Rural Party (SMP).
- \*\*\*\* Not included in this study.

*Source:* Authors' own compilation based on data in Nordsieck (2012).

However, (right-wing) populism is not a completely new phenomenon in Europe: some of the populist parties had already been founded in the early 1970s (see Table 1). A few parties are even older but were not originally right-wing populist, for example, the SVP and the Party for Freedom of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ). In Denmark and Norway quite successful populist progress parties also started out in the early 1970s, but as anarcho-liberal parties protesting against high taxes, the cost of the welfare state and the consensus style of policymaking in their countries, rather than as committed to a clear right-wing agenda (Kitschelt with McGann 1995, 121–2; Bauer 2010, 61; Klein 2012, 62).

After this initial flare, right-wing populist parties had their first heyday in the decade between the mid-1980s and the 1990s, when their numbers and magnitudes increased to previously unknown levels. In Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Switzerland, Norway and—despite the ups and downs of the Danish Progress Party (Fremskridtspartiet) until it was replaced by the much more successful Danish People's Party in 1995—in Denmark, too, right-wing populist parties entered national parliaments by the dozen or significantly enlarged the number of parliamentary seats they held. This success was based on a refreshed and radicalised ideological mixture that particularly emphasised the issues of immigration or 'foreign infiltration', and combined them with the alleged abuse of welfare state measures by immigrants or the alleged threat to the national and cultural identity of the 'heartland' (Taggart 2000, 95). Moreover right-wing populists mobilised popular support through their critique of the established political parties, which they accused of being completely remote from the lives of 'ordinary citizens' and of living in cosy, but insular, elite cartels. No wonder, therefore, that they became especially successful in countries characterised as having consensus-style democracies (Lijphart 1999). It was precisely this

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consensus that the populists were questioning. What all these right-wing populist and protest parties had in common was their propaganda against immigration (Hartleb 2004; Scharenberg 2005; Bornschier 2011), which caused them to be labelled as anti-immigration parties, although some, like the Northern League (Lega Nord, LN) in Italy and the Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang, VB) in Belgium, also emphasised the issue of separatism as a sub-form of exclusionary mobilisation (for example 'us', the Flemish, against 'them', the Walloons).

This first wave of 'real' right-wing populist parties that travelled across Western Europe roughly between 1985 and 1995 has already been the subject of countless academic studies investigating the reasons for its appearance and growth (for example, Betz 1994; Kitschelt with McGann 1995; Mudde 2004, 2007; Decker 2004, 2006; Hartleb 2004, 2011a). This wave also caused long scholarly debates about which parties should be labelled as right-wing populist, rather than as either extremist or left-wing populist, or simply as protest parties. This is far too much to recapitulate.

The bulk of the research became even more puzzling when the second wave of right-wing populism emerged. The starting point for this was around the turn of the millennium. At this time the SVP became the strongest party in Switzerland, entitled to a second seat in the Federal Council (2003); the FPÖ became the second-largest Austrian party and a junior member of the government coalition (2000); List Pim Fortuyn (Lijst Pim Fortuyn) came from nowhere to win 17% of the vote in the Netherlands (2002); and, in the same year, the leader of the French FN, Jean-Marie Le Pen, made it into the second round of the presidential elections. It was also about this time that numerous, sometimes very short-lived right-wing and/or nationalist parties entered the scene in the new democracies in Central-Eastern Europe, for example in Slovakia, Poland and Lithuania.

Due to the inroads made by right-wing and national populist parties into the parliaments of numerous countries during the mid-2000s, the Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde spoke of the 'populist Zeitgeist' (Mudde 2004). However, regardless of the vast amount of good and eligible definitions that were developed during the second heyday of right-wing populism, we shall try in the following section to hammer out both its most important characteristics and the reasons for its rise and establishment in European democracies, in order to define what we are talking about.

## ON THE CHARACTER OF RIGHT-WING AND NATIONAL POPULISM

To begin with (contemporary) populism<sup>4</sup> as such: it is generally understood as a technique or a style of political mobilisation that is based both on the creation of an identity between a leader and the 'ordinary people', whose problems that leader pretends to know and to care about, on the one hand, and a fundamental critique of the ostensibly distant political establishment that has forgotten or ignored the problems of the 'ordinary people' on the other (see, for example, Decker 2006, 12). Defined in this way, populist parties are primarily an expression of formerly latent protest against grievances of any kind, for example, the alleged inequality of society, participatory deficits, the poor performance of political institutions or their incumbent actors, and these actors' alleged separation from daily life. These grievances are identified, articulated and represented by political entrepreneurs who act as the people's advocate against the political establishment and who tend to give easy answers to complicated problems, such as 'get the criminal foreigners out' or 'we've paid enough' (regarding the euro rescue packages). Cas Mudde (2004, 542) refers to such kinds of populism as 'the politics of the Stammtisch' or a communication style that is directed at the 'gut feelings' of the people (see also Hartleb 2004, 58).

While these conceptions can in principle be applied to both left-wing and right-wing populism, Karin Priester (2012, 3) suggested taking the notions of *inclusion* and *exclusion* as the *differentia specifica* between the two kinds of populism (see also Betz 2001). Left-wing populism is predominantly inclusionary. It combines its critique of capitalism or 'neo-liberalism' with anarchic claims for an unconditional basic income, higher taxes for the wealthy, and the nationalisation of banks or key industrial branches. Left-wing populism particularly cares for the socially underprivileged, who shall be included in society through an immense redistribution of wealth to the poor. Moreover, it requires the immediate participation of the people in political and economic decision-making. Its economic positions are clearly

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4 A great deal of the literature on populism recapitulates the entire etymological history of the notion from the social revolutionary Narodniki (*Friends of the People*) in Russia in the mid-nineteenth century, via the rural American Populist Party in the late nineteenth century to the Latin American rural populists of the 1930s and 1950s (for example, Puhle 2003; Mudde 2004, 548–52; Hartleb 2004, 52–5; Bauer 2010, 5). This long etymological trajectory does not seem to be necessary for our purpose. With 'contemporary populism' we simply refer to parties which have emerged since the 1970s, and especially those that found success during the first wave of (right-wing) populism from the mid-1980s.

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protective and highly driven by the idea of state interventionism in economic planning and production. Like other populist movements, however, left-wing populists are also at least sceptical of the institutions of the European Union because it is seen as a far distant project of bureaucrats and elites who primarily serve the interests of capitalists and financial markets. Although left-wing populism is also often driven by charismatic leaders, especially outside Europe (Werz 2003), it can be labelled as ‘populism from below’ (Hartleb 2004, 59).

Right-wing populism, in contrast, is exclusionary. It tries to form an identity barrier between ‘us’, that is, the ordinary native people of the ‘heartland’, and ‘them’, where the ‘them’ can be both the political establishment and strangers—especially (Muslim) immigrants, asylum seekers and ethnic minorities (Betz 1998, 4; see also Taguieff 2012). Defined in this way, right-wing populism has two dichotomous exclusionary dimensions: a vertical one that is directed against the ‘distant establishment’ and a horizontal one that is directed against strangers (see, for example, Frölich-Steffen and Rensmann 2005, 7; Bauer 2010, 7). Right-wing populists need such groups as the concept of an enemy to mobilise either latent prejudices or real concerns among their potential followers. These enemies are accused of undermining the cultural identity of the heartland and of exploiting the domestic welfare state (‘social parasites’) without any intention of taking care of themselves or ‘of integrating’ into the host society. According to right-wing populists, the national economy should serve the nation and welfare state measures should be preserved primarily for native citizens who work hard but are, in the populist’s language, ‘left behind’ by the failed overall immigration policies of either politically correct or remote governments (Mudde 2007, 125, 130–3).

This kind of populism is called ‘populism from above’ (Hartleb 2004, 59) because these sentiments tend to be utilised by political entrepreneurs who command what are usually weak party organisations. More than others, right-wing populists see themselves as advocates of national and ethnic interests, for example the concept of *préférence nationale* from the French FN or ‘We Flemish’ from the Flemish VB. They usually mobilise support by clearly differentiating the ‘natives’ from other population groups, nationalities or cultures. Those who are unwilling to integrate into the host society or who do not comply with the rules of the ‘heartland’ shall be excluded or more precisely sent away. The result is more or less open racism and xenophobia which, in Western Europe, is primarily directed

against immigrants and Muslims (for example, in Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland), while in the countries of Eastern Europe either Jews or Roma are the prime targets of right-wing populists. Because of the strong emphasis on the nation and nationalism by numerous right-wing populists, some authors have suggested defining them as both right-wing *and* national populists (for example, Bayer 2002; Betz 2002; Decker 2006; Frölich-Steffen 2008), a notion that we follow throughout this book.

In contrast to far-right or extreme-right parties, right-wing and national populist parties do not make use of militias or bunches of thugs, although in some cases the parties do have links to neo-Fascist fellowships—for example, the Sweden Democrats and the Austrian FPÖ (see Pelinka 2005, 96–7). However, in contrast to far- or extreme-right parties, right-wing and national populist parties principally act within the framework of liberal democracy and parliamentarism, although the borders are fluid and not always that clear-cut (Scharenberg 2005, 572; Decker 2006, 16; Hartleb 2004, 111–17). This is especially true for the French FN, which was seen by most scholars as an extreme-right party, at least until the change in party presidency from Jean-Marie Le Pen to his daughter Marine. Constantly shifting the boundaries of the permissible by deliberately violating taboos is part of the communication style of right-wing populists. ‘I say what you think’ was one of Jörg Haider’s slogans, which demonstrated both his advocacy of ‘ordinary’ people’s thinking and his readiness to challenge conventions among the mainstream political public when he mobilised voters against the alleged infiltration of Austrian culture and the Austrian welfare state (Helms 1997; Betz 2002; McGann and Kitschelt 2005).

Given the obvious proximity in style and ideology to extreme-right parties, it becomes clear why the parties under study are called *right-wing*. It is mainly due to their open hostility towards strangers, especially immigrants, and cultural or religious minorities. Yet, when it comes to European politics, some scholars have differentiated between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ Euro-critics (see, for example, Taggart and Szczerbak 2008; Hartleb 2012a; 2012b). While they consider the extreme right among the former because of their fundamental rejection of European integration, right-wing and national populist parties are ‘soft’ Euro-critics. They do not question European integration fundamentally; instead, they criticise the procedures of European policymaking as too distant and too elitist. In light of the massive financial transfers, however, oral rebellion against Europe and its costs has become at least standard practice in all present-day right-wing and national populist parties.

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So far we have only sketched some characteristics of right-wing and national populist parties. What is missing hitherto is a definition. In his widely discussed definition, Cas Mudde labelled populism as an ideology that is based on a differentiation between the 'honest people' and 'distant elites' and, therefore, he argued, it is moralistic rather than programmatic (Mudde 2004, 542). In contrast to Mudde and other scholars such as Frank Decker (2004, 31) or Werner Bauer (2010, 7), we define right-wing and national populism as an exclusionary and discriminating *mobilisation strategy* used by political entrepreneurs to exploit either latent prejudices against strangers or the deep disappointment among parts of the electorate with the performance of the political elite for their own interests, that is, in order to gain public attention, votes, and access to public office for themselves and their followers (for a similar approach see, for example, Backes and Jesse 1998, 24). Even if Mudde and others treat populism as a 'thin ideology', we argue that it is simply too thin, too dispersed and too little future oriented to be counted as an ideology.

Right-wing populists are basically 'Nay-sayers' (Betz 2001, 398). They reject (further) immigration, pluralism, the cultural variety of modern society and (further) European integration. For complex questions they offer simple but mobilising answers, such as 'we've paid enough' or 'get the criminal foreigners out' (see above). If endowed by voters with political responsibility, as, for example, in Austria between 2000 and 2002, right-wing and national populists are somewhat exposed to failure because of the complexity of politics. This should not tempt established democratic parties to underestimate the capabilities of right-wing and national populists, however. At the very least, their popularity should be seen as a serious indicator of societal and political aberrations that are a breeding ground for both populists and extremists. Moreover they should be seen as serious competitors, since populists from the left and the right have made significant inroads into the traditional left-wing and conservative electorates. Before we continue with a discussion of the reasons for the formation and growth of right-wing and national populist parties, we will summarise their major characteristics in the following table.

**Table 2 The main characteristics of right-wing and national populist parties**

Role model enemies	(i) (Muslim) immigrants, asylum seekers, ethnic/religious minorities (ii) distant political, economic and cultural elites (iii) EU procedures, structures and bureaucrats
'Therapy'	(i) stop immigration, strict application of immigration laws and welfare-state measures for immigrants, expulsion of (criminal or integration-unwilling) immigrants, (ii) break-up of the cartel of elites (iii) stop further European integration and financial transfers
Basic political orientation	xenophobic, anti-immigration, anti-establishment and anti-elitist
Communication style, including campaigning	alarmist, exclusionary, demagogic, (over)simplified, taboo-breaking, deliberately misleading, subtle key messages, opportunistic, 'friends versus enemies', negative campaigning
Inner-party organisation	dominated by one person (political entrepreneur), leadership driven, top-down style in all inner-party affairs

So far, identifying the right-wing and national populist parties' political-cultural profile as primarily anti-immigration and anti-establishment protest parties has been relatively straightforward. Yet, it is much harder to grasp their economic foundations. In this respect the common categories used for mapping political parties on a left-right dimension do not work. Although some of these parties started life as liberal parties that represented the interests of owners of small businesses, craftsmen and the self-employed, especially farmers, today, right-wing and national populist parties represent a colourful mixture of socio-economic demands. These range from still taking liberal positions on fiscal policy (such as tax reductions for the hard-working 'ordinary' people), via welfare chauvinism (welfare-state measures only for hardworking 'natives'), to complete protectionism and/or nationalism (protection of domestic producers from international competition and/or no further financial liabilities for distressed EU/euro partners). Often, right-wing populists replicate some of the elements of the critique of globalisation that are otherwise a trademark of the radical left. In other policy fields, such as environmental or energy policies, foreign politics or development cooperation, they are either indifferent or have no

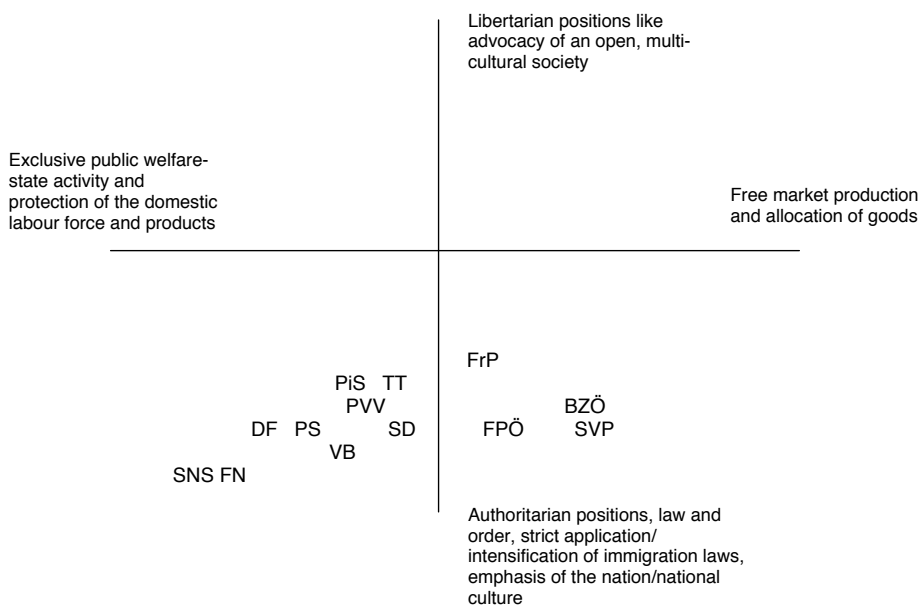
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opinion at all, while anti-interventionist, anti-US and anti-Israeli sentiments are, by and large, visible (Chryssogelos 2011).<sup>5</sup> These features make them not so dissimilar to the radical or populist European left.

In spite of this policy diffusion, we have tried to position the right-wing and national populist parties as accurately as possible in the following figure (see Figure 1). It represents the political space of most (Western) European countries and is usually applied for mapping parties according to their idealised position within that space. While the horizontal axis represents socio-economic positions, the vertical axis represents the cultural dimension in a given party system.

**Figure 1 Idealised location of contemporary right-wing and national populist parties in a two-dimensional political space**



Source: Prepared by the authors on the basis of expert opinions.

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<sup>5</sup> The exception here is Geert Wilders who always emphasises his closeness to Israel, although some argue that this solidarity follows the logic of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' (Vossen 2011).



That all the right-wing and national populist parties are located below the horizontal axis comes as no surprise of course. As mentioned above, libertarian values and calls for an open and multicultural society are alien to them. Although the parties are quite close to each other in their cultural political positions—much closer than in their economic positions—some variations are visible. According to the judgements of our authors, the most ‘liberal’ right-wing populist party in terms of cultural issues is the Norwegian Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet), while the French FN and the Slovak National Party (Slovenská Národná Strana, SNS) are the most authoritarian or radical parties among the right-wing populists.

On the socio-economic axis, the SVP, the Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich) and the Austrian FPÖ are the most liberal, while the latter is also able to reach out deeply into the traditional left-wing camp. Nevertheless, the right-wing populists in the Alps all exhibit legacy tendencies in both liberal economic policy claims and respective electoral support from free market proponents, such as the self-employed, farmers and craftsmen, as these parties all started out as business parties which have radicalised over time (Scharenberg 2005, 572–3). In contrast, the FN and the SNS hold the most protective and welfare chauvinist positions among the right-wing populists, with the others all falling somewhere in between.

## THE REASONS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE FORMATION AND GROWTH OF RIGHT-WING AND NATIONAL POPULISTS

If we want to understand the reasons for the advance of right-wing and national populists and the conditions under which they thrive, we must consider at least five explanatory factors separately: first, social and economic progress and change; second, the strategic behaviour of established democratic parties and their policies, especially on immigration and EU matters; third, institutional conditions in the respective countries; fourth, the degree of awareness of the established democratic forces regarding radical political acting and propaganda, including the watchdog function of the media; and finally personal factors such as the existence or

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non-existence of charismatic and unscrupulous political entrepreneurs.<sup>6</sup> These factors have to come together in a favourable combination to create the conditions in which right-wing and national populist parties can emerge and flourish (see, for example, Mudde 2007, 231).

### **Economic progress and social change**

Although scholarly debate and the bulk of empirical studies reveal no clear-cut picture (Mudde 2007, Chapter 9) regarding the impact of economic modernisation and change on the *individual* decision of voters to vote for radical or populist right-wing parties, most authors see populist parties as an expression of dissatisfaction and protest among the ‘victims’ or ‘losers’ of economic modernisation and social change (for example, Decker 2004, 25). Such victims are basically those who were laid off or simply replaced in the process of economic change and rationalisation, or who were exposed to both higher-level or cheaper competition, for example from an unskilled immigrant who does the same job for a fraction of the cost. However, in order to feel threatened by either economic progress, social change or both, in general (potential) voters of protest parties do not necessarily have to be affected negatively by social change or economic progress. Usually it is enough to fear that a deterioration of life, income and social status may follow from economic development and social change. Such fears may also arise among people who obviously profit from progress, for example if they are active in highly competitive sectors of the labour market. Yet, it has been observed that these people tend to vote more radically if they fear being exploited by others in the process of social distribution (Decker, 27; see also Mudde 2007, 204). These ‘others’ can be either the welfare state, collecting contributions for its own, or welfare-spending on the ‘social parasites’, whose presence the voters are alerted to by populist political entrepreneurs.

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6 Except for the last reason, these factors hold true, especially in Western Europe. For Central and Eastern Europe scholars have put forward further factors explaining the emergence of populist parties: the weakening of democratic structures and the end of liberal consensus; the loss of the legitimacy of traditional political actors and institutions; high levels of corruption and clientelism, or the political culture and Communist heritage; and the influence of accession to the EU. For more details see the chapter by Hartleb in this volume.

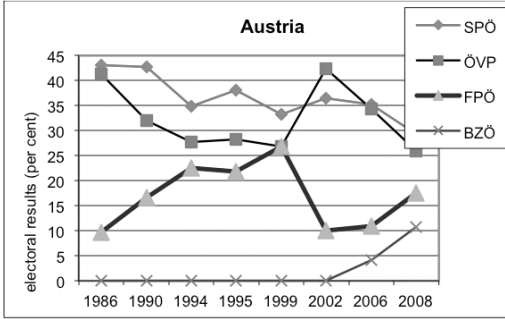
However, the core support for right-wing and national populist parties has been identified by research as being found among voters who report a feeling of insecurity. As Cas Mudde spells out: '[L]arge groups of the population have become insecure about various aspects of their life: identity, job, life as a whole. They seek salvation in the "simple messages" of the populist radical right, which promises a clear identity and protection against the changing world' (2007, 223).

Voter studies have revealed, that—at the aggregate level—unemployed and/or low- to medium-skilled male workers under the age of 40, and male petit bourgeois voters (for example, craftsmen and shop-keepers) form the core of voters for right-wing populist parties. Far from being proof of individual behaviour, electoral studies (for example Mayer 1998, 19; Riedlsperger 1998, 35; Svåsand 1998, 85–6) illustrate that these voter cohorts are obviously easier to mobilise than other groups with anti-immigrant sentiments, especially if the issues around which they are mobilised are related to suburban crime, cultural infiltration and job competition on the one hand, or with the alleged failure of the mainstream parties and their politics on the other. Though these social milieux form the breeding ground (or the demand side) for right-wing populist parties, these worries and latent prejudices have to be triggered by clever and mobilising political entrepreneurs (the supply side), which we think are crucial to the process of the formation and running of a successful (right-wing) populist party (see below).

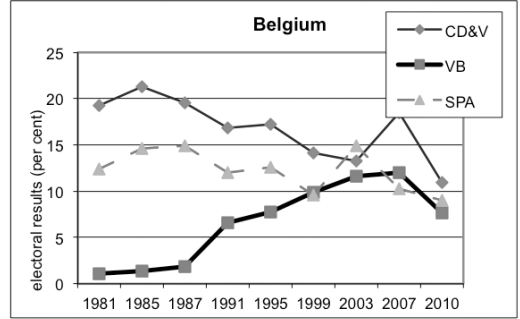
### **The strategic behaviour of established democratic parties and their policies**

Regarding this second factor, some authors looking for less-sophisticated answers have tried to blame Christian Democrats or moderate conservatives for the successes of right-wing and national populists (for example, Schäfer 2010, 3). The crude argument is that through some adaption, toleration or even coalition building with right-wing populists, the Christian Democratic or moderate conservative parties have enhanced the status of the populists and made them politically acceptable. Although this may partially hold true in individual countries, such as Austria between 2000 and 2002 or the Netherlands from 2010 to 2012, this kind of argument falls much too short. In many countries right-wing populists successfully penetrated segments of the 'old' Social Democratic voter market when the Social Democrats decided to move closer to the centre, leaving large voter

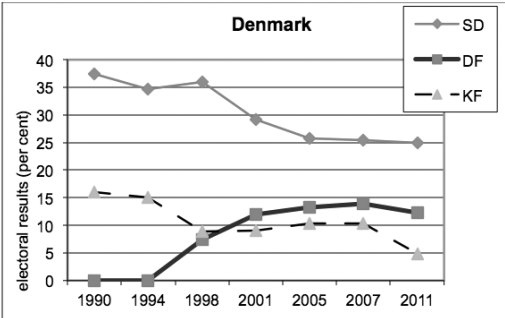
**Figure 2 The relationship between the electoral results of established democratic parties and right-wing populists over time**



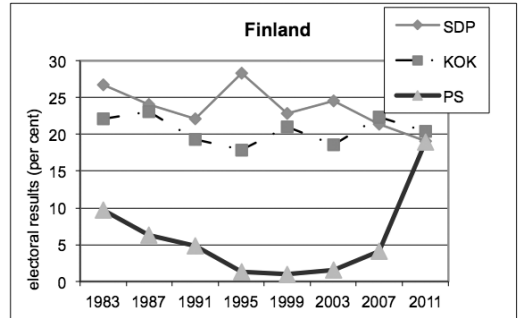
$r_{SPÖ, FPÖ} = -.38$ ;  $r_{ÖVP, FPÖ} = -.86$



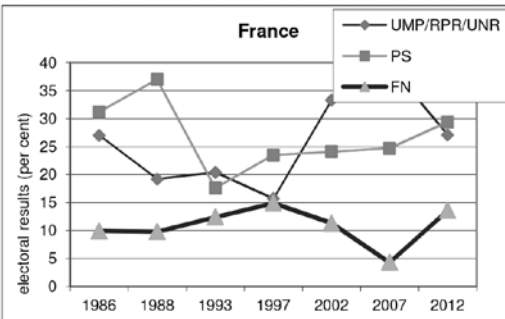
$r_{CD\&V, VB} = -.63$ ;  $r_{SPA, VB} = -.45$



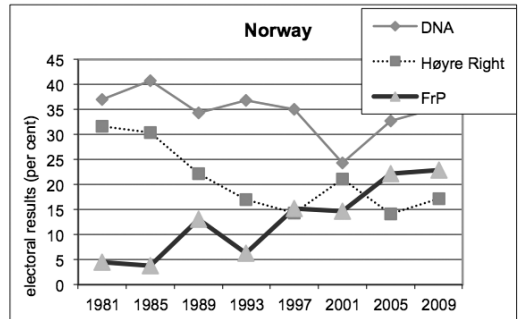
$r_{SD, DF} = -.99$ ;  $r_{KF, DF} = .14$



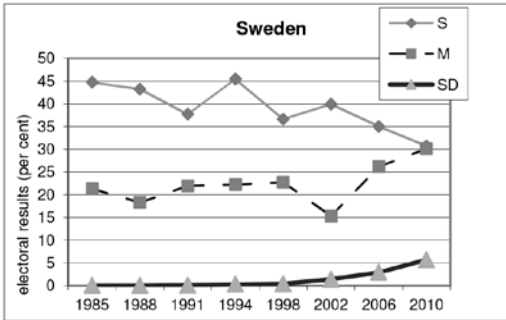
$r_{SDP, PS} = -.51$ ;  $r_{KOK, PS} = .27$



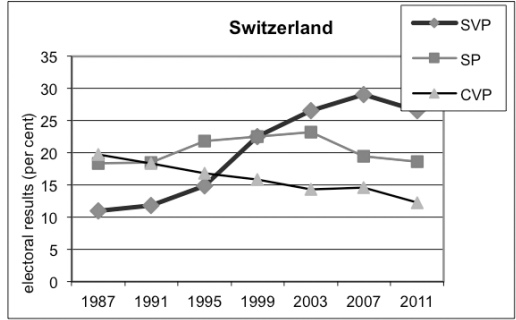
$r_{PS, FN} = -.18$ ;  $r_{UMP, FN} = -.73$



$r_{DNA, FrP} = -.47$ ;  $r_{Høyre, FrP} = -.75$



$r_{S,SD} = -.77$ ;  $r_{M,SD} = .70$



$r_{SP,SVP} = .33$ ;  $r_{CVP,SVP} = -.91$

*Legend:* Without establishing a singular causal relationship, a negative result signals that the gains of one party are at the expense of another, while a positive result signals that the curves of the electoral results go in the same direction, that is, that both the moderate conservative party and the populists have gained, as is the case in Sweden. Though some of the correlation coefficients are not that strong, illustrating at best a weak relationship between gains/losses at the competitor's expense, others are much stronger, for example, that of the Danish Social Democratic Party and the Danish People's Party, which signals gains for the latter at the Social Democrats' expense. The same holds true for the relationship between the Christian Democratic People's Party in Switzerland and the SVP. However, even strongly negative correlations, for example between the results of the UMP and the FN, should not tempt one to assume that the FN has attracted millions of former UMP voters over time. On the contrary, until the 2012 election, the UMP had successfully absorbed potential FN voters. In this respect the relationship between the UMP and the FN resembles that between the Austrian People's Party and the FPÖ in Austria. In both countries Christian Democrats and moderate conservatives on the one hand and right-wing populists on the other interact like communicating pipes, while the left is not completely untouched by the populists.

cohorts politically homeless. The Social Democratic search for new voter alliances in the centre, and their intermezzo with neo-liberal economic policies in the mid-1990s and early 2000s, created substantial vacancies that were then occupied by populists who called for more protection of the domestic labour force, markets and products. Thus, some of the traditional European left-wing parties were simply passed on their left flank by the populists while they were looking for new electoral fortunes in the centre and alienating their former core voters by relinquishing formerly convincing and binding positions.

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In Denmark, Finland and Sweden especially, the Social Democratic parties were hit more severely than conservative or Christian Democratic parties by the advance of right-wing populists, while in Norway the growth of the Progress Party was more at the expense of the liberal-conservative Conservative Party (Høyre) (see Figure 2). In Belgium and the Netherlands,<sup>7</sup> Social Democracy and Christian Democracy were negatively affected by the right-wing populists to similar degrees. This also holds true for Austria, where the right-wing populists recovered after 2002 at the expense of both the Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei) and the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs). In Switzerland, however, the Christian Democratic People's Party (Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei) suffered more than the left from the SVP's steady advance (Kriesi 2005; Lachat and Selb 2005).

Given these figures, one cannot state that right-wing populist parties have gained in a generally one-sided way at the expense of either Social Democracy on the one hand, or Christian Democracy and moderate conservatives on the other. Neither have the populists completely changed their electorate from formerly pro-market petit bourgeois voters to voters from the 'forgotten' working-class—although in some countries right-wing populists have since become the biggest workers' parties (for example, in France and Austria). Instead, they have quite successfully mastered the expansion of their electoral base. They are now fairly well anchored in voter market segments both to the left and right of the centre, where voters either feel threatened or overwhelmed by further immigration, or where they are tired of distant elite arrangements.

Just as there is no overall proof of which camp holds more responsibility for the right-wing populists' advance, there is no clear link between this advance and the parties in power at the time, whether Social Democrats or socialists on the one hand, or Christian Democrats or moderate conservative parties on the other (Decker 2004, 251–5). This does not mean, however, that the established democratic parties are not involved as relevant actors in the process of the right-wing populists' advance; quite the contrary. Most scholars agree that the steady progress of right-wing populist parties must be seen as a result of the declining social entrenchment of the established democratic parties, which over time have lost their integrative function and

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7 Due to the short electoral history of the Dutch List Pim Fortuyn and the Party for Freedom, we did not calculate correlations for the Netherlands.

their capacity to identify with their voters (Decker 2004, 28; see also Katz 1990). Yet, if the linkage function of formerly strong and powerful parties becomes weaker, and if the established parties fail to convince a growing proportion of their (former) supporters, new protest parties such as those in this study will find excellent conditions for mobilising these free-floating voters for their purposes.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the attenuation of bonds between the established democratic parties and their less aligned voters, the specific policies of the established mainstream parties are also of great significance to the populists' success or failure. Two policy fields are especially relevant: (i) the regulation of immigration and (ii) European integration.

#### *Regulation of immigration*

Although based on only two case studies, Germany and France, Simon Bornschier (2011) argues that the degree of cooperation between the established left and the moderate right parties in national immigration regulation plays a crucial role in either preventing or furthering the rise of right-wing populists. He evaluates the behaviour of the left, that is, of the respective socialists or Social Democrats, as decisive. While the French Socialists pursue(d) an open immigration strategy that has made multiculturalism a central claim, since the mid-1980s the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) has followed a more restrictive path or a 'dismissive strategy' in immigration politics in order not to act '... against the instincts of ... [the] core electorate ... namely blue-collar workers' (Bornschier 2011, 18). While over the decades French Socialists have lost electoral support from their traditional voters because of their too libertarian positions on immigration, the German SPD has not been blamed by its traditional core of voters for following an immigration policy that is too liberal. Completely different again, but with similar results, is Frank Decker's argument (2004, 257–8). When the red–green coalition was preparing a more libertarian citizenship law that would ease conditions for a second nationality for immigrants in 1999, the German Christian Democrats campaigned successfully against it. In doing so, Decker argues, they secured support from immigration-averse voters and ultimately prevented fraying on their right flank.

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8 See also Figure 2. The decline of the formerly strongest established democratic parties on the one hand and the parallel upswing of right-wing populists on the other is most pronounced in Austria, Belgium and Switzerland.

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To put it simply: immigration regulations in Germany were made, by and large, either through consensus between the two biggest camps or in such a manner that it prevented the emergence of an anti-immigration party. Over the years immigration regulations have become stricter, and immigration has declined. As a result of both this tightening and filibustering tactics, immigration has not been an issue that potential right-wing populists could use to mobilise voters, and no right-wing populist party has emerged—at least not one relevant at the federal level. In France, in contrast, the Socialist Party was too lax on immigration regulation for a large proportion of its traditional voters, and many of them turned to the FN, while, until 2012, the moderate conservative camp was able, through verbal intensification of immigration matters, to secure the support of its less immigration-friendly voters (Mayer 1998, 18–20; Bornschieer 2011, 18–21).

When extrapolated to more than two countries, however, neither the regulation of immigration nor the party constellation of the governments explains the populists' success or failure satisfactorily. While in Denmark, the Netherlands (at least in Jan-Peter Balkenende's first years in government), Finland, and especially France immigration increased under either liberal-conservative, Christian Democratic or conservative governments, in Austria and Norway it continued to fall when Social Democrats once again took the leading position in government (see Table 3). However, this did not have negative consequences for the respective anti-immigration populist parties, which went on to become the third (Austria) or even second-largest parties (Norway).

Putting this blurred picture into a broader perspective than that applied by Bornschieer in his two-country comparison (2011), we have to conclude that apparently regardless of the question of which of the established parties controls the government and holds responsibility for immigration regulation, if immigration becomes an issue in public debates, and if this concern is correspondingly echoed in the media, populists—who fuel those debates with xenophobic propaganda and the exploitation of prejudices—will benefit from the growing discomfort with immigration among segments of voters. This argument holds true quite independently



**Table 3 Immigration rates and government composition in selected countries**

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	...	2009	2010	2011
...	CD-right-wing coal. ...						SPÖ led Grand coal.				
<b>Austria</b>	2.46	2.45	2.45	2.44	2.00	1.94	1.94	...	1.85	1.83	1.81
...	Liberal-left				...			CD		SD	
<b>Belgium</b>	0.98	0.97	0.97	0.97	1.23	1.23	1.22	...	1.22	1.22	1.22
...	SD led coal.			liberal-conservative		... liberal-conservative			SD		
<b>Denmark</b>	1.95	1.98	2.01	2.04	2.48	2.53	2.52	...	2.48	2.47	2.41
...	mixed coal. under SD leadership						centre-liberal-conservative coal. ...			RB	
<b>Finland</b>	0.58	0.61	0.62	0.63	0.95	0.89	0.84	...	0.68	0.62	0.62
...	centre-right presidency				... centre-right presidency						
<b>France</b>	0.66	0.64	0.64	0.66	0.66	0.66	0.66	...	1.48	1.47	1.46
...	red-green coalition ...				grand coalition			CD-liberal coal.			
<b>Germany</b>	4.01	4.0	3.99	2.18	2.18	2.18	2.18	...	2.19	2.19	0.54
...	left-liberal coal.		CD-liberal coalition ...				... right-liberal				
<b>The Netherlands</b>	2.3	2.34	2.35	2.35	2.91	2.8	2.72	...	2.46	2.38	2.33
...	SD		... CD/CONS/LIB ...			SD led coal. ...					
<b>Norway</b>	2.13	2.11	2.1	2.09	1.74	1.73	1.73	...	1.7	1.7	1.7
...	CD led coal. ...						SD-populist coal. CD ...				
<b>Slovakia</b>	0.53	0.53	0.53	...	0.3	0.3	0.3	...	0.29	0.29	0.29

\* Net migration rate per 1,000 inhabitants. A positive figure signals that there is more immigration than emigration from a country.

*Legend:*

coal.: coalition

CD: Christian Democrats

CONS: Conservative

LIB: Liberals

SD: Social Democrats/socialists

RB: Rainbow coalition (under liberal-conservative leadership).

Source: Indexmundi (2012).

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of both the absolute numbers of migrants and long-term immigration rates.<sup>9</sup> The (True) Finns, for example, became stronger in the last decade, when immigration declined. The same is true for the Dutch Party for Freedom and the Austrian FPÖ, although immigration is higher in these countries than in Finland. Nevertheless, both in the Netherlands and in Austria the anti-immigration parties have grown continuously, even though immigration and its visibility have fallen moderately in recent years. However, despite this decline, immigration has remained an issue in public debates in the form of ‘cultural infiltration’ or the ‘lazy immigrant’ who comes to the ‘heartland’ just to benefit from welfare-state measures and who lives in a culturally parallel society with its own habits and rules. This style of mobilisation was and still is apparently enough to mobilise support from all those who have anti-immigration sentiments, even if immigration and its related problems have become less salient, or—as in the case of Central-Eastern Europe—are virtual rather than real (see also note 9).

### *European integration*

In no other policy field is the vertical dimension of (right-wing) populism, that is, the demarcation between ‘us’, the ordinary and righteous people, and ‘them’, the distant political establishment, as presently pronounced as in EU matters. Here, the right-wing and national populists argue in two directions. First, they stress that European integration is nothing other than the wholesale of national sovereignty to the EU’s bureaucratic superstructures. This is the kind of reasoning that is especially salient in the Central-Eastern European democracies, where many have developed a particular understanding of the concept of a nation after decades of being satellite states of the Soviet empire. Second, the EU is alleged to be a costly but distant bureaucratic elite project that consumes vast sums of money on its own but does not care for the real needs of the net contributors, that is, the people. ‘Paid enough’ (to the failed Greek public authorities and European bureaucrats) and ‘No more cent for any rescue packages at our expense’ were the winning formulas of Timo Soini’s The (True) Finns’ highly successful electoral campaign in the spring

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9 The ultimate test for a weak relationship between absolute immigration and the existence of a right-wing populist anti-immigration party is Central-Eastern Europe. In Poland and Slovakia, for example, there were and still are right-wing populist parties, yet with virtually no significant (Muslim) immigration. Instead, the populists point to ethnic minorities in their countries, chiefly Roma, as in Slovakia, or ‘foreign enemies’ such as ‘Jewish capitalists’ or ‘Brussels bureaucrats’, as in Poland.

of 2011 (Raunio 2012, 14–17). The campaign of the FN in the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2012 was similar, in that Marine Le Pen repeated her and her father's call for France's immediate exit from the eurozone. These are not isolated examples.

Though Euroscepticism, especially criticism of Brussels and the EU as a political system which is considered bureaucratic, undemocratic and centralised, was and is a trademark of all populist parties (Hartleb 2004, 132–8; Hartleb 2011b), they have intensified their critique in recent years, and not only in Scandinavia and France. Unlike the purely extremist forces (hard Eurosceptics), populists are not totally against the European project, but are against the EU as a political system, arguing that the EU is too centralised, too bureaucratic and too little concerned with national sovereignty (soft Eurosceptics; see Taggart and Szczesbiak 2008). The Austrian FPÖ profits from precisely this reluctance for further European integration among the growing number of voters who feel alienated from the bureaucrat-driven and distant EU procedures. Geert Wilders, too, has shifted his focus from Muslim immigrants—for him Islam is a 'political ideology' and a 'totalitarian cult with global ambitions' (Wilders 2012, 25–6)—to the EU. When he refused to give his approbation to a new government budget plan that had to meet more restrictive EU requirements in the spring of 2012 he declared Brussels as the new number one threat to Dutch sovereignty (*Spiegel Online* 2012).

Today, the institutions of the EU and its politics have severe problems with their credibility and legitimacy. The EU is described by populists as 'an inefficient heaven for bureaucrats' and a 'cartel of European and national elites' who tend to make 'cosy elite agreements' at the expense of both the domestic economy and the hard-working people (quotations from Raunio 2012, 9, 13, 16). This new scepticism seems quite popular among large voter groups—especially in times of massive financial transfers to distressed eurozone economies. As long as this legitimacy gap cannot be closed and the EU is recognised by a growing number of voters as a distant elite cartel there is a fairly good chance that these deficits will fuel the right-wing and national populists' progress.

### **The institutional context**

Our third factor in the success or failure of right-wing populist parties is the institutional context in which parties operate (Mudde 2007, 233–7).

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As we know from all comparative political studies, institutions—as part of the rules of the political game—may not provide the reasons for a given situation, but they can reinforce or impede a certain problem (North 1990). The countries under study, except France, all have systems of proportional representation (PR). Under these conditions it is generally easier for small protest or populist parties to gain parliamentary seats than under the French two-tiered single-member majority system. This is why the FN has missed out on parliamentary representation regularly within the last 20 years despite winning support from as many as 15% of the voters. In June 2012, however, it entered the national assembly with a similar result but in two successful districts and cemented its position as the third-largest political party in France.

Yet, with such institutional arrangements smaller protest parties can be excluded from parliamentary representation on a somewhat technical basis. However, it is inappropriate to suggest, of course, that this reduces both the underlying thinking and the mobilisation techniques of the populists or the sentiments of the populists' supporters. So, for example, even if the FN can be kept small by the rules, it will remain a relevant player in the French party system for as long as the conditions for its establishment persist.

In the countries with PR electoral systems there are some variations in the electoral threshold. It is zero in Switzerland (at the federal level), over 0.67% of the votes cast in the Netherlands, 2% in Denmark, 4% in Austria and Norway, and 5% in Germany. In this respect, the simple rule applies that the lower the threshold the better the chances are for protest parties to win seats in the legislature. That a high threshold of 5% is not sufficient to keep protest parties completely out of parliament becomes discernible when one looks at Slovakia or Belgium (where the 5% rule applies only at the constituency level). However, even though an electoral threshold is primarily a technical rather than a social or ideological decision, its level is part of the explanation for why right-wing populist parties have gained access to parliaments in some countries and not in others, for example, Germany or the United Kingdom.

### **Public awareness**

A new (protest) party needs attention and media coverage to disseminate its messages. As mentioned above, the mode of political communication

of (right-wing) populists is usually loud, alarmist, xenophobic and taboo-breaking. Yet, right-wing populist parties do not find media outlets in all the countries under study. So, if we come to our fourth reason for their establishment or failure, we must state that the degree of awareness of the established democratic forces regarding radical political acting and propaganda, including the watchdog function of the media, varies significantly among different countries. Although Mudde (2007, 248) and others claim that the causal relationship between the right-wing populists' success and both friendly and unfriendly media coverage is not proved empirically to a satisfactory extent, there is some agreement that there are countries with less restrictive public spheres and others with public spheres that are highly unfavourable to the growth of xenophobic protest parties. While in Germany the media environment for right-wing populists is tough, it is less restrictive in the Scandinavian countries, Belgium and the Netherlands. In these countries the media have either tended to 'silence right-wing populism to death' (Mudde 2007, 252) or to repeat the typical slogans of populist parties. The least restrictive media environments we can find are in Austria, Switzerland and Italy (see Decker 2004, 261–3).

Thus, the advance of Jörg Haider and his FPÖ was possible due to a less restrictive public sphere. There was a kind of symbiotic relationship between him and the media (Mudde 2007, 249). While Haider became more and more popular when the 'elite media' put him down, the tabloid press ('Kronenzeitung') transmitted his messages so that the FPÖ gained ownership of immigration issues, political dissatisfaction (Decker 2004, 261–2; Mudde 2007, 250) and—more recently—Euroscepticism. Austria's public sphere, as in Italy, is much less concerned with any coy 'shadow of history' or historical guilt when it comes to public discussion about (flawed) immigration policies than is the case in Germany (Decker 2004, 261–2).

There, even the tabloid press is hesitant to support openly xenophobic statements, while the mainstream media reaction is usually close to hysteria. Under these conditions of complete stigmatisation by the media and the political establishment, (potential) populist political entrepreneurs have to raise the bar much higher than their fellows in neighbouring countries to achieve political activity, which can be seen as one part of the explanation for why a relevant right-wing populist party does not exist at the federal level in Germany.

### Political entrepreneurs

High social costs and social stigmatisation may also serve as an explanation for the existence or non-existence of charismatic and unscrupulous political entrepreneurs, our final reason for the advance of right-wing and national populist parties. Where these costs are somewhat lower, political entrepreneurs may find it more attractive to act against the political mainstream and vice versa. However, as important as charismatic leaders are for the success of a populist party, individuals like Jörg Haider, Heinz-Christian Strache, Jean-Marie Le Pen and his daughter Marine, Pim Fortuyn, Geert Wilders, Christoph Blocher, and—to a lesser extent—Timo Soini, as well as Central and Eastern Europe party leaders such as Jarosław Kaczyński (who served alongside his twin brother Lech), Ján Slota and Rolandas Paksas, do not grow on trees and nor are they easily copied.

So a great deal of the answer to the question of why there are right-wing populist parties in some countries and not in others has to do with the existence of a charismatic political entrepreneur who mobilises his or her followers by addressing grievances, dissatisfaction or similar sentiments. However, unlike some of the favourable or unfavourable conditions for the formation and growth of right-wing populist parties discussed in this section, this personal factor escapes a systematic approach. To some degree the presence of a charismatic and mobilising right-wing populist leader is down to chance. Though chance is an unsatisfactory factor in science, in combination with the reasons and conditions we have discussed in this section it is quite a strong explanation for why the countries in this study have right-wing populist parties while others, like Germany or Spain, do not.

In the following table we summarise the reasons and conditions for the establishment and growth of right-wing and national populist parties in a formalised way. The table shows that the best conditions for right-wing populist parties exist in Austria, Switzerland and Italy, followed by the Netherlands, Denmark, Finland and Slovakia. The worst conditions for right-wing populists exist in Germany, primarily because of the lesser salience of immigration compared to its neighbouring countries; the high awareness of right-wing populism among democratic forces, especially the media, which are, largely for historical reasons, completely hostile towards and sometimes even alarmist about any kind of right-wing suspect expression; and the absence of a charismatic leader with an appealing and mobilising right-wing populist agenda.

**Table 4 Reasons and conditions for the formation and growth of right-wing and national populists**

Country	Existence and mobilisation of de-aligned and disappointed voters (deprived)	Immigration and Euroscepticism as mobilising issues	Institutional conditions (electoral system/threshold)	Awareness of the established democratic forces, including the media	Existence of charismatic political entrepreneurs	Sum	Outcome: relevant right-wing and national populist party/parties
Austria	1	1	0.75	0.75	1	4.5	Yes
Belgium	1	1	0.5	0.5	1	4	Yes
Denmark	0.75	1	1	0.5	1	4.25	Yes
Finland	0.75	1	1	0.5	1	4.25	Yes
France	1	1	0	0.5	1	3.5	Yes
Germany	0.75	0.5	0.5	0	0	1.75	No
Italy	1	0.75	0.75	1	1	4.5	Yes
Lithuania	1	0.25	0.5	1	0.75	3.5	(Yes)
The Netherlands	1	1	1	0.25	1	4.25	Yes
Norway	0.75	0.5	0.75	0.5	0.75	3.25	Yes
Poland	1	0.5	0.5	0.75	0.75*	3.5	(Yes)
Slovakia	1	1	0.5	0.75	1	4.25	Yes
Sweden	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.5	0.75	3.5	Yes
Switzerland	0.75	1	1	0.75	1	4.5	Yes

\* until 2006

*Legend:* 0 = reason absent/conditions unfavourable for formation and growth of right-wing and national populist parties; 0.25 = reason somewhat absent/conditions rather unfavourable; 0.5 = reason/conditions medium; 0.75 = reason present/conditions rather favourable; 1 = reason very present/conditions highly favourable for formation and growth of right-wing and national populist parties.

*Source:* Authors' judgment based on this chapter. We put the Lithuanian and Polish cases in brackets because their populism is less xenophobic and anti-immigration oriented. For more details see the chapters by Ramonaitė and Ratkevičiūtė on Lithuania and Wysocka on Poland in this volume.

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The factors for the formation and growth of right-wing and national populist parties still exist across Europe. Some issues have even intensified in recent years, both in salience and in their potential to mobilise people. This is especially true of the populists' Euroscepticism. To their anti-immigrant and xenophobic propaganda, the European right-wing and national populist parties have successfully added open hostility to the EU and its bureaucracy, and the alleged light-year distance between its decision-making processes and the subjects of those decisions. The bailouts of the distressed economies in southern Europe have been a particular focus for the populists. As long as this distant image of the EU remains as an open flank on the established pro-European parties, the right-wing populists will find ammunition to stress their issues and mobilise sentiments against the elite-driven or failed politics of the democratic mainstream parties. The populist virus then, though not completely new, will continue to spread, to borrow a forecast from *The Economist* (2011).

### CASE SELECTION AND OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

With this potential in mind, it seems plausible to assume that right-wing populist parties will become stronger rather than weaker in the future. This, in turn, was reason enough for us to undertake another study of the European right-wing and national populist parties. Although there is definitely no shortage of good studies on these parties in general, no one would deny the increase in their relevance. In addition to an elaboration and recalibration of the reasons for their survival, comeback or even growth, the refreshed Euroscepticism of right-wing populists, as their new 'winning formula', deserves close attention from both academic researchers and professional pro-Europeans. The latter must be careful not to lose track of their voters' opinions and apprehensions when taking decisions on the future of European integration and mutual financial cooperation. This real risk and a discussion of suitable counter-strategies for the established Christian Democratic and moderate conservative parties, in order to prevent a further strengthening of right-wing populism, were the prime motivations behind this study.

To this end we decided to include relevant right-wing and national populist parties from both Western and Central-Eastern Europe. While the label 'right-wing and national populist parties' is probably undisputed for most of the parties, some, for example the Polish Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS), can be seen as borderline cases. Polish right-wing



populism has become more moderate on immigration and xenophobia recently because immigration is not a big issue in the net-emigration country. However, PiS, having absorbed the two rather anarcho-radical populist parties, Self Defence (Samoobrona) and the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin), follows a clerical-nationalistic course that links strict law and order principles (for example, the reintroduction of the death penalty) with ideas of Polishness, the meaning of the nation and national Catholicism. After Lech Kaczyński became president in 2006 he, with his twin brother Jarosław and former Self Defence chair Andrzej Lepper, followed a strict clerical-nationalistic, anti-elitist, anti-German, anti-Russian and Eurosceptic path, with the goal of creating a 'fourth republic' based on Polishness and Catholicism (Ziemer 2011, 24–5). When President Lech Kaczyński died in an aircraft crash in April 2010 conspiracy theories were added to the legends and propaganda of the PiS, which can be seen as a role model for national populism in Central-Eastern Europe. In the Lithuanian party system too, Order and Justice is, in many regards, not a typical right-wing populist party. Furthermore, as the party supports the Polish minority that lives in the country, it is proof that the classical left-right distinction is, at least in Eastern Europe, not applicable.<sup>10</sup>

In the subsequent section of the book are 12 country studies written by experienced experts in the field. In order to make the chapters highly comparable they are synchronised in accordance with guiding questions developed by the editors. This allows for a structured comparison within a similar research framework. After a short description of the formation and the trajectory of the parties under study and a look at their intra-party procedures, the chapters devote special attention to the mobilisation strategies of the populists, their mobilising issues, and any shifts in their propaganda. Moreover, the authors discuss the impact of the right-wing and national populist parties on the other parties, and their influence on public debates and the politics of the investigated countries.

After the country studies Florian Hartleb provides a comparison of the main characteristics of the right-wing populist parties in an east-west perspective. The reason for the populist wave in Eastern European countries may differ from the reason for it in Western ones. In Eastern Europe the reasons could be related to a lack of legitimacy among the traditional

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10 See the contribution of Ainė Ramonaitė and Vesta Ratkevičiūtė on Lithuania in this volume.

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parties after the first decade of transition and the widespread corruption of political elites. This decline in legitimacy can also be applied to Western Europe, but hardly on the same scale, since parties in the West still have more stable roots and a more loyal electoral base than in Central-Eastern Europe. Following on from this, he argues that there are European-wide opportunity structures, as well as specific Eastern European conditions such as the heritage of socialism and national traditions, that populists are taking advantage of in the new period of post-transformation processes. In a final step Petra Vejvodova explores an aspect that has not been investigated deeply so far: transnational cooperation and network-building among right-wing and national populist parties. The book then concludes with a chapter by the editors on the implications of the populists' advance for Christian Democratic and moderate conservative parties, and how to prevent their apparently constant progress.

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Part II:  
Country Studies  
A. Western Europe





# Austrian Right-wing Populism: A Surprising Comeback under a New Leader<sup>1</sup>

Reinhard Heinisch

## INTRODUCTION

In the Austrian context, the label ‘right-wing populism’ is most unambiguously attributable to the Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ). Descended from both liberal and nationalist currents that in the nineteenth century opposed the Catholic Habsburg state in favour of a politically and culturally unified Germany, the precursors of the FPÖ rejected separate Austrian statehood. The immediate forerunner of the FPÖ, the League of Independents (Verband der Unabhängigen, VdU), which was founded in 1949 and attracted many former Nazi sympathisers, found the idea of an Austrian nation apart from German cultural nationhood unacceptable. In 1956 the VdU was superseded by the newly founded FPÖ, which continued to see Austria as part of a culturally unified German nation. However, by the end of the 1960s, the party’s nationalist stance was moderated in an effort to appeal to independent, libertarian and secular middle-class voters. This would essentially remain so until 1986 when the 36-year-old Jörg Haider was elected party chairman. At the time the FPÖ was the unpopular junior partner in a coalition government with the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs, SPÖ). This rankled the party’s right-wing base, especially in the mountain provinces, prompting Haider to lead a grassroots revolution against the more liberal party leadership in Vienna. Subsequently, Haider refashioned the FPÖ as a radical protest party positioned against a series of coalition governments between the SPÖ and the Christian Democratic Austrian People’s Party (Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP). These governed Austria from 1987 through to 2000.

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<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Lukas Kollnberger and Nino Sebastian Willroider for their invaluable help with research and editing.

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By the end of the 1990s, the FPÖ had also greatly expanded its power at the regional and local level (Dachs 2008, 97–9). As the increasingly unpopular grand coalition governments placed the future of the ÖVP in peril, the latter opted for a government with Haider's FPÖ. The switch to the unfamiliar role of government party proved a political fiasco for the FPÖ, which at the time was no longer led by Haider. Following a political haemorrhage at state and national elections, the party renewed its coalition with the Christian Democrats in 2002 only to fracture in 2005 when Haider led a group of relative moderates out of the party to continue the coalition with the ÖVP within a new formation called the Alliance Future Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, BZÖ), thus starting a rivalry with 'his' FPÖ. Meanwhile the FPÖ reconstituted itself under the leadership of Heinz-Christian Strache as a radical right-wing populist opposition party very similar to what it had been in the 1990s (see Table 1). By 2008 the FPÖ had regained most of the political support it had lost while in government.

Despite the success of the FPÖ in the years after 1986, significant radical populist rivals have not emerged. Even though Haider had been instrumental in forming the BZÖ, the party was chiefly involved in pursuing office and exhibited a policy orientation that, while generally Eurosceptic and to the right, was clearly more moderate and accommodating than that of the FPÖ. Other political formations in Austria that can be regarded as bordering on being populist, such as the Eurosceptic group List (Hans-Peter) Martin, have essentially remained one-man operations and have never been more than intermittent factors. One may therefore conclude that the FPÖ continues to be the only formation in Austria that genuinely deserves the label right-wing populist in the sense that it is populist not only in its style but also its core ideology.

However, in 2012 a new party appeared on the Austrian political scene, one which is hoping to capitalise on the same populist anti-government sentiments that have boosted the fortunes of the FPÖ, the BZÖ and other smaller protest parties. Created by the Austro-Canadian billionaire Frank Stronach, founder of an international automotive company, Team Stronach has successfully competed in two state elections in 2013. Although Frank Stronach's political style appears at times rather populist, as a result of him making controversial statements and lashing out rather emotionally at his opponents and the media, his party's ideology has thus far consisted of a mixture of neo-liberal economic ideas, protest politics and Euroscepticism. As such, it is not populist in the stricter ideological sense, as it has neither

advocated conspiracy theories nor rejected pluralist versions of society in favour of a belief in a homogenous people threatened by sinister forces. Also, unlike the party leader himself, most members of his party appear moderate and measured in tone. In marked contrast to the FPÖ, Stronach has steered clear of making statements about immigrants and foreigners. However, Team Stronach is clearly a new type of party and one which is unusual in that it began its political life by inducing several sitting members of parliament to switch party allegiances. In this manner, Team Stronach has formed its own parliamentary faction without ever having faced the voters. Stronach's considerable wealth has not only proved persuasive to some legislators but also allows him to compete in terms of advertising budgets with the major parties. As such, his party appears to be a force in Austrian politics for the time being whose overall future is only likely to be constrained by the biological age of its leader and paymaster who is 80 years old.

### **Why consider the FPÖ right-wing populist?**

In terms of its ideology, the FPÖ can be considered a prototypical case of the right-wing populist protest parties that emerged in Europe towards the end of the last century. As such, it has reflected many key features that characterise contemporary populism (Poguntke and Scarrow 1995; Canovan 2002; Mudde 2004; Albertazzi and McDonnell 2007). Central to the FPÖ's populist belief system has been the constant reference to a vaguely defined concept of a single people with unified interests and preferences (Canovan 1981, 265). Along with a common-man ethos and the 'centrality of the purported popular will', as Frank Decker put it (2000, 45), the populism of the FPÖ is also characterised by opportunistic and frequently inconsistent programmatic positions as well as by a strong preference for plebiscitary politics, direct appeals to the population, and the reduction of political issues, choices and groups to dichotomous categories such as yes/no, good/bad and us/them. In fact, during the 1990s Haider even advocated the partly symbolic foundation of a third republic which was to combine direct democratic elements with a strong presidency.

In parties such as the FPÖ, populist orientations merge with radical right-wing elements. Like all far-right groups, the FPÖ represents a rejection of the European enlightenment tradition in the form of political liberalism, universalism and humanism. Unlike its politically extremist right-wing forebears who alleged the biological and genetic superiority of their own

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ethnos to justify intellectual and cultural hegemony, the new right, such as the FPÖ, uses these concepts to advocate cultural and ethnic autonomy. The racism, xenophobia and cultural relativism of the old right have been resuscitated by the new right to justify extreme measures in the name of protecting the sanctity of one's own ethnos.

### **The development of Austrian right-wing populism over the years**

Third parties such as the FPÖ stood completely outside the power-sharing arrangement, dubbed 'Proporz' (proportionality) created after the Second World War by the ÖVP and SPÖ to insure social and political stability (Katz and Mair 1995; Müller 2006a). Thus, the FPÖ saw its best course of action in appealing to an independent, libertarian and anti-clerical middle class that did not see its interests represented in the Proporz system. In terms of electoral success, the FPÖ hovered around the 5% mark in national elections and briefly played a significant part in supporting a Social Democratic minority government in the 1970s. Following the ascendancy of more liberal currents within the party, the FPÖ formed a coalition government with the Social Democrats from 1983 to 1987.

The liberal orientation of the party's national leadership and the lack of success of the government coalition galvanised the right-wing grassroots in the provinces, especially in the southern province of Carinthia. There, Jörg Haider had established himself as a forceful regional leader, who took on the national FPÖ establishment at an impromptu party convention in 1986 (Riedelsberger 1998; Morrow 2000, 41–8). In the following decade, Haider instituted such transformative changes that we may consider the FPÖ under his direction a substantially new party. Pursuing an aggressive vote-seeking strategy, the 'new' FPÖ under Jörg Haider increased its electoral share from 5% to 26.9% (see Table 1) and the party's share of seats in parliament from 5 to 52.

**Table 1 Elections to the national parliament (lower house, *Nationalrat*)**

Year of election**	Political parties*					
	Greens	Social Democrats (SPÖ)	People's Party (ÖVP)	<b>Freedom Party (FPÖ)</b>	Alliance (BZÖ)	Liberals
1983		47.7	43.2	<b>5.0</b>		
1986	4.8	43.1	41.3	<b>9.7</b>		
1990	4.8	42.8	32.1	<b>16.1</b>		
1994	7.3	34.9	27.7	<b>22.5</b>		6.0
1995	4.8	38.1	28.3	<b>21.9</b>		5.5
1999	7.4	33.2	26.9	<b>26.9</b>		
2002	9.5	36.5	42.3	<b>10.0</b> ***		
2006	11.1	35.3	34.3	<b>11.0</b>	4.1	
2008	10.4	29.3	26.0	<b>17.5</b>	10.7	

*Legend:*

\* The parties are ordered from the political left to the political right. Grey cells indicate the parties forming the government after the respective elections.

\*\* Legislative and governmental periods do not always coincide. General elections often take place at the end of the calendar year; that is why most new governments take office only at the beginning of the following year. This was the case, for example, in 1987, 1996, 2000, 2003 and 2007.

\*\*\* The second ÖVP–FPÖ cabinet lasted only until April 2005, when the BZÖ formally replaced the FPÖ as the ÖVP's coalition partner without new elections being called.

Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior ([http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi\\_wahlen/](http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi_wahlen/))

After more than 12 years, the grand coalition of SPÖ and ÖVP was exhausted in every sense (Müller 2004, 152–3). Whereas the ÖVP under its new party leader Wolfgang Schüssel was drifting to the right, Haider began pursuing office, signalling overall greater political moderation and also his acceptance of a joint Schüssel-led government in 2000. When the ÖVP took office, Haider himself, at least officially, stepped back, allowing Susanne Riess-Passer to be elected the new party leader and, thus, become Vice-Chancellor. But soon afterwards he started to go into opposition within the party, frequently criticising the team in government. Government participation, however, could not tame the FPÖ completely, as some Christian Democrats had intended. This became clearly evident when the party's populist-oriented rank and file, egged on by Haider himself

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and dissatisfied with the neo-liberal reforms of the government, brought down their own party leadership and the government in 2002 (Luther 2003, 139–41). Nonetheless, the ÖVP renewed its coalition with the FPÖ after the 2002 general elections in which the Christian Democrats had achieved an impressive victory: 42.3% of the votes, 15.4% more than in previous elections. By comparison, the FPÖ had experienced a catastrophic defeat by falling from 26.9% to 10%. Continuing the governing partnership offered the ÖVP greater spoils of office than would have been available with a much stronger coalition partner such as the SPÖ as well as the clear domination of the policymaking arena. This outcome also prevented the FPÖ from regrouping and reasserting itself in opposition (Luther 2003, 148–9). In 2005 the FPÖ, already weakened by internal turmoil, split following a grassroots rebellion against the leadership in government. This caused many of the party moderates to leave the FPÖ, paradoxically under Haider's leadership, and form the BZÖ. Recognising that the latter group would exact a smaller price and be easier to control than the alternatives, Schüssel continued in government by forming a coalition with the BZÖ. After elections in 2006, Austria reverted to the format of grand coalitions when the Social Democrats surprisingly defeated the Christian Democrats in a campaign fought over social policy reforms. Neither after 2006, nor after the 2008 elections was the FPÖ invited into any serious coalition negotiations.

### **The FPÖ's leading representatives**

The individuals most associated with Austrian right-wing populism are the FPÖ's former leader Jörg Haider (1950–2008), who led the party from 1986 to 2000 and also founded the BZÖ in 2005, and the FPÖ's current leader Heinz-Christian Strache, born in 1969. However, Haider's role in establishing the current FPÖ in terms of organisation, personnel recruitment and political positioning cannot be emphasised enough. In many ways, the current party leader, Strache, is modelling himself after the younger Haider, who sought for a period to present himself as a flamboyant and polarising anti-politician and who frequently broke with the conventions of Austrian politics. By doing so, he was able to reach out to groups typically less interested in politics.

As a person, Haider appeared complicated and occasionally conflicted in that he sometimes exhibited boundless energy and vigour while at other times withdrew from public view and publically expressed resignation and

self-pity. Haider surrounded himself with young men, the 'Buberlpartie' or 'boy gang' (Heinisch 2002, 97–103), whom he met at public functions and who idolised him. They subsequently rose to prominence in the party, relying on his protective power and repaying his support with unquestioning personal loyalty and devotion. One such man was the young Strache, whom Haider met at a campaign event in Vienna in 1991.

Although Strache never counted among Haider's inner circle, the latter recognised his political talent as he rose through the ranks of the Vienna branch of the FPÖ (Noraczek and Reiterer 2009, 86). A dental technician by training and, briefly, a student of history, Strache became involved early on with Austria's right-wing student fraternities (*Burschenschaften*), many of which have explicit German-nationalist orientations. It is there that Strache received his political education, forging lifelong friendships and forming connections with like-minded young men who would in time rise to play important roles in the FPÖ. Particularly controversial were photos that surfaced showing Strache as a young man in the uniform of 'Wehrsportgruppen', a type of right-wing militia which engaged in war games.

In contrast to Haider, Strache has generally maintained a much stronger affinity with pan-Germanic thinking and, as party leader, reinserted a clause into the FPÖ's programme which explicitly states that Austria is part of the German cultural nation.<sup>2</sup> By comparison, Haider referred to his party as an 'Austria party' and saw to it that the far-right fraternities were gradually pushed out of leadership positions in many regional FPÖ chapters (Noraczek and Reiterer 2009, 86; Heinisch 2002, 125–31). Only in Vienna did the fraternities successfully resist such efforts, thus retaining their prominent position in the party.

Unhappy with the direction of the FPÖ in government, Haider was toying with the idea of heading an insurgency against the national FPÖ establishment in 2005. In this, he turned to Strache to help orchestrate an impromptu party convention in which the rebels were planning to remove the old leadership. In the final moments before the coup, Haider reversed himself and eventually led even the party moderates along with most of the FPÖ representatives in government and the legislature out of the FPÖ to create the BZÖ. Strache never forgave Haider for what he saw as a personal betrayal and an attempt to destroy Austria's far right.

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<sup>2</sup> Haider had seen to it that the passage was stricken and that the FPÖ programme recognised Austria's other traditional ethnic minorities (Heinisch 2002).

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Today's Freedom Party is reminiscent of an older FPÖ in terms of its leadership, which includes the following personalities, all of whom are all particularly close to Strache:

- Herbert Kickl, a party General Secretary, is also a Member of Parliament, a party ideologist and a strategist. He originally transferred from Haider's inner circle in Carinthia to Vienna, where he became Strache's close confidant and maintained a connection to his former Carinthian colleagues even after the split.
- Harald Vilimsky, also General Secretary, spent his formative political years in Austria's far-right political scene. He then became press secretary to several senior FPÖ officials and subsequently transferred to the Vienna FPÖ to oversee press relations and campaigning.
- Andreas Mölzer, a Member of the European Parliament since 2004, has served as the FPÖ's public intellectual and as a right-wing political commentator whose acerbic newspaper columns and statements about Austrian politics provide a certain ideological context to FPÖ initiatives. His statement about Austria's 'Umvolkung' (re-ethnicification of the population) as a result of immigration caused considerable stir in the media because it recalled Nazi-era terminology. An unreconstructed German nationalist, Mölzer became a political mentor for Strache and was increasingly critical of Haider's political zigzagging.
- Martin Graf, another senior figure in the FPÖ, was born in Vienna. As Third President of the National Assembly since 2008, he has been known for his controversial far-right views as well as his connections to right-wing extremist groups such as the student fraternity Olympia.



**The right-wing populist electorate and its profile**

When repositioning the FPÖ as a radical, right-of-centre middle-class protest party in 1986, Haider initially appealed especially to conservative and middle class voters. At that time, the FPÖ’s constituency consisted of about 10% more former ÖVP voters (32%) than Social Democrats (22%) (Plasser and Ulram 2000, 128–33).

By the 1990s, the privatisation of state-owned industrial assets resulted in a net loss of some 70,000 of 102,000 jobs in that sector in the context of Austria’s integration into the European single market. These were all core SPÖ voters who felt increasingly abandoned by their party. The situation was compounded by Austria’s geographic location on the doorstep of the war in the Balkans and the changes sweeping Eastern Europe. This meant that large numbers of refugees, asylum seekers and labour migrants began competing with Austrians in areas of lower-skilled employment and industrial labour. As a result, there was a growing reservoir of untapped voters located both ideologically and geographically outside the segments of the population to whom the FPÖ had traditionally looked for support. Whereas only 10% of FPÖ voters in 1986 were manual labourers, their percentage increased almost fivefold (to 47%) by 1999 (Plasser and Ulram 2000, 232). By contrast, white-collar support peaked more or less in 1990 as both Table 3 and Figure 1 show.

**Table 2 Social demographic profile of FPÖ voters, 1986–2008 (%)**

Election year	1986	1990	1994	1995	1999	2006	2008
<b>Education/schooling</b>							
Compulsory education	6	14	21	18	25	11	19
Trade/vocational/technical	11	19	26	27	31	13	23
Advanced-secondary/university	11	13	19	16	22	07	12
<b>Occupation</b>							
Farmers	5	9	15	18	19	09	08
Self-employed, professionals	15	21	30	28	33	06	17
Blue-collar worker	10	21	29	34	47	10	34
White-collar worker	13	16	22	22	22	11	17
Civil servants	9	14	14	17	20	03	13
Pensioners	11	22	29	23	28	12	15

*Source:* Data for 1989–99: see Fessel-GfK exit poll data in Plasser and Ulram (2000, 232). Data for 2006: see Fessel-GfK exit poll data Sommer (2007, 12). Data for 2008: see GfK Austria exit poll data in Ulram (2009, 19).

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As a consequence, the FPÖ began dominating in populations that survey researchers classified as 'low-skilled labourers involved in routinised mechanical work with little human interaction', and 'engaged in object and document processing' (Plasser, Seeber and Ullrich 2000, 83). Specifically, there were two types of cleavages among Austrian voters that appeared to benefit the FPÖ:

- The first developed in response to the pressures of economic liberalisation and modernisation. Employees in skilled occupations, in the service sector as well as workers in flexible, innovative and interactive jobs, tended to benefit from these developments and thus moved towards more libertarian attitudes. By contrast, employees in the exposed economic sectors, especially those most threatened by rationalisation, reacted with growing calls for protection. It is in this latter segment that the issue of foreigners resonated most strongly.
- A second new cleavage appeared between a libertarian new left and the old industrial proletariat which increasingly favoured authoritarian solutions to the problems associated with economic change. In short, Austria's late industrial society saw the emergence of a fragmented workforce with both more libertarian and more authoritarian attitudes.

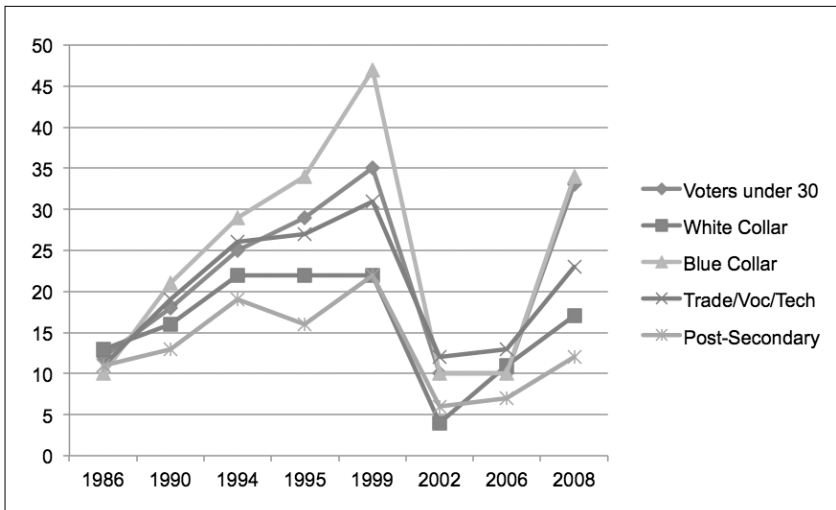
The trend was especially pronounced among younger labourers and here particularly among men.<sup>3</sup> By 1999 the FPÖ had become the largest blue-collar party in Austria by taking 47% of the vote, significantly ahead of the Social Democrats with 35%. However, the latter held on to a 14% lead among white-collar workers (Plasser and Ullrich 2000, 466–9 and appendix B1–B3).

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<sup>3</sup> Thus 38% of younger male workers indicated that they supported the FPÖ as compared to 21% of their female counterparts (Plasser, Seeber and Ullrich 2000, 85).

Following a massive decline in voter support when in government from 2000 to 2005, the FPÖ rebuilt its electorate first by reaching out to lower-skilled workers (Ogris et al. 2006). By 2008 the FPÖ had diversified its appeal as evidenced by the fact that the percentages of its voters identified in their educational trajectory as ‘downwardly mobile’ and of those identified as ‘upwardly mobile’ were nearly the same—14% and 12%, respectively (Institut für Strategie-Analysen 2008). Moreover, the popularity of FPÖ leader Strache also became a more important factor in the party’s electoral appeal than it had been just two years earlier.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 1 Freedom Party support by select demographic groups<sup>5</sup>**



Source: Data for 1986–99: see the Fessel-GfK exit poll data in Plasser and Ulram (2000, 232). Data for 2002: see Ogris et al. (2002). Data for 2006: see Fessel-GfK exit poll data in Sommer (2007, 12). Data for 2008: see GfK Austria exit poll data in Ulram (2009, 19).

4 In 2008 Strache was overall the third most important reason why people voted for the FPÖ. For 47% of the voters it was the most important reason (Institut für Strategie Analysen 2008, 19).

5 For the years 1986 to 2006 ‘Voters under 30’ refer to those aged 18–29, whereas for 2008 the data list voters aged 16 to 29. ‘Blue-collar’ includes skilled and unskilled workers. ‘Trade/Voc/Tech’ refers to students learning a trade and/or attending vocational and technical schools.

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### **Regional representation in the legislature and government**

In the years under Haider's leadership, the FPÖ also greatly expanded its power at the regional and local level, emerging as the second biggest party in five of Austria's nine provinces, including the capital of Vienna, and the dominant party in the state of Carinthia. Three of Austria's nine provinces have been of great importance for the FPÖ: Carinthia, Upper Austria and Vienna (see Table 2). Of these, the southern state of Carinthia was special in that it was Haider's home base, where he had served as the youngest member in the national parliament and later successfully as governor.

Because several Austrian state constitutions mandate that political parties with a certain level of representation in the legislature be included in executive government, if they wish, the FPÖ has part of various regional governments. In response, other parties either sought to keep the FPÖ from entering public office where this was legally possible—Vienna, and Vorarlberg after 2009—or sought to change the rules so that the FPÖ could be kept away from power—Salzburg and Tyrol (Marko and Poier 2006). In general, there is an indication that the FPÖ became more moderate and oriented towards seeking office when it expected to be included in the governmental power structure—for instance, in the provinces of Carinthia, Vorarlberg, Styria, Upper Austria and Lower Austria—whereas it was more extremist where participation in power was closed off—in the provinces of Vienna, Burgenland, Salzburg and Tyrol, as well as Styria and Burgenland after respective shifts in the local power constellation (Heinisch 2010).

By 2012, the FPÖ still held the governorship in the state of Carinthia and was part of governmental coalitions in the Austrian provinces of Upper Austria (with the ÖVP, SPÖ and Greens) and Lower Austria (with ÖVP and SPÖ).<sup>6</sup>

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6 The local FPÖ was affiliated with the BZÖ from 2005 to 2009 and re-affiliated with the national FPÖ after 2009.

**Table 3 National and regional legislative representation of the FPÖ<sup>7</sup>**

Legislature	Election cycle 1	Election cycle 2	Election cycle 3	Election cycle 4
National Parliament	1995: 22.4%	1999: 28.4%* 2002: 9.8%*	2006: 11.5%	2008: 18.6%
Carinthia	1994: 36.1% <sup>G*</sup>	1999: 44.4% <sup>G*</sup>	2004: 44.4% <sup>G*</sup>	2009: 47.2% <sup>G**</sup>
Upper Austria	1991: 19.6%*	1997: 21.4%*	2003: 7.1%	2009: 16.1%*
Vienna	1996: 29%	2001: 21%	2005: 13%	2010: 27%
Vorarlberg	1994: 19.4%*	1999: 30.6%*	2004: 13.9%*	2009: 25%

*Legend:*

\* participation of FPÖ members in provincial government following the election.

<sup>G</sup> Haider or his successor held the governorship.

<sup>\*</sup> Following Haider's death.

Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior ([http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi\\_wahlen/](http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi_wahlen/))

In 2013 the FPÖ saw its fortunes decline as it was faced with a formidable challenge from the aforementioned Team Stronach, which took votes away from the FPÖ in state elections in Lower Austria and Carinthia. Although party leader Frank Stronach failed in his stated goal of denying the powerful Christian Democratic governor of Lower Austria Erwin Pröll yet another absolute majority, the new party easily gained entry into the local legislature, taking 9.8% of the vote. In Carinthia, Team Stronach even won 11.8% of the vote and contributed to an election fiasco for the Carinthian Freedom Party (Die Freiheitlichen in Kärnten, FPK), which under Haider had risen to become the dominant political force in the state. Losing nearly a third of their voters, the FPK was punished by the voters for a steady string of political scandals and a disastrous economic performance which had relegated the state to the very bottom of the table for several key economic indicators when compared with other Austrian provinces. Most poignantly, it was the only state with negative population growth and an almost unmanageably high debt burden. At the same time, several key party officials had been under indictment or were sentenced on various

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7 Provides information on the four (of a total of nine) provinces with the most significant legislative FPÖ representation.

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charges related to impropriety, corruption and influence peddling. As a result, the local branch of the FPÖ not only shrank to small-party status but was one of no fewer than three formations claiming to be the legitimate political heirs of Jörg Haider, along with the FPK and the Carinthian rump organisation of Haider's BZÖ, of which the FPK had been a part before deciding to break away and once again cooperate on a national level with the FPÖ.

The setback for the FPÖ at the regional level surprisingly came at a time when opportunities for opposition parties and new political formations were generally considered to be good. However, the FPÖ increasingly had to contend with the fact that it, too, was not only an 'old' and 'established' party, but was also tarnished by corruption scandals.

### PROGRAMMES, TOPICS, MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

The FPÖ's first programme, essentially a series of 15 slogans designed to attract former NSDAP supporters, dates back to 1955. Two years later these catchphrases were reintroduced in a more expanded form under the title 'Richtlinien Freiheitlicher Politik' (Guidelines of Freedomite Politics). The cornerstones of the FPÖ's early programmatic development were anti-Communism, pan-German nationalism and opposition to the Proporz system. A milestone of sorts was the 1985 FPÖ's Salzburg Programme, which was profoundly influenced by the party's liberal Attersee Circle, a gathering of mainly young party liberals engaged in programmatic development. The new programme de-emphasised the nationalist dimension while orienting the party towards individual liberty and personal responsibility but also the imperatives of the social market economy and the modern welfare state (Luther 1997, 269).

### **The FPÖ's programme as a right-wing populist party**

Under Haider's leadership, a previously developed, relatively liberal 'Salzburg Programme' was formally retained but lost in importance because it detracted from the FPÖ's new posture as a radical protest party. Shorter-term action programmes and election platforms served as substitutes during the party's various campaigns.

In 1997 the 'Contract with Austria' was formally adopted as the new programme.<sup>8</sup> It no longer emphasised Austria's allegiance to the German nation and cultural sphere. Instead, it endorsed an explicit '*Österreichpatriotismus*' (Austrian patriotism) (FPÖ 1999, 108), expressed hostility to the notion of Austria as a country of immigration (FPÖ 1999, Article 4, especially page 108) and devoted extensive consideration to Christianity, which was required 'to defend its values' (FPÖ 1999, 113). Particular attention was given to law and order and the expansion of the influence of juries and lay judges to obtain stricter punishments, especially for sexual 'offenders and deviants' (FPÖ 1999, 128).

The exodus of many of the party's moderates and the formation of the BZÖ in 2005 forced the FPÖ to revisit and revise its programme, most of which, however, survived intact into the Strache era. A completely new programme was launched in 2011, which departed in significant ways from that developed in the Haider era. The new text is shorter and characterised by crisper phrasing. Although the programme still espouses an Austria First agenda, it explicitly recognises Austria as 'part of the German cultural nation' (FPÖ 2011, 1) and makes it clear that 'Austrian language, history, and culture are German' (FPÖ 2011, 4).

### **Mobilisation strategies**

Since the FPÖ's transformation in 1986, it has gone through five somewhat distinct phases in each of which it emphasised specific themes in reaction to changes in the political context. The first three stages can be labelled the 'political rebel phase' (1986–91), the 'social populist phase' (1991–6) and the 'Austro-patriotic phase' (1996–2000). In the rebel phase, the FPÖ focused thematically on the public corruption and political influence peddling inherent in the Proporz system. After 1990, the FPÖ began aiming its message increasingly at SPÖ's core constituencies in Austria's industrial regions. To this end, its mobilisation strategy combined the themes of 'going after welfare cheats' with the economic and social dangers posed by neo-liberalism, globalisation and foreigners (Riedlsberger 1998, 36). Following disappointing elections in 1995, the FPÖ began advocating a new Austrian patriotism, directed mainly against processes of globalisation and European integration. Once in government in 2000, the FPÖ had

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<sup>8</sup> The Contract with Austria is not to be confused with an earlier action programme of the same name.

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to moderate several of its anti-EU positions and entered a new phase. Finally, in its fifth phase, the FPÖ returned to a hybrid form of its earlier self, combining domestic political protest with staunch anti-internationalism.

### **The role of Islam, immigration and other policy issues in FPÖ mobilisation**

A staple among FPÖ mobilisation strategies has been the campaigns against foreigners and especially against Islam. As the foreign and foreign-born population passed the 10% mark in the early 1990s, the issue of immigration gained significant political traction. In the fall of 1992, the FPÖ launched its 'Austria First' initiative, as part of which it proposed a constitutional amendment declaring that Austria was not a country of immigration. The initiative highlighted a series of areas where foreigners were claimed to cause problems, such as education and public safety, or to be unduly privileged, such as health, public welfare and housing (Riedelsberger 1998, 36). At the heart of the FPÖ's racist and xenophobic mobilisation efforts are persistent charges linking foreigners to crime (Plasser and Ulram 2000, 227). As a result, the FPÖ grew increasingly vocal in urging the SPÖ-ÖVP government to tighten immigration rules and restrict asylum policies (Bauböck and Perchinig 2006). When in office, the FPÖ did everything it could to restrict immigration still further, prompting Austrian industry to criticise the government's immigration policy because the economy depends on the skills (both low and, in some cases, high) of immigrants. To this day the FPÖ is most distinctly associated with its unambiguous stance on foreign immigration, and its clearest brand image is that of an anti-foreigner party (Luther 2010, 81–2).

The mobilisation of anti-Islamic sentiments must therefore be seen in the context of the general xenophobic orientation of the party and significant parts of the voting public. However, the question of Islam did not enter Austrian political discourse until the late 1990s. This is because the country's Muslim population, the second largest religious group after Catholics and before Protestants, has consisted mainly of labour migrants and their children from the relatively secular countries of Turkey and the former Yugoslavia. As a result, the discussion in Austria was largely shaped by international debates about Islamic radicalism, issues of cultural identity such as headscarves and, more recently, the circumcision of minors. In the 1990s the FPÖ sought to make Islam a campaign issue, implying that Christianity was under assault and needed to defend itself



against the encroachment of Islam. Anti-Islamic pamphlets, board games and cartoons have become staples of FPÖ campaigns. In 2008 FPÖ officials also distributed video games at local elections that allowed users to take potshots at cartoon minarets and Muslim cartoon figures. In the 2009 Vienna elections, the FPÖ even tried to mobilise voters of Serbian descent against Turkish and Bosnian Muslims (Toth and Apfl 2010).

Political expediency has also shaped the FPÖ's position on Israel and the Jews. In its days as a small pan-Germanic party, active in Austria's more protestant and rural areas, the FPÖ exhibited strong anti-Semitic tendencies. Subsequently, when the FPÖ grew into Austria's major protest party, it became infamous for its insensitive statements about the Holocaust and Nazism, and earned Haider and his followers international notoriety. Later when the FPÖ leader sought to present himself as the maverick in Austrian politics, he changed direction by appearing to cultivate personal relationships with well-known Jewish personalities. In interviews, he boasted of having played tennis with US Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan; expressed some admiration for Austria's former Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, who was from a Jewish background; and championed the Jewish Austrian journalist Peter Sichrovsky to become an FPÖ Member of the European Parliament. At other times, Haider portrayed himself and his parties as the victims of a 'Jewish' smear campaign and often used the term '*Ostküste*' (the 'East Coast', as in the Jewish-dominated areas in and around New York City) as a code word. Particularly notorious was his tirade against the head of Vienna's Jewish community Ariel Muzicant in the context of the 2001 Vienna elections.<sup>9</sup> Although Strache too, has made controversial remarks about Vienna's Jewish community and its leaders, he has tried to be more circumspect in this regard. While intensifying the FPÖ's campaign against Islam, Strache appeared to be intent on mending fences with the Jewish community and Israel. In 2010 he even travelled there with a delegation and expressed admiration for Israel's tough stance against the Palestinians.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from the issues of immigration, cultural identity, hard Euroscepticism and political corruption, the main political themes of the FPÖ have included dismantling the neo-corporatist regulatory state and governing by ballot

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9 See, for instance, Mayr (2001).

10 See, for example, an interview with Strache expressing his understanding for Israel in 'Israel handelt in Notwehr' (2012).

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initiatives and plebiscites. Yet, even when in government, the party was largely unable to follow up on its tough rhetoric (Luther 2010, 81–2).

In terms of economic policy, the FPÖ has represented rather contradictory positions, ranging from a libertarian and deregulatory agenda, which even included a call for a flat tax, to protectionist and socially populist stances. When in government, the FPÖ made a considerable effort to weaken organised labour and reduce its role in economic and social governance. Yet, on other occasions, leading FPÖ politicians have railed against international capitalism and economic integration while defending welfare measures for ordinary Austrians. In this, the FPÖ distinguishes itself from the more clearly libertarian BZÖ.

### **Significant shifts in the programmatic focus**

From the start, Haider pursued an uncompromising vote-seeking strategy. This implied a high degree of ideological flexibility and political opportunism in the pursuit of popular or politically expedient positions, even if they contradicted programmatic fixtures of the FPÖ. Thus, he shifted from a pro-European to a sharply anti-European stance and, departing from the party's libertarian roots, began criticising economic liberalisation as social dumping. Moreover, Haider moved the FPÖ from pan-Germanic to Austro-patriotic, from anti-clerical to rather traditionalist Catholic, and from libertarian to protectionist positions, all within less than a decade. After 1996 he may have recognised that the FPÖ was in danger of overplaying its hand by steadily seeking to maximise its vote share without getting any closer to governing. As a result, he began to develop a more policy-oriented focus, tailored to appeal to the business faction within the ÖVP (Luther 2010, 81–2).

Despite the programmatic changes, the FPÖ was successful in creating the appearance of ideological consistency and continuity. In part, this was the result of Haider's considerable political skill and rhetorical ability, which allowed him to make two seemingly incongruous positions appear naturally connected and seamless.

### **THE FPÖ'S INTRA-PARTY DYNAMICS**

Under Haider, the FPÖ underwent an increasing personalisation of intra-party dynamics by establishing clientelistic networks of individuals with

personal connections to the leader. Simultaneously, the influence of party institutions was considerably reduced. In addition, the party's programmatic strategies and goals were developed less through internal discussions and consensus and more through Haider's personal ambitions and preferences. As a result there emerged de facto a leadership duopoly when Haider withdrew from the chairmanship in favour of Riess-Passer but continued to meddle from his Carinthian stronghold. Party institutions were subsequently helpless to mitigate the conflict between the different factions.

Despite the importance of the party leader, the FPÖ has always also been a member-based party with some 37,000 rank-and-file members in the 1980s (Luther 1991, 252). This number had risen to about 50,000 by 2000 and declined to some 45,000 during the FPÖ's troubled years in government (Luther 2006, 274). After 2008, party membership rose once again to an estimated 40,000.<sup>11</sup> Although these numbers may pale in comparison to those of Austria's major parties, which have memberships historically in the hundreds of thousands, the FPÖ is clearly neither a cadre party nor one without a significant organisational apparatus.

In its organisational development, the FPÖ has gone through various changes. However, several of the more ambitious attempts in the 1990s to bring the organisational reality in line with its identity as a populist protest party have since been reversed, including rewarding electorally successful regional chapters with additional delegate representation in key party institutions or temporarily even converting the FPÖ from a party to a movement.<sup>12</sup> Haider's erratic approach to organisational matters was a persistent problem for the party and gradually fomented growing internal criticism.

To this day the FPÖ has a federated organisational structure with nine<sup>13</sup> regional and nominally self-governing chapters along with a national

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11 The FPÖ reports 50,000 (Sickinger 2009, 145).

12 In 1995 Haider campaigned under the new label the 'Freedomites' (*die Freiheitlichen*) and placed the party nominally under the tutelage of a 'citizen movement'.

13 The Carinthian FPÖ, which had split in 2005 into the dominant Haider faction affiliated with the BZÖ and a small remnant of FPÖ loyalists, subsequently reunited to join once again the national FPÖ. It still enjoys a special role among the regional branches.

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leadership. At the top of the national party, the FPÖ's presidium has been responsible for the day-to-day affairs and is, de facto, the most powerful party institution. Closely grouped around the party chairman, the members of the presidium include, among others, the deputy party leaders, the party's parliamentary whip, the general secretaries and the treasurer. As the party leader Haider had been particularly successful in inserting into the presidium relative party outsiders who owed their careers exclusively to the FPÖ leader and who repaid him through their loyalty (Luther 2005, 4–15).

The presidium is itself an integral part of the Federal Party Executive Board (*Bundesparteivorstand*), which takes all major decisions in between the typically biannual party conventions. Following the separation of the BZÖ from the FPÖ, it was important for the latter to tie its disparate parts, especially the regional chapters, closer to the party and prevent further defections. As a result, the executive board was much expanded.

The party conventions are formally the most important party institution. Owing to Haider's popularity with the base, he could generally count on these conventions to exert pressure on the party when he encountered resistance from its apparatus. However, when Haider lost control of the grassroots at the Knittelfeld Convention in 2005, Strache emerged as the party's new strongman after rejecting Haider's pleas to call off a challenge to the FPÖ's leadership.

### **The FPÖ's modes of leadership**

Under Haider's chairmanship, the party was transformed into a formation tightly controlled by a quasi-authoritarian leader (Riedelsberger 1998, 30). This was accomplished through strategic intra-party alliances and a system of deputies devoted to Haider personally. Party tribunals, loyalty pledges, gag orders and the party leader's power of sanction over all members led to a concentration of political control in the hands of the top leadership beyond what would be normally acceptable in other democratic organisations. Many of the office holders owed their success to Haider's campaigning ability and were eager to support him in internal party decision-making (Heinisch 2002, 97–103). Thus, the concerns of the party apparatus shifted away from longer-term goals and programmatic and institutional development to shorter-term strategies, popular campaigns and fighting elections. At the zenith of his power, Haider could practically refashion the

party at will. Frequent rotations of officials and periodic shake-ups of the composition of decision-making bodies added a dimension of 'permanent revolution' to Haider's FPÖ (Luther 1997, 290). In those years the FPÖ was characterised by an exclusive orientation towards Haider, who would frequently announce important changes in direction via the media.

Although Strache acts generally in the mould of his erstwhile mentor, the new FPÖ leader is much more beholden to the organisational reality of the party. On the one hand Strache has to be considerate of the important donors and financial backers of the party, while on the other he is generally not considered to be an ideas man. As such, he does not enjoy nearly the same power and standing within the party apparatus and cannot act with such impunity as Haider could. This is not only the result of differences in ability, charisma and political instinct between Strache and Haider but also the result of the party's near-death experience. Surviving the exodus of its singular political leader taught the party that continued success was not dependent on a particular personality but rather a particular political formula. Nonetheless, Strache, already in his seventh year at the helm, is unquestionably the person in charge and nothing happens without his approval. Yet, as the events following the two regional elections in 2013 make clear, Strache must be careful not to overplay his hand. After the above-mentioned less than strong showing of the FPÖ in the Lower Austrian regional elections, the party leader demanded consequences which were generally interpreted to mean the resignation of the local FPÖ leader, Barbara Rosenkranz, and her team. Following hectic behind-the-scenes negotiations with Strache in attendance, his inability to prevail made it clear that he lacked the power to get his way. In the end, he had no other option but to backtrack and appeal for party unity.

Unlike Haider's 'Buberlpartie', a group of handpicked young men who were completely devoted to their idol and occupied many important positions in the party (Heinisch 2002, 97–103), Strache's confidants are ideologically rooted in the larger network of far-right fraternities. Moreover, the new FPÖ leader has less of a grip on the FPÖ regional chapters than Haider did. Crucially, Strache lacks real control over the important Carinthian branch that gave his erstwhile predecessor an independent power base. After the FPÖ suffered the single greatest electoral loss of any party in modern Austrian history in the 2013 state elections by losing nearly one in every three voters, it was generally thought that Strache would now have a free hand to force the chastened local Freedom Party to re-affiliate formally with

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the national FPÖ. Instead, Strache appeared to be a helpless bystander when several of the local party leaders (duly elected at the top of the ticket) refused to vacate their positions following their dismal performance, and a stand-off ensued between the new and old party officials. Strache's rhetoric seemed to move from threatening to pleading as he desperately tried to resolve the problem between the squabbling functionaries and, more broadly, engineer a reunification of the two local 'Freedom Parties'.

### **The FPÖ's modes of communication and campaigning and the role of (new) media**

From the start, Haider's FPÖ became known for breaking new ground in campaigning and political communication. It professionalised political branding, introduced permanent campaigning in Austria and found ways to reach segments of the voting public that traditionally paid little attention to politics. Using iconoclastic imagery, calculated outrage, the celebrity factor and metaphors borrowed from sports and Hollywood,<sup>14</sup> campaigns were generally centred on the personality of the FPÖ's top candidates in a given race and/or on Haider personally. As Haider aged and the FPÖ entered public office, campaigns became more conventional and also subtle. Particularly during Haider's governorship in Carinthia, it became nearly impossible to distinguish his communication as the highest representative of the state from that of partisan self-promotion. The post-Haider FPÖ has taken full advantage of having in Strache a young, telegenic leader once again, whose debating skills are a considerable asset for the party.

As skilled but not necessarily fair debaters, Haider and Strache were particularly effective on the stump and on television. Haider imported highly choreographed US-style campaign appearances and forced the political competition to update their campaigning style as well. Although the reporting on the FPÖ by Austria's public broadcaster, long the only network in the country, was often critical, both FPÖ leaders enjoyed considerable air time and knew how to use such opportunities to maximum effect.

Probably no periodical was more important in helping the ascent of the FPÖ than Austria's daily tabloid newspaper *Neue Kronenzeitung* (*Krone*).

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<sup>14</sup> One borrowed Hollywood image was that of the lone boxer from the *Rocky* movie series.

With some two million readers, 44% of Austria's reading public, it is by far the largest and most influential print medium in the country. In terms of ideology, it is rather eclectic but embraces a diffuse kind of right-wing Austro-patriotism. Over the years, Haider could frequently, but not always,<sup>15</sup> rely on the complicity of *Krone* when warning against foreign threats (for instance, EU enlargement) or lashing out against those that both the FPÖ and the tabloid deemed un-Austrian, such as controversial artists and immigrant support groups (Heinisch 2002, 115).

The overall emphasis on youthfulness and the history of unconventional campaigning would suggest the FPÖ to be a party with a special affinity for the use of new media. A well-known video in which Strache performs a rap song and the notoriety of an anti-Islamic video game by the FPÖ seemed to support this assumption. Yet, the use of new media has been rather conventional and does not appear to be very different from that of other Austrian parties. Both the homepage and the Facebook pages of the FPÖ are rather traditional platforms in that they reflect little more than the messages the party places on its posters and in other media. Although it is true, as suggested by recent research (Bartlett, Birdwell and Littler 2011), that Strache appears to have a large following on Facebook, it is unclear whether FPÖ's social media activities have increased the right-wing following or whether the party's already sizable fan base has simply wished to connect with their political idol through the new medium.

### **The FPÖ's party finances**

Like all Austrian parties, the FPÖ has a variety of funding sources. There are membership dues of typically €22 a year per member, yielding overall €750,000; 'party taxes' levied on FPÖ members in public office, currently 12% of the party's gross income (Sickinger 2009, 231); and donations by individuals. Moreover, all Austrian parties represented in national and regional legislatures<sup>16</sup> also have access to considerable public financing that reimburses political organisations for public relations activities as well as campaign expenses<sup>17</sup> in proportion to their electoral success; covers

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15 For example, the *Kronenzeitung* opposed the ÖVP-FPÖ government in 2000.

16 Parties that win 1% of the vote can also expect to have some portion of their expenses reimbursed.

17 Because the formula takes into account success at the polls, the amounts vary: for instance, €8.5 million in 1999 and €4.4 million in 2008 (Sickinger 2009, 246, Table 22).

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the activities of legislative clubs or party caucuses, at the national and regional level; and funds 'party academies', which are essentially party think tanks.

In terms of individual party contributions, the lack of full disclosure due to lax transparency rules governing donations has made it difficult to definitively assess all the sources of party funding or to know most donors and their profiles. The evidence suggests that major contributions, amounts in excess of €7,260, have varied through the years: in 1991 and 2003 the party received more than €700,000 per annum; in other years it reported no such donations (Sickingner 2009, 150, Table 14). Generally, it is clear that the lack of close ties to organised labour and business, the source of most political donations puts the FPÖ at a considerable disadvantage compared to Austria's mainstream parties.

The FPÖ like other Austrian parties has had to cope with significant financial problems in its more recent history. In Haider's early years as party chair, he financed his aggressive election campaigns with loans, resulting in considerable debt for the party. The situation improved in the 1990s, when the FPÖ gradually transformed into a major party, but worsened paradoxically following its greatest success in 1999 when it entered government. The growing representation expenses for the party leadership, the need to promote the government's policy in an increasingly incohesive FPÖ and the dramatic losses in the 2002 elections all proved financially devastating. Three years later when the BZÖ split from the FPÖ, the financial future of the latter was in jeopardy as both parties laid claim to its finances. While rebuilding the FPÖ at national level, Strache faced the formidable task of reducing the party's debt, which had risen to some eight million euros in 2007.

The pressure to raise money after 2000 may explain the persistent allegations and several high-profile cases that are either under investigation or have already been in court about public corruption in conjunction with illegal party financing schemes through kickbacks from business ventures. All of these date from the time when the FPÖ and Christian Democrats were in public office both at national level and in Carinthia. Especially involved appear to be many of Haider's former close confidants, the top officials of the Carinthian FPÖ, and their Christian Democratic coalition partner.



## EFFECT ON THE PARTY SYSTEM AND THE MAINSTREAM PARTIES

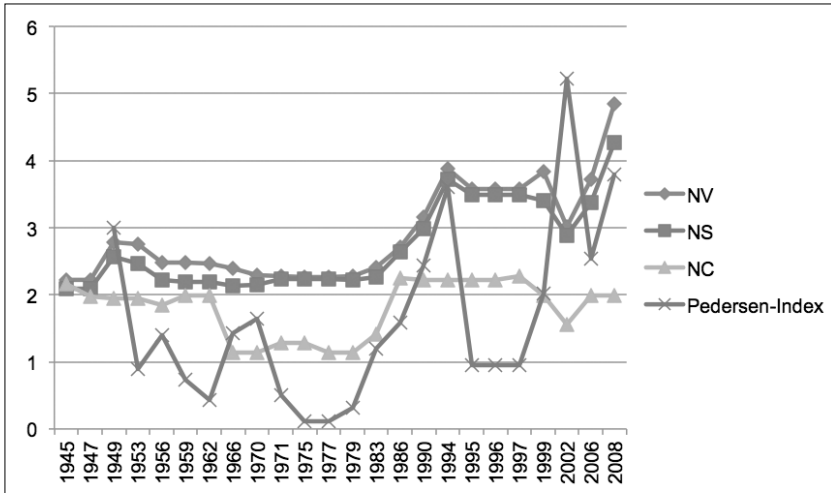
With the rise of the FPÖ after 1986, Austria's party system, which had once been dominated by two parties, gradually developed into a moderate multi-party variant, first with two main parties (1986–94) and subsequently (1994–2008, with the exception of the elections in 2002 and 2006) three larger parties (the SPÖ, ÖVP and FPÖ) and two significantly smaller ones (the Greens and the BZÖ). In 1994 and 2008 the Social Democrats and Christian Democrats both lost votes to the FPÖ to such an extent that even grand coalitions no longer garnered the important two-thirds majority in parliament, which governments needed to protect legislation from judicial challenges by the Constitutional Court.

By 2006 the Austrian party system had clearly moved beyond its traditional two-and-a-half configuration towards a polarised pluralist model (Mair 2000; Müller 2006b). Other indices used by political scientists to measure the relative strength of political parties support the argument that substantial changes have occurred in the Austrian party system since the mid-1980s. Such composite measures seek to account for the relative influence of parties beyond the question of who controls the government. The resulting coefficients are better measures of how many political parties actually matter in a party system than may be gleaned from knowing the overall number of parties and or from focusing only on those in government.

Figure 2 presents four such indices, three of which show substantial changes for the Austrian party system after the FPÖ turned right-wing populist following 1986 (Blau 2008). Simply stated, these measures seek to capture the number of politically relevant parties in a given party system based on vote shares, seats in the legislature and cabinet appointments. Political scientists call these indices the effective number of parties in votes (NV), effective number of parties in seats (NS), and effective number of parties in the cabinet (NC) (for details see Blau 2008). When applied to the Austrian case, the measure of the effective number of parties in votes (NV) shows an increase from 2.6 to 3.5 following 1986 when the FPÖ grew in support. Likewise the measure of the effective number of parties in seats (NS) shows significant increases after 1986 with the highest value (4.2) in 2008.

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**Figure 2 Effective number of party indices<sup>18</sup> and electoral volatility:<sup>19</sup> Austrian party system 1945–2008**



Source: The findings are based on the author's own calculations based on election data from the Federal Ministry of Interior ([http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi\\_wahlen/](http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi_wahlen/)). For the construction and calculation of the indices, see Blau 2008.

Figure 2 indicates that only the measure of effective number of parties in the cabinet remains flat following an initial increase after 1986, which is to be expected since the actual number of parties in Austrian governments remained unchanged. Differently stated, the changes in the political system as such did not translate into equal changes in government.

Another important measure political science uses to capture the electoral volatility in a given party system is the Pedersen Index (Pedersen 1979). It is based on the number of voter defections from one party to another between elections and provides a snapshot of the electoral stability over time. As shown in Figure 2, the ascendancy of the Haider-led FPÖ after 1986 is reflected in substantial increases in the tendency of voters to

18 N = Effective number of parties in: V = votes, S = seats or C = cabinet. For index construction and calculation see Blau (2008).

19 The Pedersen Index (0–100) is constructed by totalling the net changes for each party and then dividing them by two. For purposes of a better fit with the above chart, the coefficients were re-scaled by dividing them by four. See Pedersen (1979).

switch parties. This is particularly true after the critical elections in 1994, 2002 and in 2008.

Summing up, in terms of the increased political volatility and the number of parties that can be shown empirically to have influence on legislative outcomes and government policy, the system has clearly changed, becoming more volatile, more open and more polarised. The tone of the political discourse has also become harsher. On the other hand, the polarising style of the FPÖ has had the effect that the party's 'fitness to govern', to use the term employed in the public debate of the late 1990s, has been questioned. This, in turn, has paradoxically reduced the available coalition options and has again increased the degree of cartelisation of the party system. In fact, research suggests that once the FPÖ emerged as a successful vote-seeking opposition force, competition between SPÖ and ÖVP declined.

In response to Haider's success in the 1986 elections, the SPÖ and ÖVP sought to isolate the FPÖ politically. Especially the Social Democratic Party, initially under Chancellor Franz Vranitzky in 1986, committed itself to a *cordon sanitaire* with respect to the FPÖ. The Christian Democrats also declared the FPÖ unfit to govern (*regierungsunfähig*) as long as the party opposed Austria's consensus democracy and social partnership, rejected European integration and distanced itself only half-heartedly from Nazism (Luther 2010; Fallend 2012). The SPÖ and ÖVP sought to marginalise the FPÖ by portraying Haider as a politically irresponsible firebrand. However, this was clearly more difficult for the ÖVP because many of its rural voters saw Haider articulate positions that also appealed to the Christian Democrat base (Müller 2000, 94–5).

In the second half of the 1990s, the dismissive strategy adopted towards the FPÖ was tacitly but increasingly abandoned by the major parties. The shift to an accommodationist approach was most acute in the areas of immigration and, to a lesser extent, law and order. The Social Democrats also sought to recruit political leaders that were themselves not perceived as typical politicians and could thus more directly compete with Haider.<sup>20</sup>

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20 Examples are the former Mayor of Vienna, Helmut Zilk (1984–94), a former television personality, and Chancellor Viktor Klima (1996–2000), a telegenic former manager from the oil industry and Finance Minister.

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When the ÖVP offered to form a coalition with the FPÖ at national level,<sup>21</sup> it breached the *cordon sanitaire*. However, the Christian Democratic leader Schüssel always justified the decision by arguing that this was the best way to ‘defang Haider’ and prevent an outright FPÖ majority. However, both parties appointed loyalists to key positions in the public sector to replace officials loyal to the SPÖ (Müller and Fallend 2004, 809–17). Although polarisation between the government (ÖVP and FPÖ) and the opposition (SPÖ and Greens) was growing in both the electoral and parliamentary arenas (Müller and Fallend 2004, 817–18; 823–4), government policies in the period 2000–2 ‘generally do not bear the mark of right-wing extremism or excessive populism’ (Heinisch 2003, 106; Luther 2003, 138).

Since the BZÖ split away from the FPÖ, the SPÖ and Greens have categorically ruled out any coalition with the FPÖ (under Heinz-Christian Strache) whereas the ÖVP has been more ambivalent.

### OUTLOOK

In the final analysis, it remains difficult to assess how populist Austria’s political system has become as a result of the FPÖ. The latter’s actions have clearly exacerbated the alienation from the political establishment felt by many voters. Mainstream politicians now have to be cautious for fear of being perceived as too out of touch with ordinary voters when tackling potentially populist issues such as immigration and European integration. In terms of style, discourse and political marketing, populism has clearly had an effect. Yet populism, with its quasi-ideological core, remains restricted to the FPÖ and the political system has been remarkably resistant to such temptations.

Austria’s limited mainstream parties have found no good answer to the challenges posed by the FPÖ. Dismissive or accommodationist strategies have tended to make the FPÖ stronger while increasing voter apathy. The most effective tool has been to appeal to Austrians’ desire for political harmony by pointing to the FPÖ’s polarising nature.

Trying to coax the populist right into adopting a more moderate political posture may be difficult after its disastrous experience in government. The next time, therefore, the FPÖ may decide to join a government only on its

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21 There had been cooperation between the FPÖ and other parties at the regional level, especially in Carinthia.

own terms. The FPÖ, which tolerates extreme right-wing forces in its ranks, will continue to have an established place in the party system, as shown by the return of the FPÖ under Heinz-Christian Strache—a return which many observers had hardly considered possible and which demonstrated major similarities in style and content to the FPÖ under Haider during the 1990s.

As the country approaches national elections in 2013 in which the Freedom Party is expected to do well, its difficulties and the questions about Strache's leadership come as a surprise. Given that about a third of the Austrian electorate is open to populist and protest parties and that some observers even question whether a grand coalition can still gain an outright majority, the problems of the FPÖ may be temporary. Much will depend on how the FPÖ handles the challenge from new rivals such as Team Stronach, which offers many similar messages but avoids certain controversial topics and thus may have a broader appeal. It is clear that the party protest spectrum in Austria is becoming increasingly crowded, the effect of which still remains to be seen.

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# Belgium: Decline of National Populism?

Teun Pauwels

## INTRODUCTION

As in many other European democracies, the established political parties in Belgium came to be seriously challenged by populist contenders at the end of the twentieth century. These parties can be considered populist as they all contend that there is a deep division between the 'ordinary people' on the one hand and the 'corrupt elites' on the other, while arguing that politics should be the expression of the general will of the people (Mudde 2004; Stanley 2008). In the 1991 Federal elections the Flemish national populist party Flemish Bloc (Vlaams Blok, now Vlaams Belang; VB) made its national breakthrough, winning 10% of the vote in Flanders, while two other populist parties, Radical Reformers and Social Militants for a More Just Society (Radicale Omvormers en Sociale Strijders voor een Eerlijker Maatschappij, ROSSEM) and the Walloon National Front (Front National, FN), also gained representation. While the latter two parties were ephemeral phenomena, the VB has steadily grown to become a stable party with serious influence over the Flemish party system. Since 2007, however, the niche for right-wing populist parties has decreased significantly, with the VB suffering from serious competition from the neo-liberal populist List Dedecker (Lijst Dedecker, now Libertair Direct Democratisch; LDD) and the Flemish nationalist New Flemish Alliance (Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie, N-VA) in particular. While the latter does not qualify as populist party, it appears that many voters consider the party a functional equivalent for the national populist VB, as will be explained further on in this chapter.

This chapter will provide an overview of the populist challengers in Belgium with a focus on the most electorally significant party, the VB. The next section will clarify the concepts of national populism and right-wing populism while exploring which parties fit the definition in the Belgian context. Furthermore, attention will be devoted to the origins and development of populist parties, such as the VB, FN and LDD, in Belgium. In the third section the focus is on the ideology of the VB. The issues which feature most prominently in its ideology and how the party positions itself on both the cultural and economic dimension will be explored. The fourth

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section sheds light on who votes for the party. The focus is then placed on the leadership, organisation and membership of the VB. In the sixth section, how the established parties have dealt with the national populist threat will be explored and finally the future prospects for the VB in Belgium will be investigated.

### THE CONCEPTUALISATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF POPULIST PARTIES IN BELGIUM

Since the early 1990s there has been a lot of debate on the most appropriate label—ranging from extreme-right to populist or anti-immigrant—for parties such as the National Front (Front National, FN) in France or the Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs) in Austria (Mudde 1996; van Spanje 2011). In this chapter I will draw on the work of Betz (1993) and Mudde (2007) who both distinguish between national populism or the populist radical right on the one hand, and neo-liberal populist parties on the other. *National populist parties* combine (1) ethnic nationalism and xenophobia to promote and preserve the homogeneous nation-state while opposing immigration; (2) populism or ‘ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be the expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people’ (Mudde 2004, 543) and; (3) authoritarianism or the belief in a strictly ordered society in which obedience prevails over personal autonomy (Napier and Jost 2008). *Neo-liberal populist parties* aim to ‘alter, or if possible reverse, the trend towards big government and state intervention while at the same time defending the “ordinary people” against an allegedly “corrupt elite”’ (Pauwels 2010, 1009). While neo-liberal populist parties might occasionally advocate anti-immigration policies, ethnic nationalism is not core to their ideology and economic issues are generally more important than cultural issues (see also Barney and Laycock 1999; Rydgren 2006). Together national populist parties and neo-liberal populist parties form the broader category of right-wing populism (Mudde 2007). While populism can also be linked to other ideologies such as socialism, this combination has not been a viable one in Belgium so far and will therefore not be discussed further.

After a clarification of national populism and neo-liberal populism it is possible to explore which Belgian parties might fulfil the basic criteria of these concepts by exploring their ideologies. Taking just those parties with national representation since 2000 into account, it is possible to identify

two national populist parties—the VB and National Democracy (Démocratie Nationale, ND)—and two neo-liberal populist parties—the LDD and the Popular Party (Parti Populaire, PP). Together with the borderline N-VA, I will focus in some detail on these parties in the following paragraphs.

### **The Flemish Interest**

The VB emerged in 1978 as an offshoot of the Flemish nationalist movement and originally focused on Flemish independence. In the 1990s the party gained electoral appeal with a party manifesto based on Flemish nationalism, xenophobia, law and order, and populist anti-party sentiments. In 2004 the party obtained no less than 24% of the vote in Flanders. Since 2007 the VB has faced increasing competition and has lost much of its electoral support. The central argument in its populist rhetoric is that the established parties impose political correctness upon the VB and the man in the street in an attempt to silence the problems of a multicultural society. This is considered ‘part of a conspiracy by the traditional parties against the VB, the only party that defends the silent majority, the popular will and democracy’ (Jagers 2006, 252). To restore the voice of the people, the VB favours the introduction of direct democracy. Combined with its ethnic nationalism, xenophobia, and concern for law and order, the VB qualifies as a text-book example of a national populist party.

### **The National Front**

The Walloon FN was established in 1985 by Dr Daniel Féret. In addition to the name, Féret also borrowed the symbols and ideology of the French FN in an attempt to profit from the success of its French archetype. The FN’s potential has been observed on various occasions, such as in the 1994 local elections when it obtained more than 10% of the vote in cities including Charleroi and La Louvière. In 2004 the FN also gained 8% of the vote in Wallonia but, in spite of these occasional successes, the lack of societal roots and organisational resources, combined with the erratic leadership of Féret, has turned this party into a marginal phenomenon (Art 2008; Delwit 2007). A series of internal disputes, legal charges and leadership changes has had its repercussions on the vote share, which has declined steadily to the point that since 2010 the party has not been represented in the national parliament. In 2011 the French FN took legal steps to prevent the Belgian FN from using the same name, which forced the Belgian FN to change its name to National Democracy (Démocratie Nationale, DN).

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While the ideology of the FN/DN is somewhat underdeveloped, the party qualifies as national populist as one its main aims is to limit immigration as much as possible. In its most recent programme the party proposes that naturalised foreigners should be deprived of their Belgian nationality should they commit a crime and sent back to their country of origin (DN 2012). The FN/DN is also populist as it accuses the established parties of silencing the people and the party by all possible means, including 'misleading, defamatory press articles orchestrated by the government' (Féret, cited in Delwit 2007, 147). Apart from the anti-elitist dimension, the party also claims to represent the ordinary people and supports citizens' initiatives as a way to restore the voice of the people.

### **The Libertarian Direct Democratic Party**

The LDD was originally established as Lijst Dedecker, named after businessman and well-known judo coach Jean-Marie Dedecker in January 2007. Contrary to expectations, this personal party received 6% and 8% of the vote in the 2007 and 2009 elections respectively. Despite the electoral potential of this party, Dedecker has been unable to build a stable party organisation and, due to several internal conflicts, it has fallen in the polls and only obtained one seat at the 2010 national elections. An exploration of the ideological underpinnings of the party suggests it fits the category of neo-liberal populism well. To preserve welfare, the party proposes a smaller government, privatisation, a flat tax rate and limited unemployment benefits. In accordance with the principles of neo-liberalism, the party also claims that the individual should be left unrestrained and that the government should only provide the most essential services. The LDD is also populist, as the Belgian political system is presented by Dedecker as corrupt and clientelistic, functioning by means of compromises between party headquarters without the citizens having any say. While denouncing the establishment, Dedecker sees himself as a representative of the common people, who can no longer identify with the highly educated politicians. To break through the 'particracy' and restore the voice of the people, the LDD proposes the introduction of binding citizens' initiatives. Direct democracy is believed to be 'the most effective way to prevent the abuse of political power' (LDD 2010).

### **The Popular Party**

The PP was established by lawyer Mischaël Modrikamen and former cabinet secretary and founder of the Liberal-Democratic Party Rudy Aernoudt in November 2009. Inspired by the Spanish Popular Party (Partido Popular) and the French Union for a Popular Movement (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, UMP), the party combined right-wing positioning on both the economic and cultural ideological dimensions, supporting less state intervention and stricter immigration policies. The party gained 3% of the vote and one seat in parliament at the 2010 national elections. After the elections the PP went through a period of infighting, with Aernoudt being expelled from the party. Even its only representative has abandoned the PP, making it a personal party dominated by Modrikamen (Delwit 2011). The PP fits the proposed typology less well, as both the economy and immigration are important for the party. Originally the party could have been labelled as neo-liberal populist as it proposed drastic tax cuts and limited unemployment benefits, while denouncing the established parties and favouring the use of more referenda. While it is still not entirely clear how the recent organisational and ideological changes will crystallise, it appears that the party is shifting towards national populism under the leadership of Modrikamen, who is more focused on the immigration issue. After all, the party leader has claimed several times that he sees the French FN under the leadership of Marine Le Pen as an example for his own party.

### **The New Flemish Alliance**

The N-VA is a Flemish nationalist party that was established in 2001 as the successor to the People's Union (Volksunie, VU). While the VU used to be an important party in terms of votes and policy in the 1970s and 1980s, its successor has had much more difficulty in demonstrating its relevance to the voters. Most observers have argued that the various state reforms, which have consequently increased Flemish autonomy, have meant that much of the VU/N-VA's programme has been realised and therefore the party has lost its electoral appeal (Van Haute and Pilet 2006). The first elections in which the N-VA participated in 2003 were disappointing as the party only surpassed the electoral threshold of 5% in one province. This motivated the party to join an electoral alliance with the Christian, Democratic and Flemish Party (Christen-Democratisch & Vlaams, CD&V) in 2004. In 2007 the CD&V and N-VA alliance won the elections with the promise of further state reform. Yet this reform did not

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materialise because of strong resistance from the francophone parties, and the N-VA withdrew its government support and left the alliance in 2008. By leaving the government and sticking to its principles, the N-VA has been able to present itself as the most credible standard-bearer for institutional reform.<sup>1</sup> Increased polarisation over this issue, combined with the rising popularity of party president Bart De Wever, brought the N-VA unprecedented electoral success in 2009 and even greater success in 2010 (28% of the vote).

In terms of ideology, the N-VA focuses predominantly on Flemish nationalism, favouring more autonomy for the linguistic communities and ultimately striving for an independent Flemish state. The party is also conservative and right-wing on both the economic and cultural dimension, favouring less state intervention and greater focus on law and order. While the N-VA wants to limit immigration and often frames political debates in terms of 'us' (Flemings) and 'them' (Walloons), the Flemish nationalists do not quite fit the labels of radical right or populist (Mudde, 2007). The party is not Eurosceptic either—opposing neither the idea of European integration nor the current functioning of the EU—and hopes that Flanders could become an independent region within a broader European framework. Although some observers have labelled the party as populist, I disagree, mainly because the elitist approach of the party is hard to reconcile with a populist stance. The N-VA has certainly regularly used anti-establishment appeals. In an interview in 2003, Bart De Wever admitted to a deep loathing of the 'politically correct establishment'. Accusations of a conspiracy are also made quite frequently, and are not only directed at the francophone parties. At the same time, however, the N-VA does have confidence in democracy at the regional (Flemish) level, as shown by its participation in government at that level. This makes it difficult to dismiss the entire elite as corrupt. More important than its ambiguous relationship with the establishment is the fact that the N-VA, as a conservative party, displays elitist characteristics and is less concerned with being seen as the *vox populi*. De Wever sees himself as a trustee trying to find support for his

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<sup>1</sup> About 34% of the electorate linked the issue of state reform instantly to the N-VA (Walgrave et al. 2012).



ideas rather than as someone who reflects the will of the people.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore no surprise that, in contrast to the party programmes of the VB and the LDD, the N-VA makes no mention at all of a referendum (Pauwels 2011b).

### **The diversity of populism in Belgium**

The previous paragraphs have shown that the populist phenomenon is quite diverse in Belgium, both ideologically and in terms of electoral success. Table 1 provides an overview of the electoral successes of populist parties with parliamentary representation in the last 13 years. It shows that the only populist party that has been consistently successful is the Flemish VB. Research has demonstrated that the success of the VB compared to the weakness of (national) populism in Wallonia cannot be attributed to structural explanations such as a rise in anti-immigrant attitudes or a decline in political trust. In fact, public opinion data suggest that anti-immigrant attitudes, authoritarianism and political distrust are more widespread in Wallonia than in Flanders (Coffé 2005b; Hooghe et al. 2011).

The difference between the VB and other, more short-lived, populist phenomena can be largely explained by historical legacies and organisational factors. First, the VB was not built from scratch but instead originated and received support from the Flemish movement. This movement dates back to the second half of the nineteenth century and was formed to advance the rights of the Dutch-speaking population at the cost of the francophone elite. Flemish nationalist organisations, such as *Were Di* or *Voorpost*, provided the VB with financial support and served as a reservoir for the recruitment of candidates in the early years of its existence. They also delivered 'political soldiers' who 'did "the dirty work" of campaigning, stuffing tens of thousands of mailboxes with campaign material and postering the city of Antwerp' (Art 2008, 430). Parties such as the FN, the LDD and the PP were established by political entrepreneurs

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2 De Wever makes no secret of his admiration for Edmund Burke and even explicitly mentioned his liking of the way in which Burke addressed his voters in 1774. In that speech Burke explained that it was as a matter of principle that he had argued for the abolition of protectionist measures against the wishes of his supporters. In Burke's own words, 'Your Representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion' (Burke cited in Koop and Van Holsteyn 2008).

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without links to large societal groups, and therefore lack the solid support which might be particularly important in times of crisis (Harmel and Svåsand 1993).

Second, the VB is one of the rare parties with both good ‘external’ and ‘internal’ leaders in its ranks. Filip Dewinter, for instance, is a good debater and has often been described as a charismatic leader. In terms of preferential votes, he ranks consistently among the top 10 politicians in the country. In addition to this, he is also a good ‘internal’ leader as he has spent much of his time organising the party in a professional way. Although it has taken some time, the VB is well developed, with a youth section, a research centre and many local branches. Parties such as the FN, the LDD and the PP might also have ‘charismatic’ leaders, yet they have been largely unconcerned with building a stable party organisation: On the contrary, Dedecker, Féret and Modrikamen have often been involved in internal conflicts that have harmed the reputations of their parties. Since the VB has been the only consistently successful populist party in Belgium and has also had the largest impact on Belgian politics, the following paragraphs will focus more on the ideology, voters, impact and outlook of this national populist party.

**Table 1 Vote share of populist parties in Belgium since 1999 (%)**

	Nat./Reg. election	National election	Regional election	National election	Regional election	National election
	1999	2003	2004	2007	2009	2010
VB (FL)	15.3	17.9	24.2	18.9	15.3	12.4
FN/ND (WA)	4.0	5.6	8.12	5.6	2.86	1.4
LDD (FL)				6.4	7.6	3.7
PP (WA)						3.1

*Note:* Vote shares are given within each region—that is, Flanders (FL) or Wallonia (WA)—since Flemish parties can only gain votes in Flanders and francophone parties only in Wallonia (excluding Brussels).

*Source:* Belgian Election Results Database (2012); Coffé (2005b)

## THE IDEOLOGY OF THE VB

An independent Flemish republic has always been, and is still today, the principal goal of the VB. Flanders is perceived as an ethnic community, which must protect its cultural, material and intellectual interests. Since the ethnic community (Flanders) does not coincide with the state (Belgium), it is obvious to the party that the artificial Belgian state should cease to exist and that Flemings and Walloons should go their own separate ways. This has been illustrated most evocatively by the slogan 'Volk, word staat!' (People, become state!), which featured in a VB campaign in 2007 (VB 2008). The ethnic nationalism of the VB is strengthened by a call for *internal homogenisation*, which argues that only Flemish people should have the right to live in Flanders, and that immigrants should not be endowed with too many rights. In order to fight 'mass immigration', Dewinter developed a 70-point programme in 1992 that provided an operational plan for the guided repatriation of non-European foreigners to their countries of origin (Mudde 2000). Throughout the years, these harsh stances have been softened to some extent, although repatriation is still considered necessary for those who do not want to adapt.

Ethnopluralism, referring to the permanent differences between groups of peoples and arguing that people should live in their own group, makes up an important part of the VB's ideology. As a consequence, the party argues that 'just as Flemings would have difficulties living in the desert, so too would North Africans (Muslims) have difficulties living in a complex modern society such as Flanders' (Mudde 2000, 100). The argument goes that because immigrants are uprooted from their own culture, they find themselves inevitably embroiled in all sorts of problems, such as drugs and crime. Accordingly immigrants should be removed from the Flemish territory so that they can once again live according to their 'own nature'. While the xenophobia of the VB originally targeted the Walloons and Belgian nationalists, non-European immigrants, and particularly Muslims, have increasingly come under attack. The VB stresses the fundamental and irreconcilable antagonism between Islam and Western values, and argues that Muslims are increasingly imposing their values upon Flemings.

Even though the party featured elitist viewpoints in its early life, the VB has, since the 1990s, increasingly presented itself as populist. The 'pure person' is the common Fleming, who is honest, works hard and pays taxes, but is politically quiescent. These people, it is argued, are persistently betrayed

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by a corrupt political class, which is willing to sell out the Flemish cause out of self-interest. Other groups that are depicted as part of the corrupt elite are the monarchy, the judiciary, intellectuals, trade unions, the cultural world and civil servants. They are sometimes accused of conspiracies, of demonising the VB and of imposing their political correctness upon the average man. The VB favours direct democracy to remove power from the establishment and give it back to the people (Jagers 2006).

The VB thinks that the individual cannot be separated from tradition and is only able to develop within his own ethnic community. The traditional family, consisting of a heterosexual couple whose duty it is to contribute to the continuity of the Flemish people, is considered the smallest unit of a harmonious, organic society. To defend the integrity of the traditional family, the VB rejects abortion and homosexuality. More generally, the party adheres to traditional values to fight the ongoing process of moral decay. In line with traditional ethics, it is also argued that individuals can only develop in a well-ordered community, which can be seen in the party's call for law and order (Mudde 2000).

The position of the VB on the economic dimension is not entirely clear, but it appears that economic issues are less important in its ideology. Perhaps the term welfare chauvinism best fits its position, as the party argues that the Walloons (and immigrants) are less productive and have higher unemployment, jeopardising the welfare of the Flemings. The economic policy of the VB is therefore aimed at cutting 'development aid' by splitting social security and the public debt. An independent Flanders is hence not only valuable in itself, but is also the solution to economic challenges. To use the words of party ideologue Annemans: 'Our unique selling proposition concerning the economy and welfare consists of three things: Flanders, Flanders and again Flanders' (VB 2005, 3).

The recent competition with the N-VA has made the VB return to its core business in a more radical style. Evidence of this is the book *Immigration-Invasion: The New Colonisation*, published by Dewinter a month before the local elections of 2012. In this book it is argued that mass immigration creates crime, poverty and unemployment. The link between immigration and crime is obvious to the author, as he claims that 'a considerable number of immigrants are born with a knife in their nappies' (Eeckhout 2012). Furthermore, it is argued that immigration costs the Flemings a lot of money and opens the door for the colonisation of Europe by Islam

(Dewinter 2012). The author states that Islam stands for Intolerant, Sexist, Lying, Anti-democratic and Medieval. It is also interesting to see how the VB has recently shifted more towards the left on the socio-economic dimension to distinguish itself from the allegedly 'neo-liberals from the N-VA'. This can be seen as a strategy to target the 'losers of globalisation' in a more pronounced way.

## THE VB'S ELECTORATE

Much research has focused on the electorate of the VB (Billiet and De Witte 1995 and 2008; Swyngedouw 2001) and has shown repeatedly that it is relatively stable. In this section I will draw on recent data from the Partirep survey which was conducted for the Belgian regional and European elections of 2009. A random sample of Belgian voters was interviewed in three waves with a response rate of 48.3% in the first wave. Since we are only interested in Flemish voters, the analyses will be based on some 810 respondents who participated in all three waves. All the data were weighted for province, socio-demographic characteristics and voting behaviour (for more details see Deschouwer et al. 2010). In terms of methods, I have made use of a logistic regression model, which enables the prediction of a discrete outcome, such as voting for the VB or not.

Table 2 shows which socio-demographic variables have an effect on voting for the VB. It appears that gender has no effect, which is in line with earlier findings. By far the most significant socio-demographic variable is education. Those with none or only low educational attainment are almost 10 times as likely to support the VB compared to those with higher levels of education. Concerning occupation, we can see that the self-employed and blue-collar workers are more likely to vote for the VB compared to those with sedentary roles. The unemployment variable is insignificant, although it should be kept in mind that it is not easy to include this group in a survey. Finally, membership of a trade union and religious attendance do not seem to play a role in voting for the VB.

**Table 2 The effect of socio-demographics on the VB vote (logistic regression)**

<b>Socio-demographic variables in the VB vote (2009)</b>		
	Exp(B)	Sig.
Sex (ref. woman)	0.97	0.901
Age	0.98	<b>0.043</b>
Education (ref. highly educated)		<b>0.000</b>
None/low	9.75	<b>0.000</b>
Low/middle	4.63	<b>0.000</b>
Middle	2.98	<b>0.002</b>
Occupation (ref. inactive)		<b>0.019</b>
Self-employed	3.90	<b>0.006</b>
Employee	1.72	0.137
Blue-collar worker	2.01	0.059
Retired	0.80	0.633
Unemployed (ref. unemployed)	0.52	0.175
Membership (ref. trade union member)	0.95	0.810
Religion (ref. Catholic)	1.29	0.476
Constant	0.12	<b>0.005</b>
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> : 0.123	N = 809	

Source: The author's own calculations on the basis of the Partirep survey (2009).

Table 3 shows which attitudes increase the likelihood of supporting the VB. It appears first that political distrust plays a role. Those voters who are dissatisfied with the functioning of democracy are more likely to vote for the VB. Second, it seems that those voters who position themselves on the right of the (general) left–right dimension are also over-represented in the party's electorate. In contrast, economic issues are not significant in predicting VB support. This might be explained by the fact that economic issues do not feature prominently in the ideology of the party. In line with previous research findings, it seems that negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities and generally authoritarian attitudes are important predictors of national populist voting. Looking at the magnitude of the odds ratios (Exp(B)), it emerges that anti-immigrant attitudes and authoritarianism are the most important attitudes in explaining a vote for the VB. Contrary to

expectations, Euroscepticism does not play a role as a motivation for VB voting. This might be explained by the fact that Euroscepticism is less relevant in Belgium compared to other countries (Deschouwer and Van Assche 2008). Finally, it seems that those who support the idea of direct democracy are more likely to vote for the VB.

**Table 3 The effect of attitudes on the VB vote (2009)**

<b>Attitudes in the decision to vote for the VB</b>		
	Exp(B)	Sig.
Political trust (not at all trusting)	1.06	<b>0.023</b>
Left-right position (right)	1.23	<b>0.001</b>
State intervention (more state intervention)	1.09	0.416
Ethnic minorities (negative towards ethnic minorities)	1.28	<b>0.000</b>
Authoritarianism (authoritarian)	1.26	<b>0.000</b>
Europe (unification has gone too far)	1.06	0.229
Referenda (disagree voters should make important decisions by referendum)	0.76	<b>0.046</b>
Constant	0.00	<b>0.000</b>
Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup> : 0.338	N = 775	

*Source:* The author's own calculations on the basis of the Partirep survey (2009).

## THE ORGANISATION OF THE VB

Originally the VB was a small splinter party, gaining between 1.8% and 3% of the vote between 1978 and 1987. Karel Dillen was the only VB Member of Parliament and could not be considered a professional politician, instead taking days off from work to attend parliamentary debates. At this time the party received support in terms of finances and personnel from friendly Flemish nationalist organisations such as *Were Di* and *Voorpost*. This loyal support provided the VB with a certain degree of continuity in the early years when it had little electoral success. In the second half of the 1980s the party gradually started to change in terms of its ideology and organisation. Ideologically, the immigration issue became much more important. In terms of organisation it is important to mention Operation

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'Rejuvenation', as it allowed Dillen to integrate various young VB members into the party council. The 29 year-old Gerolf Annemans replaced Karel Dillen in the Chamber in 1987. In the same year, a youth organisation called Flemish Bloc Youth (Vlaams Blok Jongeren, VBJ) was established by, among others, Filip Dewinter and Frank Vanhecke. These internal changes provoked some tensions in 1988, as a group of committed VB members accused the VBJ of side-lining the Flemish cause in favour of the immigration issue. Dillen supported the VBJ, however, leading to the departure of the dissatisfied VB members while strengthening the position of Dewinter (Mudde 2000).

After its first successes in the 1990s, the situation of the VB's finances improved dramatically, as Belgian parties are financed to a large extent according to their number of seats in Parliament.<sup>3</sup> This financial boost meant that the party was no longer an organisation of volunteers and enabled serious organisational expansion. In 1995 a research centre was established under the supervision of Annemans. It should be stressed, however, that this research centre is not very elaborate, and, in general, one should conclude that—as a protest party—the VB prefers to invest in propaganda rather than policy expertise. In 1998 a centre was established for the training of new party candidates, and summer and winter universities are currently held to provide young VB members with political knowledge and skills. In addition to these institutions, the party also provides its representatives and members with various services, such as media training, propaganda material and judicial support. As can be seen from this description, today's party is very professionally organised, with representation on all levels, many auxiliary organisations and services, and a membership of around 20,000.

In terms of leadership, the party is somewhat different from other (national) populist parties in that there is not one all-dominant leader. Three different politicians have led the party so far: Karel Dillen (1979–96), Frank Vanhecke (1996–2008) and Bruno Valkeniers (2008–present). While Vanhecke in particular has played an important role in the VB, it is not always the national party leader who is most powerful or features most frequently in the media. Probably the most dominant of all VB politicians is Filip Dewinter from Antwerp, who is one of the main hardliners on the immigration issue

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<sup>3</sup> In 2007 the VB received 87% of its income from the state which is, together with the Open VLD, more than any other party (Weekers and Maddens 2009).



within the party. Dewinter is known as a good debater and often features prominently in the party's election campaigns. He has also been one of the most popular Flemish politicians in terms of preferential votes. Although it is difficult to gain an insight into the functioning of the VB, the recent internal struggles suggest that Dewinter has always been dominant and has expanded his power in recent years.

The electoral decline of the party in the past five years has provoked much discussion about the strategy to be followed (radicalisation versus moderation) and has also meant that fewer mandates have been distributed. From what can be observed in the campaigns, it seems that the radical strategy of Dewinter has remained intact and consequently several prominent VB politicians, including Vanhecke, Jurgen Verstrepen, Koen Dillen and Karim Van Overmeiren, have left the party. Politicians such as Vanhecke and Van Overmeiren have stated clearly that they can no longer identify with the radical strategy that is maintained by the head of the VB. Vanhecke was more explicit on his Internet blog, denouncing the complete domination of the VB by the Antwerp section led by Dewinter. He stated that '[t]he fragile equilibrium that existed until mid-2009, with FDW [Filip Dewinter] playing an important and prominent role but at least taking the role of the party bureau . . . into account, has been systematically broken down by Bruno Valkeniers. On every crucial occasion Valkeniers has taken the side of FDW . . . The VB has become the party of one man and this cannot possibly end well' (Van Hecke 2011). Some of these disillusioned former VB members, such as Van Overmeiren, have since joined the N-VA.

Over the years the VB has gained representation on all levels. The party now has 1 Member of the European Parliament (MEP) (the second VB MEP was Frank Vanhecke who left the party), 16 Members of Parliament (MPs) at the national level (out of a total of 220), 18 MPs at the regional level (out of a total of 124) and representatives in many Flemish municipalities. Its main stronghold is Antwerp, where the party secured around one-third of the vote in both 2000 and 2006, although it experienced a serious setback in 2012. While national populism used to be mainly an urban phenomenon, it seems that a considerable number of voters are now susceptible to the VB's appeal all over Flanders (Schuermans and De Maesschalck 2010).

### RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PARTIES

Given the radical ideology of the VB, all the other parties solemnly agreed on a *cordon sanitaire*, or agreement not to cooperate with the party under any circumstances or on any level. This agreement dates back to 1989, but was undermined only 40 days later by Jaak Gabriëls, who was the party president of the VU and argued that the VB should be met with a political struggle instead of a pact of all against one (Buelens and Deschouwer 2003). Yet when the VB made its national breakthrough in 1991 the *cordon sanitaire* was endorsed once again and has remained intact to date. As a consequence, the VB has never obtained governing power at any level. Some internal documents suggest that it is a deliberate strategy of the party to stay in opposition. After the local elections in 1994, for instance, Annemans claimed that should local party sections be invited for coalition talks 'one should raise the bar to such a height that the others will refuse' (Buelens and Deschouwer 2003, 30). This strategy has two advantages. First, the *cordon sanitaire* has always provided the VB with a useful narrative to depict itself as the victim of a plot by the established parties. Research by Van Spanje and Van der Brug (2009) suggests that the VB has indeed profited from the *cordon sanitaire* in electoral terms. Second, the national populists also believed that a more radical and purer profile would enable them to put pressure on the other parties. The role of a 'whip-party' was believed to be more effective than a strategy of moderation and power sharing. When the party grew rapidly and the limits of its electoral potential were in sight, this strategy started to change. In 2006, for instance, Filip Dewinter presented himself to voters as the new mayor of Antwerp. However, he was defeated by the incumbent socialist mayor Patrick Janssens, offering the first signs that the party was weakening.

Until 2007 the VB was very successful in mobilising voters on issues such as immigration, Flemish nationalism and crime, while also using its populist ideology to capitalise on political distrust (Swyngedouw 2001). The VB's popularity peaked in 2004 when, paradoxically, several VB organisations were condemned by the Court of Appeal of Ghent for violating the anti-racism law. As a consequence, the name Vlaams Blok had to be changed to Vlaams Belang. While the party moderated its style to some extent, Vanhecke also confirmed that the VB had changed its name but not its identity (Coffé 2005a). The conviction gave the party high visibility in the media and enabled the VB to act as a victim of the established parties. As a result, the party polled its best result ever, with 24% of the vote in the

2004 regional and European elections, and became the second largest party in Flanders.

In the long run, however, it seems that ostracism, combined with the emergence of democratic alternatives addressing similar issues to those of the VB, has greatly harmed the electoral potential of the party. The VB had had little competition on the radical right for more than two decades, yet, as explained earlier, this started to change as of 2007 with the emergence of the LDD and the revival of the Flemish nationalist N-VA. In 2009 the VB had already lost one-third of its votes compared to its peak in 2004, and in the 2010 national elections the party polled just 12% of the vote. The local elections of 14 October 2012 have confirmed this downward trend. In Antwerp, Dewinter's hometown, which has always been the party's stronghold, the VB fell from winning 33% of the vote in 2006 to winning a mere 10% six years later. At the same time the Flemish nationalist N-VA became the largest party in Antwerp and will most probably deliver the first non-socialist mayor in seven decades. The VB's decline can be explained to a considerable extent by a combination of the *cordon sanitaire*, increasing competition and internal problems.

While the *cordon sanitaire* might be useful to attract protest voters, it seems that it also scares away large groups of voters in the long run. After all, '[m]any voters consider government power to be the real prize in a parliamentary election, and most want their vote to count in this contest', which leads to strategic voting (Van der Eijk and Franklin 2009, 103). In the past, few other parties have mobilised on issues such as immigration, Flemish nationalism or populism. Yet, if alternative parties are available which have 'more likelihood of affecting public policy, a pragmatic voter may decide that this party is actually his or her best option' (Van der Brug et al. 2005, 548).

This is largely what has happened in Belgium in recent years. At the same time as VB voters were gradually becoming aware that their most preferred party would never have access to power, the LDD and the N-VA adopted some of the VB's issues while being more able to put their ideologies into practice. It should be noted that the N-VA also profited to a great extent

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from the rising popularity of its leader, Bart De Wever.<sup>4</sup> Post-electoral data from 2009 confirmed that the VB lost 8% of its votes to the LDD and 15% to the N-VA (Pauwels 2011a). While the LDD has become a very marginal party in recent years due to in-fighting, the N-VA has continued to be very dominant in the media and succeeded in winning the national elections of 2010 and the local elections of 2012. So, while the *cordon sanitaire* has been described time and again as counterproductive as it was unable to halt national populism for a long period, it seems that ‘a sustained strategy of containment combined with an attempt to provide democratic alternatives for dissatisfied voters will, in the end, convince extremist voters that their vote is, indeed, a wasted one’ (Rummens and Abts 2010, 663).

A final factor that might play a role in the decline of the VB is the fact that the electoral losses of the party also provoked serious internal debate about the strategy to be followed. Combined with personal struggles, this has sometimes led to public spats that have caught the media’s attention. In Ghent, for instance, a local section disagreed with decisions made by the party bureau, which led to the entire section being expelled from the party. Electoral research has shown that such internal squabbling has a seriously negative impact on parties’ vote shares (Clark 2009). Moreover, like its voters, some (leading) members of the VB have also started to doubt whether the strategy of a ‘whip-party’ is not inferior to actually participating in government and have therefore seen the N-VA as a tempting alternative. Consequently a considerable number of VB members have defected to the N-VA. This might also have had electoral consequences.

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4 Although the N-VA has several other leading members, it has always been De Wever in the media spotlight. His talent for rhetoric and sense of humour have been a major asset in winning over voters. Furthermore, De Wever consciously decided some time ago to focus on the popular media. His humour and general knowledge, displayed daily in the immensely popular television programme ‘The Smartest Person’ (De slimste mens), have enabled him to reach a diverse electorate. The importance of the N-VA’s leadership can be shown indirectly in the party’s electoral results for the Chamber and for the Senate in the 2010 national elections. The N-VA was the only Flemish party to achieve a significantly higher score for the Senate (31.7%) than for the Chamber (27.8%), which appears to reflect the fact that De Wever was on the list for the Senate. Apart from the Socialist Party Different (Socialistische Partij Anders) (15.3% versus 14.6%), all the other Flemish parties had a lower score for the Senate than for the Chamber; thus the importance of De Wever for the N-VA’s success should not be underestimated. In the 2012 local elections, De Wever won 77,723 preferential votes in Antwerp. The comparison with the second most popular candidate (the Social Democratic Patrick Janssens, with 49,858 preferential votes) and third most popular candidate (the national populist Filip Dewinter, with 17,085 preferential votes) is striking.

## FUTURE PROSPECTS

After more than two decades of continuous growth, the national populist VB is now suffering from serious electoral losses that have also had repercussions internally. The main reason for this is, as explained in the previous paragraphs, that ostracism, combined with the success of the N-VA, has made national populism less attractive. These events remind us of the situation in France where the combination of a *cordon sanitaire* with the rise of Sarkozy's UMP, which adopted some of the FN's issues, led to severe losses for the FN in 2007. Le Pen's vote share declined from 17% in 2002 to 10% in 2007 because Sarkozy 'seemed to provide what so many Le Pen supporters wanted: strong leadership and a policy agenda with emphases on issues close to the FN's concerns' (Shields 2010, 66). Yet, as the situation in France also shows, such trends can reverse rapidly in times of high electoral volatility. After five years in office many UMP voters were apparently not entirely satisfied with the policies of Sarkozy and, under the new leadership of Marine Le Pen, the FN obtained an unprecedented 18% of the vote in the 2012 presidential elections.

The French case shows that it is unwarranted to expect the VB to disintegrate or become irrelevant. Similar to the FN, the VB has a long history and remains relatively well organised. Two factors will probably be of most importance to the future of the party. First, it remains to be seen how the N-VA will deal with its recent successes. The challenges for this party are enormous at both the local and national level. De Wever is very likely to become the mayor of Antwerp while remaining president of the N-VA, which already seems a difficult task. For a relatively young, and hence less experienced, party it will be a major challenge to create a stable coalition in Antwerp and to deal with its many urban problems. At the national level it is unlikely that the N-VA will soon succeed in transforming Belgium into a 'confederal' state in which independent regions only collaborate in a limited range of policy domains, as most francophone parties are opposed to this idea. In 2007 a discussion about institutional reform led to a severe institutional crisis (Sinardet 2008). In short, it is unlikely that De Wever will be able to deliver everything he has promised, which in turn will open up opportunities for the VB to regain its 'old' electorate. A second important factor is how the VB will cope with the decline internally. Will the recent electoral defeat of 2012 lead to more internal struggles? How will the party reposition itself? The current party president Valkeniers recently announced his resignation, so here, too, are new opportunities for the party.

### CONCLUSION

This chapter first explored which parties can be considered as populist in Belgium. Despite the diversity of populism in the country, it appears that only one party has been persistently successful: the VB. For more than two decades this party has grown continuously, which has undoubtedly had an impact on Belgian politics. Although it is hard to demonstrate, there is evidence that Flemish parties in particular have been influenced in their actions by the national populist success (for example Downs 2001). In 2004, for instance, the political debate in Belgium was dominated by the issue of whether non-EU residents should be granted the right to vote at the local level. While this was not much of a debate in Wallonia, it was highly controversial for the Flemish parties, given the electoral strength of the VB (Sinardet 2008, 1017). The right-wing Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open Vlaamse Liberale Democraten, Open VLD) was particularly deeply divided on the issue, which led to open conflict within the party. Some observers also argue that the success of the VB in the urban regions of Flanders—most notably in Antwerp—has triggered a reversal in Belgium’s anti-urban climate and policies. Historically, Belgium’s governments have encouraged citizens to live outside the city, while having little concern for urban problems such as poverty, housing and so on. It was only when the VB made its breakthrough in the cities that serious policies were initiated to revitalise Flemish cities (De Decker et al. 2005). In Antwerp, this has led to a process of decentralisation<sup>5</sup> and major projects of urban renewal. More generally, the Flemish government decided to establish a city fund (*Stedenfonds*) to (1) increase ‘liveability’ in the city, (2) fight ‘dualism’ (*dualisering*), and (3) increase the quality of democratic government. In 2011 this city fund distributed 132,266,000 euros to the 13 most important cities of Flanders (Reynaert et al. 2011).

Despite these indirect effects, the *cordon sanitaire* has thus far kept the VB out of office. This strategy of containment has, moreover, harmed the electoral potential of the party. Open-ended questions in a survey on the occasion of the 2009 regional and European elections showed that about 38% of former VB voters referred to the VB’s remoteness from power as a reason for switching to another party. About 33% of the respondents argued that better alternatives were available in the Flemish party system

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<sup>5</sup> To limit the gap between politicians and citizens, the nine Antwerp districts have been directly elected since 2000.

(Pauwels 2011a). The emergence of the LDD and the later revitalisation of the N-VA, which both address similar issues to the VB but in a less radical style while not suffering from a *cordon sanitaire*, have clearly harmed the potential of the VB. This was illustrated most clearly during the 2012 local elections in Antwerp where the VB vote fell from 33% to 10%, while the N-VA won the elections with 38% of the vote. Ironically, it is possible that the decline of the VB and the growth of the N-VA will make it more likely that some of the national populist issues, such as Flemish autonomy, stricter immigration laws, and improved law and order will dominate the future political and media agenda in Belgium. Whether the N-VA will be able to push through its Flemish nationalist and right-wing agenda is far from clear, however. And if the party fails to deliver, this opens up new opportunities for the VB which, although obviously in decline, is likely to remain an important player in Belgian party politics.

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# The End of Solidarity? On the Development of Right-wing Populist Parties in Denmark and Sweden

Andreas M. Klein

## INTRODUCTION

The reintroduction of border checks at the Danish–German border in the early summer of 2011 focussed public attention in Europe squarely on political developments in Denmark. With this drastic step, which undermines the provisions of the Schengen Treaty, the Liberal–Conservative government of the then Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen was ostensibly reacting to reports of abuse following the abolition of visa requirements for a number of Western Balkan states. However, the real reason had more to do with the low approval rating of the ‘blue block’—the coalition government formed of the Left–Denmark’s Liberal Party (Venstre–Danmark’s Liberale Parti) and the Conservative People’s Party (Konservative Folkeparti)—which in the opinion polls five months before the parliamentary election in September 2011 was badly trailing the ‘red block’, headed by the leader of the Social Democrats, Helle Thorning-Schmidt.

By introducing the border checks—which were subsequently lifted by the new Danish government led by the Social Democrats—the Liberals and Conservatives reacted to pressure from the right-wing populist Danish People’s Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF), which had supported the minority governments of Anders Fogh Rasmussen and his successor, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, since 2001. The discussion about the reintroduction of the border controls once again made immigration and integration policy a central issue in the Danish election. As early as 2001, when the DF finally established itself in the Danish party system by achieving 12% of the vote, the party was seeking to attract votes through recourse to xenophobic rallying cries.

### FROM ANARCHIC FUNDAMENTALIST OPPOSITION TO KINGMAKER: DENMARK'S NEW RIGHT

Denmark's New Right first became a political factor in the early 1970s when the previously unknown tax lawyer Mogens Glistrup founded the Progress Party (Fremskridtspartiet, FP) as an anti-tax movement. Glistrup declared tax evasion a civil liberty and positioned his party as an 'anarcho-liberal', anti-elitist movement (Andersen 2003, 2; 'Tag der Rache' 1973). In the 'earthquake election' (*Jordskredsvalget*) of 1973, when the entry of five newly established parties into the parliament shook up the Danish political landscape, the FP came from nowhere to win 15.9% of the vote and, with 28 seats, became the second largest political force in the Danish parliament (Folketing) after the Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterne, SDP).

In the 1975, 1977 and 1979 parliamentary elections, the party consistently managed to maintain its share of the vote at above 10%. Only with the arrival in power of the Conservative government of Prime Minister Poul Schlüter in 1982 and the associated shift in Danish politics in the 1980s did the movement recede. Its decline also coincided with the sentencing in 1983 to three years in prison for tax evasion of its founder, Mogens Glistrup. During the next parliamentary election in 1984, the FP only picked up a 3.6% share of the vote.

The vacuum in party leadership left by Glistrup following his conviction was filled by Pia Kjærsgaard, who began her political career with her election to parliament in 1984.

She goes in search of votes as a shrewd girl of the people, as a lovely blonde Dane, as a mother of two and home care assistant . . . She is like many of you. She is not a high-born daughter brought up in a sheltered, luxurious family home. She has worked her whole life and did not reach the top as the daughter of Mr and Mrs such-and-such . . . Her voters see her . . . as 'their Pia'. She appeals to archetypal Danish values, promotes the monarchy, the krone as the Danish currency and the freedom and self-determination of Danes as an individualist small people, she strongly supports the Danish language and likes to hark back to the history of her country in her parallels (Hasselberg 2002, 160).

The change of leader also saw the start of a reorientation of the FP's programme. In addition to the anti-tax policy, it increasingly started to play the anti-immigration card, at a time when the number of asylum-seekers in Denmark rose in a short period by more than a factor of 10, from 800 (1983) to 8,700 (1985).

The FP found itself back at its former strength for at least a short time when Mogens Glistrup returned to the political arena after his release from jail. With provocative statements about the government's immigration policy, the party again aroused the attention of the media and therefore the general public. Pia Kjærsgaard regarded it her role as party chairperson to tone down Glistrup's positions and formulate them in a socially acceptable way. This division of labour first produced results in the parliamentary election of 1988, when the FP made a successful comeback by winning a 9% share of the vote.

Another factor in the FP's success turned out to be the Danish referendum on the Treaty on European Union in June 1992. Surprisingly, in this referendum a wafer-thin majority of 50.7% of Danes rejected the treaty signed by the European Council in Maastricht in the Netherlands. The FP had campaigned vigorously for a 'no' vote and given the Danes the sense that they were defending European democracy (Hervik 2006, 95–6).

However, during the period which followed, an ideological battle emerged inside the party between the 'hardliners' (*strammerne*), who wanted to pursue an uncompromising 'anti-political' line and the 'slackers' (*slapperne*), who strived to gain political influence through compromises with the Conservative governing party (Meret 2009, 97). The conflict led ultimately to Pia Kjærsgaard and other leading party officials leaving the party in 1995. In October that year, Pia Kjærsgaard, heading the *slapperne* wing, which was open to compromise, founded the DF with former FP MPs Poul Noerregaard, Ole Donner, Kristian Thulesen Dahl and Peter Skaarup.

In spite of initial scepticism and media resistance (Meret 2009, 98), the DF managed to gather the 21,000 signatures needed to take part in parliamentary elections. Furthermore, the party's executive committee around Pia Kjærsgaard broadened the programme of the DF, clearly differentiating it from the FP. Membership grew continuously. Whereas the party had 1,500 members when it was established, by 1998 it already had 2,500 members; by the year 2000 this number had reached 5,000, and by

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2009 the party counted 10,000 members (Meret 2009, 98). As early as the parliamentary election of 1998, the DF achieved 7.4% of the vote, while the FP dropped to 2.4% and disappeared completely from the political landscape in the years that followed.

Unlike the FP, which considered itself diametrically opposed to the established parties and delighted in the role of fundamental opposition party, from the start the stated goal of the DF was ‘to get as many of its political goals as possible implemented in reality’ (DF 1996). This necessarily required compromises and the formation of coalitions with the leading political powers. Furthermore, the executive body around Pia Kjærsgaard clearly distanced itself from the partly anarchist elements in the FP and positioned itself as a credible political alternative to the established parties (Kjærsgaard 2000). Members who were opposed to this course or who tended towards political extremism were thrown out of the party.

The DF made its definitive breakthrough in the parliamentary elections of 2001, when, after winning 12% of the vote, it became the third largest party behind the liberal Venstre party (31.25%) and the SDP (29.08%). The election again heralded a change of direction in Denmark. For the first time since 1924, the SDP was not the biggest party in the Folketing. Under Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen (Venstre), a liberal-conservative minority government was formed, which only held 72 of the 179 seats in parliament. The DF with its 22 MPs ‘tolerated’ the liberal-conservative government, without taking a place at the cabinet table itself. In the same constellation—but with decreasing support—Anders Fogh Rasmussen secured re-election in 2005 and 2007. The coalition government of Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, who took over the reins from Anders Fogh Rasmussen when the latter became Secretary-General of NATO in April 2009, comprised 89 MPs from Venstre, the Conservative People’s Party and the DF and remained in power until the election held in November 2011.

In the parliamentary elections of 2005 and 2007, the DF stabilised its share of the vote at 13%, winning 24 seats in 2005 and 25 in 2007. With again 12.3% and 22 parliamentary seats in the 2011 election, the DF has established itself firmly in the Danish party system. With its programme of social welfare policy and nationalist-chauvinist ideas, the party strikes a chord with less educated voters.

## PROGRAMMES, POSITIONS AND MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

According to recent analyses, the DF's successes over the past 10 years have mostly been at the expense of the SDP. In the 2001, 2005 and 2007 elections, the share of the DF vote from the conventional, originally social-democratic working-class milieu increased sharply, while during the same period the support of this social group for the SDP stagnated. Between 1966 and 2001, the socialist parties in Denmark steadily lost support. Although the position of the SDP in Denmark was never as strong as its sister party in neighbouring Sweden, until the early 1970s support for it never dipped below 40%. As Denmark became wealthier and socio-economic issues thus became less imperative, this conventional division within the electorate disintegrated. New issues such as immigration, internal security and matters of European integration took centre stage (Andersen 2003, 5).

The generational profile of the DF reveals that those aged over 60 are over-proportionally represented among the party's supporters. However, since the 2001 election, with the exception of the 'Generation of '68' (those born between 1945 and 1959), there has been a growth in political support for the party in all age groups. Support for the DF is particularly prevalent among male voters, although—unlike most of the right-wing populist parties in Europe—the DF was led from the start by a female chairperson (Meret 2009, 210–39; Andersen 2003, 8–12).

As in many European countries, Denmark, too, has seen voters become alienated from the established parties. The number of floating voters started rising sharply in the late 1960s and reached its first high during the 'earthquake election' of 1973. On top of this, there is the phenomenon of protest voters, who as early as 1973 were already channelling their rejection of the political establishment into support for the FP. To this day, the DF continues to enjoy the support of these protest voters, with the party's voters also typified by a particularly low level of confidence in political decision-makers.

### THE PARTY 'BRAND': ANTI-IMMIGRATION AND ANTI-EU RHETORIC

The feature singling out the DF in the Danish party political landscape was for many years its anti-immigration rhetoric and its clear rejection of a multi-ethnic society:

Denmark is not an immigrant-country and never has been. Thus we will not accept transformation to a multiethnic society. . . . Denmark belongs to the Danes and its citizens must be able to live in a secure community founded on the rule of law, which develops along the lines of Danish culture. It ought to be possible to absorb foreigners into Danish society provided however, that this does not put security and democratic government at risk. To a limited extent and according to special rules and in conformity with the stipulations of the Constitution, foreign nationals should be able to obtain Danish citizenship (DF 2002).

The debate about a regulative immigration policy found an increasingly receptive audience from the 1980s onwards, when the number of asylum seekers from countries outside Europe rose dramatically and, accordingly, the 'type' of immigrants changed from job to asylum seekers. As this issue was made a running theme first by the FP and later by the DF, the Danish mass media also started covering it. Studies have shown that they were predominantly negative about the immigration of asylum seekers and heightened the xenophobia already simmering beneath the surface in Denmark (Roemer and van der Straeten 2004, 18). In the 1990s, immigration was the prevailing issue in the Danish media and public perception (Hussain 2000, Hellström and Hervik 2011).

In its 10-point plan as far back as 1995, the year the party was formed, the DF campaigned for stricter legislation on asylum and immigration. Among other things, it demanded a long-term repatriation strategy for refugees with a corresponding development policy that enabled their (re)integration into their countries of origin or neighbouring countries. In addition, the party called for tougher action to combat forced marriages, a more selective approach to family reunification for immigrants and a quicker deportation procedure for foreigners convicted of a crime. The DF also opposed allowing immigrants to vote in local elections after three years residency in Denmark, a right that had been granted to immigrants by the Social Democratic government in 1981.



The DF essentially regards immigration as a threat to Danish culture. The party is particularly sceptical of Muslim immigrants, with leading representatives of the party claiming that they cannot be successfully integrated into Danish society. Mogens Camre, a Member of the European Parliament (EP) for the DF from 1999 to 2009 and Vice-Chairman of the Union for a Europe of Nations group in the EP, repeatedly warned of the 'danger' of Muslim immigrants: '... the vast majority of Muslims are not here to stay integrated. They will certainly not be Danes. They have come to take over Denmark, and they demonstrate at every opportunity that they consider themselves entitled to organize the country after Muslim culture' (Camre 2000).

The claims of a purported 'Muslim world conspiracy' that gained fresh momentum following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the protests in the Islamic world against the cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in *Jyllands-Posten* in September 2005, also formed the backdrop for DF chairperson Pia Kjærsgaard's proposal in November 2010 to ban satellite dishes in residential areas to curb the reception of 'anti-Western' TV broadcasters such as Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya.

Additionally, the party uses xenophobic clichés. In 1997 it launched the nationwide campaign 'Safety now—No violence in Denmark'. The party went into the 2001 election campaign with the slogan 'Your Denmark? A multi-ethnic society with gang rapes, repression of women and gang crimes. Do you want that?' printed on posters against a background of a veiled woman. Alongside foreign infiltration and rising criminality, abuse of the Danish social system was the third argument used to drum up opposition to a putatively overly lax immigration policy. While the party vigorously presents itself as a defender of the welfare state, championing in particular the needs of the old and the sick, its support for a solidarity-based approach clearly wanes when it comes to benefits for immigrants and refugees (Meret 2009, 279).

As well as its positions on immigration policy, the DF's main hallmark is its rejection of the transfer of any sovereignty rights to the EU: 'The Danish People's Party wishes friendly and dynamic cooperation with all the democratic and freedom-loving peoples of the world, but we will not allow Denmark to surrender its sovereignty. As a consequence, the Danish People's Party opposes the European Union' (DF 2002).

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With these positions, the DF appeals to the widespread Euroscepticism in Denmark that, since the latter's accession to the EEC in 1973, has led time and again to special solutions for the country during the European integration process. Again, it is the fear of surrendering national sovereignty and of the end of Danish democracy as well as of the erosion of the Danish welfare system which unites nationalists and socialists. This Euroscepticism, which is entrenched in sections of the population, is exploited by the DF with its anti-European rhetoric. In the referendum on the Treaty of Amsterdam, which among other things incorporated the provisions of the Schengen Treaty into the EU's legal framework, the DF campaigned with the slogan 'Vote Danish—Vote No' (*Stem Dansk—Stem Nej*) and whipped up the fear of uncontrolled immigration from Eastern Europe (Sørensen 2004, 15).

While in relation to immigration policy and EU policy the DF holds positions that typically tend to be found on the right wing of the party political spectrum, in terms of economic and social policy it has adopted a more left-leaning, protectionist stance. It is in this regard that we observe most clearly an ideological development from the FP to the DF, from the tax-protest party to the welfare party. A best-practice example for DF's transformation was the successful strategy of the Norwegian Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet, FrP), which fought its 1997 parliamentary election campaign using populist rhetoric focusing on pensions, the quality of hospitals and improvements to the health system and thereby managed to become the second-largest political party in Norway.

The balancing act between market-orientated tax reform and expansion of the welfare state was still evident in the DF's 1997 election manifesto. Whereas the party demanded the abolition of various taxes and expenditures that were getting in the way of private companies' competitiveness and a reduction of spending on public administration, immigration, culture, international military interventions and development aid, the DF also demanded that expenditure on health, education and care services be increased.

The DF's 2001 policy statements took account of these contradictions. While affirming its general desire to lower the tax burden, it ruled out savings on pensions, healthcare, education, research and internal security. In its 2007 policy statements, the DF went even further and declared that current tax policy was to play a primary role in establishing a framework for the development of society and the fair redistribution of resources:

In general the DF is in favour of adjusting Danish tax policy if this takes place slowly and respects the welfare state that is financed without putting pressure on the debt. Tax policy is an instrument in forming the welfare state, which influences the life of everybody. It is therefore important that tax policy is always perceived as just, effective and fair (quoted from Meret 2009, 104).

## INTEGRATION INSTEAD OF MARGINALISATION: DEALING WITH THE PEOPLE'S PARTY IN DENMARK

Unlike the right-wing populist movements in other European countries, in Denmark no *cordon sanitaire* was formed around the DF or its predecessor, the FP. Instead, both movements were tolerated in day-to-day politics at a very early stage of their existence. This approach by the centre-right, first under conservative Prime Minister Poul Schlüter and later under liberal Prime Ministers Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Lars Løkke Rasmussen, is also due, at least to some extent, to the Danish political system. In view of the low 2% threshold to get into the Danish parliament, many parties manage to gain seats in the Folketing, which contributes to its fragmentation and the formation of sometimes large multi-party coalitions.

The conservative-liberal governments led by Prime Minister Poul Schlüter from 1982 until 1993 intermittently relied on the support of the FP. Although the FP helped the government of the day to get its budget through parliament in 1982 and 1989, the concessions made remained relatively marginal (Bjørklund and Andersen 1999, 23). However, since the Progress Party with its anti-tax rhetoric and planned reorganisation of the welfare state continued to appeal to voters, the liberal-conservative government sought to reflect the supposedly general change in mood with significantly more liberal emphases in its labour-market and taxation programme in the late 1980s. The subsequent Social Democratic–Liberal government of Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen pursued this same course, continuing in a direction that had been embarked upon by the previous administration.

The emergence and establishment of the DF in the 1990s is closely connected with the increase in the immigration of asylum-seekers to Denmark and the related issues of integration and internal security. The DF adopted both issues and voiced the concerns and fears of large sections of the population. Although the direct influence of the DF on Denmark's more restrictive immigration and asylum policy in the 1990s is difficult to

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gauge, there is no question that the DF made a significant contribution to the popularisation of these themes.

When in October 1997 the DF's approval ratings suddenly rose from 5 to 14% due to various incidents that occurred during an attempt to deport Somali refugees to their home country and a media campaign focussed on immigrants' integration difficulties, the SDP Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen replaced his Interior Minister Birte Weiss, who opposed a stricter immigration policy. In contrast, her successor, Thorkild Simonsen, had as the mayor of the city of Århus already advocated the systematic overhaul of Danish refugee and immigration policy. For a while, the change in personnel and the associated change in policy of the SDP-led government had the desired effect: the approval ratings of the DF fell considerably in the months that followed (Bjørklund and Andersen 1999, 25). Nevertheless, integration policy remained on the agenda and became the central issue of the 1998 election campaign in which not only the DF but also the two large parties, SDP and Venstre, advocated a more restrictive immigration policy.

For the SDP in particular, the success of the DF posed a problem because the party developed into its main rival in the contest for the votes of conventional SDP voters. With its mix of left-leaning positions on economic and social policy and its tough line in the immigration debate, the DF appealed to the less-educated working class, who in the past had traditionally supported the SDP. By the parliamentary election of 2001, the proportion of conventional working-class voters within the electorate had grown from 49% (in 1998) to 56%, whereas the proportion of this group of voters among SDP supporters dropped to 43% (Andersen 2004, 25). In the subsequent period, the SDP attempted to regain lost ground with a targeted change in its rhetoric. As a result, by the end of SDP Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen's government in 2001, there was significantly less difference between the DF and the SDP in the immigration debate (Volquardsen 2007, 18).

Between 2001 and 2011, the DF supported the minority government consisting of Venstre and the Conservative People's Party, first under Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, and then under his successor Lars Løkke Rasmussen. The fact that under this arrangement the DF did not officially sit at the cabinet table worked to the party's advantage. In this way, the DF enjoyed more freedom than it would have been allowed had

it been directly involved in the government. For example, it was able, in particular in EU-related issues, to distance itself from positions of the more pro-European-minded government which would have contradicted its own proposals. Furthermore, vis-à-vis the liberal-conservative government the DF positioned itself as a corrective influence resolving social questions while acting in the interests of the hard-working Danish working class (Meret 2009, 143).

In summary, it can be said that the DF has, in spite of what has until now only been indirect participation in the government, had a significant impact on the politics of the day in Denmark over the past 10 years. A clear shift to the right can be seen in the political rhetoric of the two major political blocks. In terms of the DF's central policy issues of immigration and internal security, the party has been able to push through some of its demands, such that today Denmark has some of the strictest immigration laws in Europe. Moreover, in the 2011 election campaign both the liberal Venstre and the SDP ultimately partially utilised the argumentations of the DF with its, in essence strikingly, populist traits.

A Danish political landscape without the DF is virtually a thing of the past. Yet the party is facing an uncertain future. Founder and undisputed leading figure of the DF for the past 17 years, Pia Kjærsgaard announced her resignation as party leader in August 2012. As successor, co-founder and long-standing comrade-in-arms, Kristian Thulesen Dahl, who was previously chairman of the DF parliamentary group in the Folketing, followed her as chairman of the party. Thulesen Dahl, who is just over 20 years younger than his predecessor, is considered a cool-headed party strategist and—unlike Kjærsgaard, who first had to learn the political ropes—an all-round career politician ('Pia Kjærsgaard vs. Kristian Thulesen Dahl' 2012). Although at first glance he lacks the emotion of Pia Kjærsgaard, the change in leadership initially resulted in a high in the opinion polls for the DF. In an Epinion questionnaire, the DF climbed from 12.5 to 15.6% after the announcement of the change at the top of the party and his positive image has proved particularly popular with female voters ('Thulesen Dahl har kvindetække' 2012). It remains to be seen to what extent he will actually succeed in winning over the obviously untapped electoral potential of women voters in the long term.

Pia Kjærsgaard will continue to be involved in the DF after her departure as party chairperson, however. She has become the party's spokesperson on

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values and will also keep her seat in the Danish parliament. Despite all the criticism and animosity over the years, almost all of her contemporaries, regardless of their political colours, praise her performance as an ‘honest’ and ‘capable’ politician who has brought about something of a shift in Danish politics (‘Nekrologe’ 2012).

### THE END OF THE DREAM OF A MULTICULTURAL WELFARE STATE? THE RISE OF THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS

While the solid performance of the DF in the 2011 parliamentary election no longer came as any surprise, the entry of the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, SD) into the Riksdag (Swedish parliament) in September 2010 came as a sobering blow to Sweden’s established parties. The SD polled 5.7% of the vote, well above the 4% threshold. For the first time since New Democracy (Ny Demokrati, NyD) in 1991, a party spouting xenophobic and anti-elite rhetoric had emerged successfully from a parliamentary election in Sweden.

Whereas in Denmark, the FP and its offshoot the DF had established a political movement based on anti-establishment rhetoric and an anti-immigration agenda as far back as the 1970s—as also happened in other Western European countries—in Sweden, this trend did not get under way at the national level until much later. Admittedly, there had been national socialist/extremist parties in existence as early as the 1950s, such as the Nordic National Party (Nordiska Rikspartiet), Keep Sweden Swedish (Bevara Sverige Svensk) and the Progress Party (Framstegspartiet). However, for a long time these parties enjoyed no appreciable electoral success (Larsson and Ekmann 2001, 207). Only with the founding of the NyD by the two prominent entrepreneurs Bert Karlsson and Ian Wachtmeister did there emerge a force on the right wing of the political spectrum with some (albeit short-lived) political weight. Karlsson and Wachtmeister hit it off straight away and soon came up with the idea of founding a political party. Its programme was published in the leading daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* on 25 November 1990 under the title ‘Here is our party programme’ (Rydgren and Ruth 2011, 204).

Sweden’s five-party system, cemented over a period of seven decades, was broken up in 1988 with the entry into parliament of the Green Party (Miljöpartiet de Gröna). Against the backdrop of the collapse of the socialist Eastern Bloc and a flourishing Swedish economy underpinned by

a construction boom, alongside rising levels of immigration, preservation of the Swedish welfare model was no longer the main concern of voters: there was also a desire for lower taxes and stronger regulation of the influx of immigrants. In addition, the popularity of the two political newcomers, Karlsson and Wachtmeister, as well as an unconventional, in parts theatrical, electoral campaign by the NyD, helped propel the New Right into the spotlight within a few weeks and catapult it into the Riksdag with 6.7% of the vote and 25 MPs (Rydgren 2002, 34; Redlich 2007, 42).

Although the political influence of the NyD remained relatively marginal overall, the party, by abstaining from voting on the office of prime minister in 1991, helped Carl Bildt to form a liberal–conservative government after close to 70 years of SDP dominance. Due to internal wrangling, and possibly also to the shifting political parameters following the Swedish banking and economic crisis in the mid-1990s, the NyD quickly lost public support. In the 1994 Riksdag election, the party received just 1.2% of the votes cast. In February 2000, the NyD was declared insolvent and disbanded. In its place, the SD party emerged onto the scene during the 1998 parliamentary election, polling a modest 0.4% of the vote.

The SD emerged from the Sweden Party (Sverigepartiet) in 1988. They currently have around 7,200 members (Marmorstein 2012). In its early days, the party had close links with elements from Sweden’s far-right. Its founding fathers and first chairmen, Leif Ericsson and Anders Klarström, came from the Sweden Party, the Keep Sweden Swedish movement and the neo-Nazi Nordic National Party (Nordiska Rikspartiet—sometimes translated as Nordic Reich Party or Nordic Realm Party). It was only under the leadership of Mikael Jansson in 1995 that the party repositioned itself as a progressive nationalist, Eurosceptic movement along the lines of the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ), the DF and the French Front National (FN). Jansson succeeded in distancing the party from the far-right neo-Nazi scene, enabling him to win over new sections of the electorate.

This course has been consistently pursued by Jansson’s successor, the current party leader Per Jimmie Åkesson (born in 1979). The party’s new public image was reflected in its members’ decision to change its logo from a torch in the Swedish national colours of yellow and blue to a liverwort (*Hepatica nobilis*), a flower commonly found in Sweden. In recent electoral campaigns, the party has also made greater use of the Internet,

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thereby avoiding the conflicts generated by street campaigning under police protection (Larsson and Ekman 2007).

Jimmie Åkesson has been the chairman of the SD since 2005. After starting out in the youth wing of the Moderate Party (Moderaterna), he joined the SD's youth league (Sverigedemokratisk Ungdom, SDU) in 1995. In 1998, at the age of 19, Åkesson became a councillor in his home municipality of Sölvesborg. In the same year, he was elected deputy chairman of the SDU, and two years later became its chairman. He held this office until 2005, when he defeated incumbent leader Mikael Jansson in an election to become the leader of the 'mother party' SD.

Along with party secretary Björn Söder (born in 1976), press spokesman Mattias Karlsson (born in 1977) and former editor-in-chief of the party newspaper *SD-Kuriren* Richard Jomshof (born in 1969), Åkesson is one of the 'Scania gang', which determines the direction taken by the SD. The four are bound together not only by their place of origin (all are from Scania, or Skåne, a county in the southernmost tip of Sweden), but also by having followed similar paths within the party and at Lund University. In 2000, with 'his' party secretary, Björn Söder, and another partner, Jimmie Åkesson, also set up BMJ Aktiv, a web design and consulting company serving customers in Sweden, Belgium and France. All four have been members of the Swedish parliament since the general election of 19 September 2010.

After distancing themselves from the neo-Nazi scene, the SD has seen its share of the vote increase steadily from 0.4% in 1998 to 1.44% in 2002, 2.93% in 2006 and 5.7% in 2010. In the 1990s the SD began winning a few seats on municipal councils, mainly in southern Sweden as well as some smaller towns on the west coast. From having eight councillors in five municipalities in 1998, it went on to have 63 councillors in 29 municipalities in 2002. Since that year, the SD has been the undisputed political power on the right wing of the Swedish party political spectrum. The party gained its first representation at the county (*län*) level after the county council elections in 2006, when it crossed the 3% threshold in the counties of Skåne, Blekinge and Örebro. Today, the SD holds 68 seats on county level and 612 councillor seats on municipality level. According to recent surveys carried out by Statistiska centralbyrån (Statistics Sweden, SCB) in November 2012, the SD has reached an all-time high of 7.9 and on that basis would certainly win seats again in parliament (SCB 2012, 5).



According to research by the state broadcaster Sveriges Television (SVT), the bulk of SD voters are aged between 18 and 30, with a significant number being first-time voters aged 18 to 21 (Holmberg et al. 2010). In contrast to the SD's highly educated leading figures, most of whom have a university degree or attended a higher education institution of some kind, the party's voters are predominantly working class or currently unemployed. The research suggests that the party enjoys below-average support among women and the over-65s, as well as civil servants and students, compared with other parties.

Recent research confirms the SVT findings. Rydgren and Ruth (2011, 212–23) conclude from an analysis of the 2006 and 2010 election results that the SD enjoys particular support among lower income and marginalised groups with minor educational background. In addition, unemployment, crime levels and the proportion of immigrants within the constituency are also factors that influence voting behaviour in favour of the right-wing populists. Particularly in southern Sweden, which has a higher-than-average proportion of immigrants, the SD enjoys above-average support. In the 2010 parliamentary election, the party achieved its highest score (15.84%) in Sjöbo, a small municipality in southern Sweden, which attracted media attention and strong political reactions in 1988 when it held a referendum on halting the admission of foreign refugees (Nordin 2005, 65). Malmö, Sweden's third-largest city, where migrants make up almost 40% of the population, is another SD stronghold with 7.84% of the vote in 2010. By contrast, support for the right-wing populists in Stockholm and Gothenburg is below the national result of 5.4%.

The SVT research also found that overall there was no significant movement of voters from the established parties to the SD in the 2010 election. In fact, there was actually a swing back from the SD to other parties—in particular, remarkably, to the SDP—compared with the Riksdag election in 2006. The SD was relatively unsuccessful in appealing to other parties' voters with its programme. Instead, it found new supporters among those who, for one reason or another, did not vote in the 2006 election or who were eligible to vote for the first time in 2010. According to Eurostat (2009), Sweden has one of the highest levels of youth unemployment in the EU among people aged 15 to 24 (Ekonomifakta 2011). This figure confirms the observation of Rydgren and Ruth that the unemployment rate, particularly among young first-time voters, correlates with the strength of the SD in that target group.

### 'SAFETY AND TRADITION': THE POLITICAL AGENDA OF THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS

As in neighbouring Denmark and Finland, fears of unemployment and excessive immigration among certain sections of the population, exacerbated by the financial, economic and euro crisis, as well as perceptions of a political elite that is seen as out of touch with ordinary citizens, have worked in the SD's favour. Like other right-wing populist movements, the SD rejects any form of supranational entity such as the EU.

The SD defines itself in its revised 2005 manifesto 'Safety and Tradition' (Trygghet & Tradition), which is largely reproduced in the 2011 programme of principles (Principprogram 2011), as a 'social conservative party with a nationalist core ethos', inspired by the Swedish national conservatism of the past 200 years as well as, in parts, by the idea of the Social Democratic welfare state (SD 2011). In its central guidelines, the SD advocates the nation state and the promotion of Swedish national identity, the strengthening of families and the protection of society through strengthening of the rule of law.

The guidelines suggest an adherence to the principle of subsidiarity. This is not only based on the party's perception of the family as the fundamental unit of society but, following from that, also implies decentralisation of the state and the economy. It is from the principle of subsidiarity that the SD derives its rejection of any form of entity above the nation state, such as the EU. Based on the assumption that every nation is best placed to know what is good for it, the party believes that even a partial transfer of sovereignty to supranational bodies runs counter to the principle of subsidiarity and, furthermore, leads to unequal power relations. However, the SD is in favour of Sweden cooperating with other countries.

The SD devotes much of its manifesto to concepts such as 'fatherland' and 'nation', and, following from that, to the policy areas of integration and immigration.

According to the SD, immigration over recent decades has resulted in a serious threat to the once homogenous Swedish nation. In order to tackle the problem of ethnic enclaves, the SD argues, immigration must be limited. However, they already see this threat as a reality in Sweden and identify two essential ways of approaching the issue: the repatriation or assimilation of immigrants.

None of the official articles, statements and publications of the SD suggests any overt or inherent racist attitude per se. Their anti-immigration policy is targeted primarily at uncontrolled immigration of people with Muslim backgrounds. At a presentation of his party to an international audience in 2010, party chairman Jimmie Åkesson was adamant that the SD was the only party in Sweden to be critical of mass immigration, Islam and multicultural society. Similarly, his party's solidarity with the State of Israel was owing to the latter's position as a bulwark against the onslaught of the Islamic world in the Middle East. The party demonstrated its pro-Israel attitude with an expression of solidarity on the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of Israel in 2008 as well as its participation in the commemoration of Holocaust victims on 27 January, International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Although the party leadership officially distances itself from any form of racism, in their documents and articles the SD exploits fears of being 'swamped' by foreigners, especially Muslim immigrants. In an advertisement broadcast ahead of the 2010 parliamentary election, a female pensioner with a wheeled walker is overtaken by a group of burka-clad women with prams who get to the coffer of the Swedish social security office before her.<sup>1</sup> With its slogan 'Pensions or immigration: the choice is yours', the advertisement was clearly aimed at those who believe that the government gives too little to the older generation and expends too much of its resources on immigrants.

During the controversy surrounding publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish daily newspaper *Jyllands Posten* in 2005, the SD was unequivocal in its support for freedom of expression and expressed its solidarity with the Danes. It condemned the reactions of the Islamic world and its calls to boycott Danish products. In early 2006, it published one of the cartoons on the website of the party newspaper, *SD-Kuriren*, under the heading 'Muhammad's face'. However, the party leadership refrained from publishing the entire series in *Kuriren* to avoid sanctions against Swedish products and attacks on Swedish citizens (Sweden Democrats decide against further publication 2007).

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1 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgiG9aRNRgQ>. The original version of the election advertisement with English subtitles has now been removed from YouTube.

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Given the recent findings of an educational study into the declining performance of primary school pupils and the poor results of students from migrant backgrounds, the SD questioned Education Minister Jan Björklund and Integration Minister Erik Ullenhag during a question-and-answer session in the Riksdag on 2 December 2010. The SD MPs wanted confirmation of their impression that the study's negative findings were linked to the integration policy of recent years. They also criticised the position of the Discrimination Ombudsman, Katri Linna, that the wearing of the niqab (a garment covering the face) could not be considered grounds for excluding a person from state educational establishments. This decision was in response to a complaint from a Muslim girl who had been prevented from attending a Stockholm high school due to her face being covered (Åkesson and Ekeröth 2010).

Although the SD is keen to position itself on other topics of political debate, issues such as labour immigration (*arbetskraftsinvandring*), family reunification among immigrants (*anhöriginvandringen*) and abuse of the asylum system remain the dominant themes in the party's press statements and parliamentary questions. Equally, there are statements criticising excessive subsidies, for example for the construction of wind farms, and the inadequate protection of local agriculture (SD 2012).

It is to their stances on immigration policy and abuse of the welfare system by foreigners that the SD owes most of its popularity. A Swedish–Danish study commissioned by the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in summer 2010 found that only around 20% of the Swedes questioned regarded immigration generally as a problem (compared with 40% in Denmark). However, it is precisely in that part of the population that the SD finds its supporters, in regions where Sweden's housing policies of the 1970s and 1980s have created the perfect conditions for the ghettoisation of immigrants and where people's underlying dissatisfaction with their own living conditions is greatest, due to rising unemployment ('Broderfolk splittede om indvandrere' 2010).

The well-groomed appearance of their leading figures and their clear distancing from Sweden's active radical right-wing scene have enabled the SD to gain a foothold among the working classes, traditionally a key target group of the SDP. For decades, these working-class voters enjoyed the benefits of the social-democratic welfare state; now that this welfare state is being used by people from other countries, they see the established

parties—foremost among them the SDP, which has run the country for decades—as being no longer able to safeguard the long-established benefits in the same way that they used to. The solution appears to be a group of patriotic young people who are willing to defend the achievements of the Swedish social model.

Time and again, Jimmie Åkesson conjures up the notion of social cohesion in Swedish society, as he did in his 2012 keynote speech at Almedalen, on the island of Gotland, during the traditional Almedalen Week at the end of the parliamentary year. Referring to the model of the Swedish welfare state (*Folkhemmet*) largely developed by the SDP, he targets his party's offerings at a social-nationalist electorate which increasingly feels that it no longer has a political home in the left-wing parties. In this, he is following the example of the DF, although his influence to date is not comparable with that of the Danish party.

#### IT CANNOT BE, IT MUST NOT BE: THE STIGMATISATION OF THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS

Following the SD's surefooted entry into the Riksdag, the initial reactions of the media and politicians were of shock at the right-wing populists' success. Until as late as summer 2009, the Swedish daily newspaper *Aftonbladet* refused to print the SD's advertisements. State broadcaster TV4 refused to transmit the controversial 'Pensions or immigration' election advertisement. Therefore, in April 2010 Jimmie Åkesson wrote an open letter to editors-in-chief and newspaper publishers calling on them to view the SD as a 'normal' party and, accordingly, to treat them in an unbiased way in their media coverage. In the run-up to the parliamentary election of September 2010, some SD events still had to be held under police protection (Brisman et al. 2010; Hellström and Hervik 2011). A few observers in neighbouring Denmark commented derisively on such conflicts with the right-wing populist movement and called on the OSCE to send in election observers ahead of the parliamentary election in Sweden (Halle 2010; 'Tag der Rache' 2010).

Two years after the entry of the SD into the Riksdag, the established parties still refuse to cooperate with the right-wing populists. After the 2010 elections, when neither of the two major blocks could command an absolute majority, SD party secretary Björn Söder offered to enter into coalition talks, but his proposal fell on deaf ears. As soon as it became

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known that the SD had won seats in parliament, all leading politicians from both the government and opposition ruled out any collaboration with the party. Having initially helped the minority government, led by Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, to secure the majority it needed to pass a number of bills, the SD grouping in the Riksdag changed its strategy and voted against the governing alliance. This happened, for example, in spring 2011 over the proposed sale of state shareholdings in Vattenfall and TeliaSonera.

Calls for the party to be accepted as a 'normal' political rival are growing louder. However, this demand is motivated less by acceptance of the new reality in which the SD is a political player, than by the attempt to counteract the efforts of the SD to present themselves as 'true democrats' and 'martyrs of democracy'. The stigmatisation of SD members, their status as victims and outcasts of democracy has now become part of the party's success. The persistent exclusion of the party is being turned into an argument against the establishment, which is portrayed as a bureaucratised and complacent political elite removed from the concerns of ordinary people (Hellström et al. 2012, 201–3; Ramalingam 2012, 19–21).

At the same time, a debate has begun, even within the established parties, about whether Sweden's integration policy over recent decades has failed. In other words, while the SD is not itself involved in the discussion, the root causes of the rise of right-wing populism are being investigated, as in Denmark years ago.

Currently, all of the signs suggest that the SD will become firmly established on the political map of Sweden, at least in the medium term. Unlike the NyD, the populist, right-wing party that enjoyed brief success in the early 1990s with its xenophobic and anti-elite rhetoric, the SD has grown organically over the past decade and is underpinned by a stable organisational structure and grassroots support. Although the NyD also attacked the immigration policy of the then SDP government, its main political focus was on the country's economic realignment (owing to the backgrounds of its two founding fathers, the industrialist Ian Melcher Shering Wachtmeister and businessman Bert Willis Karlsson).

As is now the case in many parts of Europe, even in liberal Sweden large sections of the population are latently fearful of being swamped by an influx of foreigners, who currently make up 14% of the Swedish population. Particularly during the Balkan wars of the 1990s and the war in Iraq in

the early 2000s, Sweden granted refuge to thousands of people from southeast Europe and the Middle East. Studies show that since the 1990s, immigration has become one of the most important political issues among people who are eligible to vote, although until recently it has not been discussed in Sweden anywhere nearly as intensively as in neighbouring Denmark (Rydgren 2010, 65–7).

Moreover, the SD has maintained its efforts to ‘clean up’ its ranks by removing people who bring the party under suspicion of being racist or who publicly damage the party’s image. In this regard, party chairman Jimmie Åkesson is not afraid of dismissing such long-time fellows and central party figures as the SD’s economic policy spokesman in the parliament, Erik Almquist, and Kent Ekeroth, a Member of Parliament and the SD’s international secretary. Both of the SD’s top politicians were seen in a private video clip filmed in 2010 insulting an obviously inebriated man and a young woman who was trying to calm down the situation. The clip was leaked to Swedish daily *Expressen* and released in November 2012 (‘Vittne’ 2012).

As consequence of the incident, Erik Almquist has resigned from all political duties including his parliamentary mandate. Kent Ekeroth was allowed by the party’s board to keep his seat in parliament, but resigned from all parliamentary committees. Despite this latest scandal, the party’s public support remains unbroken so far.

## SUMMARY AND OUTLOOK

With the entry of the SD into the Riksdag, Sweden became the last Scandinavian country to be rudely awakened from dreams of a liberal, all-encompassing welfare society by a right-wing populist movement. Anti-elite, anti-tax parties became established in neighbouring Denmark and Norway as far back as the 1970s; in the 1990s, these parties ‘further developed’ their programmes through anti-immigration and anti-EU rhetoric. Neither the inclusion of the DF in Denmark nor the attempted stigmatisation and marginalisation of the SD have resulted in the regression of right-wing populist movements. Quite the opposite in fact: the DF came third in the 2011 parliamentary election, while the SD seems set to establish itself in Sweden’s political landscape, at least in the medium term, with opinion polls putting the party at a stable 5% to 6%.

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As well as their positions on European integration, which range from criticism to outright rejection, another feature that the right-wing populist parties in Denmark and Sweden share is their belief that state benefits should only be received by their nation's 'own people'. In this connection, they deliberately fuel existing fears of immigration and of the potential erosion of the welfare state. While in Denmark this approach has proved successful with some groups of voters since the mid-1980s, the themes of integration and immigration are relatively recent additions to the political agenda in Sweden, although here too they are increasingly coming to the forefront of public debate.

Thanks to rhetoric of this kind, the right-wing populists find the bulk of their grassroots support among the traditional working class. Accordingly, the rise of these parties has coincided with a gradual sidelining of socio-economic issues in favour of socio-cultural ones and an associated loss of power by the Social Democratic parties, which dominated the political scene in the Nordic countries for decades. This is most clearly apparent in the success of the DF in Denmark, where research confirms that the working-class share of the DF's vote increased noticeably in the 2001, 2005 and 2007 elections, at the expense of the SDP. Between 1966 and 2001, the socialist parties suffered a steady decline in support in Denmark. Although the SDP succeeded in supplanting the liberal-conservative government in November 2011 after 10 years in power, this should not disguise the fact that this one-time party of the working class achieved its worst result in a Danish parliamentary election in over 100 years, winning just 24.9% of the vote.

Likewise, the image of the Swedish Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, SAP) has changed over the past decades. Save for a few years' interruption, it represented the country's interests as Sweden's ruling party for seven decades. In 1975, the SAP had some 1,032,219 registered members, equivalent to 12.4% of Sweden's total population at the time; by 2009, this figure had slumped to just over 100,000. In other words, the SAP's current membership is just one tenth of what it was in 1975. In the September 2010 parliamentary election, it won 30.9% of the vote, its worst result since 1914.

However, unlike in neighbouring Denmark, the SD has not filled the vacuum created in the working-class vote, yet; rather, the conservative Moderaterna party has opened up to the centre-left to win over new sections of the



electorate. The Moderate Party's transformation, under its leader Fredrik Reinfeldt, from a conservative party into a modern, broad-based, centre-right one—dubbed the *Nya Moderaterna* (New Moderates)—proved successful in the 2006 parliamentary election, which saw the centre-right Alliance come to power. In their selection of issues and their appeal to target groups, the New Moderates focused more on the middle ground of society, which is traditionally left-leaning in Sweden. However, despite positioning itself as the *arbetarparti*—the employment party, rather than the worker's party—the unified centre-right Alliance has also been unable to completely undermine the populist 'anti-' approach adopted by the SD.

Neither inclusion nor stigmatisation has succeeded in pushing back the right-wing populist parties so far. Even in cosmopolitan Denmark and Sweden, as in most European countries, a growing social class has developed comprised of people who regard themselves as losers in the process of European integration and globalisation. These people are seeking refuge in the inflated conception of homeland and nation being promulgated by the populist politicians of the DF and the SD to appeal to archetypal Danish and Swedish instincts.

In view of global crises that are having a deep impact on people's day-to-day lives, even in the stable societies of northern Europe, populists will continue to receive support from (mostly less educated) voters for the foreseeable future. However, as long as the foundations of the democratic system itself are not called into question, this does not pose a threat to the open societies of Denmark and Sweden. Nonetheless, the established parties should take the fears and concerns that exist among ordinary people seriously. While politicians can only do a limited amount to allay fears of globalisation, the perceived distance of parties from their voters, as reflected in the anti-elite rhetoric of the populists, can definitely be countered through the open and transparent exercise of power by political decision-makers.

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# The Finns: Filling a Gap in the Party System

Tapio Raunio

## INTRODUCTION

The Finnish parliamentary elections of April 2011 were nothing short of extraordinary, producing major changes to the national party system and attracting considerable international media attention (Table 1). The populist and Eurosceptical The Finns (Perussuomalaiset, PS)<sup>1</sup> won 19.1% of the vote, a staggering increase of 15% on the 2007 elections and the largest ever increase in support achieved by a single party in Eduskunta (the unicameral national parliament) elections. Every other party represented in the Eduskunta lost votes. These were also the first Eduskunta elections in which the EU featured prominently in the debates, with the problems facing the eurozone and Finland's role in the bailout measures becoming the main topics of the campaign. Despite their major victory, The Finns continue in the opposition.

The reason for labelling The Finns as 'populist' is two-fold. First, this is how the party defines itself. The Finns are, by their own definition, the natural successor to the populist Finnish Rural Party (Suomen maaseudun puolue, SMP),<sup>2</sup> having been established in 1995 by former SMP activists after the party's bankruptcy. Party chair Timo Soini, who has led The Finns since 1997, was Deputy Chair (1989–92) and last Party Secretary of the SMP (1992–5); wrote his master's thesis on populism; and has openly acknowledged Veikko Vennamo, the equally charismatic and controversial leader of the SMP, as his role model in politics (Soini 2008). The programmes

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1 The party adopted its current English name, The Finns, in August 2011. Previously the party had been known as the True Finns. According to party leader Timo Soini, the simple new name is intended to emphasise the fact that the party represents ordinary citizens. Soini also felt that the old name, True Finns, had an extreme right or nationalistic slant to it. The exact translation of the Finnish name of the party, Perussuomalaiset, would be 'common Finns' or 'ordinary Finns'.

2 For information on the SMP, see Helander (1971), Sänkiäho (1971), and Matheson and Sänkiäho (1975). The SMP twice achieved major victories in Eduskunta elections, in 1970 and 1983.

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of The Finns identify the party as a populist movement, with the 2011 election programme in particular distinguishing the 'populist' version of democracy advocated by the party from the more elitist or bureaucratic version that characterises modern democracies. Second, defending the common, ordinary man or the 'forgotten people' and attacking the (corrupt) power elite are the cornerstones of the party's ideology (Ruostetsaari 2011). However, while on the socio-economic left-right spectrum The Finns are quite centrist or even centre-left (Jungar and Jupskås 2011; Ruostetsaari 2011), the emphasis on 'Finnishness' and protecting national culture and solidarity also indicates that The Finns bear many similarities to European radical right or anti-immigration parties (Arter 2010).

The exceptional nature of the 2011 elections is largely explained by the developments that had taken place since the previous Eduskunta elections four years earlier (Arter 2011; Borg 2012). Since the 2007 election, Finland had been governed by a centre-right coalition between the Centre Party, the National Coalition Party, the Green League and the Swedish People's Party that by mid-term had found itself in serious trouble due to party finance scandals. While the government stayed in office, there was, nonetheless, an awkward sense of sleaze permeating the domestic political landscape. Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen eventually stepped down in the summer of 2010 and was replaced as Centre Party leader by Mari Kiviniemi whose term in office did not get off to an easy start due to the eurozone crisis. The decision to save Greece from near-bankruptcy, and the related euro stabilisation measures, had resulted in unexpectedly heated debates in the Eduskunta during the final weeks of Vanhanen's premiership, and the debates continued after the summer break.

In the run-up to the 2011 Eduskunta elections, as first Ireland and then Portugal followed Greece and asked for bailouts, the EU debate intensified. It is fair to say that no other EU matter has produced similar tensions in Finland since its accession to the Union in 1995. While the opposition parties, as well as a notable share of backbench MPs from the governing parties, were clearly aggravated by the EU response to the crisis, the debates were also strongly influenced by the upcoming elections.



**Table 1 Elections to the Finnish parliament, 1945–2011 (%)**

Year	VAS	SDP	VIHR	KESK	PS	LIB	KD	SFP	KOK	Others
1945	23.5	25.1	-	21.3	-	5.2	-	7.9	15.0	2.0
1948	20.0	26.3	-	24.2	-	3.9	-	7.7	17.1	0.8
1951	21.6	26.5	-	23.2	-	5.7	-	7.6	14.6	0.8
1954	21.6	26.2	-	24.1	-	7.9	-	7.0	12.8	0.4
1958	23.2	23.2	-	23.1	-	5.9	-	6.8	15.3	2.5
1962	22.0	19.5	-	23.0	2.2	6.3	-	6.4	15.0	5.6
1966	21.1	27.2	-	21.2	1.0	6.5	0.5	6.0	13.8	2.7
1970	16.6	23.4	-	17.1	10.5	6.0	1.1	5.7	18.0	1.6
1972	17.0	25.8	-	16.4	9.2	5.2	2.5	5.4	17.6	0.9
1975	18.9	24.9	-	17.6	3.6	4.3	3.3	4.7	18.4	4.3
1979	17.9	23.9	-	17.3	4.6	3.7	4.8	4.2	21.7	1.9
1983	13.5	26.7	-	17.6	9.7	-	3.0	4.6	22.1	2.8
1987	13.6	24.1	4.0	17.6	6.3	1.0	2.6	5.3	23.1	2.4
1991	10.1	22.1	6.8	24.8	4.8	0.8	3.1	5.5	19.3	2.7
1995	11.2	28.3	6.5	19.8	1.3	0.6	3.0	5.1	17.9	6.3
1999	10.9	22.9	7.3	22.4	1.0	0.2	4.2	5.1	21.0	5.8
2003	9.9	24.5	8.0	24.7	1.6	0.3	5.3	4.6	18.6	3.3
2007	8.8	21.4	8.5	23.1	4.1	0.1	4.9	4.6	22.3	2.4
2011	8.1	19.1	7.3	15.8	19.1	-	4.0	4.3	20.4	2.0

*Legend:* VAS: Vasemmistoliitto (Left Alliance), until 1987 the Finnish People's Democratic League (Suomen Kansan Demokraattinen Liitto), in 1987 it included Demokraattinen vaihtoehto (Democratic Alternative); SDP: Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue (Social Democratic Party); VIHR: Vihreä liitto (Green League), in 1987 not as a party in its own right; KESK: Keskusta (Centre Party), until 1965 the Agrarian League (Maalaisliitto), in 1983 it included the Liberal People's Party (Liberaalinen Kansanpuolue); PS: Perussuomalaiset (The Finns), in 1962 and 1966 the Small-Holders Party (Pienviljelijäin Puolue), and until 1995 the Finnish Rural Party (Suomen maaseudun puolue, SMP); LIB: Liberaalit (Liberals), until 1948 the National Progressive Party (Kansallinen Edistyspuolue), until 1966 the People's Party of Finland (Suomen Kansanpuolue), until 1999 the Liberal People's Party (Liberaalinen Kansanpuolue); KD: Kristillisdemokraatit (Christian Democrats), until 2001 the Finnish Christian League (Suomen Kristillinen Liitto, SKL); SFP: Svenska folkpartiet (Swedish People's Party); KOK: Kansallinen Kokoomus (National Coalition Party).

*Source:* Statistics Finland (the years 1948–75 also include votes in the Åland Islands).

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During these debates, the more Eurosceptical parties (The Finns, the Christian Democrats and the Left Alliance<sup>3</sup>) in particular, and the main opposition party, the Social Democrats, attacked the government. The Social Democrats adopted a highly publicised position against giving Finnish money to eurozone Member States without adequate compensation, also demanding that banks and investors become involved in solving the crisis, and, in general, the opposition parties voted against the aid measures.

The main beneficiary of the party finance scandals and of the euro crisis was undoubtedly The Finns. While the party had been represented in the Eduskunta since 1995,<sup>4</sup> it had enjoyed only marginal electoral success until 2011, and was essentially considered as something of a nuisance or harmless protest movement in Finnish politics. The party's support had more than doubled in the previous elections to the Eduskunta, from 1.6% in 2003 to 4.1% in 2007, and the rise of the party had continued in the 2008 municipal elections, when it captured 5.4% of the vote. However, the real turning point came in the 2009 European Parliament (EP) elections, with The Finns gaining 9.8% of the vote and their first ever seat in the Parliament (Raunio 2010a).<sup>5</sup> It is probable that this victory was explained more by a combination of Soini's popularity and the electorate voting against the mainstream parties than by Euroscepticism. However, one can also argue that the voters were protesting against the broad pro-EU consensus of the political elite, and this was indeed one of The Finns' main campaign themes.

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3 The Left Alliance and the Green League were so divided over EU membership in 1994 that they chose not to adopt official positions on the issue. Joining the government in the spring of 1995 meant that both parties had to profile themselves, almost overnight, as pro-integrationist parties. The Greens have become solidly pro-EU while, since joining the opposition in 2003, the Left Alliance has adopted a more Eurosceptical position, which is also more in line with the views of its electorate. The Christian Democrats (then the Christian League) opposed EU membership and European monetary union and are against deeper integration. The European stances of both the Left Alliance and the Christian Democrats have clearly been dependent on government–opposition dynamics (Raunio 2005; 2008).

4 The Finns was established in May 1995, two months after parliamentary elections. The sole elected representative of the SMP, Raimo Vistbacka, became MP for The Finns. Vistbacka was also the first party chair, serving in that position from November 1995 until 1997, when Soini became the party's leader.

5 In the three previous EP elections The Finns had won less than 1% of the vote (in 1996, 0.7%; in 1999, 0.8%; and in 2004, 0.5%).

In a repeat of the 2009 EP elections, the 2011 Eduskunta election campaign was also characterised as a clash between The Finns and the mainstream parties. The governing parties in particular, often backed by the Social Democrats, did their best to discredit Soini and his party, with the consequence that their own policy agendas were often ignored or downplayed. While The Finns had been able to force immigration onto the domestic political agenda prior to the 2009 EP elections, Soini did not want it to become a key issue in the campaign, mainly because many of the party's candidates had expressed rather racist views. Instead, Europe, or more precisely the euro stabilisation measures and Finland's participation in the bailouts, became the main focus of the elections. The debates benefited the entire opposition but most of all The Finns, who could attack the euro stabilisation measures with more credibility than the traditional parties of government. After all, The Finns were and are the only party represented in the Eduskunta that has consistently been opposed to the EU—and they are also the only party which has systematically used the EU as a central part of its electoral campaigns and political discourse.

Considering these developments, it is not surprising that those who voted for The Finns in the 2011 elections were a heterogeneous group. The party's core voters had predominantly been less-educated men, but in the 2011 elections The Finns clearly attracted new supporters from the ranks of the main parties—the Centre Party, the National Coalition Party and particularly the Social Democrats. Interestingly, the party performed remarkably evenly across the country, indicating that The Finns also made significant advances in the more rural constituencies, the traditional strongholds of the Centre Party. Overall, according to surveys, voters were drawn to supporting the party because they wanted societal change and to shake up both established patterns of power distribution and the direction of public policies, especially concerning immigration and European integration. Hence it is fair to claim that the phenomenal rise of The Finns can be explained by both protest and issue voting (Suhonen 2011; Borg 2012; Grönlund and Westinen 2012; Paloheimo 2012).

### PROGRAMMES, TOPICS AND MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

The programmatic development of The Finns reflects its electoral strength. But while the party programmes were generally very brief until the 2007 Eduskunta elections, there is, nonetheless, considerable thematic consistency in the programmes adopted since 1995. Examining the programmes, campaigns and mobilisation strategies of The Finns, the issue focus or priorities of the party can be divided into three main themes: defending the ‘forgotten’ people, Euroscepticism, and ethno-nationalism.<sup>6</sup> As the analysis in this section will show, it is obvious that there is a certain degree of overlap between the themes, with, for example, concerns about democracy relevant to all three thematic categories.<sup>7</sup>

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6 The analysis is based on the following programmes (none of which are available in English): Oikeutta kansalle, Perussuomalaisen puolueen yleisohjelma, Olen Perussuomalainen, (‘Justice for the People’, the general programme of the True Finns Party, ‘I am a True Finn’), approved at the 1st Party Congress, 26 November 1995 in Kokkola; Eurovaalijulistus: Perussuomalainen kriittisenä Euroopassa, (Manifesto for the European elections: ‘A True Finn: Critical in Europe’), approved at the True Finns’ Party Council, 16 June 1996 in Jyväskylä; Perussuomalaisten eurovaaliohjelma 1999: Perussuomalainen kriittisenä Euroopassa (The True Finns’ programme for the European elections 1999: ‘A True Finn - Critical in Europe’); Perussuomalaisten lähiajan tavoiteohjelma, (Short-term target programme of the True Finns), approved at the 4<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, 17 June 2001 in Oulu; Perussuomalaisten eduskuntavaaliohjelma 2003, Uusi suunta Suomelle – Korjauksia epäkohtiin, (The True Finns’ programme for the parliamentary elections 2003, ‘A new direction for Finland – Remedies for grievances’), approved at the True Finns’ Party Council, 11 August 2002 in Pori (Perussuomalaiset 2002); Perussuomalaisten lähiajan tavoiteohjelma (Short-term target programme of the True Finns), approved in Lappeenranta in 2003 (Perussuomalaiset 2003); Perussuomalaisten EU-vaaliohjelma 2004: Perussuomalaiset puolustavat Suomen kansaa (The True Finns’ programme for the European elections 2004: ‘The True Finns defending the Finnish people’); Perussuomalaisten lähiajan tavoiteohjelma, (Short-term target programme of the True Finns), approved in 2005 in Kokkola; Perussuomalaiset r.p. Eduskuntavaaliohjelma 2007, Oikeudenmukaisuuden, hyvinvoinnin ja kansanvallan puolesta!, (The True Finns’ programme for the parliamentary elections 2007, ‘For justice, welfare and rule by the people!’) approved at the Party Council of 13 August 2006 in Ikaalinen (Perussuomalaiset 2006); Perussuomalaisten EU-vaaliohjelma 2009 (The True Finns’ programme for the European elections 2009) (Perussuomalaiset 2009); Suomalaiselle sopivin, Perussuomalaiset r.p:n eduskuntavaaliohjelma 2011 (‘Fits Best for a Finn’, The True Finns’ programme for the parliamentary elections 2011) approved on 25 February 2011 (Perussuomalaiset 2011).

7 For more detailed analyses of the ideology of The Finns, see Arter (2010) and Ruostetsaari (2011). Raunio (2011b; 2012) provides a more thorough discussion of the party’s European policy.

### Defending the ‘forgotten’ people

The Finns are very strong champions of the cause of the common man or woman, the ordinary citizens whose interests have, according to The Finns, been neglected by the ‘old parties’. Soini often uses the term ‘old parties’ when referring to the traditional parties of government, blaming them both for not listening to what people want and for their corrupt and elitist ways of modern governance. Drawing on ‘Christian-social’ values, the party thus offers a home for the underprivileged or ordinary people, those ‘forgotten’<sup>8</sup> by the ruling elites. According to its 2011 election programme, the activities of The Finns are based on ‘honesty, fairness, humaneness, equality, respect for work and entrepreneurship, and spiritual growth’ (Perussuomalaiset 2011).

In socio-economic issues the party takes a rather ambivalent position. On the one hand, The Finns are against bureaucratic interference, stating that the government should avoid extensive regulation and respect the rights of ordinary citizens to control their own lives. Bureaucratic rules and ‘red tape’ are particularly harmful to small-scale entrepreneurs and farmers, two occupational groups championed by The Finns. But more importantly, the party calls for strong government action in the economy, with the state acting as a bulwark against uncontrolled market forces and the power of big money and large multinationals. Government intervention is also needed to safeguard the livelihoods of the more rural and peripheral constituencies. The Finns are also, by and large, supportive of the welfare state, as the universalistic Nordic welfare model is particularly important for the underprivileged and less affluent sections of society that the party aims to represent. The party also favours the existing system of progressive taxation, supporting cuts to taxes paid by low-income citizens (Ruostetsaari 2011).

Thus, on the political spectrum The Finns are quite centrist or even centre-left, but their core values are more conservative. Aside from its nationalistic and anti-immigration tendencies (see below), the party emphasises both the role of the family and the need to uphold the rule of law, whilst

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8 Veikko Vennamo, the long-standing leader of the SMP, famously claimed that his party defended the interests of the ‘forgotten people’. Overall, there is considerable programmatic continuity between the SMP and The Finns (Ruostetsaari 2011; but see also Arter 2012).

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expressing concerns about societal ills such as corruption and crime. There are extensive references to traditional, or Christian, values in the programmes, with the party generally stating that families and family-sized firms provide a solid foundation for societies. The Finns have demanded more resources for the police and the army, and have stood against liberal policies such as same-sex marriages. The party also champions the cause of sustainable development, yet, of the 'old parties' it has attacked the Green League in particular and, more broadly, the green political agenda.

In the populist version of democracy espoused by the party, decision-making is based on simple and transparent procedures, as more complex systems are also more undemocratic, favouring bureaucracy and 'faceless power'. The elitist conception of democracy introduced by the 'old parties' emphasises bureaucratic expertise and neglects the opinions of the citizens. According to the populist version of democracy 'people want to select as their representatives persons who share their preferences and who can unite the nation in the face of different conflicts of interest' (Perussuomalaiset 2011). The Finns are thus anti-elitist and anti-establishment, but certainly not anti-system or anti-democratic as the party is not against national political institutions. In fact, The Finns strongly support the roles of domestic institutions as part of their overall defence of national democracy and sovereignty. Yet, the party programmes do not display any sympathy or support for authoritarian regimes or leadership. While The Finns are against reducing the powers of the president, the party is not otherwise in favour of charismatic or strong leaders. The party also favours a more active use of direct democracy, both in significant domestic matters and in decisions concerning further EU integration or possible NATO membership.

The Finns have been particularly critical of the consensual and cartelised ways of Finnish and European governance, where the 'old parties', often in conjunction with big money and powerful interest groups, collude to conclude bargains without paying sufficient attention to the wishes of ordinary citizens. Indeed, the Finnish polity is in many ways highly consensual—and also quite elitist (Ruostetsaari 2003). The fragmented party system, with no party winning more than about 25% of the vote in elections (Table 1), facilitates consensual governance and ideological convergence between parties aspiring to enter the cabinet. Governments are typically surplus majority coalitions that bring together parties from the left and the right. Government formation has something of an 'anything goes' feel to it (Arter 2009), with the current 'six-pack' cabinet formed after

the 2011 elections including six parties, thus leaving only two in opposition. As in the ‘rainbow’ governments that ruled the country from 1995 to 2003, the ‘six-pack’ includes both the most right-wing (the National Coalition Party) and most left-wing (the Left Alliance) parties in the Eduskunta.

Decision-making on foreign and EU policies has been particularly characterised by the search for a broad domestic consensus among the elite. This applies particularly to foreign policy, in which maintaining an amicable relationship with the Soviet Union was of overriding importance during the Cold War. This combination of elitism and consensualism has arguably provided more leverage for the political leadership than in the other Nordic countries (Rehn 2003). The rules of the national EU coordination system—based on building consensus, including between the government and the opposition in the Eduskunta—have certainly contributed to the depoliticisation of European issues. The priority of the national EU coordination system is to manufacture national unanimity or at least broad elite consensus, which can arguably be translated into additional influence during EU-level bargaining<sup>9</sup> (Johansson and Raunio 2010).

Particularly noteworthy has been—at least until the eurozone crisis—the lack of conflict, or even tension, between the government and the Eduskunta on the one hand, and between the government and the opposition on the other hand. The government is usually criticised by individual MPs from both opposition and government parties rather than by a united opposition or even by unitary party groups. Committee scrutiny of European matters in the Eduskunta has differed in one important respect from the processing of domestic legislation: the government–opposition dimension has not played the only significant role in either the Grand Committee (the EU committee) or in specialised committees. Granting the opposition a larger role in European matters facilitates broader backing for governmental action at the European level. This reduces the likelihood of the main features of Finnish integration policy being altered after each parliamentary election, and also further lowers the probability of EU issues featuring in domestic party competition (Raunio 2005; 2008).

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9 Interestingly, when Finnish and Swedish MPs were asked in a survey carried out in 2001/2002 who should have influence in domestic EU decision-making, Swedish MPs placed the electorate in second place (with the cabinet) after the parliament, whereas Finnish MPs placed the electorate in eighth position after the various national political institutions (Ahlbäck Öberg and Jungar 2009).

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Thus, until the 2011 elections, there had been a broad partisan consensus about Europe, despite the fact that in the membership referendum held in October 1994 only 57% voted in favour of joining the Union (turnout was 74%). The SMP, the predecessor of The Finns, had been against joining the EU. National integration policy can be characterised as flexible and constructive, and has sought to consolidate Finland's position within the inner core of the EU (Raunio and Tiilikainen 2003; Tiilikainen 2006). The Finns have forcefully attacked these consensual modes of decision-making. Coming from outside of that cosy elite consensus, The Finns have demanded public debates about Europe, calling for an end to 'one truth' politics.

Such consensual features and office-seeking tendencies have, in turn, facilitated a lack of opinion congruence between the parties and their supporters over the EU. This opinion gap has been most pronounced in the three 'core' parties of recent decades: the Centre Party, the National Coalition Party and the Social Democrats (Mattila and Raunio 2005; 2012). According to Eurobarometer surveys, Finns are more sceptical of integration than the average EU citizen. In addition to generally low levels of public support for integration, the Finnish electorate seems to be particularly concerned about the influence of small Member States on EU governance. Hence it is not surprising that Finnish parties have generally maintained a fairly low profile in integration matters.<sup>10</sup> Given that most parties are internally divided over the EU, it is also not surprising that they have shown little interest in submitting EU matters, such as treaty amendments, to referenda. A similar lack of opinion congruence applies to immigration policy, where MPs have been more positive about immigration than citizens in general, and non-voters in particular (Kestilä-Kekkonen and Wass 2008; Wass et al. 2012). Thus, there was and is clear demand for a party with a more critical view of European integration.

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10 It also appears that, until the current euro crisis, the EU was not as salient an issue as in other Nordic countries, thus leaving parties more freedom to execute their preferred strategies. In contrast to the other Nordic countries, in Finland there were fewer issues around which to wage anti-EU campaigns (such as the euro in Sweden and Denmark, or the fisheries policy in Norway).



## Euroscepticism

The thrust of The Finns' anti-EU discourse can be summed up by Soini's famous slogan: 'whenever the EU is involved, you get problems'.<sup>11</sup> The party emphasises the 'impossibility' of integration, predicting (or hoping) that it will prove unworkable and thus inevitably disintegrate. As the opening section of the party's 2009 EP election programme, titled 'As a Finn in Europe—for democracy', states:

The Finns are a Eurosceptic party, for we emphasise how unworkable the EU is. On the other hand, The Finns are also against the EU, for we believe that democracy cannot work in the context of supranational EU governance. Hence the EU is not even in theory a democratic system and The Finns believe that democracy is the best way to organise societal decision-making (Perussuomalaiset 2009).

In its 2007 Eduskunta programme, the party argues that European integration and globalisation favour elites at the expense of democracy, with authority concentrated within a small circle of power elites and big businesses:

The EU's principles of subsidiarity and free movement are pure propaganda and are particularly aimed at getting young people to support the Union. At the same time the EU produces idiotic directives that make the lives of ordinary citizens more difficult and favour the power of big money. The EU is a project for filthy-rich capitalists, which tries to fill the pockets of major owners of capital while creating a valueless Europe where only money matters. In the view of The Finns, large artificial entities based on materialistic values are doomed to fail (Perussuomalaiset 2006).

Hence the anti-EU discourse bears many similarities to the European policies of left-wing parties, criticising the market-oriented nature of integration and its negative impact on the Nordic welfare state model (Jungar and Jupskås 2011). For example, in the 2009 EP election programme, the interests of big businesses and capital were clearly pitted against the interests of ordinary people:

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11 In Finnish 'missä EU, siellä ongelma'. Soini used this expression for the first time in a television debate during the 2006 presidential election campaign (Soini 2008, 211).

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Federalisation combined with enlargement—for example, to include Turkey—represents a further consolidation of unregulated capitalism and the centralisation of capital. A group of economically and culturally very diverse nations is necessarily heterogeneous and can only find agreement on increasing the power of the financial markets. This makes it easy for owners of big businesses to have control—power in the EU belongs to the elite, never to the people. The EU is destined to become a fortress for big businesses which aim—for example, through the free movement of the workforce—to reduce wages in more affluent Member States such as Finland. Inspiration for this development comes from the United States, where many citizens are forced to take two jobs due to low wages (Perussuomalaiset 2009).

For The Finns, the EU is the project of ‘politicians who are opposed to nation-states and support elitist democracy, which equals bureaucracy’ (Perussuomalaiset 2011). Hence integration will result in ‘mammoth-like bureaucracy and inefficiency’ (Perussuomalaiset 2003) and, even now, the EU is an inefficient heaven for bureaucrats. As The Finns are opposed to the principle of supranational democracy, they are against increased majority voting in and further empowerment of EU institutions. In the name of democracy, power must be given back to Member States. The Finns have also consistently demanded that key domestic EU choices, such as treaty amendments, be subject to referenda. When considering the gap in opinion regarding the EU reported above, their arguments in favour of direct democracy seem legitimate. As argued in their 2007 Eduskunta programme: ‘[t]he gap between the Eduskunta and the citizens over the EU is so large that representative democracy can even be seen to function poorly in Finland regarding EU affairs. The EU has a lot of influence. Hence EU matters should be subject to referenda in Finland’ (Perussuomalaiset 2006).

The Finns argue that the domestic elites have failed to defend national interests in Brussels. In fact, the party sees EU negotiations as a playground for pro-integrationist national elites. The SMP had already attacked the official consensual foreign policy stance of the Cold War period, and, according to The Finns, the same style continues today, with Finnish politicians ‘shining the shoes’ of EU leaders. The party demands a complete U-turn in national EU policy: Finland should switch from being ‘a model student to a critical partner’ (Perussuomalaiset 2009), for ‘several Member States that have defended national interests more vigorously

have also performed better in negotiations' (Perussuomalaiset 2006). For the party, Finland is not for sale.

Two themes stand out in this discourse about national interests: Finland's position as a net contributor to the EU budget and protecting livelihoods in rural areas. The Finns like to remind the electorate about the net payer aspect, for example, demanding in their 2011 election programme that Finland's payments be 'drastically reduced. The EU has redistributed money, for example through structural funds, to companies such as Coca-Cola, Ikea and IBM' (Perussuomalaiset 2011). The Common Agricultural Policy, in turn, is clearly detrimental to Finnish rural areas: 'Finland should not be turned into the EU's bear and wolf reservation' (Perussuomalaiset 2006) and agricultural policy should be returned to the competence of the Member States.

The Finns also highlight the lack of equality between Member States. Smaller countries are steamrollered by larger Member States, for the latter use the EU to advance their own objectives. Questioning the logic of the official national integration policy, the party argues that an increased use of majority voting in the EU will inevitably result in the empowerment of larger Member States.

Is the anti-EU discourse of The Finns primarily a case of a sustained, principled objection to European integration or should it be better understood as a product of domestic party competition? It is noteworthy that The Finns have at no stage demanded that Finland should exit the EU or the eurozone.<sup>12</sup> In fact, as their 2009 EP election programme states, The Finns are committed to working within the EU in order to advance their objectives: 'The Finns are in favour of intergovernmental cooperation among independent nation-states. Our strong desire is to return power from the EU to the nation-states. However, this goal is unattainable without participating in EU decision-making' (Perussuomalaiset 2009).

But it is also clear that the ideology of The Finns is fundamentally at odds with European integration. The party's EU policy has been stable and consistent, whereas the Euroscepticism displayed by the Christian Democrats, the Left Alliance or even the Centre Party is more opportunistic

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<sup>12</sup> A partial exception is found in the 2007 election programme, according to which Finland should leave the EU if further development towards a federal Europe continues. The 2011 Eduskunta election programme also argues that Finland could survive outside of both the eurozone (like Denmark and Sweden) and the EU (like Norway).

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or dependent on government–opposition dynamics (Raunio 2005; 2008). Thus the anti-EU stance of The Finns is definitely a case of hardened Euroscepticism and ‘a broad, underlying party position’ that goes beyond the mere conjunctural usage of Europe in domestic party competition (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008, 255).

### **Ethno-nationalism**

The Finns put significantly more emphasis than other parties represented in the Eduskunta on distinguishing Finns from others (‘us versus them’). The party is not against a multicultural Europe as such, but the kind of multiculturalism The Finns envisage is a mosaic of co-existing cohesive national cultures instead of the mixing or blending of such cultures within national societies such as Finland (Pyykkönen 2011). Hence it is logical that a tougher line on immigration is one of the main themes of The Finns’ ideology and that the party sees the EU as a bridge to increased immigration. Emphasising immigration is thus in line with the overall party ideology: ‘our name, The Finns, already tells you that our politics is based on Finnish history and culture’ (Perussuomalaiset 2011). The Finns are a ‘nationalistic’ and ‘EU-critical’ party which argues that Finnishness is a ‘strength’ and a ‘competitive advantage’ and that ‘patriotism is unselfishness’ (Perussuomalaiset 2011). The solidarity and cohesion of the Finnish nation are underlined: ‘history classes in schools must highlight the Finnish miracle, how a poor and peripheral country became a globally recognised nation of progress and wealth—even without large natural resources’ (Perussuomalaiset 2011). The solidarity of the nation is emphasised, with societal or national cohesion contributing to a feeling of togetherness which forms the core or basis of a well-functioning society. The Finns are also against the compulsory teaching of Swedish, the second official national language and the first language for 5.4% of the population.

While The Finns highlight national culture and Finnishness, the immigration policy of the party is nonetheless more moderate than that of most European radical right parties, with the party often speaking of a ‘responsible immigration policy’. However, it can be argued that the party has hardened its position on immigration in recent years, at least when measured in terms of the amount of space devoted to the issue and the wording of party programmes. As summarised by Arter (2010, 485), The Finns are ‘indeed a populist radical right party . . . albeit one (thus far) lacking the xenophobic extremism of the likes of the Austrian Freedom Party or the Danish People’s Party.’

According to The Finns, increased immigration threatens national solidarity and culture, and hence the party has repeatedly stressed that immigration matters must remain within the competence of EU Member States. In line with a heading from the 2011 Eduskunta election programme, ‘a cohesive nation—a safe Finland’ (Perussuomalaiset 2011), the party draws a direct line between immigration and societal problems: ‘the EU is struggling with mass unemployment, demographic issues, pollution, and serious crime, prostitution and substance abuse problems. We do not need or want them imported here’ (Perussuomalaiset 2002). Increased immigration also poses a threat to the Nordic welfare state model, The Finns argue: ‘EU level cooperation in immigration matters aims to undermine the taxation systems of welfare regimes as the readiness of people to pay taxes decreases when they observe problems related to immigration’ (Perussuomalaiset 2009). The Finns have also been consistently against EU enlargements, but Turkey is the only potential Member State whose membership has specifically been rejected.

Considering its centrist position on the left–right spectrum, immigration and, in particular, Europe have offered The Finns two policy issues with which to distinguish themselves from the ‘old parties’ (Mattila and Raunio 2005; Paloheimo 2008 and 2012; Arter 2010; Grönlund and Westinen 2012). Seeking to exploit the gaps in opinion between political parties and the electorate (see above), The Finns have challenged both the consensual patterns of policymaking and the resulting policies. The Finns are the only party represented in the Eduskunta that have consistently been against both the EU and further immigration, and they have systematically used these issues as a central part of their electoral campaigns and political discourse. However, their mobilisation strategies had not really been that successful before the 2007 elections, when favourable external conditions—the party finance scandal that fuelled the current anti-party sentiments and the eurozone crisis—facilitated the rise of the party.

It was their position as an ‘outsider’ which enabled The Finns to benefit from these developments. As the party was not part of the consensual arrangements, it could attack the existing status quo with more legitimacy and credibility than its competitors. In the 2011 elections The Finns’ voters identified the desire to unsettle the existing party system, or the overall balance of power, as the main reason for voting for the party, followed by a wish to tighten immigration policy and to curb the process of European integration (Borg 2012). More broadly speaking, there was clearly a significant void or gap in the party system, with it lacking political

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movements offering a voice to those citizens with more traditional or socially conservative and nationalistic preferences (Kestilä 2006).

### INTRA-PARTY DYNAMICS

The Finns put strong emphasis on the role and will of the people in politics, underlining the competence and political literacy of ordinary citizens. But while the discourse of the party is highly anti-elitist and not explicitly in favour of charismatic or strong leaders, it is certainly true that so far The Finns have effectively been a one-man show. As is typical of populist and radical right parties, The Finns is a highly leader-dependent organisation.

Party leader Timo Soini (born in 1962) certainly deserves a lot of credit for guiding The Finns from being outcasts to their current position as the third largest party in the Eduskunta.<sup>13</sup> A charismatic figure known for his witty and insightful comments, Soini's verbal anti-elitist attack has worked particularly well in the political climate of the past few years, which have been characterised by party finance scandals and the euro area crisis. Soini is a Roman Catholic (in 2011 there were only around 11,000 Catholics in Finland) and an avid Millwall Football Club supporter, with his Millwall scarf part of his normal attire. Easy to approach and seemingly always having the time to chat with people in market squares and other public places, Soini has campaigned tirelessly across the country, even between elections. Soini gained the third highest poll result of any candidate in the 2007 Eduskunta elections, and the highest individual vote totals in the 2008 municipal elections, the 2009 EP elections and the 2011 Eduskunta elections. In the 2011 elections those who voted for The Finns identified the personal qualities of Soini as the fourth most important reason for voting for the party (Borg 2012). In the first round of the 2006 presidential elections Soini won 3.4% of the vote, and in the first round of the 2012 elections he garnered a respectable 9.4% vote share.

It is difficult to determine Soini's leadership style within the party. Soini has definitely played a central role in the development of the party, and probably many, if not most, of the key decisions taken by The Finns have effectively been taken by him. Internal criticism of Soini has until now been almost non-existent and this may indicate that his party colleagues respect his leadership style. Another equally plausible interpretation

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13 While both The Finns and the Social Democrats won 19.1% of the vote, the latter have 42 seats and The Finns 39.

is that many fear Soini or believe that The Finns would collapse or split without him. Whatever the reason behind this strong support for Soini, it is clear that since the 2011 elections there has been increasing pressure to decentralise decision-making in the party. How to manage this transition towards a less leader-dependent organisation will be a key question in terms of the success and durability of the party.

Parties are rarely unitary actors, and The Finns are certainly no exception. A big question mark hovers above the parliamentary group, as 34 of the 39 MPs elected in 2011 have no previous parliamentary experience. According to Arter (2012, 819) the parliamentary group is 'a motley collection' of veterans from the Vennamo era, young female MPs primarily concerned with social policy questions, single-issue campaigners, persons with national reputations from the world of sport and entertainment, and a significant anti-immigration faction (see also Mickelsson 2011, 163–4). It is the last group of MPs in particular that has caused a major headache for Soini.

The unofficial leader, or at least the most important member, of the anti-immigration faction is Jussi Halla-aho, who was elected chair of the Eduskunta's Administration Committee, which is responsible for immigration matters. However, Halla-aho was forced to resign as the committee chair in June 2012 following a decision by the Supreme Court to fine him for hate speech on his blog. Halla-aho maintains that blog and contributes actively to *Homma*, an anti-immigration online discussion forum established in 2008 by people close to him (Mickelsson 2011). While *Homma* defines itself as a non-affiliated civil society movement, it is clearly closely linked with The Finns and, in May 2012, a founding member of *Homma*, Matias Turkkila, was appointed as editor of the party newspaper (*Perussuomalainen*). Several future The Finns MPs, and 5.5% of all the candidates in the 2011 elections, also signed the anti-immigration election programme 'Nuiva manifesti' in the summer of 2010. Roughly 15% of the parliamentary group belong to the Nuiva manifesto group and at least four MPs are members of the xenophobic organisation Suomen Sisu (Arter 2012, 819).

While The Finns have no formal ties with these or other xenophobic or nationalist organisations, there is obviously some personnel overlap between the party and such civil society movements. Worried about the effect of such links, Soini has tried to maintain a certain distance between The Finns and anti-immigration organisations. Soini has repeatedly

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spoken out against any kind of racial hatred or mistreatment on ethnic grounds, with The Finns also publicly condemning racism. At the same time Soini has forcefully defended the right of immigration-sceptics to express their opinions, also arguing that speaking out against further immigration should not be automatically considered as racism. Soini has likewise correctly pointed out that the anti-immigration faction probably only represents a minority of The Finns' electorate. However, strains within the parliamentary group have already become visible, with disciplinary measures having been taken against several individual MPs due to them speaking out against the party line or otherwise behaving unacceptably, and in particular, repeatedly using racist language. Interestingly, before the elections The Finns' candidates had to sign a document stating that, if elected, they would not defect to another party.<sup>14</sup>

It is also probable that concerns about party unity influenced the decision to stay in opposition after the 2011 elections. The official explanation for this was that it was impossible to participate in a government that was committed to eurozone rescue measures. During the campaign, The Finns had vowed not to approve bailout measures for Portugal or other euro countries and, despite some initial post-election signs of a willingness to moderate this stance and being asked by future Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen to join government formation talks, Soini and his party respected their election promise, knowing that the new government would most likely have to deal with subsequent euro stabilisation measures. However, it is evident that Soini's leadership qualities will now be truly tested. Leading the main opposition party is completely different from chairing a marginal party with no influence in national politics. And controlling an unpredictable, and some might say unruly, bunch of deputies is no easy task, even for the most skilled party leader.

Turning to extra-parliamentary organisation, electoral success has translated into increased financial resources, as political parties receive public funding based on the share of seats won in the most recent parliamentary election. The Finns have traditionally called for cuts to public party funding, both because such public money offers the established parties protection against potential new rivals and, more broadly, as part of their anti-elitist critique of the political establishment. However, in

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<sup>14</sup> Here the parliamentary experience of the SMP sets an interesting precedent. Out of the 41 MPs elected to the Eduskunta from the SMP between 1966 and 1995, only 56% ended their term as a parliamentarian in the SMP's parliamentary party (Arter 2012, 813).



2012 The Finns received €6,630,000 from the state, with this money a significant boost for the organisational development and consolidation of the party. Until the 2011 elections the party organisation suffered from weak resources; now the regional and local branches and the women's organisation have much stronger resources, the party central office has hired new staff and moved to new premises, and the party is investing in redesigning its newspaper and website. The website has particularly attracted criticism, and so improving the online activities of The Finns is a topical concern for the party leadership.<sup>15</sup>

The highest party organ is the party congress, which convenes every second year. The party congress elects the party leader, three vice-chairs, the party secretary and the other members of the party council (*puoluevaltuusto*). Individual party members have the right to direct representation, including the right to vote, in the party congress. The party council meets once or twice every year while the smaller party executive (*puoluehallitus*) convenes more frequently and is responsible for the preparation of issues and the management of the party organisation. In addition, there is a party board (*puolueneuvosto*) that meets in alternate years to the party congress and is specifically authorised to approve new party programmes or amendments to existing programmes. The party has organisations both for women and youth, and 16 regional organisations.

Starting with the 2008 municipal elections, The Finns have invested a lot of resources into trying to build the party from the ground up, recruiting members and candidates from across the country. This strategy has paid off, at least when considering how strongly and evenly The Finns performed in the 2011 elections throughout the 14 mainland constituencies.<sup>16</sup> The party has also tried to recruit female candidates in order to shake off its image as the party of men. In the 2011 Eduskunta elections just over one-third of The Finns' candidates were women (the lowest share of all the parties), with women comprising 28% of the MPs elected.

Finally, Soini was elected to the European Parliament in the 2009 elections. In the EP Soini faced the choice of joining either the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) or the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD)

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15 At the time of writing (August 2012), the website is in Finnish only, with no information in either Swedish (the second official language) or English.

16 The lowest vote share (13%) was in the Helsinki constituency, while the highest (23.6%) was recorded in the Satakunta electoral district.

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group, choosing the latter on account of its more uncompromising Eurosceptical views. Soini also felt that there would be more freedom for manoeuvre for him within the EFD group (Raunio 2010).<sup>17</sup>

### EFFECTS ON THE PARTY SYSTEM

Populist or ideologically more radical parties have, in several EU countries, influenced the policies of their competitors, not least regarding immigration (Mudde 2007, 277–92). Until the 2009 EP and 2011 Eduskunta elections The Finns had at best had a marginal impact on national politics, but in the past few years other parties have needed to take them more seriously. Essentially the ‘old parties’ have adopted a strategy of collective defence—seeking to contain The Finns by depicting them as an irresponsible and even outright dangerous political force that is all talk and no action. The 2009 EP election pitted The Finns against all the other parties, with the Green League and the Swedish People’s Party, which are in many ways ideologically furthest from The Finns, campaigning rather aggressively against Soini.<sup>18</sup>

However, the outcome of the 2009 EP elections showed that such a collective defensive shield was not sufficient to contain the rise of The Finns. Unsurprisingly, the ‘old parties’ opted for another strategy. With The Finns doing increasingly well in the opinion polls and with the eurozone crisis necessitating unpopular bailout measures, most of the other parties altered their policies, especially concerning the EU and immigration. Particularly noteworthy was the more critical discourse about Europe, which could indicate changes to national integration policy.

The decisions to lend money to Greece, Ireland and Portugal prior to the 2011 Eduskunta elections provided a fertile ground for lively debates about the EU. The government naturally defended Finland’s contributions to the stabilisation mechanisms, while the opposition as a whole was largely against the bailout packages. The main opposition party, the Social Democrats, was doing badly in the polls, and the eurozone crisis arrived at a convenient time, handing the party a salient issue with which

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17 After Soini returned to the Eduskunta in the 2011 elections, Sampo Terho became The Finns’ MEP.

18 For example, the Swedish People’s Party announced that it was the counter-force to The Finns (Vuoristo 2009).

to attack the government. Initially, the Social Democrats adopted a high-profile position against lending money to Greece without bilateral loan guarantees, subsequently demanding that the banks and other private sector institutions become involved in solving the crisis. The government justified decisions to participate in the euro area bailout operations with their positive effects on the domestic economy and growth, and the defence of national interests was generally stressed by all political parties (Raunio 2012).

Considering the debates and campaigns of the April 2011 elections, the current 'six-pack' government led by Jyrki Katainen has been under serious political pressure to defend national interests in Brussels. Broadly speaking, it appears that the emphasis on national interests and on the role of smaller Member States has become more pronounced in Finland in recent years, and the success of The Finns has clearly pushed the other parties in the direction of more cautious EU policies. Indeed, since entering office in June 2011 the cabinet has taken a tougher stance in EU negotiations. The government has demanded specific guarantees for its bailout payments to euro area countries; was alone in rejecting an 85% majority in decision-making for the European Stability Mechanism, demanding unanimity instead; and, together with the Netherlands, blocked the entry of Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen area. Whether this signals a more long-term change in national integration policy remains to be seen, but at least in the short term the Finnish government—and particularly the Social Democrats, given their vociferous criticism of the euro area stabilisation measures during the election campaign—is under considerable domestic pressure not to make too many concessions in Brussels (Jokela and Korhonen 2012; Raunio 2012).<sup>19</sup>

While problematic for the government, these developments are certainly good news in terms of democracy and public debate. Since the euro crisis began in the spring of 2010 the fate of the single currency and European integration more broadly have appeared repeatedly in the media and in parliamentary debates. This change is significant as, until the eurozone crisis, plenary involvement in European matters was very limited, with

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<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the euro issue has strained relations inside the government, particularly between the National Coalition Party and the Social Democrats. Significantly, the leader of the Social Democrats, Jutta Urpilainen, is the Finance Minister. Prime Minister Katainen has been clearly aggravated by the Social Democrats, with Urpilainen's high profile in the eurozone crisis raising questions about who actually leads Finnish EU policy.

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debates almost exclusively focusing on ‘high politics’ matters such as treaty amendments, Finland’s EU presidencies, and security and defence policy. These parliamentary debates about the eurozone are thus arguably the first time that the government has really been forced to justify and defend its EU policies in public—and that the opposition has attacked the cabinet publicly over the handling of EU matters. It also appears that the euro crisis has at least partially changed the consensual mode of decision-making in the Grand Committee, the Eduskunta’s EU committee. Voting has become more common in the Grand Committee, with the votes reproducing the government–opposition divide that characterises plenary decision-making.

For a long time, immigration was another depoliticised issue, with hardly any public discussion or party competition regarding national immigration policy. The rise of The Finns has changed this, even without the party employing immigration as a major campaign issue. Party leader Soini probably anticipates that active discourse about immigration might backfire given the problematic role of the anti-immigration faction inside his party. Hence, in many ways, the mere stronger presence of the anti-immigration The Finns has politicised immigration, and, interestingly, this has revealed splits inside the ‘old parties’.<sup>20</sup> Aware of such internal divisions, the leaders of other parties have adopted relatively cautious positions over immigration, seeking to appease the more immigration-sceptic voters and MPs within their ranks. However, given the very low proportion of immigrants in Finland, the electoral success of The Finns will not make much of a difference to current policies.

In terms of voters, the electoral success of The Finns is explained both by defections from other parties and by the mobilisation of non-voters. While The Finns’ core voters are predominantly male, less educated and have lower levels of income, in the 2011 elections the party was able to attract new supporters both from the left (the Social Democrats) and the right (the Centre Party and the National Coalition Party), and from both urban and rural constituencies. It appears that Social Democrat voters defected

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20 For example, in the 2009 EP elections it was the National Coalition Party rather than The Finns that was discredited on immigration when, on 29 May, one of its candidates, Kai Pöntinen, published an advertisement on the front page of the leading national daily newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, that called for a ‘stop to welfare bum immigrants’. While party chair Katainen was quick to denounce Pöntinen’s tactics and views, the episode clearly caused embarrassment to the National Coalition Party.

to The Finns in particular. Roughly one-fifth of those who voted for The Finns in 2011 had not voted in the previous Eduskunta elections held in 2007 (Suhonen 2011; Borg 2012; Grönlund and Westinen 2012; Paloheimo 2012). In fact, The Finns deserve credit for mobilising voters, particularly in the 2003 and 2011 Eduskunta elections, and the 2009 EP elections. In the 2011 elections the rise of The Finns, and the associated higher levels of contestation and interest, partly explains the rise in turnout to 70.5%. This was a welcome development given that the turnout in 2007, of 67.9%, had been the lowest since the Second World War and that it had been declining fairly consistently since the 1960s. The higher turnout in the 2003 Eduskunta elections is also partly attributable to The Finns and the success of their leading candidate in the Helsinki constituency, the late Tony 'Viking' Halme (Wass and Borg 2012).

## OUTLOOK

The challenge facing The Finns is typical of populist or radical right parties: Can the party maintain its popularity now that it is effectively part of the very political elite it fought so much against? What will happen to this anti-establishment party now that it finds itself strongly represented in the corridors of power? The decision to stay in opposition after the 2011 elections may have been a wise strategy, as this way The Finns can continue to attack the government, which is facing economic problems both in the EU and at home. Yet many feel that Soini shirked government responsibility, preferring instead the safety of opposition.<sup>21</sup>

The municipal elections of October 2012 saw the party winning 12.3% of the votes. While this is almost seven per cent less than in the 2011 Eduskunta elections, it was also roughly seven per cent more than The Finns achieved in the previous local elections held in 2008. Certainly The Finns are thus more strongly present in local politics than before. However, the real test for The Finns will be the 2015 Eduskunta elections. Given the substantially increased party funding, Soini and his party are guaranteed to be investing resources in strengthening their organisation, both nationally and in the constituencies, as well as in improving the various modes of communicating with the electorate (particularly the party newspaper and website). Until then The Finns will do their best to unsettle the government

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21 The SMP was in government from 1983 to 1990 and this probably contributed to the decline of the party.

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and to avoid internal divisions. As the largest opposition party, The Finns will seize every opportunity to provoke debates about the EU, and this may cause frictions in those parties that are internally divided over European integration.

The Finns are internally cohesive over integration, and their key policies of defending the welfare state and rural livelihoods and Euroscepticism will probably continue to appeal to both leftist and right-wing voters. On the left, both the Social Democrats and the Left Alliance performed badly in the 2009 EP elections. Most of the discussion at the European level has, in recent years, focused on the eurozone crisis and on the need to make the EU more competitive. When this discourse is combined with Finnish domestic measures aimed at making the public sector, and the national economy in general, more cost efficient and competitive, it is understandable that leftist voters may find it hard to identify themselves with European integration (Raunio 2010). On the right, the electorates of both the National Coalition Party and particularly the Centre Party are generally less supportive of integration than their parties, with rural voters probably also dissatisfied with the way the Centre Party has defended their interests. Overall, The Finns have clearly had an impact on the tone of domestic EU debates, with national interests and the role of smaller Member States receiving more attention from the 'old parties' (Raunio 2011a). This shift—at least in the short term—towards a more critical EU policy can also be viewed as a positive development when considering the gap in opinion between the political parties and their supporters over Europe.

Maintaining party unity may prove more difficult for Soini. The anti-immigration faction inside the party is particularly troubling for Soini, as the media and the other political parties are quick to exploit any such xenophobic rhetoric. This faction is definitely a minority within the party, comprising at most 10 to 15 of the MPs, but it is also the section of the party that receives the most media coverage and has already caused considerable problems for the party leadership. Another major question concerns the role of party leader Soini and the simultaneous goal of strengthening party organisation. Until now The Finns have been a highly leader-dependent organisation, with Soini firmly in control of his party. While it is hard to imagine The Finns without him, there are bound to be increasing demands within the party for moves towards more decentralised decision-making.

To conclude, the meteoric rise of The Finns is explained by several factors. The party has clearly benefited from favourable external conditions, with the party finance scandal and the eurozone crisis discrediting the 'old parties'. Hence the continuation of the European financial and structural crisis also benefits The Finns, who can attack unpopular policies from the safety of the opposition. There was also an attitudinal demand among the electorate for such a populist or radical-right party breakthrough, with national politics lacking parties that would represent those sections of the citizenry with more socially conservative and Eurosceptical preferences. At the same time, there is no denying the leadership skills of party chair Soini, who has guided his party from the margins of Finnish politics to its current position as the largest opposition party. And, irrespective of what one thinks about the policies of The Finns, the party has at least played a major role in forcing immigration and the EU onto the domestic public agenda. This is certainly a highly positive development considering how the 'old parties' had colluded to keep such matters depoliticised for such a long time.

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# The French National Front from Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen: Between Change and Continuity

Magali Balent

## INTRODUCTION

In October, the French National Front (Front National, FN) celebrated its fortieth anniversary. Founded on 5 October 1972 against the backdrop of the Cold War by a small activist group called the New Order (*Ordre Nouveau*),<sup>1</sup> it is one of the oldest far-right parties in Europe. Despite periods of waning popularity and electoral failure, in the most recent French parliamentary elections of June 2012 it managed to secure two seats in the National Assembly, while in April its president, Marine Le Pen, achieved the party's best-ever result in a presidential election (17.9% of the vote). This longevity shows that the FN is not an anomaly in the French political landscape or even the product of a protest vote in the context of a major economic crisis. Rather, it is the manifestation of a French political tradition born in the nineteenth century which brings together two conceptions of nationalism: that of an 'open' nationalism demanding openness to other countries so as to perpetuate French influence in the world, and that of a 'closed' nationalism advocating withdrawal into oneself as the ultimate condition for national survival (Winock 1990). Furthermore, it is a party that now has a stable and well-defined electoral base: primarily male (despite a recent increase in female support), low-skilled and largely working-class. Although it is now extending its reach to all levels of society, it remains France's most popular party among blue-collar workers (35% of whom voted for the FN in the 2012 presidential election).

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1 The New Order was a small political group formed in 1970 with a view to re-establishing a far-right political force in France. With a preference for street activism, it decided to set up the FN to participate in elections and so emerge from its isolation. It was dissolved a year after the establishment of the FN.

### Inheritor of the French far-right mantle

The FN is unquestionably part of the ‘far-right constellation’, which political scientist Pierre-André Taguieff eloquently defines as originating from an ‘ethnically based xenophobic nationalism, founding on the principle of biogenico-racial or historico-cultural determinism, whose most visible political form today is anti-immigrant xenophobia. It often manifests itself in a demonisation of elites and a reliance on conspiracy theories’ (2004, 178). More specifically, since its establishment the FN has brought together the two major families of the French far right: the nationals, ‘fans of Poujadist populism and Vichyism, and nostalgic for French Algeria’ (Lecoeur 2003, 48), a group to which those close to Jean-Marie Le Pen initially belonged; and the nationalists, a more hard-core, fascistic stream, professing biological racism and neo-paganism, and harbouring a nostalgic longing for the principle of revolutionary action. This dualism within the FN—combining revolutionary and conservative tendencies—has persisted over time. The arrival of Marine Le Pen as president of the party has not dispelled this tension. However, the balance is increasingly being tipped, with the FN now adopting a more moderate stance with the aim of distancing itself from the party’s rearguard actions in relation to the Second World War and decolonisation as part of a strategy of *dédiabolisation* (detoxification).<sup>2</sup> However, while the most radical members of the FN have abandoned or been thrown out of the party, its nationalist tendencies have not completely vanished, as illustrated by the presence of Bruno Gollnisch, leader of the FN’s Catholic traditionalists.

Renewal of the FN’s core themes is linked to what Taguieff has branded a ‘new national-populism’, one more closely linked to ‘the fears sparked by globalisation, European integration and mass immigration’ (2012, 24), as well as to ‘condemnation of the Islamisation of Europe and a rejection of multiculturalism’ (2012, 59). These issues, which formed the basis of the FN’s campaign for the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections, make it clear that today the party’s concerns are more closely related to identity and that they are now prioritising cultural issues over economic challenges.

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2 *Dédiabolisation* is the name given to Marine Le Pen’s strategy of adopting more measured language and offering credible proposals on issues of concern to voters, in order to present the FN as a party fit to govern.

## **Entrenchment in the French political landscape**

The history of the FN is also that of a party that has become a long-term player on the French electoral scene. Having experienced repeated setbacks at the ballot box and a period in the wilderness during the 1970s (the FN won 0.76% of the vote in the 1974 presidential election, 0.3% in the parliamentary elections of 1978 and 0.18% in those of 1981), the 1980s were the years of its political rise. This was confirmed by the substantial result it achieved at the municipal by-election in Dreux in September 1983 (the FN list polled 16.7% of the vote) and then at the European Parliament elections in June 1984 (where it won 11% of the valid votes and gained 10 MEPs). The 1990s were a decade of consolidation, during which the party continued to win around 10–15% of the vote, but also of internal divisions with a split in the party in December 1998, due to the departure of the supporters of Bruno Mégret and of a fair share of its leading figures. Despite this ‘putsch’, and disregarding the punishment meted out by the voters at the European Parliament elections in June 1999 (in which it won just 5.86% of the vote), the party managed to maintain its political credibility by qualifying for the second round of the 2002 presidential election with 16.8% of the vote. It came fourth in the 2007 presidential election (10.44%), with Marine Le Pen taking part in her father’s campaign and emerging as a potential successor. Five years later, the result for the FN candidate in the presidential election of April 2012 confirmed the success of this handover of power.

In spite of the substantial results achieved nationally, the number of FN elected representatives has always remained small due to the use of a voting system in which candidates are elected on a majority basis. This does not work in the FN’s favour. It is therefore better represented in municipal councils (20 councillors elected in 2008), regional councils (118 councillors since 2010) and the European Parliament (3 seats since 2009), which all use proportional representation systems. As for the National Assembly, where one member is elected for each constituency in a two-round contest, the party has only managed to win seats on three occasions: in 1986 (30 MPs), in 1997 (1 MP) and in 2012 (2 MPs).

Thus the history of the FN is one of long-term entrenchment in the French political landscape in spite of the constraints imposed by the institutional framework. The party has become a major political force with which the other political groupings have to reckon. It is on this multifaceted history

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that we wish to focus here, with particular emphasis on the changes witnessed since the election of Marine Le Pen as president of the party in January 2011.

### PROGRAMME, CORE ISSUES AND VOTER PROFILE

#### **National survival—the cornerstone of the FN's programme**

Since its establishment in 1972, the FN has made France's national rebirth and the survival of French identity its *raison d'être*, and hence the ultimate purpose of its political programme. It therefore establishes all of its positions according to this yardstick. In January 1976, François Duprat, a party ideologue and one of the FN's founding members, already seemed obsessed by what he referred to as 'the genocide of our people' (1976, 7), caused by the legalisation of contraception and abortion and by immigration from outside Europe. This fear of the disappearance of the 'true' French population and of its identity, undermined by population groups who do not share the national values, is a constant in the FN's rhetoric, even though immigration is not considered the sole source of identity distortion. In the 1970s and 1980s, the FN believed that the national identity was threatened by international Communism, an ideology which, in the party's view, embodied the negation of Western civilisation and European liberties. Ten years later, multiculturalism became the grave digger of national identity with its promotion of 'the mixture of races, cultures and peoples' (Front National 1993, 15) encouraged by the European Union, the US and by French political leaders in order to meet the demands of globalisation. This propensity of the FN to perceive the nation as a fragile entity constantly under threat from enemies plotting against it has not changed. It is a result of the party's conception of the nation, which it defines on the basis of ethnocultural, rather than political, criteria.<sup>3</sup> Many enemies are identified, both within the national borders—immigrants, the Jews, political elites, the media—and beyond—international Communism during the Cold War, the US and globalisation since 1990, the European

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3 This view of the nation is opposed in every way to the republican conception that arose with the French Revolution of 1789, which emphasises a citizenship-based definition of the nation based on a desire to live together and adhere to a set of shared political values. By contrast, the ethnic/cultural nation is founded on inherited and unchangeable cohesive components, and gives a closed conception of citizenship, with only individuals who are members of the original ethnic community, or whose values are compatible with it, being able to belong. On this subject see Schnapper (1994).

Union, and Islam. Therefore, national survival depends on the nation's ability to preserve its heritage—historical, cultural and ethnic—and the specific identity that makes it a unique and everlasting entity. According to the FN, any alteration of this heritage through the mixing with or integration of population groups deemed culturally incompatible signals the beginning of the end of the French nation.

This world view dictates the FN's political programme, which revolves around three focal areas dedicated to this mission of national survival in an anti-system rationale.<sup>4</sup> First, the FN wants to restore France's economic and social fortunes by imposing protectionist measures to combat unfair competition and relocations/offshoring. These measures include favouring French candidates in job recruitment and for social security payments, and increasing public spending on retirement pensions to ensure national solidarity (and therefore cohesion) for people of French 'origin'. Second, the FN programme promotes the restoration of the authority of the state and the state apparatus that forms the basis for its sovereignty, given that—according to the FN—no other player is better placed than the state to defend the national interest. The state would therefore have the power to legislate on immigration in order to reverse the flows of immigrants from countries outside Europe and to put an end to illegal immigration (abolition of the *jus soli* and of social security payments for immigrants). The defence sector would also be prioritised to give the country the resources needed to safeguard its freedom: spending on defence would be raised to 2% of gross domestic product, military defence and intervention capacity would be restored, and France would leave NATO. Defending the national interest would also involve an appropriate foreign policy that would enable France to act entirely independently (especially vis-à-vis the US) and to avoid intervening in conflicts in which it has no direct interest or which do not put its interests at risk. In line with this, the FN condemned the Arab revolutions in North Africa, even though they signalled the triumph of democracy and human rights in that region, on the pretext that they would lead to an increase in flows of immigrants into France and Europe. Third, the FN aims to address the country's future by promoting a pro-birth policy. Family allowances would only be paid to families in which at least one parent is French and a parental income—equivalent to 80% of the statutory minimum wage—would be paid for child-rearing. The FN's vision of the future also involves placing more emphasis on national

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4 In this regard, see the current FN manifesto (2012).

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cultural, historical and geographical heritage (through selective teaching in schools), and preserving national integrity, thus justifying retention of the overseas territories.

In short, the FN's current programme for government, which fuses republican nationalism with authoritarian and anti-egalitarian ideas, is akin to a vast national defence programme, expanded to encompass all government ministries rather than just the one department responsible for the military protection of France and its citizens. The party's manifesto thus blurs domestic and foreign policy, with both being directed towards the same essential goal of defending the nation's 'biological borders'.

### Strategic changes in message over time

Although the purpose of the programme has not changed over time, being underpinned by both an identity- and a protest-based philosophy, there have been significant changes in the message, although these are more the result of a strategic calculation than an ideological *aggiornamento*. First, in the early 1990s the party abandoned its ultra-liberal economic principles, to replace them with support for state interventionism, a change which has been described as the FN's 'social U-turn' (Perrineau 1997, 53). There is no doubt that the economic programme it set out for the 1978 parliamentary elections reflects the party's initial liberal leanings (Front National 1978). At that time, the party, with its Poujadist inclinations, defended, among other things, tax cuts for small to medium-sized enterprises, the limiting of social security and the abolition of income tax. Presented as a radical alternative to socialism, the FN's economic and social doctrine claimed that it wanted to 'make the poor rich instead of making the rich poor' (Taguieff 1996, 206). This positioning was accompanied by an undisguised fascination with the US and its Republican president, Ronald Reagan—so much so, indeed, that in Jean-Marie Le Pen's 1988 presidential election campaign he presented himself as the new French Reagan. This rhetoric was carefully tailored to the right-wing 'petite bourgeoisie' that had come over to the FN in the early 1980s after the Socialist–Communist coalition came to power. However, it was gradually abandoned as the FN made headway among the working classes, who had been disappointed by the left and worried by liberal globalisation. This required the party to develop a message that appealed more to that group. In line with this, the FN became the defender of acquired social rights and of public authority, from which, according to the party, only the French should benefit. As Gilles Ivaldi shows, this leaning



towards 'economic and social populism' has strengthened since Marine Le Pen became party leader (2012, 108–10) due to her decision—against a backdrop of international financial crisis and accelerated globalisation—to appeal to the losers of globalisation by stigmatising international finance and holding liberal capitalism responsible for all the woes of society. Thus the FN's rhetoric is now more left-leaning, with the party claiming it will give a central role to the state and restore effective protectionism.

Changes to the international situation and the end of the Cold War also forced the party to rethink some of its positions. Bruno Mégret astutely summarised what he saw as a 'geopolitical shift' that required the FN to develop an alternative message; the shift meant that now 'the main political confrontation is no longer between Marxist socialism and liberal capitalism but between the adherents of cosmopolitanism and the defenders of identity-based values' (1989). In this way, having previously been highly supportive of Community Europe—the 'imperial' Europe trumpeted by Jean-Marie Le Pen (1990, 107–9) and a bulwark against the Soviet threat—the FN became a fervent champion of national sovereignty, which was deemed to be at risk from the European Union. It now likened the EU to a 'totalitarian' and anti-democratic structure, 'a political project establishing a Euro-globalist and bureaucratic empire' that aimed to destroy peoples and identities (M. Le Pen 2011b). At the same time, France's ally, the US, which had previously been fêted for its patriotism and its interventions against the 'red peril', became a counter-model, a symbol of decadence and materialism. It was also described as the mastermind behind this 'new world order' and accused of wanting to create a cosmopolitan world in which all peoples would become interchangeable and nations would disappear. In this context, immigration was described as a tool encouraged by globalisation to speed up the process of population mixing.

Marine Le Pen has in no way renounced this discourse from the early 1990s. Nevertheless, anxious to reflect the concerns of her electorate and keep step with current issues, she has chosen to focus the party's message more on Islam and the threat she considers it poses to French society (Balent 2012). Thus Islam is described as fanatical and expansionist, and immigration from Muslim countries is likened to an 'invasion' or a 'tsunami' (M. Le Pen 2011a). Moreover, Marine Le Pen stresses that Islam is incompatible with French cultural and political values. This is why she so passionately denounces halal food, the practice of street prayers in some urban neighbourhoods and the construction of 'cathedral mosques', all of

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which she sees as proof of the threat Islam presents to France's national identity and to its republican and secular heritage.<sup>5</sup> Although contextual factors play a key role in this repositioning, with the Arab revolutions in the Maghreb countries being used as evidence of the Islamist threat, it is also a tactical ploy to neutralise accusations of anti-Semitism by focusing on another enemy. The call for national entrenchment in a crisis-hit world where the September 11 attacks are still fresh in the memory occupies a more central place than previously. While Jean-Marie Le Pen, nostalgic for the period of colonial power and French 'greatness', wanted to perpetuate the country's influence (via the policy of 'francophonie' and 'civilising missions' in Africa), the new team at the head of the party appears to be more in favour of withdrawing into a national 'cocoon', echoing the revival of national sentiment visible in France. In short, the attitude and policy choices of Marine Le Pen bear witness to the 'adaptation strategy' referred to by Guy Birenbaum. This strategy 'consists of getting involved in an explicit process of integration into the political scene' (Dézé 2007, 282) by adopting a more restrained and respectable rhetoric that adheres more closely to the expectations of the electorate and that is more in line with the issues of the day. This contrasts in every way with the demarcation strategy pursued by the FN under Jean-Marie Le Pen, which entailed 'positioning itself at the outermost limits of the political system and capitalising on this by using radical rhetoric drawing on the foundations of doctrinal orthodoxy (explicit racism, questioning of democratic principles and values, revisionism, and so on)' (Dézé 2007, 281–2). In this way, today more than ever before, the FN is striving to form a credible alternative to government by toning down its rhetoric, even if this means abandoning some of its nationalist heritage and alienating voters who favour a more radical line.

### **A protest vote or a vote of support?**

And yet, a vote for the FN continues to be belittled as simply an act of protest in a context of economic crisis and a crisis of political representation. According to this view, people vote for the FN as a way of expressing economic distress and social anger rather than because they endorse its

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<sup>5</sup> According to Gilles Ivaldi, this poaching of the republican heritage by the FN is a means of moving the discussion outside the ethnic/cultural domain to avoid being accused of racism and anti-Muslim discrimination, while appearing to be a fervent champion of secularism (Ivaldi 2012, 100).

political programme. However, a recent TNS Sofres opinion poll conducted on 26 and 27 April 2012 on the image of the FN (Rivière 2012) found that 95% of people who voted for Marine Le Pen said they agreed with the ideas advocated by the FN. We can therefore concur with Alain Mergier and Jérôme Fourquet that a vote for the FN is no longer 'either a protest/warning vote or a vote by default', but instead shows an 'empathy with its views', something which is even stronger among working-class voters, who are particularly susceptible to the FN's rhetoric on immigration and social issues (Mergier and Fourquet 2011, 12–13).

'The triad of unemployment, immigration and insecurity' (Perrineau 1997, 178) is what motivates a vote for the FN, since those three issues are still closely linked in the party's rhetoric and associated with ethnic considerations. More specifically, according to Nonna Mayer, FN voters are characterised by their 'ethnocentric vision of society' (2012, 147) in which national affiliation, fear of the 'other' and the desire to live with people like themselves predominate. Therefore, identity-related concerns are the prime factors motivating their vote, together with the fear of disappearing, which is opportunistically fuelled by the FN's rhetoric on Islam and national decline. By contrast, economic issues, 'whether it be prioritising employment or the return of the franc, are of least importance' (Mayer 2012, 147 and 149). Therefore, the rhetoric of Marine Le Pen is in tune with the concerns of her voters, who are in a situation of 'cultural insecurity' (Guilly 2010, 172–5) triggered by liberal globalisation from which they are scarcely benefitting and which they see as responsible for the deterioration of their living conditions. This feeling of insecurity explains their receptiveness to a message that advocates a return to the nation-state, this being the political level deemed to offer the most protection from external threats. Therefore, although it includes some more radical elements and a highly educated fringe (Mayer 2002, 84–5), the FN's electorate consists mainly of the losers of globalisation, the people whose lack of skills means that they are poorly equipped to face the challenges it poses. These voters, while they remain attached to republican values, nonetheless—and sometimes unwittingly—apply double standards in connection with those values, readily admitting that it is possible for non-natives to integrate while at the same time considering populations of immigrant origin in France as outsiders to the nation (Crépon 2012, 177 and 184).

### DYNAMICS AND INTERNAL BALANCES OF POWER

#### **A highly centralised party**

The FN is universally regarded as a highly centralised and personality-driven party, which for many years was entirely synonymous with its founding president Jean-Marie Le Pen. This is so much the case that the party's institutional organisation is dubbed the 'Le Pen system' (Birenbaum 1992, 1993) and the gradual appropriation of his ideas by public opinion is referred to as the 'Le Penisation' of minds (rather than the 'National Front-isation'). These expressions illustrate the undisputed status of the former leader, who was re-elected by acclamation for one term after another at every congress since 1972. When he announced in 2008 that he planned to hand over the reins of the party, many predicted that the FN would not survive his departure. Accordingly, in 2010 he decided to support the candidacy of his daughter—inheritor of the party's trademark surname—to succeed him, thus signalling to party activists that continuity would prevail. In reality, despite her strategy of *dédiabolisation*, Marine Le Pen has continued the FN tradition of hyper-centralisation as well as following the party's fundamental ideologies. She also appointed her father as honorary president, establishing a kind of collegiate presidency at the head of the party, to reassure far-right hard-liners alarmed by the new president's tactical realignment. Marine Le Pen inherited her father's charisma and media savvy which rapidly propelled her to the forefront of the party and assured her of success against her opponent, Bruno Gollnisch, leader of the FN's Catholic traditionalists, during the primary for the party presidency. She was elected as party president with more than 67% of the vote from the party's membership at the congress in Tours on 16 January 2011. Like her father before her, she now has a media profile that no other leading figure in the FN can hope to match. Also like him, albeit to a lesser extent, she has developed something of an argumentative streak, making her a favourite with the media.

The party's governing bodies, set up by Jean-Marie Le Pen and maintained intact by his daughter, also bear witness to this hyper-centralisation. Entirely loyal to the president, they have only a superficial power, a 'non-power'. The party's policy committee, whose 42 members are appointed by the president, meets at the president's request to approve decisions, but does not have the right to initiate actions. Though presented as the party's governing body, the policy committee actually exists subject to the

goodwill of the president (Birenbaum 1992, 210). The central committee, the movement's 'parliament' which represents activists within the FN apparatus, only issues opinions and only meets at the invitation of the president. Furthermore, of the 123 elected members, 20 are co-opted by the president, enabling him or her to 'short-circuit the mechanisms of internal democracy to secure a comfortable majority in this body over whose election he/she does not otherwise have control' (Amjahad and Jadot 2012, 59). Finally, the national congress—the party's main representative body, combining its activists and senior officials—meets every three years on the initiative of the president, who can also call extraordinary meetings. The president and the members of the central committee are elected by the activists at the congress. But, in reality, 'the way the congress is organised means that it is essentially a platform for declarations, where the members are passive onlookers as the party leadership is renewed' (Amjahad and Jadot 2012, 59). Finally, only the executive committee, consisting entirely of the president's inner circle, plays any real role in decision-making, a fact which confirms the hyper-centralisation of the FN's internal organisation, since all the members of this committee are also appointed by the head of the party.

### **A front of ideological sensibilities in a competitive context**

However, this hyper-centralised system does not necessarily mean that the president has absolute control over the party's ideological apparatus. In reality, since its inception, the FN has been a 'nationalist compromise',<sup>6</sup> or a 'nebula', a product of various far-right ideological sensitivities between which there is constant tension and a shifting balance of power. Jean-Yves Camus points out that this aggregating role was evident right from the outset in the name 'National Front', which was 'based on a lowest common denominator for its various components, that is, in this case the idea of "national"' which gives priority to safeguarding the nation (Camus 2001, 202). In this respect, the role of the president is really more to act as a referee or unifier, who must rally his troops by taking care to maintain a

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6 This notion of a 'front' bringing together all the sensitivities of the national camp in order to take power was launched by Charles Maurras after the failure of a protest on 6 February 1934 and of the activist strategy of the leagues (Lecoœur 2007, 107–8). The idea was to bring together in one political grouping all the strands of nationalism, which—while they had differing views on what form of state should be promoted, and on the issues of religion and the economy—agreed on the need to prioritise the defence of French nationalism (Camus 2001, 203).

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balance while allowing diverging opinions to be expressed. Therefore, the whole history of the FN is based on shifting balances of power between the different sensitivities that have fed into its official ideology.

In the 1970s, the influence of the revolutionary nationalist stream led by FN general secretary and ideologist François Duprat was crucial. This was the most radical ideological phase in the party's history. A passionate admirer of European Fascist movements and a former activist in the Occident movement<sup>7</sup> and then in the New Order, Duprat gave a voice to the adherents of neo-Nazism, the most extreme anti-Semitism and negationism, who were unabashed in their admiration for dictatorial states and the apartheid regime in South Africa. Indeed, this ideological radicalism was one of the causes of the party's political marginalisation and of its isolation on the French political scene throughout the 1970s. The death of François Duprat in a car-bomb explosion in 1978 put an end to the marked influence of the revolutionary nationalists who were then sidelined from the party apparatus.

In the late 1970s, the Catholic traditionalists<sup>8</sup> made their entrance into the FN. Their influence grew from the moment their leader, Bernard Antony, became part of the FN's policy committee in 1984 and controlled the training of its senior officials by taking charge of the Institut de formation nationale (National Training Institute) in 1986. This stream regarded itself as the heir to Maurrassism and presented itself as a passionate defender of France's Christian identity and of Christian causes around the world. Anti-Semitism was also characteristic of this ideological family. However, they lost influence after the arrival of neo-rightists in FN leadership positions in the late 1980s, the period of the Mégrétisation of the FN apparatus. During these years, the 'number two' set about putting his allies in the main leadership posts so as to reconfigure the party's ideological framework. The neo-rightists popularised the ideas of the Research and Study Group

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7 Occident was a French nationalist and neo-Fascist movement led from 1963 by Pierre Sidos, whose father, a member of the Patriotic Youth (Jeunesses Patriotes), was shot in 1946 for collaborating with the Nazis. Occident was the main activist group in the 1960s, committing acts of violence against leftists and supporting right-wing regimes around the world in the fight against Communism. See Camus and Monzat (1992, 51–2).

8 The Catholic traditionalists 'disputed the liberal reforms made in the Catholic church at the Second Vatican Council (1962–5), without, however, breaking off relations with the Vatican, unlike the "integrists" of Monsignor Lefebvre and the Society of St Pius X' (Lecoeur 2007, 88).

for European Civilisation (Groupement de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation européenne, GRECE).<sup>9</sup> They defended a more identity-based and pagan view of the nation, and introduced the idea of 'civilisations' as biologically defined entities. They were also the theoreticians of the rhetoric of power conceived as a means of national survival. Furthermore, the New Right elaborated the FN's ideology by introducing differentialism, which proclaimed the richness of identities in the world and rejected cosmopolitanism on the grounds of this diversity. It promoted the right of populations to 'be themselves'. However, behind this praise of the diversity of peoples and cultures actually lay a fear of mixing and of the distortion of Western identities through immigration from outside Europe. Furthermore, Bruno Mégret advocated entering into an *entente* with the parliamentary parties of the right (the Gathering for the Republic (Rassemblement pour la République, RPR) and the Union for French Democracy (Union pour la Démocratie Française, UDF)), in order to lift the FN out of the political ghetto, and a 'polishing up' of the party's rhetoric so as to make its ideas more palatable. This difference in political tactics triggered a conflict between him and Jean-Marie Le Pen and led to a split in the party in December 1998. The Catholic traditionalists seized this opportunity to once again be promoted into the FN's governing bodies: Bruno Gollnisch, who was close to this faction, became general delegate in 1999.

In their turn, the 'Marine years', which began in 2002 when the leader's daughter emerged on the media scene, have been characterised by a balance of power between the 'Marinists', who are close to today's party president, and the radical fringes of the movement, the guardians of FN orthodoxy, for whom Bruno Gollnisch is an iconic representative. The first group belong to the generation of 40-somethings who are keen to win power. To that end, they are making an effort to tone down the FN's rhetoric by attempting a synthesis—already advocated by Bruno Mégret in the 1990s—between pragmatic support for republican ideals and the rejection of immigration. The second group are supporters of a more ideologically based hard-line, whose adherents include members sympathetic to the

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9 GRECE is a think tank that represents the 'New Right' movement established in 1968. This faction pursued a metapolitical strategy aimed at winning over minds ahead of elections and developing ideas that were anti-American (unlike the Club de l'Horloge) and anti-egalitarian, by condemning cultural mixing. They profoundly inspired the FN's ideas when leading figures from this group joined the party (including Pierre Vial, Jean Mabire, Jean-Claude Bardet and Yvan Blot).

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ideas of the Bloc identitaire<sup>10</sup> and the Œuvre française,<sup>11</sup> who share racist and anti-Semitic ideas, and who are less interested in gaining power; they see *dédiabolisation* as a betrayal of the Le Pen heritage. Marine Le Pen may appear to reign supreme over the party, but she must show receptiveness to the concerns of its more radical elements in order to avoid desertions.

### Progressive internal structuring to enhance the movement's credibility

Despite these tensions, which put the omnipotence of the Le Pen leadership into perspective, the party has managed to structure itself internally so as to appear a credible party of government by imposing organisational and ideological discipline on its officials and activists. This structuring dates back to the mid-1980s, to the time of the party's initial electoral successes, which forced it to project a more consistent political doctrine on all topical issues by toning down rhetoric that was considered too strident and training the members in the party's ideas. Politically, this structuring gave rise to a party administration from 1988 onwards that revolved around two central bodies: the general secretariat and the general delegation, which together form the FN's national management (Amjahad and Jadot 2012, 61). The general delegation, which was chaired by Bruno Mégret from 1988 to 1998 and is now led by Jean-François Jalkh, is responsible for the ideological and programmatic aspects of the party. On the other hand, the general secretariat—now led by Mégret adherent Steve Briois—oversees the party's elected representatives, members and local federations. This two-pronged structure shows the strict separation that exists between the party's leadership, which is responsible for drawing up the programme and the ideology, and the elected representatives and supporters, who are excluded from it. Indeed, members, whether they be elected representatives, activists or simply supporters, are not consulted when drawing up the policy programme. They could be more accurately described as implementers and transmission belts in a highly hierarchical structure (Amjahad and Jadot 2012, 62).

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10 The Bloc identitaire is a French political grouping created in 2003 which has stood in cantonal and regional elections in the south of France. Its programme is based on cultural and identity considerations. It defends European identity against all the threats it faces, especially Islamisation and multiculturalism, and advocates going beyond the national framework. It supports the idea of a European federation bringing together the countries of European 'origin' that share a common heritage.

11 This is a small far-right group that was founded by Pierre Sidos in 1968. It rejects any electoral logic. It has unofficial links with the FN and close ties with a number of its leading figures, including Bruno Gollnisch.



Once again it was Bruno Mégret, then general delegate in charge of training and propaganda, who was the driving force in setting up activist training structures and developing the ideological outlines of the programme. From the moment of his arrival, he sought to make the party a machine of war geared towards winning power and transforming activists into political soldiers responsible for spreading FN propaganda. To achieve this, he set up the FN's scientific council, billed as 'a distinguished panel of highly competent individuals', which advises the movement and wishes to 'take part, on behalf of the FN, in the intellectual discussions of the moment' (Institut de formation nationale 1991, 28). Made up of academics and intellectuals, the council mainly expressed itself in *Identité*, a magazine launched in 1989 and wound up in 1996. There was also the Centre d'Études et d'Argumentaires, which was responsible for drawing up topical policy papers to flesh out the programme. Around the same time, the FN also acquired its own publishing house, Editions nationales, with a view to making its proposals more credible and disseminating them more widely. Lastly, Mégret set up the Institut de formation nationale for activists and senior party officials, which was tasked with relaying party propaganda and discipline. The training is now supervised by Laurent Ozon, originally from the New Right and one of the party president's inner circle. All in all, the FN does not appear to be a deliberative party in which members take part in the development of decisions and ideological positions. This characteristic has been watered down in recent years, as shown by the internal campaign between Marine Le Pen and Bruno Gollnisch to succeed Jean-Marie Le Pen, in which debate and discussion were very much at the forefront. But as Anissa Amjahad and Clément Jadot explain, this lack of a deliberative tradition is 'viewed favourably in radical right ideology, which sets great store by the authority and position of the leader' (Amjahad and Jadot 2012, 75). Moreover, there have been very few objections to it from activists or members, who join the FN not so much to participate in the development of the party's doctrinal architecture as out of a 'spirit of camaraderie' and in search of a new family of individuals 'who love themselves hating together' (Tristan 1987, 85).

Finally, one might assume that the internal organisation of the FN and the management and propaganda structures, which depend on the state of the party finances, will become stronger and more efficient as the party's funding expands. The 3.5 million votes won in the most recent parliamentary elections and the election of two MPs in spring 2012 could extricate the FN from the cash-flow problems it has experienced since 2007, which forced it to sell its historic Saint Cloud headquarters known

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as the Paquebot (ocean liner). The party now has public funding of €5.7 million (compared with €1.8 million previously), together with membership fees (from the party's 75,000 official members), contributions from its elected representatives and private donations. Evidence of this new-found financial health came in summer 2012, when the FN announced plans to move its headquarters to Paris in the near future.

### THE IMPACT OF THE FN ON FRENCH POLITICAL LIFE

#### **Electoral rise at the expense of the traditional parties**

After a long spell in the wilderness in the 1970s, the FN became an electoral force to be reckoned with from the 1980s as the result of two factors: the coming to power of the left, which radicalised the right-wing vote, and the emergence of a new national and international context that legitimised the party's core issues. This new state of affairs meant that the FN's rhetoric chimed with the concerns of some citizens and enabled the FN to lure voters who had previously voted for other parties. National Front issues that were given a new legitimacy included anti-Communism, stoked by the coming to power of a Socialist–Communist government; the threat of immigration, revived by a rise in immigration and the Socialist government's decision to regularise the status of illegal immigrants; and feelings of anti-statism following the nationalisations of big banks and businesses in 1982 (Camus 1996, 47). This favourable situation for the party has continued ever since, due to the rise of a politicised Islam and immigration from the Muslim world, the continued process of globalisation, and a crisis of political representation that penalises the traditional parties (Perrineau 1995, 14–15). This has enabled the FN to gradually become the third largest political force in France and to develop a real 'ability to do damage' (Alidières 2012, 27) at the expense of the traditional political groupings.

In this regard, three periods can be distinguished in the electoral progress of the FN that have had a negative impact on the other French political parties. The initial FN successes of the 1980s hit the traditional right, both the RPR and the UDF, which was accused of being too moderate in response to the ruling left on issues such as immigration and security. In this period, the FN mostly won over voters from the well-to-do, traditionally right-voting Catholic middle class. Thus at the European Parliament elections in 1984, almost one-third of FN voters were defectors from the

traditional right (Camus 1995, 54). Some of the National Front's senior officials also came from the RPR, the UDF and the Republican Party (Parti Républicain). One such individual was Bruno Mégret, a former member of the RPR's central committee and an unsuccessful candidate in the 1981 parliamentary elections; and another was Jean-Yves Le Gallou, formerly a member of the Republican Party's steering committee, who joined the FN's policy committee and scientific council in the mid-1980s and remained there until the split in 1998.

In the 1990s, the FN retained its traditional electorate, which had originated from a radicalisation of the conventional right. However, it also started to recruit from the working classes (the lower socio-professional categories including blue- and white-collar workers). These groups were disappointed by the left and disenchanted by the various scandals that had rocked the political class, and they had also been weakened by the crisis. Pascal Perrineau uses the term 'left-Le Penism' (Perrineau 1997, 80–1) to refer to this 'poaching' of long-standing left-wing voters, a phenomenon that was clearly visible in the 1995 presidential elections in which the party obtained 15.15% of the vote in the first round. Consequently, he explains, 'the territory of the Le Penist push is, for the most part, the territory of socialist erosion', that is, blue-collar northern France stretching from Normandy to Lorraine, taking in Picardy, Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Champagne-Ardenne (Perrineau 1995, 254). Defectors from the left who had voted for François Mitterrand in the second round of the 1988 presidential election accounted for around one-third of FN voters in the first round of the 1995 presidential election. This swing in some of the left-wing vote (which was only marginal in the case of Communist voters) was due to the working classes turning away from the Socialist Party after it chose to focus more specifically on the middle classes. This enabled the FN to take on the 'tribune role' that had long been the preserve of the French Communist Party (Lavau 1969)—a role characteristic of opposition parties defending those left behind in society and claiming to be their mouthpiece. This new concern for the working classes can be clearly seen in the speech given by Jean-Marie Le Pen on 21 April 2002, the evening of the first round of the presidential election. When the results were announced, propelling the FN into the second round and eliminating the Socialist candidate, the president of the party addressed this new electorate, those who were, he said, often referred to as 'ordinary folk', the 'rank and file', and the 'excluded', in other words 'the miners, the metalworkers, the workers of all those industries ruined by the euro-globalism of Maastricht', and also 'farmers condemned

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to miserably low pensions and driven to the brink of ruin and elimination' (quoted in M. Le Pen 2007, 222–3). From then on, these working classes would form the party's core electoral base.

Today, this tribune role is being fully assumed by Marine Le Pen who, during the campaign for the 2012 presidential election, chose to address the 'invisible people' and the 'forgotten members' of French society. This was exactly the same group that Nicolas Sarkozy had managed to attract in 2007, which led to a fall in the FN vote at the presidential election (10.4% of the vote, a drop of 6.5 percentage points compared with 2002) and the installation of the Union for a Popular Movement (Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, UMP) leader as president of the French Republic. The FN had itself fallen victim to a siphoning-off of its working-class vote. According to a number of polls by the French Institute of Public Opinion, 38% of Le Pen's voters from 2002 voted for Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007, due to Sarkozy's 'muscling-in on the issue of security and the successful takeover of immigration and national identity issues' (Fourquet and Philippot 2011, 47). However, this coup did not last long. At the regional elections in 2010, the FN again achieved a significant increase in its electorate (11.4% of the vote), capitalising on the growing popularity of Marine Le Pen and disappointment with Nicolas Sarkozy's policies. Some 16% of disappointed Sarkozy supporters voted for the FN at the 2012 presidential election, as well as 11% of those who had voted for François Bayrou's MoDem and 6% of those who had backed Ségolène Royal in 2007.<sup>12</sup> More than ever before, the FN has become a cross-class party capable of winning support from all social milieux and all political backgrounds.

### **Reaction of the parties and shift of discussions to the right**

Since Marine Le Pen became president of the FN and embarked on a strategy of normalisation to make the party more acceptable, its extremist image has softened in the eyes of the public. According to a TNS Sofres opinion poll from June 2012, 51% of French people today regard the FN as a party 'like others' (58% of these are among the working classes).

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<sup>12</sup> These figures are from an analysis of the results of the 2012 presidential election that was undertaken by the Centre for Political Research at Sciences Po (Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po, CEVIPOF) after the first round. See CEVIPOF (2012).

Similarly, in April 2012, 42% thought that the FN no longer posed a danger to democracy in France, as opposed to 26% 10 years earlier (Rivière 2012). Finally, the same opinion poll found that 52% of French people shared the FN's opinion that there were too many immigrants in France (Rivière 2012). This growing public acceptance of the FN's ideas, following the party's demonisation in the 1990s and 2000s, is leading the conventional right to reassess the idea of an electoral alliance. This currently applies to a part of the popular right, a section of parliament that is made up of the most right-wing fringe of the UMP, whose policy position on immigration and security issues is closest to that of the FN. However, as Pascal Perrineau (2012, 60) points out, 'stances in favour of alliances remain very much a minority' among public opinion; despite its more respectable image, 62% of French people continue to see the FN as a party of protest, with just 25% regarding it as a party 'that is fit to be part of a government'. This perception is dominant, even in the UMP.

However, despite this persistent effort to block the party's routes to power, we should not forget the many local electoral pacts that have been concluded between the traditional right and the FN since the party joined the 'big boys' and has been able to support candidates for election. These pacts have consisted of negotiating joint candidates or lists and, in certain constituencies where a three-horse race was in prospect, of withdrawing the candidate from whichever of the two parties was least likely to win. In the 1980s, there were a number of local pacts aimed at preventing a Socialist-Communist win. For example, in the cantonal elections in 1985, the FN agreed to withdraw some of its candidates in Bouches-du-Rhône to avoid the election of left-wing politicians (Bréchon 2012, 165). At the 1988 parliamentary elections, similar pacts were made in Bouches-du-Rhône, Gard and Vaucluse, consisting of a withdrawal from the second round in favour of the better-placed candidate in three-horse races with the left (Delwit 2012, 22). The 1990s were less favourable to alliances, as they were marked by the return of the traditional right to the French presidency in 1995 and by a radicalisation in the FN which led to its renewed ostracism.<sup>13</sup> In line with this a 'strategy of isolation and of the 'cordon sanitaire' became the official rule of the right-wing parties' (Bréchon 2012, 166). However, this strategy did not prevent certain UDF regional council presidents being

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<sup>13</sup> Signs of FN radicalisation include remarks by Jean-Marie Le Pen about 'the international Jewry' in July 1989 and about 'the inequality of races' in September 1996. On this matter, see Guland (2000).

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elected thanks to votes from FN councillors in the 1998 regional elections. This was specifically the case for Charles Millon in Rhône, Charles Baur in Picardy and Jean-Pierre Soissons in Burgundy. This disobedience reflects the right's ongoing dilemma that pits the republican discipline demanded by the party leadership—requiring the rejection of any alliance with a party that is supposedly anti-republican—against the desire to win elections, which sometimes involves consorting with the enemy. More precisely, it bears witness to the awkward predicament of the traditional political parties when faced with an ideological grouping that is becoming normalised and whose ideas are shared by a growing proportion of the public, but which continues to be labelled as extremist.

Yet this label, which underpins the persistent ostracism the FN has suffered since it was founded, has not prevented the FN's ideas from finding their way into the political debate. In the 1980s, the party even worked on the ideological renewal of the right, then in need of mobilising issues, via the New Right discussion groups, which spawned several of its members.<sup>14</sup> The FN subsequently managed to impose some of its terms on French political debate and to 'Le Penise'<sup>15</sup> minds. In this way it legitimised its ways of thinking, for example, by getting foreigners blamed for unemployment and delinquency, and imposing its vocabulary of the immigrant 'invasion' or the 'national preference' (Tavanian and Tissot 1998, 6). This shift of discussions to the right characterised the 2007 presidential campaign, during which the UMP candidate, Nicolas Sarkozy, built up his popularity by wresting back security and immigration issues from the FN. He did this by proposing to 'hose down' the housing estates in the suburbs, to limit the possibilities of family reunification for immigrants, and to rethink the content of national identity by denouncing 'those who hate France and its history . . . those who feel only rancour and contempt towards it' (Sarkozy 2007). In February 2011, he also declared that multiculturalism in France had failed and that the system of integration and the conditions for accessing French citizenship should be reviewed. The left has not

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14 Examples are GRECE, established in 1968, and the Club de l'Horloge, set up in 1974 with a view to renewing the ideas of the right and competing with the Marxist left in the field of ideas. These discussion groups broached issues such as 'the national preference'; the 'cultural, economic and political imperialism of the United States'; and respect for the diversity of cultures, leading to the theory of 'differentialism'. They were welcomed by the right-wing press in the early 1980s (*Figaro Magazine*, *Valeurs actuelles* and *Spectacle du monde*). See Lecoœur (2007, 100 and 166).

15 This neologism is said to have been used for the first time by Robert Badinter in February 1997.

shied away from this ideological 'poaching' either, taking up a number of issues previously monopolised by the FN, such as 'de-globalisation' and the defence of 'fair trade' in international trade relations. However, this 'Le Penisation' of the debate has never signified wholesale support for the FN's ideology; rather, it has been confined to a few issues of particular concern to French citizens, namely immigration, security and traditional values. As for the rest, Pascal Perrineau indicates that the level of penetration is much weaker. 'Once the burden of exclusion, stigmatisation and repression increases, the assessment' of National Front ideas 'becomes much more varied', he explains (Perrineau 2012, 65). The shift of the political scene to the right meets its limits here.

## CONCLUSION: WHAT ARE THE FN'S FUTURE PROSPECTS?

### **Does the future look rosy for the FN?**

With the FN having just won two seats in the National Assembly, an event whose political consequences will probably be as limited as its symbolic value is significant, there is reason to believe that the party is entering a period in its history in which it is on the march. This march is driven by its increased popularity under Marine Le Pen's leadership, and the context of general insecurity about identity that is legitimising its rhetoric and its issues. The new president's strategy of enhancing the party's respectability has certainly borne fruit. In April 2012, the FN achieved its best-ever result in a presidential election and Marine Le Pen is enjoying popularity ratings never obtained by her father. Furthermore, the results show that the FN has rejuvenated its electorate and re-engaged with women and younger voters (it polled 21% of the vote among 18–24 year olds). Thanks to its new leader, the party appears to have acquired a renewed dynamism which it may be able to exploit against a weakened UMP that is divided into a centrist section and a more right-wing strand. Time will tell whether the FN manages to meet its objective of providing a right-wing alternative by developing a closer affinity with UMP hard-liners.

However, this revival in the FN's popularity cannot be understood without reference to the prevailing climate of tension on matters of identity, as people struggle to come to terms with a globalisation process that is weakening national distinctiveness and changing the face of European societies as a result of immigration. This context of increased openness, combined with the weakening of national sovereignty and the rise of parochial attitudes, gives credit and a future to the FN rhetoric that advocates a

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return to the protective nation-state and to a sense of identity based on ancestral cultural values. Moreover, the rise of a politicised Islam, evident, for example, in the Muhammad cartoons incident of 2004, international acts of terrorism and, more recently, the Islamist upsurge in the countries of the Arab Spring, give resonance to Marine Le Pen's attacks on street prayers, the wearing of the veil and the consumption of halal meat, which she interprets as political acts that compromise the secularity and values of the French Republic. In this regard, it is highly significant that the other political parties are taking on certain issues of concern to people who feel excluded from globalisation by adopting a more critical stance on free trade, the European Union and integration policies.

### **What solutions are there to contain the rise of populism in France?**

However, the FN's growing popularity is not irreversible and there appear to be solutions for countering this rising populism in France. Some of them have partially borne fruit already, even though they have too often tackled the effects while failing to address the causes. The maintenance of a voting system in which candidates are elected on a majority basis in parliamentary elections (with the exception of 1986–8) and the continued existence of a *cordon sanitaire* supported by the whole of the political class have certainly reduced the political influence of the FN and perpetuated its isolation. However, they have not made it disappear.

Therefore, could other, more constructive solutions not be envisaged, such as exposing the flaws in the FN's rhetoric or developing a rival message on the issues that are responsible for its popularity? After all, its discourse is based on a number of myths which need to be exposed and deconstructed. These include its conception of national identity as being built entirely on an unchangeable cultural substrate and its ethnic definition of the nation withdrawn into itself, which it contrasts with a political conception that is more open to external influences and, therefore, to alteration. In this regard, it must be remembered that any identity is a construct of history and the product of a series of legacies. Consequently, the boiling-down of identity to a single essence is as misleading as it is appealing. Similarly, the ethnic nation is in fact just a community dreamed up on the basis of the geographic dispersion of an ethnic group and of its fluctuating constituent elements. If an ethnic component does indeed exist in any society, it remains the case that it is the product of numerous mixes that render the idea of a single filiation illusory (Formoso 2011, 130).



An alternative message is also needed on the issues monopolised by the FN and which it is currently the only party to confront head-on. The traditional parties must respond and debate in order to communicate their views on French national identity and its content; and also on their vision of the European Union, its founding values and its geographical limits. Appropriate responses on the place of Islam in French society and the cost of choosing to withdraw into a national cocoon are also needed. Without these, the FN's rhetoric, which claims to re-establish certainty by advocating a return to the protective nation-state, will continue to attract people in a world in search of meaning and bearings.

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# Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands: A Political Entrepreneur in the Polder

Paul Lucardie and Gerrit Voerman

## INTRODUCTION

Pillarisation may have prevented the rise of populist movements in the Netherlands, at least until the end of the twentieth century. After all, pillarisation (*verzuiling* in Dutch) implies that the population is divided and organised along ideological and religious lines. Catholics attend Catholic schools and universities, join Catholic trade unions, read Catholic newspapers and magazines, listen to Catholic radio, watch Catholic television and vote for a Catholic party, while Calvinists and Social Democrats do the same (*mutatis mutandis*). So the notion of a homogeneous people, which constitutes a defining characteristic of any populist movement, does not make sense in a pillarised society. Dutch Catholics tended to identify with their Catholic elite, much more than with other segments of the Dutch people. So did the Calvinists and the Social Democrats. Occasionally Dutch politicians used populist rhetoric, but even when they pretended to appeal to the Dutch people at large, they had in mind their own pillar. Attempts by dissident or maverick politicians to mobilise people from different pillars for a populist movement did occur, but were short-lived and not very successful (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 21–36).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, pillars disintegrated. As a result of secularisation, individualisation, increasing mobility and the development of the mass media, individuals identified less and less with a religious or ideological pillar. The ties between the pillarised organisations weakened. Catholic universities, newspapers and broadcasting associations no longer

supported the Catholic party, while the Catholic trade unions merged with the Social Democrats' unions. In 1980, the Catholic party merged with the two main Protestant parties into the Christian Democratic Party (Christen Democratisch Appel, CDA). Increasing numbers of Catholics and Protestants no longer voted automatically for a religious party but switched to the Social Democrats (Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA) or the conservative liberal party (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD).

At the same time, the ideological differences between the major parties seemed to diminish. The Christian Democrats reduced their emphasis on the ideals of a corporatist economy and of a Christian society with Christian morals, while the Social Democrats relinquished their ambitions for a planned economy and came to accept the market version. Thus the political elites as well as the Dutch people became more homogeneous, creating a potential for populist movements (Thomassen 2000, 206–9).

In the 1990s the potential was realised to only a modest extent by a number of parties. In 1994 an ethnocentric nationalist party with populist demands for direct democracy—named Centre Democrats in order to avoid any associations with the extreme right—obtained three seats in the Tweede Kamer, the lower house of parliament, but disintegrated rapidly and disappeared from the scene in 1998 (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 31–2; Lucardie 1998). In 1994 the Socialist Party (Socialistische Partij, SP) entered parliament with two seats; it had been founded in 1971 as the Communist Party of the Netherlands (Marxist–Leninist) but gradually shed its Maoism, Leninism and Marxism and shifted towards a left-wing Social Democracy, while retaining its populist appeal to the people and its critique of the political elite in the Netherlands (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 37–69; Voerman 2011; Voerman 2012). It would grow rather rapidly, mobilising more voters as well as registering more members. Yet this party will not concern us here, as it is definitely not a right-wing or a national populist party.

At about the same time, local parties emerged in several Dutch cities that articulated a populist critique of the political elite as pursuing selfish ambitions and realising grand urban renewal projects without consideration for the interests of the people and the quality of life (*leefbaarheid*) in the community. In 1999 the leaders of two of these local parties decided to set up a national party, called Leefbaar Nederland (Liveable Netherlands), with a populist platform (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 71–82). Two years later,

the party elected a rather peculiar political leader, with the name of Pim (originally Wilhelmus) Fortuyn.

Fortuyn was peculiar because of his exuberant, theatrical personality, his whims, his almost exhibitionistic homosexuality and his maverick political past. He started as a Marxist, joined the PvdA in 1973 but left it in 1989 and had flirted with VVD and CDA without joining either party. As a professional public speaker and columnist for a weekly magazine, he had criticised the political establishment as well as multiculturalism in the Netherlands and warned against creeping Islamisation. Multiculturalism had been a taboo topic in Dutch politics until that point. When the leader of the Centre Democrats called for abolition of the multicultural society without clarifying what he meant he was condemned in court for racial discrimination, and he and his party were boycotted in parliament.

When Fortuyn refused to tone down his criticism of the ‘backward’ Islamic culture and argued for the abolition of the ban on discrimination in the constitution, the leadership of *Leefbaar Nederland* expelled him. In February 2002 he founded his own party, the *List Pim Fortuyn* (*Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, LPF). The party’s primary goal was to return power to the people through direct election of public officials, as well as a radical reform of public administration.<sup>1</sup> This relatively moderate populism was combined with moderate nationalism and economic as well as cultural liberalism—and a bit of Islamophobia (Lucardi and Voerman 2012, 102–15; Lucardie 2008, 158–60). With his charismatic and theatrical personality, Fortuyn received substantial media attention and managed to break through the taboo surrounding nationalism and Islamophobia. He paid a price. On 6 May 2002, he was assassinated by a leftist animal-rights activist. Nine days later, his party won 17% of the popular vote and became the second-largest party in parliament, with 26 out of 150 seats. It proved to be a pyrrhic victory. The party joined a government coalition with CDA and VVD which collapsed within three months because of a rapidly escalating conflict between two of its ministers that polarised and paralysed the parliamentary group as well as the party leadership. Expelled from the government, the party failed to close ranks. By 2006, it had lost all credibility as well as its parliamentary seats. A year later it disbanded.

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1 According to Fortuyn, municipalities should gain more power at the expense of central government, and public services like schools and hospitals should become smaller, less bureaucratic and more transparent, in short, more accountable to elected politicians (Fortuyn 2002, 133–51, 183–6).

Yet populism did not die with Fortuyn and his party. Many supporters of the LPF switched in 2006 to a new party, founded the same year by an independent member of parliament who had deserted the VVD in 2004. Geert Wilders was a very different person than Fortuyn—less extraverted and less exuberant, far from exhibitionistic—but he shared many of his ideas and recognised that Fortuyn prepared the ground for him (Buijt 2012). Initially he was more of a conservative Liberal with modest populist and nationalist tendencies, but gradually his populism became stronger while his liberalism receded into the background (Vossen 2011). In 2006 his Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV) entered parliament with nine seats. It obtained four seats in the European Parliament in 2009.<sup>2</sup> The PVV took part in very few municipal elections; in 2010 it participated only in The Hague and Almere, a commuter town near Amsterdam, where, however, it became the largest party. In the parliamentary election of 2010 the party won almost 16% of the popular vote and 24 seats. Subsequently, it signed a ‘toleration agreement’ with CDA and VVD, which formed a minority government. The PVV supported the government in many but not all cases. The financial and economic crisis made cooperation increasingly difficult, however, as the PVV refused to agree to cutbacks in welfare, pensions or health care and refused to bow to the diktat of Brussels. In April 2012 the government resigned. In the provincial elections of 2011 its share of the vote had gone down to 12%; in the general elections of 12 September 2012 it declined to 10%. The loss of nine seats can be attributed to the role of the party in the crisis (avoiding responsibility), but possibly also to growing internal troubles (see below) and the radicalisation of some of its positions, specifically its strong rejection of the European Union.

### ELECTORATE

The electorate of the PVV was concentrated to some extent in peripheral areas in the south-west, south-east and north-east of the Netherlands and in the commuter towns around Rotterdam and Amsterdam, though in the capital city itself fewer than 5% voted for the party in 2006 and 9% in 2010. The electorate was predominantly secular. Three-quarters of the voters in 2006 did not belong to any religious denomination, which is more than

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<sup>2</sup> When the Netherlands acquired an additional seat, it was assigned to the PVV but the candidate who occupied it was expelled from the party for drunken driving so the party continued to have four seats.



average.<sup>3</sup> It was also more urban or suburban and young and male than average, while the income and educational level were a little below average.

In 2010 the electorate had expanded, mainly at the expense of PvdA and SP, but its composition had hardly changed (Schmeets 2011, 226–8). Dissatisfaction was probably a key motive for voting for the PVV. Compared with other voters in 2010, PVV supporters were the least satisfied with government policy over the previous three years and with the way that Dutch democracy operated. They had less confidence in political parties, parliament and government, they were the most cynical about politicians and had the least confidence in their own political influence and effectiveness. As to be expected, their political views tied in fairly closely with the PVV programme. They felt that immigrants needed to integrate, that the number of refugees admitted should be minimised and that Muslims should not be let in at all. They also believed that the government should take a tougher stance on crime, that the Netherlands spends too much money on development aid, that European unification had gone much too far and that Turkey should not join the European Union. PVV voters adopted the most extreme conservative or right-wing positions on all these issues, but differed less from other parties on other issues. On gay marriage, pensions, nuclear power plants, home mortgage-interest deductions and tax cuts, PVV voters did not differ significantly from the average voter. In a classic left-versus-right issue like income distribution, they occupied a moderate left position, fairly close to that of the PvdA voters. Wilders's winning formula of a combination between socio-economically left-wing views and socioculturally right-wing ideas had indeed succeeded, at least in 2010. In 2012 the PVV lost more than a third of its electorate. Many voters may have returned to the VVD and the SP.<sup>4</sup>

## PROGRAMME, TOPICS, MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

The ideology of the PVV can be considered a blend of nationalism, anti-Islamism, populism, conservatism and liberalism. The liberal elements became weaker over time, while nationalism, anti-Islamism and populism became stronger.

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3 The data were provided by Dr Henk van der Kolk (University of Twente). See also the Appendix in K. Aarts et al. (2007, 275–82.).

4 At the time of writing, exact data were not available.

When he was a Member of Parliament for the VVD, Wilders criticised the welfare state and Dutch corporatism from a classical liberal perspective (Fennema 2010, 39–47). He did not seem very happy with the ‘purple’ coalition between his party and the PvdA and the left-wing liberal party Democrats 66 (Democraten 66, D66). In 2004 he and another MP wrote a pamphlet advocating a right-wing turn for his party, giving priority to issues such as fighting Islamic terrorism, increasing punishment for serious crimes, deregulation and a reduction of foreign aid (Fennema 2010, 81–2). The party leadership was irritated by the pamphlet and asked Wilders to withdraw it. When he refused, a break with the party became inevitable. In the first election platform of the PVV, liberal and conservative issues such as tax reduction, crime and security came before immigration and democratic reforms. The party wanted to reduce government subsidies and cut the size of the civil service, yet hire more policemen, nurses and teachers. It favoured liberalisation in the environmental sector, but not with respect to immigration policies (PVV 2006, 407–10). The PVV also proved liberal with respect to moral issues like gay rights or euthanasia, even if these did not figure in party platforms. After 2006, the liberal elements in the ideology of the PVV receded into the background, though they did not disappear altogether. The party remained conservative in its position on crime and punishment. In the socio-economic realm, however, it no longer strove for liberal reforms but opted for ‘unqualified defense of the welfare state’ and a ‘social Netherlands’, without reduction of pensions or social security, without rent increases and without cutbacks in health care (PVV 2012, 22–5). On these issues the PVV seemed to take almost Social Democratic positions, but perhaps ‘Social Conservative’ (in the sense that the PVV is radically opposed to welfare reforms) would be a better label.

Even if social policies gained importance for the PVV, its core business became more and more the struggle against mass immigration, Islam and European integration. Islamisation and European integration undermined the independence of the Netherlands, Wilders argued in his first publication after the break with the VVD (Wilders 2005, 103–4). Given his concern with national independence, it seems justified to call him a nationalist, though he preferred the term ‘patriot’, as he associated nationalism with destruction and hatred (Schwarz 2007). Here we use ‘nationalism’ in a more neutral sense, as an ideology that centres on the independence and identity of the nation, not necessarily on conquest or domination of other nations. Independence was undermined by two not unrelated trends, according to Wilders: Islamisation and the development of a European superstate. Mass immigration and multiculturalist policies had contributed

to the growing influence of Muslims in Dutch society and elsewhere in Europe. European integration encouraged multiculturalism and migration.

Wilders's ideologue, the political scientist Martin Bosma (2010, 291-303), suggested that the left-wing elites in Europe felt a lot of sympathy for Islamic values. Perhaps the elites were also concerned about Islamic terrorism and a shortage of oil in the future and hoped to stave off these threats by pacifying Islamic minorities in their countries (Niemöller 2007, 34). Islam was not a religion but a political ideology in the eyes of the PVV, in many ways similar to fascism. It did not need the support of a majority of the population in order to win power, Bosma argued. History shows that fanatical minorities can capture power even against the will of the majority (Bosma 2010, 321). The Koran was a 'fascist book' that should be banned (Wilders 2007), Islamic schools should be closed, no more mosques should be built and immigration from Islamic countries should stop. Immigration from non-Islamic countries should not be encouraged either, especially migrant workers from Eastern Europe. Immigrants who committed a crime, who lost their job or who failed to adapt to Dutch culture should be expelled. Even immigrants who behaved well would not be entitled to social security for the first 10 years of their stay. Dutch language and history should get more attention in school.

In 2012 the PVV even called for a return to the guilder and an exit from the EU (PVV 2012, 17). The party centered its election campaign in 2012 on this issue, while the Islamisation issue receded somewhat into the background. The title of the election manifesto was rather revealing: 'Their Brussels, Our Netherlands!' (Hún Brussel, óns Nederland). And in a curious redefinition of the term 'nationalism' the party explained that while 'other parties opt for Islam or EU-nationalism, we opt for the Netherlands' (PVV 2012, 7). The PVV demanded that the bureaucrats in Brussels stop interfering with immigration, environmental protection, employment and financial policies in the Netherlands.

Nationalism was linked to populism. The progressive and cosmopolitan elites were fostering immigration and Islamisation, against the will of innocent people. 'The Left is in power', according to Bosma (2010, 319), and 'Leftists control the civil service, the arts, the media, the unions, the judiciary, the universities, and they distribute the millions and the jobs in the subsidy network of the left . . . That elite has been in power for 40 years already, almost everywhere in society'.<sup>5</sup>

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5 All quotations have been translated by the authors.

Whereas the leftist elite encouraged mass immigration, Bosma (2010, 329) claims that ‘the Dutch people has always opposed vehemently mass immigration, Islam and the multicultural project’. The people also disagree with the climate theories of Al Gore, the European superstate, foreign aid, art subsidies and mild punishments for criminals (PVV 2010, 317). Only the people could stop these dangerous trends and save the country, in the eyes of the PVV. ‘Only the goodness and toughness of our citizens could cause a reversal of the trend. In history, it was always the ordinary people who took up arms when they were let down by the elites’ (Bosma 2010, 325). Therefore, the people should receive more power, the power to veto legislation through a referendum and to elect a prime minister. Members of the Hoge Raad, the Supreme Court, should also be elected by the people (PVV 2012, 29–33).

To sum up, the PVV has become increasingly nationalist and populist since its foundation, while liberal ideas have faded away or receded into the background and given way to a certain type of social conservatism with respect to the welfare state, as well as crime and justice issues. The shift may be explained at least to some extent in terms of electoral strategy. In an interview, Wilders stated: ‘We have a cultural-conservative profile, but we managed to break into the [electorate of the] left. They have not patented issues like health care, social security or labour market policies’ (Staal and Staps 2011). This strategy worked, at least in 2010.

Of the new voters that the party managed to win in that year, almost a third seemed to come from the left, from people who had previously voted for PvdA or SP (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 177). They tended to be less educated and less well-to-do than average. They may have been the losers of modernisation, but the data are not specific enough to warrant this conclusion.

### INTRA-PARTY DYNAMICS

Groep Wilders (Wilders Group) was the official name of the new one-man party in the Dutch lower house of parliament. In November 2004 Wilders had also established the foundation Stichting Groep Wilders to enable him to collect money and hire staff. Wilders took his time setting up the new party in a bid to avoid the mistakes of his predecessor Pim Fortuyn. Fortuyn had whipped up a party organisation almost overnight, but it soon fell apart as a result of internal conflicts. Efforts to build the movement

got slowly underway in March 2005, when Wilders launched a website, published a manifesto and began recruiting parliamentary candidates. The new PVV was launched in February 2006.

In organisational terms the PVV was not actually a party as it had only two formal members: the natural person Wilders and the legal person, Stichting Groep Wilders. Wilders, who was and still is under constant security protection, was also the only member of the foundation's executive board. This was to prevent the names and addresses of other board members being traced through the Chamber of Commerce (Bosma 2010, 26). The party thus consisted of Wilders and Wilders, a remarkable legal construction by which the party was obliged to dance to Wilders's tune. Party platforms were drafted only by Wilders and candidates for elections were appointed by Wilders alone.

The PVV did not recruit any members, initially for fear of infiltration by right-wing extremists and troublemakers, but later also for ideological reasons. Wilders's ideologue Bosma argued that a virtual or network party without members would only be accountable to the Dutch voter, not to an 'odd, non-elected intermediate layer' of party activists that called the shots within the party organisation (Bosma 2010, 30–1). According to Bosma, party activists would try to keep at bay any new ideas arising within society and would be concerned primarily with their own power: the structure of a member-based party has a disruptive effect on democracy. In his view the PVV was the first modern party of the Netherlands, much more democratic than the old member-based parties. 'A memberless party means adding elements of direct democracy to indirect (representative) democracy' (Bosma 2010, 215).

While the decision to form a virtual party was dictated initially by practical considerations, if it were up to Bosma the model would be retained on principle. He predicted that the PVV was the model of the future. Rather than an association, the PVV should in fact become a foundation, which would require no members at all. The only problem was that the Electoral Act did not allow this if the PVV wished to contest elections under its own name. This antipathy towards political parties on the part of Wilders, and especially Bosma, seems to be characteristic of all populists, although few go so far as to reject any form of member-based organisation.

## Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands

The PVV did in fact recruit informal members, if we also include staff, volunteers and parliamentary candidates. This was no easy matter, however, because of the anticipated risks to their personal security and possible consequences for their public careers. From the spring of 2005, Wilders had been receiving and questioning prospective parliamentary candidates at a highly secret address. Those who proved suitable then received political training. In August 2006 Wilders presented 19 candidates: 4 women and 15 men. In political terms they were amateurs rather than politicians or party activists; only three had any political experience at the local or provincial level.

From 2006 to 2010 Wilders succeeded in keeping the ranks closed; if there were any internal conflicts, almost none of it got out. Two MPs became embroiled in scandals, but Wilders did not expel them and managed to limit the political damage. Party discipline was very strict. However, after the early general elections of June 2010 the number of MPs increased from 9 to 24. Several candidates on the list turned out to be of dubious repute; some withdrew, others entered parliament and retained their seats. Wilders did not expel them from the party, perhaps also because he needed all his MPs to help the minority cabinet to a majority in the lower house of parliament.

In the meantime the PVV had also contested the European elections of June 2009 and the municipal elections of March 2010 in The Hague and Almere. In each case the candidate lists were headed by an MP. Via his confidants, Wilders was able to control nominations as well as candidates' activities in the European Parliament and the two city councils. Initially the PVV leader himself continued to hold a city council seat in The Hague, but that soon proved to take up too much of his time. Alongside the problem of finding suitable candidates, the fear of losing control had probably influenced his decision to contest the local elections in just these two cities.

The PVV also needed to be represented in the upper house of parliament or Senate if it wanted to be able to support the minority cabinet there, too. Because the upper house is indirectly chosen by the members of the provincial legislatures (*Provinciale Staten*) the PVV fielded candidates in all 12 provinces in the provincial elections of March 2011. The party won 69 seats, which was enough for 10 seats in the Senate. It maintained discipline and unity in the Senate, but failed to do so in the provincial legislatures; within a year, nine members had seceded from the party. Similar problems

occurred at the local level, in the city councils of Almere and The Hague, and in the European Parliament, where one of the five members elected in 2009 was expelled after causing an accident while driving under the influence of alcohol.

Wilders had hoped to avoid problems of this kind, not just through a stringent selection process, but also through a tight hierarchical organisation in which newly elected members of legislatures were directed and controlled by more experienced MPs, in other words, close cronies of the party leader with a track record of loyalty. The formula did not work as expected, however. In practice, the dual roles took up too much time and energy, and a number of MPs soon withdrew from city councils and provincial legislatures. Thus the hierarchical model did not function as well as was hoped and there were complaints in the provinces about a lack of direction.

The parliamentary group was led by Wilders, its formal Chairman; his confidant Bosma, who was the Party Secretary and in charge of discipline; and Vice-President Fleur Agema, who was responsible for contacts, albeit very limited, with the media. Wilders wielded a great deal of power, especially as all MPs, those who entered parliament in 2006 and those who did so in 2010, knew that they owed their seat mainly to Wilders's popularity. Yet even here, the unity proved fragile. In the spring of 2010 Hero Brinkman, a former policeman whom Wilders had relegated to a lower ranking on the candidate list for the general elections in June, launched a public attack on Wilders's leadership. Brinkman said that the PVV was built too much around one man and would face major difficulties if Wilders were to drop out. Brinkman also called for greater transparency within the party and for the enrolment of members as well as for the establishment of a youth organisation (Brinkman 2012). Brinkman met with little support and the parliamentary party rejected his proposals in autumn 2010. Following his defeat, Brinkman continued as a party MP until March 2012, when a website launched by the PVV prompted him to quit. The website encouraged citizens to report complaints about Central and Eastern European immigrants in the Netherlands. Brinkman said that there had been no consultation at all within the party about this initiative, which sparked a lot of controversy in both the Netherlands and the European Union (Jongejan 2012). He founded a new party, Democratic Political Turning Point (Democratisch Politiek Keerpunt, DPK) which obtained only 0.1% of the vote in September 2012 and no seats. In the

summer of 2012 three other MP's left the PVV for different reasons. Two of them had been controversial and would probably not be nominated by Wilders again. They voiced strong criticisms about the erratic leadership, lack of transparency and opportunism within the PVV, which may have contributed to its electoral loss in September 2012.

### Party finances

Like other parties in parliament, the PVV's parliamentary group receives government funds to support the group's activities, which must be spent only on staff and secretarial assistance. In 2011, the amount totalled nearly four million euros. Groups in other representative bodies also got financial support, in varying degrees. As a party, the PVV is ineligible for other public funding because of its decision not to enrol members. The lack of members also means that the party has no contribution revenues. As a result, it is completely dependent on donations from at home and abroad. Wilders has always refused to make any disclosures on this matter. Donations are channelled through a foundation, Friends of the PVV, so there is no legal duty of disclosure. According to some observers, the party receives large sums of money from conservative organisations and individuals in the US and perhaps Israel, but without hard evidence, reports of this kind remain speculative.<sup>6</sup>

### EFFECTS ON THE PARTY SYSTEM

In the 2006 general elections, most PVV voters came either directly or indirectly from the List Pim Fortuyn (more than 30% had voted for Fortuyn's LPF in 2003), and to a lesser extent from the VVD, the CDA, the PvdA and the SP, whereas more than 20% had not voted in 2003 (van der Kolk, Aarts and Rosema 2007, 224–5). In 2010 the PVV also attracted many voters from the left who had voted for the PvdA or the SP in 2006. This group also won them five additional seats. They took about three seats from the Christian Democrats, but only one from the Liberals—on balance, since voters switched not only from the Liberals to the PVV, but often the other way round as well. In 2012 the PVV lost more than one-third of its electorate. Almost half of the defectors seem to have switched to the VVD, some returned to the PvdA or SP, while others stayed at home.

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6 Some sources have reported on the PVV's finances, for example Botje (2009, 10); Geurtsen and Geels (2010); and Meeus and Valk (2010, 11–15).



Since Fortuyn, all Dutch parties have adapted their policies on immigration and integration to some extent. The VVD practically ignored the issue in 2006, but took up fairly strong conservative positions in 2010 and 2012, which may have been a reaction to the rise of the PVV. In 2010 it negotiated, with the CDA, an agreement with the PVV. The latter promised to support the government in four main areas: immigration, security, care for the elderly and financial policy. Immigration and security policies should become tougher, it was agreed, and care for the elderly should be improved rather than reduced. The three parties also agreed to disagree about Islam. CDA and VVD regarded it as a religion, whereas the PVV considered it a political ideology.

This construction of a minority government officially supported by a third party was unique in Dutch history. It was controversial, especially among Christian Democrats. The membership of the VVD seemed almost unanimously in favour of the agreement, and delighted that a party member would become prime minister for the first time since the party was founded in 1948.

The party congress of the CDA approved the agreement in October 2010, but only after intense and often emotional debate. About one-third of the 4,000 members present voted against it, among them several former party leaders and former ministers. The two MPs who had opposed the agreement accepted the verdict of the party congress and gave up their opposition (Ten Hooven 2010, 106–8). The party leadership did not want to forego the chance to take part in government. Perhaps it cherished hope that the PVV would become more moderate in the process or would disintegrate, the way the LPF had done when involved in a coalition in 2002. Moreover, the VVD put some pressure on the Christian Democrats, after it had explored but rejected a coalition with PvdA, D66 and the Green Left. Yet when Wilders decided in April 2012 to end his support of the government, Christian Democrats and Liberals announced they would never cooperate with him again. Within the CDA, participation in the minority coalition supported by the PVV led to more soul-searching debates and might have contributed to its substantial electoral loss in 2012 (Ten Hooven 2012). With its radical anti-European position the PVV seemed fairly isolated in the Dutch party system by 2012, even if more moderate anti-European sentiments are expressed also by other parties like the SP and the Party for the Animals (Partij voor de Dieren). The VVD had again taken over some positions of the PVV in its election manifesto, for instance the demand that immigrants should not be allowed social security or welfare during the first 10 years of their stay in the Netherlands (VVD 2012, 49).

Wilders has succeeded in polarising political debates, however. His ordinary and rude language—calling a minister raving mad (*knettergek*) and telling the prime minister to behave himself (*doe normaal man!*)—have attracted media attention and may have contributed to a change in political culture (see also Kuitenbrouwer 2010; De Bruijn 2010). Dutch politicians used to be quite formal and polite to each other in parliamentary debates. During the past decade, Dutch politics has become more lively, at times even rough. The overall impact of the PVV is difficult to measure, however. It would seem exaggerated to conclude that Dutch politics as a whole has become more populist, if we use populism in the ideological sense and not as a rhetorical style. In fact, one could even argue that populism in the strict sense has lost importance, as direct democracy, referenda and direct election of mayors or prime ministers are no longer on the agenda. Nationalism, however, has probably become stronger both with respect to European integration and with respect to immigration and Islam. Extreme nationalist and neo-Nazi groups do not seem to have benefited from this. Since 2000 they have become smaller and less effective than they were before (Lucardie, Voerman and Wielenga 2011, 258–60). As far as we know, there have been no contacts between them and the PVV.

### OUTLOOK

After a series of impressive electoral victories, the PVV experienced a substantial loss in 2012. At the same time, the cohesion of its informal party organisation was weakened by internal dissidence and secessions in municipal councils, provincial legislatures and the Tweede Kamer. Wilders's prestige as leader has suffered a serious blow, even if his leadership cannot be challenged given the authoritarian structure of the party. Sarah de Lange and David Art (2011, 1230, 1244) might have been too optimistic when they emphasised the cohesive and disciplined character of the parliamentary group and the institutionalisation of the party. Even so, it would be premature to forecast its demise in the foreseeable future. The example of the Austrian Freedom Party in the past decade suggests that a national populist party can survive participation in government, secessions and even the death of its leader. Moreover, the PVV might have learned from its unsuccessful support for a minority government and its poor management of internal tensions. It might offer an effective opposition to the coalition of VVD and PvdA that was formed in November 2012. The Liberal–Labour government intends to carry out fairly drastic budget cuts as well as reforms of the housing and labour market, which may alienate

substantial numbers of voters. Opinion polls in December 2012 suggest that the PVV was already recovering most of its losses, while support for the VVD (and to a lesser extent for the PvdA) was diminishing rapidly (Politieke Barometer 2012).

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# The Progress Party: A Fairly Integrated Part of the Norwegian Party System?<sup>1</sup>

Anders Ravik Jupskås

## INTRODUCTION

In the literature on what is called right-wing populist, radical-, extreme- or far-right parties, some parties are seen as the usual suspects—the Front National, for example, or the Danish People’s Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF). This is not the case with Norway’s Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet, FrP). Ignazi (1992, 14) labelled the party a ‘doubtful case’ and Kitschelt and McGann (1995, 121) referred to it as a ‘milder version’. In a more recent study by Mudde (2007, 55), the FrP is not even among the ‘borderline cases’. The reservations or objections with regard to defining the FrP as a right-wing populist party vary among scholars. Either the party is not sufficiently anti-systemic (Ignazi), characterised by lower degrees of authoritarianism (Kitschelt and McGann) or not profoundly nativist (Mudde). To some extent all these observations are true. At least compared with its Danish counterpart, the DF, the FrP is more liberal, less authoritarian and less nativist.

The extent to which the party should be included in the family of right-wing populist parties depends on how this particular family is defined. This is not the time and place to dissect the different definitions; many scholars agree that these parties are (1) anti-immigrant (usually informed by their nationalist ideology) and (2) authoritarian. Moreover, rather than being anti-systemic, these parties are (3) anti-establishment and populist. They are not opposed to democracy and so are different from the extreme right, but they are still highly critical of the established parties and politicians and thus different from the mainstream right. Since this anti-establishment

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1 I would like to thank Tor Bjørklund for his helpful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

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feature tends to be accompanied by extensive appeals to ordinary people and is presented using folksy and simplistic jargon, populism is frequently adopted as a label for these parties (see, for example, Betz 1994 and Taggart 2000).

The FrP certainly fits this definition of right-wing populism. The party has been, and still is, by far the most anti-immigrant party in Norway. In 2009 as many as 56% of the FrP's middle-level elite—delegates at the annual party convention—fully agreed or somewhat agreed that 'immigration represents a serious threat to our national identity'. The Conservative Party (Høyre) is next on the list, but only about 10% in this party fully or somewhat agreed with the statement.

The FrP is additionally marked by authoritarian tendencies, although the picture is not fully consistent across different indicators. In 2009, 44% of the parliamentary candidates fully or somewhat agreed that gay marriage should be prohibited by law. Only the Christian People's Party (Kristelig Folkeparti, KrF) shows similar figures. Seventy-eight per cent in the FrP fully agreed that people who break the law should be punished more severely than they are today (94% if those who agree somewhat are included). Only 25% did so among the Conservatives (72% including those who somewhat agree). However, the party also has a more libertarian face. Eighty per cent of the candidates are pro-choice and very few, only 21%, support torture as a legitimate method to combat terrorism, although this is much higher than in any other party.

The FrP is also the most anti-establishment party in the Norwegian parliament. Among the parliamentary candidates, 38% are not satisfied with the way Norwegian democracy works today. Again, the Conservatives are next in line, but only 15% in this party disapprove of contemporary Norwegian democracy. Sixty-one per cent of the FrP candidates believe 'our democracy needs comprehensive reforms', and they question more than any other party whether parliament is representative. The party's rhetoric also fits into a populist pattern. In fact, the main party slogan is 'FrP: the party for ordinary people' (*Partiet for folk flest*) (see Jupskås 2011).



## ELECTORAL HISTORY AND KEY FIGURES

The history of the FrP is the history of multiple electoral booms (see Table 1), ideological conflicts and organisational consolidation. Initially called Anders Langes parti til sterk nedsettelse av skatter, avgifter og offentlige inngrep (Anders Lange's Party for a Strong Reduction in Taxes, Duties and Public Intervention, ALP), the FrP had its first electoral breakthrough in 1973. Only a few months after the party was founded by Anders Lange, 5% of the electorate voted FrP, and the party gained four seats in parliament. Lange was seen as a political outsider, although he had been secretary in the most influential right-wing organisation in the interwar period, Fedrelandslaget (The Fatherland's League). Some of the main reasons for this unexpected electoral breakthrough in a quite stable party system were a growing revolt against the tax system, crumbling party loyalties after a heated referendum in 1972 on Norwegian ECC membership, the charismatic personality of Anders Lange, the increased role of television and inspiration from similar developments in Denmark (Bjørklund 2000; Jupskås 2009). However, the combination of internal struggles, disputes over organisational matters and the death of Lange only a year after the party entered parliament, left the FrP with less than 2% of the votes and zero seats in parliament after the 1977 election.

After a period of internal turbulence, Carl I. Hagen (party secretary in the party's embryonic phase before breaking with Lange) gained power within the FrP and was elected chairman in 1978, a position he would hold for the next 28 years. Hagen had briefly been a member of Norwegian Young Conservatives, that is, the youth organisation for the Conservative Party, but he cultivated his organisational and political skills as chairman in the Student's Union at Newcastle College of Commerce, where he studied business economics in the mid-1960s. While the personality of Anders Lange was beneficial in the early period of party identification, Hagen was probably a better leader for the next phase, in which organisation was emphasised (Harmel and Svåsand 1993). With Hagen as a skilful organiser and debater, the party again passed the electoral threshold of 4% and regained its four seats in parliament in 1981.

The real breakthrough came in the municipal and county elections in 1987, the first election in which the immigration question entered the political debate (Bjørklund 1988). The FrP gained 10.4% of the vote in the municipal election and 12.3% in the county election. This result was repeated two

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years later in the national election, and the party has recently performed better in national than in local elections. In the early 1990s, the FrP was again plagued by internal disputes. In contrast to earlier discussions about organisational matters, however, this was an ideological conflict, mainly between a more liberal faction and a national populist faction, though there was also a faction called the Christian-conservatives.<sup>2</sup> Among other things, the ideological disagreement between the liberals and the others made it difficult for the party on issues such as Norwegian membership in the EU (Hagen 2007, 190–3), the role of Christianity in school and general conscription (Iversen 1998, 113). The slogan ‘Yes to ECC, no to the Union’ (Iversen 1998, 118–23) was an attempt to satisfy different factions, but instead many voters got confused. About 70% of those who voted for the FrP in 1989 did not do so in 1993 (Aardal and Valen 1995, 29). The FrP lost voters both to pro-EU parties and to those sceptical of the Union, and as many as 20% stayed home on election day. The poor electoral performance meant that an open confrontation became inevitable. After an agonising convention in 1994, the liberal faction—including a majority of the youth organisation, four members of parliament and Vice-Chairman Ellen Wibe—left the party.

Once the EU question disappeared from the agenda, the FrP reoriented its ideological message towards defending the welfare state and promoting stricter immigration policy. In the 1997 campaign, the FrP focused primarily on criminality, immigration and care for the elderly. The latter was even linked with foreign aid in a traditional welfare chauvinist way: ‘our own people first!’ This campaign likely contributed to making the party Norway’s second largest for the first time, an achievement which was repeated in 2005 and 2009. From being the Conservative Party’s little brother for more than two decades, the FrP became almost 60% larger than the Conservatives in 2005.

The next year, 2006, Hagen stepped down and Siv Jensen became the party leader. She, too, had studied business economics and was for a short period of time a member of the Norwegian Conservative Youth (Aurdal 2006, 113). However, Jensen is known to be less confrontational and more even-keeled than Hagen, and she is seen as being in many ways a more professional politician who enjoys better relationships with the other non-

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<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to estimate the size of the factions, but when the liberal Pål Atle Skjervengen was elected Vice-Chairman in 1987 he received 69 votes (63%) at the party convention while the representative for the values-based conservative faction, John I. Alnheim, received 41 votes (37%) (Ekeberg and Snoen 2001, 136).

socialist parties. She represents the kind of leader needed in what Harmel and Svåsand (1993) refer to as the ‘phase of stabilization’. Although the change of leadership must be considered successful—the party had its best electoral result in 2009—the FrP suffered in the 2011 local election after several internal scandals and the attack by the right-wing extremist Anders Behring Breivik on 22 July 2011. Slightly more than 10% of the electorate voted FrP. Although Breivik had left the party’s youth branch in 2007, allegedly because he saw the party as being too moderate, some people in the public debate still linked the attack to the FrP. This might have contributed to demobilisation among the party’s traditional electorate. The local election survey shows at least a correlation between being affected by the attack and abstaining from voting among previous FrP voters.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 1 FrP results in national, municipal and county elections (1973–2011)**

Year	National elections	Members of parliament	Municipal elections	County elections
1973	5	4	-	-
1975	-	-	0.8	1.4
1977	1.9	0	-	-
1979	-	-	1.9	2.5
1981	4.5	4	-	-
1983	-	-	5.3	6.3
1985	3.7	2	-	-
1987	-	-	10.4	12.3
1989	13.0	22	-	-
1991	-	-	6.5	7.0
1993	6.3	10	-	-
1995	-	-	10.5	12.0
1997	15.3	25	-	-
1999	-	-	12.1	13.4
2001	14.6	26	-	-
2003	-	-	16.4	17.9
2005	22.1	38	-	-
2007	-	-	17.5	18.5
2009	22.9	41	-	-
2011	-	-	11.4	11.8

Source: Statistics Norway.

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3 Personal correspondence with Professor Tor Bjørklund, Department of Political Science, University of Oslo.

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### POSITIONS IN THE PARTY SYSTEM AND VOTER CHARACTERISTICS

The FrP occupies a distinct position in the Norwegian party system. The precise position, however, depends on whether we analyse voter attitudes and the ideology of members of parliament and party manifestos or whether we ask experts to locate the parties within a multi-dimensional policy space. Some findings are nevertheless relatively stable across different methods and empirical data. A recent expert survey shows that the FrP is the most right-wing party in Norway on both socio-economic and sociocultural issues (Jupskås and Jungar 2010). The right-wing position on economic issues is corroborated in analyses based on manifesto coding and surveying members of parliament (Jupskås and Jungar 2010; Narud and Valen 2007, 173). However, manifesto coding also shows that the FrP has become more centrist on economic issues over the past three decades, thus approximating the positions of the other parties (Narud and Valen 2007, 140). If we look at the voters, FrP voters are actually slightly more centrist compared with those voting for the Conservative Party (Aardal 2011, 109).

Disentangling the sociocultural dimension into three strands—moral, environmental and (anti-)immigration—reveals another interesting aspect of the FrP. On one hand, the party can be seen as a reaction against post-materialism—a ‘silent counter revolution’ to borrow Ignazi’s (1992) famous expression—on issues such as environmental protection, international solidarity and immigration. On the other, the party is not necessarily among the most morally strict. In fact, previous analyses indicate that three of the other non-socialist parties—the KrF, the Conservative Party and the Centre Party (Senterpartiet)—are slightly more morally conservative (Narud and Valen 2007, 175). A similar pattern emerges among the voters (Aardal 2011, 106).

Right-wing populist parties are usually disproportionately supported by men, the lower educated, the working-class or unemployed, and the youngest and the oldest age cohorts (Hainsworth 2008, 90–104). Since the FrP is more right-wing on economic issues, we might expect the party to attract a slightly different electorate, but it does not. An analysis of the party’s electorate in the four most recent national elections—1997, 2001, 2005 and 2009—shows that it is over-represented in the working class and among white-collar workers in the private sector (Berglund et al. 2011, 28, 35). Together these two groups make up about 60% of the party’s

electorate.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, the party is under-represented in the public sector and among students. Moreover, in 2009, no other party was as popular as the FrP among the 'losers of modernization' (Betz 1994): the unemployed. Twenty-seven per cent of the unemployed work force voted for the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet, Ap), 41% voted for the FrP. When it comes to education, the party is heavily and increasingly under-represented among those with a university or college degree. The FrP is also, as are most right-wing parties, a typical *Männerpartei* (Hofmann-Göttig 1989). With only two exceptions (1977 and 2005), two-thirds of the party's supporters have been men. The party performs strongly among first-time voters and the elderly. Although it once had an urban profile (in the 1997 election), there has been no rural–urban split in the vote in recent years. Two-thirds come from cities and one-third from more rural areas, which coincides with the overall demographic distribution in Norway.

After this short discussion of the socio-demographic profile of the FrP electorate, in the following section I turn to the question of voting intentions. Are FrP supporters protest voters or not? There are different ways of defining protest voting (for a sophisticated attempt, see van der Brug et al. 2000), but in contrast to scholars who simply define protest voting as voting for a protest party, it can also be seen as (1) voting for a party regardless of whether it actually represents one's political views or (2) lack of congruence between the party's ideological position and one's own. In this respect the FrP can hardly be seen as a protest party. Based on an election study from 2009,<sup>5</sup> 68% of the FrP's voters believe the party represents their political interests.<sup>6</sup> Ten per cent believe the right party for them is the Conservative Party, but these voters might rationally vote FrP to make sure the Conservatives do not turn soft. We are then left with 22% of FrP voters who say that either the Ap (3%), KrF (2%) or no party at all (16%) represents their interests. This is certainly a fair share of the electorate, but only marginally higher in the FrP than in other parties.

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4 Twenty-seven per cent working-class (WC) and 31% white-collars workers (WCW) in the private sector in 1997, 28% WC and 30% WCW in 2001, 26% WC and 36% WCW in 2005, and 24% WC and 36% WCW in 2009.

5 There are 280 FrP voters in the sample.

6 Interests are defined subjectively rather than as economically objective interests. One might argue that an economically right-wing party can hardly be seen as the defender of the less well-off.

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The presence of an ideological commitment among the FrP's electorate is corroborated by analysing the ideology of FrP voters. Given the right-wing position of the party, we would expect its voters also to be right-wing, unless the support is driven purely by protest. Data from an election study in 2009 provide us with a predictable picture: 25% of the voters see themselves as 'far-right' and 59% as 'right-wing'.<sup>7</sup>

### REPRESENTATION AND INFLUENCE

The FrP has not been isolated to the same extent as some populist right-wing parties: the French FN, the Vlaams Belang, the British National Party and the Sweden Democrats have been subjected to the strategy of *cordon sanitaire*, a total boycott from all other parties. In fact, by the 1980s, the FrP had been accepted in a supportive role in several state budgets, as it was again in the early 2000s. Furthermore, and more importantly, all of the contemporary opposition parties—including not only the Conservatives, but also the Liberals and KrF—have just recently (somewhat reluctantly) accepted a governmental centre-right coalition which includes the FrP. A number of factors might explain the relatively high tolerance for the FrP, but historical legacy, contemporary ideology and parliamentary size are important elements. The FrP's legacy as an anti-tax movement without militant nationalism (Bjørklund 1981; Bjørklund 2000) and its parliamentary size makes it difficult to disregard the party in parliamentary bargaining.

Still, the relationship between the FrP and other non-socialist parties is not as formalised or harmonious as it was between the DF and the two centre-right governing parties in Denmark, the Liberals and the Conservatives, from 2001 until 2011. While DF was almost seen as part of the Danish government (illustrated by the name 'VKO government', where the 'O' stands for DF), centre and centre-right governments in Norway have always kept the FrP at arm's length. First, they have not made state budget agreements exclusively with the FrP. On two of nine occasions since 1985 the centre- or centre-right governments have preferred to collaborate

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<sup>7</sup> The far right registers as 9 or 10 on an 11 point scale; 8, 7 and 6 are considered the right wing; 5 is centrist; 2, 3 and 4 are the left wing and 0 and 1 are the far left.

with the Ap (Narud and Valen 2007, 223).<sup>8</sup> Second, over the years, ‘much energy has been spent in the election debates and in the [parliament] in demonstrating distance from the Progress Party on matters of immigration politics’ (Hagelund 2003, 62). Moral and ideological criticism comes not only from left-wing parties but also from the non-socialist block. The Conservatives have always been sceptical about the sustainability of FrP economic policy, for instance fewer taxes and more welfare (Notaker 2012), and the KrF and the Liberals have criticised the party’s anti-immigration rhetoric and environmental policy (see Allern 2010, 905).

The other parties have to a lesser extent given the FrP ‘the cold shoulder’ at the local level. It took many years before the party gained the mayoral spot in one of Norway’s roughly 430 municipalities. After the local election in 1987 and 1999, one mayor came from the FrP. The real breakthrough came in 2003 and 2007 when the party was finally big enough in some municipalities to demand the mayoral position; more precisely 13 mayoral positions in 2003 and 17 in 2007. After the poor result in 2011, the party is left with 11 mayors.

The FrP has always collaborated with the Conservative Party, most notably in the capital city, Oslo, but in recent years collaboration patterns with left-wing parties have also been observed. While there were only a few examples of technical collaboration—non-political agreements to share power—between Ap and the FrP after the 2003 local elections, things changed after the 2007 local elections, when the FrP and Ap collaborated technically in 13 municipalities, with 4 of those occasions including political agreements (Magnus 2007).

There has been little research on the policy impact of the FrP’s growing power and acceptability at the local level, but Steen (2009) demonstrates clearly that the increased support for the FrP has a negative impact on the probability of accepting refugees in the municipality. Although immigration policy in general is decided at the national level, the FrP has been instrumental in exploiting the scope of action for anti-immigration policy at the local level.

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<sup>8</sup> The centre-oriented government composed of the KrF, the Liberals and the Centre Party found support from FrP and the Conservatives in 1997 and 1998 and from the Ap in 1999. The right-centre government composed of the Conservatives, the KrF and the Liberals turned to the Ap for support in 2003, but in 2001, 2002 and 2004 they collaborated with FrP.

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### PROGRAMMES, TOPICS, MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

Most contemporary right-wing populist parties are either part of what Klaus von Beyme (1988) called the 'third wave' of radical-right mobilisation or are even more recent. The FrP, however, is better classified as part of Beyme's 'second wave'. While parties in the third wave mobilised on nationalist and authoritarian issues in the mid- and late-1980s, the second wave had already begun in the 1970s and was characterised by anti-tax, anti-welfare and a more diffuse anti-partyism doctrine.

For a long time, the FrP was most concerned with fewer taxes, a slimmer bureaucracy and the need for more attentive politicians. However, as soon as the numbers of asylum seekers increased in the mid-1980s, anti-immigration was given more prominence in the party's discourse and manifesto. The FrP campaigned on an anti-immigration platform in 1987, but by the late 1980s and early 1990s it was highly disputed within the party to what extent it should brand itself as anti-immigration. In the end, the (neo-)liberal faction lost the battle, and anti-immigrant policy became an integrated and constant part of the party's identity and ideology. Moreover, simultaneously, as the more national populist faction gained power, the official rhetoric was transformed 'from problematizing immigration in terms of economy, expenses and welfare state issues, to problematizing immigration in terms of culture and ethnic conflicts' (Hagelund 2003, 63).

In the most recent manifesto, the FrP links immigration to the survival of the welfare state, to crime and potential cultural conflicts, and to problems of suppression of women within some immigrant communities. The party argues it is 'important to cut down on immigration to Norway', particularly with regard to those 'outside the Western culture complex' and asylum seekers (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 3, 33). This will allegedly make it easier to 'deal with the integration' and make public opinion more tolerant towards the non-criminal immigrants (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 3, 26). A heavy reduction in the number of asylum seekers will also reduce the possibility of 'serious conflicts' between different ethnic groups (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 33).

Analysing the policy suggestions more closely, it is clear that the party wants to link welfare benefits to either citizenship or 'other appropriate delimitations' (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 32). Any kind of affirmative action or system for subsidies directed at the immigrant population should be



eliminated as soon as possible. Clearly inspired by Danish legislation, the FrP also suggests that family reunification of spouses should be restricted to those more than 24 years old. Moreover, such reunification should only be accepted if the couple's attachment to Norway is stronger than to any other country. As a typical right-wing populist party, the FrP also advocates cutting foreign aid substantially, reducing the number of refugees and supporting refugee camps in the refugees' locality (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 30).

When it comes to labour immigration, the FrP believes it would be best for Norway to find labour within its own population. However, if there is a shortage of qualified workers, labour immigration from European countries can be accepted. In such cases, the contracts should be of limited duration and the employers would have to bear the financial burden if the labour immigrants make use of Norwegian welfare services.

Islamophobia and scepticism about Islam run through the party's history, although it has become more important in recent years. As early as 1979, Carl I. Hagen wrote a letter to the editor of the *Aftenposten* calling Islam a 'misanthropic and extremely dangerous' religion. Three decades later, in 2009, the party gained media attention after its leader, Siv Jensen, warned against a 'sneak-Islamisation' of Norway. This concept was mentioned 191 times in the two largest tabloids and the four largest regional newspapers the following year.<sup>9</sup>

However, given the focus the FrP has on Islam and Muslims in its public rhetoric, it is interesting to note that the subject is completely missing in its manifesto. The party's negative focus on Islam is nevertheless conspicuous in a report dedicated to immigration and integration issues worked out in 2007.<sup>10</sup> In this report, alleged problems with Muslims and Islam are seen as a huge economic burden and a cultural threat, and Dutch populist Pim Fortuyn's statement that 'Islam is a threat to the liberal Europe' is quoted (Amundsen et al. 2007, 127). The report sees the number of Muslim taxi

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9 The number is calculated from searching the database *A-tekst*. The newspapers include *Dagbladet*, *VG*, *Aftenposten*, *Bergens Tidende*, *Adresseavisen* and *Stavanger Aftenblad* in the period 15 February 2009–15 February 2010.

10 The report was written by a committee appointed by the parliamentary group and consisting of influential politicians such as Vice-Chairman Per Sandberg and spokesman on immigration issues Per-Willy Amundsen.

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drivers as a symptom of segregation and it warns against Shariah law (Amundsen et al. 2007, 105). Throughout the report, Muslim immigration or Islam is directly or indirectly linked to terrorism, forced marriage, welfare abuse, polygamy, a poor work ethic, increased crime and even to (inadequate) school performance (Amundsen et al. 2007, 9, 55, 56, 68, 95, 141).

Muslims are not the only minority which is demonised by the FrP. The party has also targeted Norway's national minorities such as the Sami people. The FrP's policy towards the Sami 'has been characterised as an attack on an ethnic minority', at least according to one account (Iversen 1998, 152). The party has made negative statements about the Sami throughout its history and has always wanted to dissolve the Sami parliament.

Law and order is another important issue for the FrP. In general the party argues the current system favours the criminals over the victims (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 27). In its manifesto, it focuses on how to 'provide more safety to common people' (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 3), including more resources for the police, a ban on begging, acceptance of police surveillance in cases related to national security or serious crime, and reducing the waiting time in the court system (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 3, 26). When it comes to justice, the FrP wants to increase sentences to make it more difficult to appeal against a judgement and to remove the so-called quantity discount (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 27).

The political economy of right-wing populist parties has been much debated. Most scholars agree that these parties have adopted a more welfare chauvinist and centrist position in the past decade (de Lange 2007), but that they favour the market economy over state intervention. According to Zaslove (2007, 314), 'the populist radical right supports a market economy, while it demands state protections from international capital and international institutions and it supports the welfare state, albeit in a different form than the left'. To what extent does the FrP fit this description?

The FrP is the most market-friendly party in the Norwegian Parliament; a large part of its manifesto is devoted to the market economy. In short, the party wants economic liberalisation, free trade, the privatisation of public services, less bureaucracy and 'the rule of red tape', reduced public ownership, fewer subsidies, a more efficient public sector and lower taxes

(Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 10, 11). The party is against a graduated system of taxation because it allegedly reduces the will to secure one's own economic well-being and because a flat tax system, according to the FrP will stimulate better work efforts. In other words, it is 'not a public task to equalise wage disparities which come into existence naturally in the labour market' (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 11). Moreover, the FrP has always been and is sceptical about the influence of trade unions. However, the party seems to have toned down some of its most extreme proposals in recent years (Flote 2008). In 1999, it even adopted a 'strategy of collaboration' vis-à-vis the trade unions (Flote 2008, 100). Yet, the party continued to criticise the main trade union throughout the 2000s, and the policy suggestions in the current manifesto—more temporary employment, removal of tax allowance for union dues and decentralised wage bargaining (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 13)—will in effect reduce the role of trade unions.

There are also areas where the FrP wants a more active state. First and foremost, the party wants to increase the economic support for hospitals in general and with regard to geriatric care in particular (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 46).<sup>11</sup> The FrP also wants to spend more of Norway's oil money. While all other parties agree that Norway should not spend more than about 4% of the annual return on foreign investments, the FrP believes this 'rule' is unfortunate and that Norway should spend more, particularly on infrastructure, because this is seen as investment rather than consumption (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 2, 66). However, the role of the state is primarily to secure financing; the FrP does not mind having private companies carry out the actual welfare services or construct the roads. In this sense, the defence of the welfare state and the idea of an active state differ from the ideas of left-wing parties.

Just as most right-wing populist parties have adopted an EU-sceptical position since the Maastricht Treaty (Hainsworth 2008, 82–5), the FrP, too, has become more negative. Today, they come close to a kind of 'revisionist Euroscepticism', preferring an EU as it was pre-Maastricht, that is, close economically but less politically integrated (Skinner 2011). However, this general pattern is only half of the story. In fact, when it comes to Norwegian EU membership, the FrP is divided on the issue and highly polarised views

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11 There are other, similar policy areas. The party says, for instance, that the state must ensure high-speed broadband in the whole country. Moreover, FrP would like a more active policy vis-à-vis new ideas and new products.

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are expressed by party voters, members, middle-level elite and members of parliament (Jupskås and Gyárfášová 2012). This situation certainly makes the issue a potential source of internal conflict, but the FrP seems to see 'itself as a receiver, rather than a shaper, of popular opinion on this important issue' (Fossum 2009). The party is singular in having no policy on Norwegian EU membership. It would rather leave it to the people to decide the matter in a national referendum (Fremskrittspartiet 2009, 31).

So far, we have discussed only FrP policy on different issues. To what extent these issues are salient is another question. There are obviously different ways to measure that, but decent indicators should result from asking parliamentary candidates what they see as the most important challenges facing the nation and asking voters why they vote for the FrP. While some scholars (for example, Mudde 2007, 47) have argued that fear of immigration is only a secondary or strategic issue for the FrP, recent data suggests otherwise. In 2009 concerns over immigration were the most important issue for both candidates (24% mentioned this issue, see Table 2) and voters (44% said immigration was important to their vote, see Table 3). Other important issues for the candidates are health care, the economy, geriatric care, the future of the welfare state, pension and social security benefits, infrastructure and communication, and school and education.

Many of these issues also seem to dominate among the FrP's electorate, but anti-tax, anti-immigration and health care are particularly important. Opposition to taxes has always been a vital mobilisation issue for the FrP, particularly in 1985 and 2001. The other consequential issue is immigration, although exactly how important it is varies between elections. In the most recent election, 2009, it was by far the most important issue. In third place is health and geriatric care. In some elections such issues have been even more important than taxes and immigration. However, their significance seems to have decreased slightly in recent years. If anti-tax, anti-immigration and health care have always been important among the FrP's electorate, school and education have increased in importance and employment has decreased.

**Table 2 Most important challenge facing the nation today, FrP candidates 2009**

Challenge	Per cent mentioning the challenge	
	FrP candidates	All candidates
Immigration	24	5
Health care	12	4
Economy	6	7
Geriatric care/more elderly people	6	2
The future of the welfare state	5	7
Pension and social security benefits	5	3
Communication/transport	5	2
Infrastructure	5	1
School and education	4	5
N	136	956

*Note:* The question is open-ended, which means that the categories are constructed after the survey was carried out. Only the nine most important challenges are presented in the table; issues mentioned by fewer than 4% of the candidates are not included. Hence, the numbers do not add up to 100%.

*Source:* Candidate survey, 2009. The response rate was 52%. All seven parliamentary parties are equally represented and top candidates are as well represented as lower-ranked candidates.

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**Table 3 Most important issues for FrP voters 1985–2009<sup>12</sup>**

	1985	1989 <sup>3</sup>	1993 <sup>3</sup>	1997	2001	2005	2009
Immigration	N/A	26	42	20	17	22	44
Taxes and duties <sup>1</sup>	36	17	N/A	15	56	28	27
Geriatric care <sup>2</sup>	55	51	N/A	50	35	26	21
Health care			N/A	42	17	15	15
School and education <sup>4</sup>	4	N/A	N/A	3	14	17	13
Children and family policy	N/A	N/A	N/A	7	9	13	5
Employment	14	21	18	4	N/A	2	0
N	55	-	71	159	159	282	280

Source: Aardal and Valen 1989, 48; Aardal and Valen 1995, 21; Aardal et al. 1999, 24; Aardal 2003, 18; Aardal 2007, 118; Aardal 2011, 136; Valen et al. 1990, 17.

<sup>1</sup> A category called tax policy appears in 1985, 1989 and 1997. In 2001, 2005 and 2009 that option is called taxes and duties.

<sup>2</sup> Social security benefits, health care and geriatric care was one broad category in 1989. Consequently, it is hard to say anything specific about which of these themes mobilised most of the FrP's voters, but Hagen spent much of the election campaign attacking alleged abuses of social security and welfare benefits and welfare.

<sup>3</sup> In 1989 and 1993, only the most distinct issues are presented in the literature. In 1993, Norwegian membership in the EU was important for as many as 42% of the FrP's electorate. However, compared with the other parties even this high figure is very low. Among Ap voters, the next most uninterested electorate, as many as 55% thought the EU issue was important.

<sup>4</sup> Not mentioned in 1989 and 1993. The issue probably did not produce differences between the parties.

### INTRA-PARTY DYNAMICS

The organisation of right-wing populist parties has been characterised in different ways. Some see them as the revival of Fascist party models, while other are more focused on these parties' populist features. In both cases, most scholars agree that such parties organise differently than established parties in general and new green parties in particular (Ignazi 2003; Müller-Rommel 1998; Taggart 2000, 75; Zaslove 2008). Right-wing populist parties

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<sup>12</sup> Voters were asked to mention two issues that were important to their vote. Only the most important issues for the FrP's voters are presented in the table. The percentages do not add to 100% since an individual may mention more than one issue.

rely reportedly on charismatic leadership and they are accused of lacking internal democracy. Initially, many had the same impression of the FrP. Carl I. Hagen was seen as an autocratic leader demanding unconditional loyalty from cadres and activists. Since Hagen was chairman for 28 years, it should not come as a surprise that many commentators referred to the party as 'Hagen's party' (Hompland 1999; Magnus 1998). However, he has also been challenged on several occasions, making him less undisputed than, for instance, Pia Kjærsgaard in DF.

It is always difficult to measure distribution of power within a party, but asking the people inside is probably one of the best strategies. Table 4 shows the results of three membership surveys carried out in 1991, 2000 and 2009, respectively. In these surveys, representative selections of party members from all Norwegian parliamentary parties are asked about internal affairs. Leaving aside the fact that all answers are based on subjective evaluations from party members, members who might have different expectations when it comes to co-determination and influence, it is hard to claim that the FrP is characterised by authoritarian and irresponsive leadership, or by undemocratic structures. On the contrary, far more party members in the FrP believe the 'central party leadership is good at paying attention to the views of ordinary party members' compared with other parties in 1991, 2000 and 2009. Only at one point is the FrP surpassed by another party, the Centre Party in 1991. Moreover, party members increasingly evaluate the leadership as being responsive. In 2009 the FrP is the only party in which more than half of the members think the leadership is good at listening to ordinary members. The FrP's members are also less worried about authoritarian leaders. In 2000, when Carl I. Hagen was party chairman, only 13% agreed that the 'the leadership is too strong'. This low figure decreased slightly after Siv Jensen became party leader. In both years, the FrP is below the mean for all parties.

The last question tapping into intra-party dynamics is about the role of personal connections. More specifically, the question seeks to uncover whether such connections are 'crucial' and 'far more important than formal positions in the party' when it comes to 'influencing decisions in the central party leadership'. If they are, we can speak of undemocratic elements in the internal organisation of the party. On this aspect, the survey shows very little inter-party variation. In all parties, including the FrP, about half of the party members report that personal connections are crucial in influencing decision-making.

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**Table 4 Development of intraparty dynamics for FrP, 1991–2009<sup>13</sup>**

Years	1991	2000	2009
Party chairman/leader	Carl I. Hagen	Carl I. Hagen	Siv Jensen
The central party leadership is good at paying attention to the views of ordinary party members	44 (31)	51 (31)	59 (40)
One problem with the party today is that the leadership is too strong	N/A	13 (15)	11 (13)
When it comes to influencing decisions by the central party leadership, personal connections are crucial, far more important than formal positions in the party	N/A	48 (53)	63 (63)
Lowest N	215 (1816)	204 (1565)	441 (3200)

Source: Party member surveys 1991, 2000 and 2009.

While most parties in Norway, as elsewhere in Western Europe, have experienced a quite rapid decline in membership in recent decades, the FrP has, though from a very low starting point, had remarkable growth. Figures before the mid-1990s are not reliable because of poor registration processes, but in 1993, the first year in which reliable data was available, the party had about 3,700 paying members. A decade later this number was approximately 18,800, and the most recent numbers from 2010 show a membership base of 22,600. While theories of populist parties would predict passive members, the FrP's members are not all that different from the members of other parties. About 15% could be counted as active, attending 5 to 20 functions a year, while 5% are super-active and attend more than 20 meetings a year.<sup>14</sup> However, one does not have to go to party meetings to get information from the party. The FrP spends resources on socialising members through an internal party newspaper, *Fremskritt*, which is distributed 22 times a year to all members.

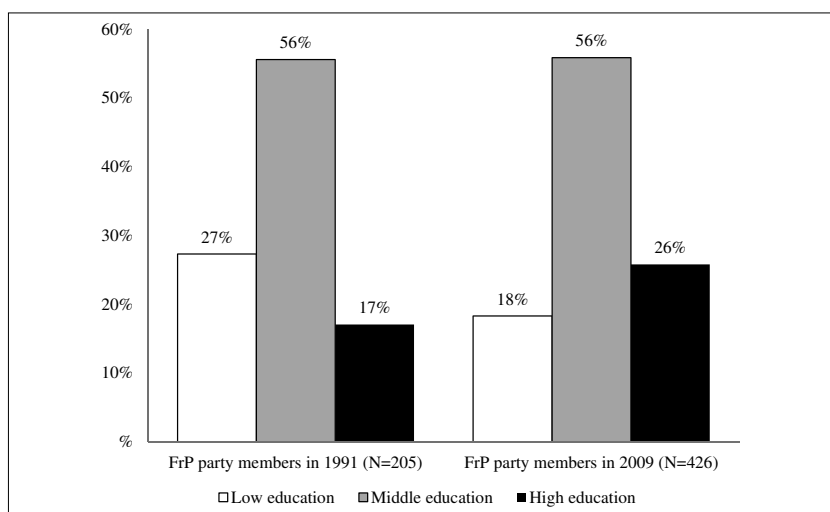
<sup>13</sup> All numbers indicate the percentage of party members who agree completely or somewhat with the statement. The mean for all parties including the FrP is given in parentheses. There were six options on each question: *agree completely*, *agree somewhat*, *disagree somewhat*, *disagree completely*, *don't know*.

<sup>14</sup> Data comes from the party membership survey in 2009.



As the number of members has increased, the social composition of party members has changed as well. If we compare a party membership survey in 1991 with a similar survey in 2009, a larger share of the FrP's members are now highly educated: they hold either a university or college degree or they have uncompleted university or college studies. This share has increased from 17% in 1991 to 26% in 2009 (see Figure 1). However, since the level of education has increased in society as well (from 15.5% in 1990 to 28.4% in 2010)<sup>15</sup> this was to be expected.

**Figure 1 Level of education among FrP members**



Source: Party membership surveys, 1991 and 2009

The FrP has not only focused on party members but also on establishing more local branches. While the party had 170 local branches in 1985, annual reports from the party show that the number had increased to 275 in 1991, 320 in 2001 and 368 in 2010. Consequently, the party has in many ways managed to copy elements—large membership, local presence and internal democracy—from the traditional mass party model.

What is perhaps even more impressive is the party's ability to combine this traditional organisation building with an extensive focus on media visibility

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15 These figures are from Statistics Norway, <http://www.ssb.no/utniv/tab-2012-06-19-01.html>. Accessed 01 October 12.

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and electoral professionalisation. For instance, while the party suffers from low levels of organisational contact and participation in demonstrations, no other party seems to be as visible in the media as the FrP (Heidar and Saglie 2002, 290). In no other parties have so many of the delegates at the annual convention been interviewed by newspapers, television and the radio. Although some of this attention might be the result of scandals, there are many party representatives who seek publicity on their own. In 2009, the FrP's convention delegates were, for instance, more active than the same group in any other party in writing letters to the editor. As many as 93% did so.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the FrP is one of the most active parties when it comes to social media. Only in the Ap were the candidates more frequent users of Facebook during the 2009 Norwegian election campaign (Karlsen 2011, 13). The FrP and party leader Siv Jensen also have one of the highest numbers of supporters on Facebook. Only the Ap and its leader, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, are ahead. Almost 39,000 'like' the party and 74,000 'like' Siv Jensen. About 17,000 'like' the Conservatives or their leader Erna Solberg.<sup>17</sup>

The FrP is also in front when it comes to involvement of in-house and external campaign professionals in technical and strategic assistance (Karlsen 2010). For instance, only the Ap and the FrP asked external professionals for advice about using technology in the 2001 and 2005 campaign. However, the FrP is more reluctant when it comes to external influence on developing the actual political message. As the former party leader said, 'We decide the message'; and the present leader elaborated, 'We cannot hand over the campaign to external consultants. We have to imprint the political character of the campaign ourselves' (Karlsen 2010, 206).

### EFFECTS ON THE PARTY SYSTEM

The impact of right-wing populist parties should not in general be exaggerated (Mudde 2012). In the Norwegian case, however, the rise of the FrP has affected both governmental coalition patterns and the policy

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16 The numbers are from the delegate survey in 2009. Figures for the other parties vary from around 80% for the centre-left parties and between 80% and 87% for the centre-right parties.

17 The numbers for all parties are taken from their Facebook pages on 24 September 2012.

positions of other parties. The effect on more extreme-right groups and on racist violence is more disputed and doubtful.

First, among other important factors, the Ap's terrible election result in 2001 and the office-seeking strategy of the Socialist Left Party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti) along with the FrP's willingness to support the centre-right government after the 2001 election may have contributed to moving the parties on the left closer together (Madeley 2002). Moreover, the decision made by Hagen in 2005 and Jensen in 2009 not to support any right-centre government in which the FrP was not included was one of the main explanations why 'the centre-right did not manage to represent a credible coalition alternative to the red-green alliance' (Allern 2010, 906). This situation was exploited by the left-wing parties which portrayed the non-socialist camp as being in political chaos, and it was probably conducive to the electoral victory for the red-green alliance in both 2005 and 2009 (Narud 2011, 220–1).

Second, the FrP's growth has primarily been an electoral challenge for three parties in the Norwegian party system: the Conservatives and Ap and, to a lesser extent, the KrF (Aardal 1999, 43; Aardal 2007, 31; Holberg 2007). While the Conservative Party usually has bled the most to the FrP, the increasingly proletarianised electorate (Bjørklund 2009) also indicates that the FrP is stealing voters who traditionally have voted Ap. Consequently, if any parties have changed their policies as the result of the FrP, we would expect that to be the Conservatives and Ap.

It might be argued that the Conservative Party drifted rightwards on economic issues to curb the rise of the FrP in the 1980s. According to Harmel and Svåsand (1997, 336), the FrP 'has clearly *influenced* the platform of its Conservative neighbor, and hence . . . affected the nature of the choices provided in its party system'. However, the effect of the party system on the FrP's ideology seems to have been at least equally strong. The party has considerably moderated its right-wing economic policy in recent decades and has rather become a strong defender of the welfare state it once criticised. In this sense, it is difficult to argue that the FrP has pushed the whole political spectrum to the right, although the Conservatives turned right for a limited period.

Also when it comes to immigration policy, at least at the national level, the impact of the FrP has been 'more indirect and mediated through the

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party's strong agenda-setting function' (Brochmann and Hagelund 2010, 354). However, even this agenda-setting should not be overestimated. For a long time a strong consensus existed across party lines in Norway (from the Socialist Left Party to the Conservatives) to keep the immigration issue off the political agenda; it was often referred to as a 'defuse strategy' (Bale et al. 2010, 422). This made the politics of immigration and integration less salient in Norwegian election campaigns, both in 2001 and 2005 (Narud and Waldahl 2004; Sitter 2006), even though the FrP tried hard to politicise this particular issue on several occasions.

In recent years, the established parties' successful 'defuse strategy' seems to have been complemented by a more subtle 'adopt strategy'. There is at least some empirical evidence to suggest that Ap and particularly the Conservative Party have moved in the direction of the FrP over the period from 1985 to 2009, even though the FrP is the only party still using a conflict-based rhetoric when discussing the number of immigrants and potential problems of integration (Simonnes 2011, 77). Analysing party manifestos demonstrates quite clearly that the number of liberal statements from the Ap has decreased, and that the number of restrictive statements from the Conservative Party has increased. In recent years, the Ap has shown more interest in the topic, most notably with former party Secretary Martin Kolberg declaring, a few months before the 2009 election, the Ap's commitment to fight 'radical Islam'. Moreover, the party even worked out a specific integration policy document in early 2011, thus contributing to the increased salience of such issues in the public debate. Is Norway moving into a new period in which integration in general and Muslim integration in particular takes up a larger share of the public debate?

While Islam or Muslims were mentioned about 1,000 times in the three largest newspapers in Norway in 1996, the numbers increased to about 2,200 in 2011. Immigration issues were present in the media in the 2009 campaign, although six other issues (including education, environmental issues and health care) were still more important (Allern 2010, 906). As a result of the increased saliency of such issues, very few parties can afford to hold on to the 'ignore strategy'. The question nowadays is not whether one should address these issues, but rather how and in what way it should be done.

Third, some scholars have also argued that the presence of a strong right-wing populist party hampers the emergence of viable extreme-right groups or reduces the potential for racist violence (Koopmans 1996). In

sociological terms, the argument would be that the FrP's position and size in the Norwegian party system provides challenging (political) opportunity structures for other extreme anti-immigrant parties or extra-parliamentary groups. At first sight, this argument seems valid for the Norwegian case. The extreme-right milieu in Norway is very small and disorganised, and, with the exception of the terrorist attack by Breivik, not very violent.

The largest party interwoven with extreme-right activists is the Democrats (Demokratene). Founded by the former Vice-Chairman of the FrP, Vidar Kleppe, this party has so far been represented in only a small number of municipalities and one county. Moreover, Kleppe has now stepped down as a leader, and the party will most likely quietly disappear within a few years. Among other extreme-right parties, we find Vigrid, a party combining neo-Nazi ideology with Norse mythology, and the ultranationalist party the Norwegian Patriots (Norgespartiotene). They both received fewer than 200 votes in the most recent national elections, and they, too, seem to have closed down party activity at least for the time being. Moreover, other extra parliamentary and Islamophobic groups such as Stop Islamisation of Norway (Stopp islamiseringen av Norge, SIAN) and Norwegian Defence League (NDL) are also more or less incapable of attracting activists to their public demonstrations. When NDL had its first demonstration in Oslo on 9 April 2011, fewer than 10 people participated. A rally against Islam held by the less militant group SIAN in September 2011 attracted fewer than 25 activists. Not even a joint NDL–SIAN demonstration in Norway's fourth largest city, Stavanger, in June 2012 attracted more than about 35 people. In other words, it seems as though these groups are predominately virtual networks existing almost exclusively online and in social media. For instance, a check of Facebook, in September 2012, showed about 1,800 people as members of NDL and as many as 10,000 as members of SIAN.

The problem with the safety-valve thesis—that more moderate parties provide a safety valve for more extreme mobilisation—is that the strength of the Norwegian post-war extreme-right subculture was weak and disorganised even before the FrP became a major political actor. If anything, the FrP's politicisation of the immigration issue in the late 1980s was factually followed by an increase in the level of racist violence and a reactivation of the extreme-right groups, for instance the anti-immigrant group called 'People's movement against immigration' and the neo-Nazi group Boot Boys (Bjørge 1997). Moreover, the Islamophobic right-wing extremism which has emerged in recent years was simultaneous with the FrP campaign against a 'sneak-Islamisation' of the country. One study

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even suggests that the rhetoric and arguments put forward by important politicians in the FrP and the role of the FrP in its struggle against Islam and Islamisation are used by extreme-right groups to legitimise their own political objectives (Berntzen 2011, 64, 85). While it still seems premature to argue that the rise of the extreme right in the 1990s or more recently was caused by the FrP, the party's growth and rhetoric can hardly be seen as having a moderating effect either.

### OUTLOOK

Let me end this chapter by discussing the outlook for the FrP, distinguishing between (1) the party in the electorate, (2) the party as a membership organisation and (3) the party as a potential governmental partner.

#### **The party in the electorate**

The FrP has experienced a remarkable electoral growth in the past three decades. However, for a long time, it did not have very loyal voters, people who would cast their ballot for the FrP two elections in a row. Only 47% of the FrP's voters in 1997 voted for the party four years later (Aardal 2003a, 35). The FrP still has more disloyal voters than the Ap and the Conservatives, but in two most recent elections, 2005 and 2009, the share of loyal voters has increased to 61% and 58% respectively (Aardal 2011, 24). Moreover, the FrP identity seems to have become more rooted in parts of the electorate. While only 3.7% of all voters identified with the FrP in 1989, the percentage has increased to 7.3% two decades later (see Table 5). However, 2011 was truly an *annus horribilis* for the party. In addition to many internal scandals and major electoral losses almost everywhere in the country, preliminary analysis from a local election study shows that the party has lost much of its ownership of its most important mobilising issue, namely (anti-)immigration.

**Table 5 Voters who feel attached to the FrP 1985–2009<sup>18</sup>**

Years	1989	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009
Voters who feel attached to the FrP	3.7	1.6	4.0	3.9	6.3	7.3
N	2160	2159	2054	2041	2003	1773

*Source:* Norwegian election studies 1989–2009. The author's own calculations.

### **The party as an organisation**

In one of the few comparative analysis of parties in Sweden and Norway in recent years, it was argued that the FrP did not satisfy the criteria for a well-organised party (Svåsand and Wörlund 2005, 278). The party was seen as too leader-centred and as having too many passive members. However, as already argued, this was obviously a premature conclusion. Contrary to many predictions, the party actually had its best election result without Hagen as leader. Party members are not as passive as previously suggested (see also Heidar and Saglie 2002, 167), and Siv Jensen has certainly been able to fill Hagen's shoes. The satisfaction with internal democracy has in fact increased with Jensen as party leader compared with the Hagen era. Moreover, the party has over the long term clearly demonstrated its ability to continuously expand its organisation and territorial presence, although the membership base somewhat decreased last year (Christensen 2012).

### **The party as potential governmental partner**

As mentioned earlier, the FrP has been less tolerated than right-wing populist parties in other countries, not only in Denmark, but also in Austria, the Netherlands and Italy. However, several indicators suggest the FrP is gradually becoming less disliked both at the elite level, among

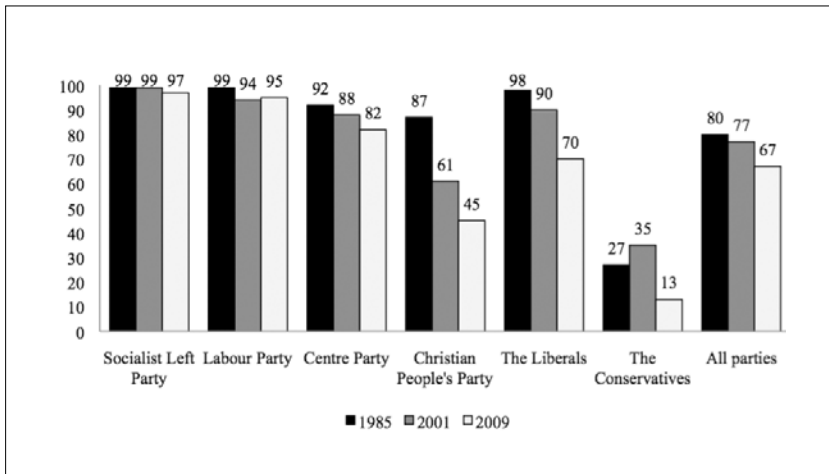
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<sup>18</sup> All numbers are in percentages. Those who answered 'don't know' are excluded from the population. In 1989–93 and 2001–9, the question asked in the survey was 'Would you say that you in general think of yourself as a Conservative Party man/woman, a Labour Party man/woman, a Social-Left man/woman and so on, or do you not feel an attachment at all to some of these parties?' In 1997 the question was slightly different ('Do you feel attached to any particular party? Which party is this?'), but Berglund (1999, 148) argues, based on analyses, that the numbers can nevertheless be compared.

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party members (numbers not shown here) and among voters. In short, the development of the relationship between the FrP and the other non-socialist parties could be described as the process of ‘slow normalisation’. In 1985, 2001 and 2009 the middle-level elite in all parties were asked about their preferences for other parties. Figure 2 shows the percentage within each party who strongly dislike the FrP. While the scepticism within the two left-wing parties, Socialist Left and Ap, are almost at the same level now as in 1985, the scepticism is eroding in the other parties. FrP critics are particularly declining in the KrF and the Liberals. While almost 90% of the delegates at a KrF convention in 1985 disliked the FrP, only 45% did so in 2009. Within the Liberal Party the numbers have decreased in the same period from almost 100% to 70%. In the least sceptical party, the Conservatives, there is almost nobody left who strongly dislikes the FrP. Not surprisingly then, the Conservatives declared they were ready to enter a governmental coalition with the FrP in 2009.

**Figure 2 FrP sceptics, middle-level elites<sup>19</sup>**



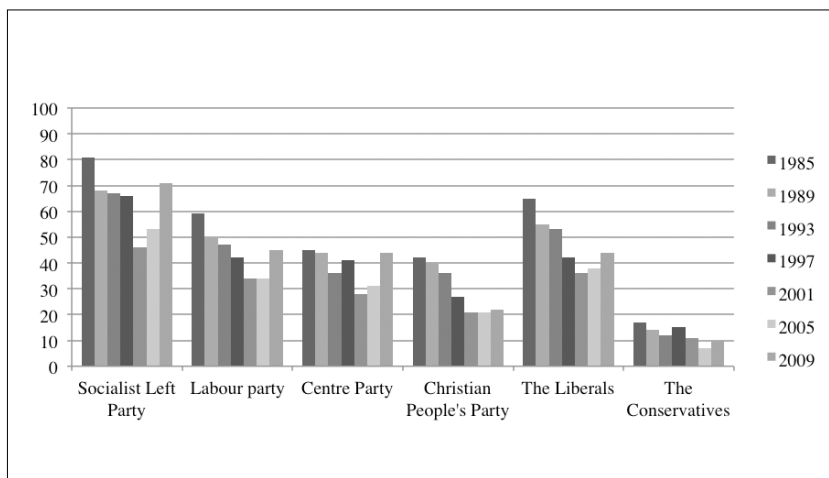
Source: Party convention surveys 1985, 2001 and 2009. All calculations have been done by the author.

<sup>19</sup> Delegates at party conventions between 1985 and 2009 who said they ‘strongly dislike’ the FrP. All numbers are in percentages. In all three surveys the initial responses have been re-categorised on a Likert scale with five options: strongly dislike, dislike, both like and dislike, like, strongly like. In the three surveys (1985, 2001 and 2009), N is as follows: Socialist Left Party 119, 154, 114; Ap 217, 220, 172; Centre Party 100, 147, 114; KrF 142, 175, 110; Liberals: 129, 136, 117; Conservatives: 211, 184, 143; all parties: 18, 1016, 770.



The same pattern of increased acceptance within other parties is visible also among voters. Starting from a less hostile level, they, too, have become less sceptical about the FrP as time has passed. As shown in Figure 3, the decline was particularly strong from 1985 to 2001. For voters of the Socialist Left Party it fell from 81% to 46%, for Ap voters from 59% to 34%, for Centre Party voters from 45% to 28%, for the KrF from 42% to 21%, for the Liberals from 64% to 36% and for the Conservative electorate from 17% to 11%. In recent years, however, as the FrP's electoral support has grown and the party has seized a reasonable share of voters from other parties (presumably those who were the least sceptical) and the party's government plans are becoming more realistic, the trend of declining scepticism has either been reversed (for example in the current left-centre government and the Liberals) or stabilised (in the KrF and the Conservatives). Nevertheless, the FrP is much less disliked among voters today than it was in the mid-1980s.

**Figure 3 FrP sceptics, voters<sup>20</sup>**



Source: Norwegian election studies 1985–2009. All calculations are by the author.

20 Voters in other parties between 1985 and 2009 who said they 'strongly dislike' the FrP. All numbers are in percentages. In the seven surveys (1985, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005 and 2009), N is as follows: Socialist Left Party: 120, 174, 236, 118, 134, 222, 104; Ap: 502, 565, 354, 608, 665, 605, 675; Centre Party: 95, 129, 93, 133, 310, 108, 123; KrF: 67, 89, 212, 264, 124, 161, 171; Liberals: 66, 97, 70, 84, 61, 77, 68; Conservatives: 287, 272, 428, 267, 276, 399, 544.

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To conclude, the FrP is certainly one of the most successful right-wing populist parties in Europe. Only in Austria (BZÖ and FPÖ together) and Switzerland (the Swiss People's Party) do such parties see similar levels of support in elections. Given its long history as a parliamentary party and its increasingly loyal electorate, it seems fair to argue that the party is on its way to becoming institutionalised and an integrated part of the Norwegian party system. Taking this and its emphasis on building a more traditional mass party into consideration in combination with utilising modern technology, other parties face a huge challenge trying to win back lost voters. One reason for the FrP's success is probably its mild version of right-wing populism and another is its ability to address different electorates with different issues: immigration, tax protests, health care, transport and infrastructure, law and order, and a more diffuse protest against the pundits and the political elite. While many other right-wing populist parties have adopted a more centrist economic policy, the FrP seems to be holding on to Kitschelt's (1995, 275) winning formula: '[A] resolute market-liberal stance on economic issues and an authoritarian and particularist stance on political questions of participatory democracy, of individual autonomy of lifestyles and cultural expressions, and of citizenship status'. This might be a successful electoral strategy, but the experience of FPÖ in Austria after joining the government in 2000 suggests it will be difficult to sustain in office (Luther 2003). Perhaps in the near future the FrP will be forced to choose between its petty bourgeoisie and working-class constituencies.

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# Between Opposition and Government: The Swiss People's Party

Oscar Mazzoleni

## INTRODUCTION

Switzerland, the oldest democracy in Europe, with a reputation for being the land of direct democracy, was spared fascist and Nazi regimes. Nonetheless it has had its share of extreme right-wing and populist parties since the end of the Second World War. In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of small parties such as the Movement against Over-Foreignisation (Volksbewegung gegen Überfremdung) launched a series of popular initiatives, some of which were supported by a significant percentage of Swiss voters. Later, several opposition parties, in particular the Swiss Democrats (Schweizer Demokraten)<sup>1</sup> and the Swiss Freedom Party (Freiheits-Partei der Schweiz)<sup>2</sup>, mobilised anti-immigration issues and systematic criticism of the political establishment. However, those parties remained marginal in the Swiss system throughout the 1980s (Skenderovic 2009; Altermatt et al. 1994; Altermatt and Kriesi 1995; Gentile 1996).

The 1990s represented a turning point. Radical right-wing themes and populist claims were gradually embraced by the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP<sup>3</sup>), a mainstream party that went through a profound radicalisation. Traditionally moderate and centre-right, the new SVP moved decisively to the right with a style that was similar to that of other so-called populist parties of Europe, taking an anti-immigration and anti-supranational political stance, combined with a pro-liberal economic agenda in the economic field. Since the 2000s, even though political

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1 French: Démocrates Suisses; Italian: Democratici Svizzeri; Romnsch: Democrats Svizers.

2 French: Parti suisse de la liberté; Italian: Partito svizzero della Libertà; Romnsch: Partida Svizra da la Libertad.

3 French: Union Démocratique du Centre; Italian: Unione Democratica di Centro; Romnsch: Partida Populara Svizra.

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scientists working on populism and radical right-wing parties have not always included the SVP in their studies, more and more scholars have begun to consider it as close to, or a member, of this political family and have tried to explain its success using similar conceptual tools (Betz 2004; Geden 2006; Mazzoleni and Skenderovic 2007; Mudde 2007; Mazzoleni 2008; Skenderovic 2009; Bornschier 2010). By the mid-1990s, the SVP was a relatively small party representing about 11% of the electorate. Then, after a significant electoral advance, it became the main Swiss party at the national level.

How can we explain the exceptional and now longstanding rise of this party? Around which issues does it mobilise? How has it been able to manage its intra-party dynamics? What are the main consequences that the rise and the presence of the new SVP have for the party system? In an attempt to answer these questions, this chapter is organised as follows:

1. We will illustrate the main phases of the party's electoral evolution and present a profile of the typical voter.
2. We will try to summarise the reasons for the sustained rise of the party.
3. We will focus on its programme and agenda with particular attention to its winning formula.
4. We will try to shed some light on certain intra-party dynamics, specifically the relationship between the internal majority and minority.
5. We will examine the consequences for the party system of the SVP's rise.

In our conclusion, we will attempt to understand the future prospects of the SVP.

### ELECTORAL DYNAMICS AND VOTERS' PROFILE

The radicalisation of the SVP has been concomitant with an important increase in its electoral support. In the lower chamber of the federal parliament (the National Council) the SVP went from 11.9% to 22.5% of the vote in the period between 1991 and 1999. The electoral success continued in the federal elections of 2003 and 2007. In 2007 the SVP earned 29% of the votes, the highest percentage that a single Swiss party has reached in the National Council since the 1910s. In the most recent federal election in 2011, the SVP suffered a setback, gaining only 26.6% of the vote, but it remained the strongest party at the national level, both in terms of



parliamentary seats as well as percentage of voters in the greatest number of cantons. Currently, aside from the regionalist Ticino League (Lega dei Ticinesi, LEGA),<sup>4</sup> which is the main party in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino, and the Geneva Citizens' Movement (Mouvement Citoyens Genevois, MCG),<sup>5</sup> the SVP is the main party representing a radical right-wing populist stance in all regions of Switzerland.

### **Middle class and workers**

According to the main academic surveys, certain elements of the electorate have persistently been over-represented in recent decades, including groups such as farmers, small-business owners and, often, males (Selb and Lachat 2004; Kitschelt and McGann 2003, 2005; Lutz 2007, 2008, 2012). Since 1995, the profile of SVP voters has evolved in multiple ways. After years of being an agrarian, largely rural party, supported only in certain cantons, in particular in the German-speaking ones, it expanded to encompass the entire national territory including the urban centres and the French-speaking and Italian-speaking regions with the support of a more socially heterogeneous electorate. The party's Protestant roots are still present, but the addition of non-practising Catholics as supporters has further widened the party's influence. In the federal elections of 1995 and 1999, adults between the ages of 18 and 24 were under-represented, while in recent elections, including that of 2011, the SVP made greater gains within this age group. Educational factors play a huge role in the SVP's support. The less educated the voters, the more likely they are to vote for the SVP (de Weerd 2004, 83–5; Lutz 2007, 2011). Increasingly, unskilled workers and voters with lower incomes have joined the party, especially in the period between 1999 and 2003 (Mazzoleni et al. 2005). Overall, the working class, particularly the blue-collar contingent, has carried significant weight within the SVP (Oesch 2008).

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4 The LEGA was founded in 1991. In the past 20 years, this party has played a significant role in the canton Ticino (one of the 26 Swiss cantons and semi-cantons), especially regarding regional and EU issues, achieving its best electoral results in recent times. In the cantonal elections of 2011, the LEGA won 29.8% and two seats in government (with five seats in total). In the federal election of 2011, the LEGA gained two seats in the lower chamber, with 34.2%.

5 The MCG was founded in 2005. In 2009, the MCG became the canton's second strongest political party in the legislative elections (with about 14.7%), while the SVP finished only seventh (winning 8.6%). In the 2011 federal elections, the MCG won a seat in the lower chamber (with 9.8%), while the SVP gained two seats (with 16%).

### **Between modernity's losers and protest voting**

According to some scholars, the case of the SVP confirms the thesis of 'modernity's losers', a reaction against globalisation from people affected by socio-economic transformation (Kriesi et al. 2005, 2008). This perspective emphasises the divide between social and cultural specialists and unskilled workers, as the former support a culturally and nationally open view and the latter tend to be more conservative. However, farmers and small business owners are still over-represented (Kitschelt and McGann 2003, 2005), and these groups are not necessarily included among the losers in the globalisation process within the Swiss context (Gottraux and Péchu 2011, Chapter 1).

Moreover, the electoral advance of the SVP does not confirm the hypothesis of the protest vote. According to the available surveys, gradual and continual growth, at least until 2007, was the result of an increasing percentage of loyal voters (Lutz 2007). Additionally, in the 2011 election, the number of SVP voters who declared that they had already supported the SVP in 2007 stood at 70%, which was the highest score in comparison with the voters of the other mainstream Swiss parties. The voters that the SVP lost in 2011 went to left-wing, centre and centre—right parties, but also contributed to the high abstention rate, which in the last federal election stood at about 51.5% (Lutz 2011, 22).

### **EXPLAINING THE ELECTORAL ADVANCE AND POLITICAL SUCCESS**

The electoral growth of the SVP and the more or less stable support of a large proportion of Swiss voters were made possible by several different factors.

#### **Endogenous resources and political opportunities**

The SVP provides resources—material and symbolic—which are incomparably greater than those of its direct competitors (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic 2007). Crucial among the internal resources was the role played by the new party leadership, particularly its charismatic leader, multimillionaire entrepreneur Christoph Blocher (Schilling 1994; Gsteiger 2002; Somm 2009) who expanded the leadership structure to the national level. Unlike other Swiss parties, historically run by rather weak national directorates, the new SVP was built in a decisive way around its

leader. The party also introduced new campaign methods: a polemical style, negative campaigning and a large-scale investment in advertising (Skenderovic 2009). The reinforcement of the national organisation in terms of mobilisation, ideological cohesiveness and internal discipline has been one reason for the successful development of the SVP.

The SVP billboards that wallpapered every corner of the country during the campaign for the national election of October 2007—all with a giant photo of the party leader flanking a single slogan: ‘Support Blocher! Vote SVP!’—constitute the apex of this new trend. It has been criticised by opponents as an ‘un-Swiss’ way of doing politics in that it betrays the traditional rules of the gentlemen’s agreement of maintaining low-profile national party organisations and leaders.

The SVP was able to exploit certain institutional opportunities within the Swiss political system, such as the proportional electoral system (Carter 2002), which gave the party a boost, especially in the election of the lower chamber of the federal parliament and in the cantonal parliaments. Conversely, wherever elections are conducted under the majority system, particularly for the upper chamber and the cantonal governments, the SVP struggles to gain seats, remaining a marginal party. The availability of direct democracy tools was also crucial and not only at the federal level. They enabled the SVP to deploy an intensive strategy of referendums and popular initiatives, either as the sword of Damocles hanging over government decision-making or as a means of defining and imposing the SVP’s agenda. In the Swiss polity, direct democracy functions as an integrating factor for oppositional actors, its use often supporting the tendency to pass preliminary agreements that involve movements and opposition parties with referendum potential (Kobach 1993; Linder 2010). However, in the hands of the SVP during the 1990s and 2000s, it obviously served as an opposition tool for several issues, favouring a contentious and anti-establishment attitude and providing the opportunity to influence the agenda. The referendum arena was also an opportunity to mobilise SVP activists and to capitalise political resources for electoral goals (Mazzoleni 2008).

### **Socio-cultural uncertainty**

The strategy of the new SVP was to exploit the social and cultural uncertainty that has emerged in the Swiss political landscape over recent

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decades, especially since the beginning of the 1990s. First and foremost, we have seen the emergence of a lasting climate of uncertainty. The explosion of the socio-economic crisis of the early 1990s contributed to a structural shift, and for the first time after at least 30 years of the continuous economic growth that had made Switzerland one of the richest countries in the world, prosperity could no longer be taken for granted. An end to jobs for life, and indeed the rising spectre of unemployment, became real risks for every citizen. For at least two generations, unemployment and the fear of it had been foreign to the social experience of the Swiss voter. Since 2000, however, the barometer of voter concerns, published annually by Credit Suisse, has shown that unemployment or the risk of losing one's job are nearly always at the top of the population's greatest worries (Longchamp 2011, 12).

Social and economic transformations have undermined a cornerstone of the country's image, of Switzerland as a model and guarantor of economic success, which was consolidated in the 1950s and 1960s as one of the basic principles of Swiss identity (Furrer 1998). Uncertainty at the cultural level is also, perhaps above all, expressed through the questioning of one of the pillars of national identity— independence and autonomy in foreign affairs. The exceptionalism that created the image of Switzerland as a happy island in the centre of Western Europe, and profoundly shaped the country's post-war identity, was put to the test by the end of the bipolar world and the acceleration of the European Union. At the beginning of the 1990s, the government and the majority of Swiss political powers began a new strategy aimed at greater international integration, from membership in the United Nations to bilateral agreements with the European Union. The strategy of the SVP straddled the socio-economic and cultural crises, responding in ways that distinguished it or set it up in opposition to prevailing norms, focusing on an electorate in search of assurances and potentially dissatisfied with the political establishment.

### **Campaign modernisation**

The SVP's strategies were reinforced by a corresponding change in the Swiss media, which gave the party significantly greater political heft. During the 1990s, Switzerland saw the emergence of a new media competitiveness, generated by the advent of free newspapers and the Internet, which led to unprecedented sensationalising and personalising of Swiss politics and, specifically, of election campaigns. These changes

gave new visibility to the SVP's provocative messages (Marcinkowski 2007; Weinmann 2009). Though still trailing the major European democracies, the modernisation of political communication and election campaigning took root and spread through Switzerland over the course of the 1990s and 2000s. These transformations also involved the other main parties in different forms, but not in any way that could stop the SVP from maintaining a significant competitive advantage in areas like campaign financing and organisation. Between the federal elections of 1995 and 2007, all the main national parties saw their national budgets increase significantly. However, while the estimates remain approximate, the SVP has consistently been able to depend on a much higher campaign budget (Gunzinger 2008, 81). An academic survey conducted in 2007 and again in 2011 shows the SVP candidates for the federal parliamentary elections declaring a higher average expenditure than the candidates of any other parties (Lutz 2007, 41; 2011, 73–5).

### **The opponent within the government coalition**

To explain the lasting growth of the SVP prior to 2007, we must also consider the party's position and ability to manage its government participation and oppositional posture. According to Alexandre Dézé (2004), in the past three decades, the European right-wing or extreme right-wing parties that have attacked the establishment can roughly be grouped into two categories. The first is characterised by an uncompromising decision to stand out, which is expressed through a political marginalising process. It unites small extremist groups, by definition anti-parliamentarian, and parties that limit themselves to parliamentary opposition. Parties from the second category will instead accept government participation, often through an alliance with mainstream parties. When these anti-establishment parties enter a relatively large government coalition, they then have to choose between three options: to adapt, to resist or to select a third option that combines the first two. Generally speaking, it is difficult to find a good balance in pursuit of this third solution, especially over the long term.

The SVP represents one of the rare cases of a party remaining within the governing coalition while maintaining a populist style. In principle, the anti-establishment style contradicts the requirements of full participation in the executive branch and of managing a good relationship with other parties in government when it comes to making political decisions. The common thesis is that the restraint imposed by the institutional rules weakens the

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challenger role. Consequently, the so-called populist parties should have a limited lifespan in political institutions, destined to eventually weaken or even disappear. If the tensions caused by this double standard are not resolved, these parties are likely to be split by internal conflicts or schisms. Nevertheless, it is also possible that so-called populist parties which have succeeded in mobilising resources and developing organisational strategies could make themselves resistant to integration even while continuing to be a member of a government coalition.

While such balancing acts are relatively exceptional in the current European landscape, the new SVP has been able through the 1990s and 2000s as a party 'of struggle and of government' (to borrow an expression often used in the past to describe the role of left-wing parties in European democracies) to maintain and manage an ambivalent position between anti-establishment postures and government participation. This ability did not, however, prevent a major internal crisis in 2008. The secession of the more moderate wing, in part the result of difficulties within the party leadership, contributed to a slowing of the party's electoral momentum. Nevertheless, in the 2011 election the SVP remained the strongest Swiss party at the national level.

### **Connecting and using the party legacy**

The SVP's ongoing strength was rendered possible, at least in part, because the SVP is a former mainstream and government party that was founded several decades ago, which gave new leadership a strong foundation. Though officially constituted in 1971, the party's beginnings date back to the 1910s (Skenderovic 2007). By 1929, a member of one of the two parties that would merge to form the SVP—the Farmers, Artisans and Citizens Party (Bauern-, Gewerbe- und Bürgerpartei, BGB)—had joined the government federal coalition. In the following decades, with an uninterrupted presence, the BGB became one of the pillars of the Swiss consociational government, and since 1959 a fully fledged member of the 'magic formula', the grand coalition of all the main Swiss parties, from the Social Democrats to the centre-right parties. Since 1959, as the smallest of the government parties, the BGB (later the SVP) was granted one seat in an unchanged government coalition. In 2003, the new SVP succeeded in changing the power balance within government by obtaining a second seat at the expense of the Christian Democratic Party (Christlichdemokratische

Volkspartei).<sup>6</sup> For four years, the leader of the SVP, Christoph Blocher, elected as a member of the government by the majority of the parliament, played a key role in the Swiss government as the *enfant terrible* of national politics (Mazzoleni and Skenerovic 2007). Then, in 2007, Blocher was not re-elected and his party underwent an internal crisis and schism that damaged the credibility of the national leadership. If these events partly explain its electoral difficulties in the 2011 federal election, the SVP still represents a unique case in Western European democracies: over the past 20 years, no other party that has developed radical right-wing positions and populist claims has managed to be almost uninterruptedly represented in a government coalition at the national level. Moreover, from 2003 until now, it has been the strongest party in the country, at least in the electoral arena.

## THE AGENDA AND THE MAIN ISSUES

What is the winning formula of the SVP? The rhetoric provided by the radical right (or populist) parties is a crucial element in explaining not only the characteristics of them, but also the ability of these parties to respond to the latent demands of followers and voters in particular. In Europe, since the 1980s, it would have been more appropriate to talk about the two winning formulas that made it possible to impose an acting political force connected to the radical right-wing populist family on the electoral field. Neither winning formula was built around a single issue, such as immigration, for instance, but instead each encompassed multiple elements through which a heterogeneous group of voters was targeted. Let us add that these elements might have been temporary in nature, responding to tactical needs in a changing context (Betz 1994).

### **National identity and liberalism**

Despite some ambivalence and shift, the first of these winning formulas was a mix between authoritarianism, or conservatism with reference to cultural values, and protectionism at the economic level, thus demonstrating a shift towards economic nationalism seen as a response to the anxieties and insecurities caused by globalisation. The theme of national preference developed by the French National Front was a part of the second formula,

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6 French: Parti Démocrate-Chrétien; Italian: Partito Popolare Democratico; Romnsch: Partida Cristiandemocratica.

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along with the more general idea that the welfare state should not be dismantled, but reserved for nationals only. The second would have been the combination of a resolutely neo-liberal economic stand and an authoritarian and particularistic approach to issues such as participative democracy, citizens' rights and lifestyle (Kitschelt 1995).

The SVP tends to embrace the second formula. The defence of national identity, the claims against European integration, the fear of foreigners and the criticism of elites in power have become key issues for the new SVP. These themes have been aired in their political and electoral platforms since 1995. The defence of national integrity—particularly in terms of the Swiss cultural and institutional traditions of neutrality, independence, federalism and direct democracy—against any supranational political integration and multicultural society, are the main issues of the party agenda. Indeed, campaigning against almost all attempts towards European integration has characterised the history of the party since the early 1990s. Struggles against immigrants and asylum seekers accused of provoking an increase in crime and welfare abuse are also recurrent themes in its popular initiatives and referendums.

With respect to economic issues, its rhetoric clearly insisted on the defence of the free market. The new SVP, like the Swiss Freedom Party, was at the heart of the neo-liberal conservative revolution, which refocused on values in line with the corporate sector, economic growth and individual freedom. Unlike the LEGA and the MCG, which often joined in anti-globalisation critiques, the official discourse of the SVP supported the economic globalisation process. The SVP was neither against the World Trade Organisation nor firmly against the reinforcement of Swiss economic treaties around the world. The SVP did not oppose the bilateral agreements with the EU in 2000. If it is much more critical of them today, particularly of the agreement regarding the free circulation of EU citizens, it is for reasons tied to an increase of foreign workers in Switzerland and to the risk that these accords could open the doors for the country's eventual entry into the EU.

However, the ideology of free trade only partially inspired its economic stand on agricultural policy. The SVP supported the liberalisation of the agricultural sector but also demanded a policy that secured sufficient income to help farmers fight the deterioration of their living standards. The SVP was not ready to give up its former electoral base. Its criticisms of



social spending and state bureaucracy did not lead it to firmly oppose social benefits as such. Indeed, according to Blocher, the welfare state would be a new type of 'slavery', a source of 'waste' and 'red tape' that did not help the needy. At the same time, on behalf of hard-working and responsible people, he made sure to denounce the 'profiteers' (fraudulent refugees and the unemployed, drug addicts and so on). 'Preference' should go to those who 'deserve' it, according to a perspective favoured by the national-populist discourse and that some authors qualify as 'welfare chauvinism' (Hassenteufel 1999).

### **The winning formula**

According to several scholars, the modern populist phenomenon took into account a dimension that was not immediately obvious: the ability to navigate the tension between tradition and modernity. According to Pierre-André Taguieff (1997; 2001), national-populist rhetoric expresses the simultaneous presence of 'anti-modern reactions' and 'hyper-democratism'. For Gino Germani (1978), the success of national populism comes from its ambiguity, which is to say from its ability to formulate a political response to conflicts caused by the speeding up of modernisation. Similarly, the key to the SVP's success relates to the double standard of its discourse, which is simultaneously against and inside.

The central component of the SVP's winning formula is the defence of Swiss exceptionalism, which encompasses both traditional and modern components. One can interpret the variations and ambiguities of the SVP program in the same way, notably with regard to the *Sonderfall*, which refers to the notion of Switzerland constituting a peculiar or exceptional case in the European and world landscape. This defence is not limited to opposing the loss of national sovereignty, nor to preserving Swiss identity (neutrality, federalism, direct democracy), but expresses the idea of the country's traditional openness in the economic field. In a speech given at the twelfth assembly of the SVP's Zurich branch in January 2000, Blocher declared:

Our secret is that we move forward consciously and convincingly on the path that we have opened, between tradition and innovation, between conservatism and modernity . . . Today, the SVP alone . . . still upholds the defence of the real factors of our country's success: federalist structures, a limited central administration, neutrality as

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an essential peace policy, diversity and competition between cities and cantons, and a hard-working, well-educated populace; all these are factors in our present success which has been developed through long tradition.

For Blocher, this success meant, first and foremost, the economic prosperity of the country.

### **The *Sonderfall* between tradition and modernity**

The discourse of the new SVP broke the traditional image of the Swiss *Sonderfall*, which until the 1980s had been dominated by movements against overpopulation. Emphasis on the *Sonderfall* has become the key factor in the SVP's winning formula, distinguishing it from other government parties, among other things. The SVP refused to give up the Swiss *Sonderfall*, unlike the other main parties which have been accused of betraying the true Swiss legacy. As it attacked the large government coalition, the SVP also often criticised the political class as well as the federal government as a whole, accusing them of helplessness, incapacity and even of betraying the true concerns of the Swiss people through left-wing and pro-EU positions.

However, beyond the traditional representation of a Switzerland which had completely cut itself off from external contacts, remaining essentially rural, in a somewhat mythical revival of the national enclave, Blocher's SVP tried to introduce a new version of the *Sonderfall*, which did not give up the old one, but instead modernised it. For the new SVP, the Swiss exception combined traditions of independence and neutrality with the economic prosperity that had shaped the wealthiest country on earth, according to the image of the country in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Blocher, Switzerland has been able to take advantage of its international economic and financial prestige. Under this model, Switzerland became an economic success because it was politically and militarily independent and internally strengthened by the successful stewardship of federalism and direct democracy.

The *Sonderfall* discourse built a kind of bridge between the generation which had experienced neutrality and independence during the Second World War and the new generations that were looking for references but remained confident in the Swiss promise of material happiness. More

generally this discourse tried to seduce voters who experienced the 1990s crisis as a split between Swiss identity and economic growth, frustrated by a new context in which old promises appear to be betrayed.

The ideological winning formula of the SVP has been stable over the years. Nevertheless, new issues have become part of its political agenda during the first decade of this century. There is the issue of education, in which the SVP positions itself as the defender of more traditional styles of schooling, distant from the wretched results of 1968. Above all, the SVP has helped launch the popular initiative against minarets, which took 57% of the national vote in 2009. This was the first referendum of its kind in Europe. Though in line with its traditional position on immigration, it was the first time the SVP took action on an issue tied largely to religion, positing itself as a defender of Christian culture. In 2011, the SVP became the first Swiss party to integrate the fight against the 'growing Islamisation' as part of its electoral platform.

#### THE INTRA-PARTY DYNAMIC

It is with this agenda that Blocher has developed his staying power as the main leader of the party for almost 20 years, and has created a collective radical leadership against the old and moderate agenda. The transformation of power dynamics within the party, which led to the moderate wing remaining a minority, began with the campaign for the referendum on the European Economic Area. Indeed, in 1992, the government and parliament urged voters to confirm Switzerland's entry into this important treaty with the EU. While the SVP's moderate wing supported the majority position of the government and the other parties, a faction led by Blocher and the Zurich branch of the party succeeded in persuading a majority of the SVP to oppose the treaty. This turned out to be one of the most intensely fought referenda in Swiss history, consecrating Blocher as the leader of the Euro-sceptics, both inside and outside his national party. Thus, between 1992 and 1996, an internal clash was brewing which would lead to Ueli Maurer, a politician close to Blocher, ascending to the national presidency, a position from which he would then foster further transformations.

#### **Organisational growth and factionalism**

The years 1996–2007 mark the continuous advance of the party at the electoral as well as the organisational level. Previously, the party had

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been present only in the Protestant cantons and almost exclusively in the German-speaking cantons (with the exception of Vaud and Ticino), but between 1991 and 2002, the party created 13 new cantonal branches, along with hundreds of municipal branches throughout the country. These new branches were generally in line with the Zurich wing, consolidating also its prevalence within the national party. At the same time, the old-style, more moderate cantonal branches of the SVP were able to preserve a certain internal autonomy, building the new national leadership around Blocher, even when the party attacked consensual democracy and the political class. Despite the steady changes in the national party leadership from the mid-1990s onward, the moderate camp within the SVP was always met with relative tolerance, at least until 2007. Until that year, exponents of the moderate wing were often accused of being halfway ministers, but never did the party leadership go so far as to fully delegitimise them.

However, the new strategy and the organisational transformation also set the stage for an internal crisis. The greater internal cohesion and centralisation of the new SVP created a greater autonomy for the party within the culture of consensus and integration that strongly dominates Swiss politics. But the internal pressure toward greater cohesion and growing discipline would also limit the tolerance of those who didn't conform to the new party line. This tendency strongly contrasts with the Swiss legacy, founded on rather weak party organisations, with limited financial means and a low degree of professionalism of party staff (Ladner and Brändle 2011).<sup>7</sup> The reduced role of the Swiss parties in national government decision-making reflects a party organisation that took shape in a system fostered by federalism and direct democracy (Gruner 1977).

### **The split of 2008**

The tension between the radical and moderate wings of the SVP came to a head in December 2007, with the failed attempt to re-elect Blocher to the federal government. Blocher was his party's only official candidate, but a parliamentary majority elected another SVP member, Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, the representative of the Grisons canton. This replacement created a crisis within the SVP that continues to this day. Up to that

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<sup>7</sup> As one of the exceptions among Western democracies, in Switzerland there are no spending limits or direct public funding of campaigns, nor any obligation to declare sources of party funding to the federal authorities.

moment, the new radical and the old moderate camps in the SVP, the latter represented mainly by the cantons of Bern and Grisons, had coexisted without insurmountable tensions, but in the early months of 2008, the national party, with the support of the majority of the parliamentary group, decided to oust Widmer-Schlumpf and the Grisons section of the party that stood behind her. Soon, a faction of the SVP from Bern and other cantons chose to break from the party entirely, forming a new and more moderate party with regard, for instance, to the European integration issue. They called themselves the Conservative Democratic Party of Switzerland (Bürgerlich-Demokratische Partei Schweiz)<sup>8</sup> and brought together the outcasts and dissidents of the SVP including Samuel Schmid, the moderate representative in the federal government. The new party managed to establish branches in numerous cantons, and in the 2011 federal election it won 10 seats, against the 59 of the SVP (10 less than in 2007), which, though weakened, found a new internal cohesion.

#### INTER-PARTISAN EFFECTS

We can distinguish some important consequences for the party system as a result of the rise of the new SVP since the 1990s.

#### **A party system shift**

The first consequence is that the SVP succeeded in attracting voters from the extreme right and the radical right who had pulled a certain weight in the 1980s, as well as from the Swiss Democrats and the Freedom Party. The second is that the new moderate party, which broke off from the SVP in 2008, has until now enjoyed a certain amount of success. The third is that the growth of the SVP corresponded to a strengthening of the leftist parties, from the Socialists to the Greens, at least up until 2007. The fourth is that the two main Swiss centre-right parties, the Liberal Democratic Party (Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei)<sup>9</sup> and the Christian Democratic Party, have particularly suffered from the electoral rise of the SVP. Already in electoral decline in the 1980s, these two historical governing parties of the centre-right—and as such the principal guarantors of the stability of

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8 French: Parti Bourgeois Démocratique Suisse; Italian: Partito Borghese Democratico Svizzero; Romansch: Partida Burgais Democratica Svizra.

9 French: Parti radical-démocratique; Italian: Partito Liberale Radicale; Romansch: Partida liberaldemocrata.

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the Swiss political system for over a century—had lost the support of a significant portion of the electorate. Their erosion continued through the 1990s and the 2000s, reinforcing above all the SVP, at least according to surveys related to the federal elections of 2007 and 2011 (Lutz 2007, 18; 2011, 22). Until the late 1990s, the attitude of the two old centre-right parties toward the SVP's electoral growth was to minimise it, along with the significance of their own decline (Mazzoleni 2009). They were convinced that their pivotal role in government could not be threatened by transient populist victories. As strict government parties (Panebianco 1988, Chapter 7) which had been represented in the federal government without interruption since the nineteenth century, they are also resilient in the face of the populist style of the SVP. However, the attitude of these parties, and of the Social Democrats, who have also been members of the federal government for decades, has been ambivalent.

### **An integrated relationship with the mainstream parties**

If the new SVP was able to participate in the federal government in recent years, it is because the other members of the coalition accepted and, in part, legitimised their participation. In general, they considered the SVP's success a limited threat. Since the SVP was a mainstream government party before its radicalisation, this served as an essential factor in its legitimisation. Until now, government partners have generally maintained that such a powerful party cannot be excluded from an all-party government.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, the SVP's participation in the government coalition is a result of the specific interest of the centre—right parties in reinforcing right-wing government policy on several issues. In order to forge timely agreements with mainstream centre—right parties, notably the Liberal Democratic Party and the Christian Democratic Party, on specific issues such as the reform of the welfare state, asylum rights and so on, even the most radical wing of the SVP has been prepared to make concessions. On the other hand, despite its populist and adversarial posture on several issues, the new national leadership, including Blocher, never implemented any concrete strategy to abandon the government coalition, apart from a short break in 2008. Rarely does the SVP organise street demonstrations, and their links with extremist movements—beyond certain intellectual and personal ties—are unofficial and sporadic (Skenderovic 2009).

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<sup>10</sup> Since 1959 all of the main parties have been represented in the Swiss government. For a history of Swiss federal government elections, see Burgos et al., 2011.

Moreover, the SVP does not systematically oppose the foreign policy initiatives of the Swiss government. Nor does it oppose, but rather officially supports, membership in Bretton Woods institutions and the NLFA project (the new railway line through the Alps). Even after the critical turning point of 1995, the SVP was far from systematically condemning the decisions of the majority parties and federal authorities. Prior to the 2001 popular vote on UN membership, the national SVP declared itself in favour of Swiss membership, in spite of opposition from the Zurich branch. Furthermore, the new leadership of the SVP has strengthened connections with the world of Swiss finance, and not just with the interests of farmers; more recently, it has not officially supported the referendum launched against the agreement on Swiss banking secrecy with some EU countries. In fact, the national organisation of the SVP would not oppose the official position of Swiss banks, which is pro-agreement, leaving the youth organisation and some cantonal branches of the party to support the referendum. Blocher himself, after all, came up as both an industrial and financial entrepreneur, which is a function that he has maintained almost throughout his political career since the 1970s.

### **Undermining the traditional rules of the game**

Perhaps the most significant consequence of the rise of the SVP lies in its contribution to making the Swiss political field more competitive and uncertain. The SVP, with its strategy, its mobilisation, its political and electoral victories, and its central role in the government and political landscape, contributed significantly to changing the rules of the game. During the 1990s and 2000s, the consensual Swiss model had to face increasing challenges in electoral, referendum, parliamentary and government arenas. Among the most significant aspects is that the federal government elections—symbol of the stability of the political system—had never been so uncertain since the foundation of the federal state in 1848 (Burgos et al. 2011). Another aspect is the personalisation of politics, through the media and other channels. While the leadership of the main national parties had always been relatively weak, both with regard to the members of government and the cantonal sections, with Blocher's arrival, all the main parties strengthened their national leadership and presidencies (Mazzoleni 2009, 431–3). The semi-presidential and collegial Swiss system is among the most resistant to any kind of monocratic or presidential trend in the highest government offices: there is no head of government, nor is there any real president of the Confederation, a role

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filled by members of the collegial government elected by parliament for one-year terms. This institutional and political legacy, increased electoral uncertainty, changes in the balance of power between parties, the growing role of the media, particularly television, in political coverage (Ladner 2005) and, last but not least, the increasing criticism against and within the political establishment, all contributed to transforming the conditions in which Swiss politics operate.

### CONCLUSION: SUCCESSES AND FAILURES IN PERSPECTIVE

It is difficult to predict the future prospects of the SVP. The recent decline in its electoral support as reflected in the 2011 federal election, the defeat of the strategy to win new seats in the upper chamber of the national parliament, the failed attempt of the federal government in the last election to retake a second seat in government at the expense of former SVP member Widmer-Schlumpf—these are all signals of the recent difficulties faced by the SVP. Moreover, it remains unclear whether the new strategy, laid out in the summer of 2012, to refocus the party platform on the traditional issues of the new SVP—immigrants, Europe and so on—will bear any fruit.

It also remains to be seen how the ambivalent position of being both a protest party and a government party, one of the reasons for the success of the SVP until 2007, will be handled in the near future. We have seen that the SVP is the only European party among the so-called radical right-wing populist parties that has managed, since 2000, to participate almost uninterruptedly in a national government coalition. During this participation, the party has maintained a challenging style, though without necessarily always siding with the opposition. This has been possible because ambivalence is written into its history as a government party, as well as into its new leadership, its internal cohesiveness, the attitude of its adversaries and partners, and the opportunities offered by the Swiss political system, including the growing uncertainty in the political field brought about by the mobilisation of the SVP. These uncertainties open new opportunities for the SVP as a challenger and participant in the government, even in the absence of full institutional integration. On the other hand, the party has been rendered fragile by internal schisms and the shifting rules of the government game. The unexpected exclusion of Blocher from government is an excellent example of that. Furthermore, the fact that the recent internal crisis in the SVP emerged only on the



exclusion of its national leader from government is a reflection of its limited integration into the government coalition, but also of the increasing difficulties of managing internal cohesiveness and factionalism. These difficulties can be traced both to the response of the party's opponents and to the decline of Blocher's charismatic role. At the present time, the political fate of the SVP is strongly connected with the political trajectory of its historical leader.

However, for almost 20 years, the trajectory of the SVP has contradicted, at least in part, the thesis that populist parties are condemned to institutional integration. Certain internal resources, under specific institutional and symbolic patterns, could help the party to overcome other potential internal crises. The main competitive advantage of the SVP, in comparison with party opponents and allies, is its character as a militant and capital-intensive party, well organised at the national level. Of course, the story of the new SVP has confirmed the crucial role of the charismatic leader, which is not to be understood solely in terms of public image and the linking of voters with their leader. At the same time, this also means a strong transformation of the party's organisational patterns, including a new collective leadership, which seems to partially counterbalance the weakening of the charismatic leader himself.

We do not yet know if the peak of the new SVP's political success now belongs to the past, as some observers have said. Much will depend on its strategy to focus more on alliances for winning seats wherever the majority system operates or on placing its ideological profile at the centre of its strategy. Much will also depend on the actions of the other parties and on how certain opportunities—the issues of Europe, foreigners or Islam—are politically handled and exploited in the referendum arena.

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## B. Central and Eastern Europe





# The Lithuanian Case: National Populism Without Xenophobia

Ainè Ramonaitė and Vesta Ratkevičiūtė

## INTRODUCTION

Most research on populism and the radical right is based in Western Europe and has only recently included cases from Central and Eastern Europe (Mudde 2007). Regional expert Klaus Bachman (2006, 217) stands firm in this opinion: 'In recent years, only a few authors have sought to cross the former Cold War boundary in their transnational studies and comparisons of populist parties.' Lithuania remains *terra incognita* for many comparativists, as there are very few studies on Lithuanian party politics available in English (see Žeruolis 1998; Krupavičius 2000; Ramonaitė 2006; Jurkynas 2009; Duvold and Jurkynas forthcoming).

While populism as a political style appears to be widespread in Lithuania, whether there are any parliamentary parties in Lithuania which might be ascribed to the populist radical right or right-wing populism can be disputed. The party that most closely approaches the style of right-wing populism among Lithuanian parliamentary parties is the Order and Justice Party (*Partija Tvarka ir teisingumas*, TT). The TT is an anti-establishment party that uses a typically populist strategy to juxtapose the people and the 'corrupt' political elite. It advocates for strong state intervention and demands effective law and order, it mainly draws its support from the protest-voter electorate, and its popularity is largely based on the charismatic appeal of its leader, Rolandas Paksas. Moreover, since 2009 the party has been a member of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group in the European Parliament (EP), alongside other European right-wing populist parties.

However, it is not a typical party of the radical right as it does not have some of the main features of this party family. For example, Cas Mudde, a well-known expert in political extremism, does not consider the TT to

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be a radical populist party in his monograph (Mudde 2007). If nativism<sup>1</sup> constitutes the core of the populist radical right ideology, as Mudde claims, the TT cannot be regarded as a member of this party family. The TT, as will be demonstrated in the analysis of its programmatic appeals, is not exclusive, is not xenophobic and has no anti-immigration stance on its agenda. On the contrary, it is supported by Lithuanian ethnic minorities and cooperates with the Electoral Action of Poles in the Lithuanian Parliament (Lietuvos lenkų rinkimų akcija, LLRA). The party supports the EU and is therefore not Eurosceptic in the sense of ‘opposing Europe’ (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2008) as are many other right-wing populist parties and their colleagues in the EFD group.

Using Grabow’s and Hartleb’s definition of right-wing populism (see the introductory chapter of this book) we could claim that the TT is exclusionary on a vertical dimension as it draws a line between the ordinary people and the ‘distant establishment’, but not on a horizontal dimension against immigrants, Muslims or ethnic minorities. Therefore, it can be described as a right-wing populist party, if *populism* is used as the core feature of the term, but not as a populist *radical right* party (see Mudde 2007, 30 for the difference between right-wing populism and the populist radical right).

The TT was established in 2002 as the Liberal Democratic Party (Liberalų demokratų partija, LDP), but the history of the party can be traced to 2000 when its current leader, Rolandas Paksas, brought the Liberal Union of Lithuania (Lietuvos liberalų sąjunga), currently known as Liberal and Centre Union (Liberalų ir Centro Sąjunga), a small non-parliamentary party, to prominence, which threw the party system in Lithuania into disarray. The LDP was in fact established as a platform from which Paksas could run for presidential election. After Paksas was elected to the presidential office in 2003 and later impeached, the party adopted a rebellious image and became an outcast in the mainstream Lithuanian political arena. The party has a distinctive niche in the Lithuanian party system, receiving between 7% and 13% of the vote in parliamentary and EP elections.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the case of the TT in the context of the phenomenon of right-wing populism. It begins with a brief overview of the genesis of the party and the story of Paksas’s impeachment, which

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1 Nativism is defined as ‘An ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (“the nation”) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state’ (Mudde 2007, 19).

shaped the party's identity. The second part of the chapter analyses the programmatic profile of the party, while the third part is devoted to an analysis of its structural features. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion of the role and the impact of the party on the Lithuanian party system and offers a general evaluation of the party's profile.

## THE GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTY

During the first decade of independence, Lithuania faced the entrenchment of the bipolar 'left-right' party system based on an ex-Communist-anti-Communist conflict (Ramonaitė 2006). The parliamentary elections of 2000 were a real turning-point as they produced populist newcomers offering 'new politics' (Norkus 2011), and a clear opportunity for new challengers such as the TT, which was founded in 2002. The emergence of these new political powers was significantly facilitated by their active promotion and successful election campaigns, as well as by the striking positions and personal ambitions of Artūras Paulauskas—the leader of the New Union (Social Liberals) (Naujoji Sąjunga (socialliberalai))—and Rolandas Paksas (the leader of what was the Liberal Union).

Rolandas Paksas began his political career in 1997, when, as a member of the Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives)—currently known as Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats (Tėvynės sąjunga-Lietuvos krikščionys demokratai, TS-LKD)—he was elected mayor of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. The emergence of a situation in which in a fight between two, the third option wins,<sup>2</sup> brought him to the office of prime minister in June 1999. However, Paksas split with the Conservative party leaders over the controversial privatisation of the state-owned oil company Mažeikių nafta, which was to be sold to the US-based energy group Williams International. Just a few days before the historic contract was to be signed, Prime Minister Paksas stepped down in order to demonstrate his disapproval of the agreement.

In order to reduce dependence on Russia, Mažeikių nafta was nevertheless sold to the US company; however, the conditions were not favourable for the Lithuanian economy. These events had various consequences. The Homeland Union (Lithuanian Conservatives) suffered from irreversible

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<sup>2</sup> Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius and President Valdas Adamkus differed in opinion over how to cope with the impact of the Russian crisis of 1998 on the Lithuanian economy.

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damage and their time in government was followed by two tenures in opposition. In contrast, Paksas became the most popular politician in the country because of his clear stand and resignation, and thus created the foundation for his future political career.

Shortly after this heroic resignation he was invited to lead the Liberal Union and began his 'liberal period'. His time as chair brought impressive popularity to the party, but undermined its ideological purity (Ramonaitė 2008). His leadership was the party's most important feature, making the Liberal Union the second-strongest political force in the country, with 24% of the seats in the Seimas in 2000. Paksas managed to form a bare-majority centrist 'New Policy' coalition formed of his party and the newly established New Union (Social Liberals) led by Artūras Paulauskas. However, after only eight months in power, the unstable 'New Policy' coalition collapsed following disagreements over the budget and privatisation plans for the country's energy sector.

Soon afterwards, Paksas was forced to resign as chair of the Liberal Union. Nevertheless, he managed to use this to his benefit, claiming that he was tired of the internal intrigues and party dictatorship and that he was withdrawing from the Liberal Union to create a new political party—the Liberal Democratic Party (later the TT). This party was founded on 9 March 2002. The Liberal Democratic Party, based on the values of 'liberalism towards business, social policy based on labour, and order in the state' (Učen 2007, 58), became Paksas's personal platform from which to run for the presidential elections (Duvold and Jurkynas, forthcoming).

Surprisingly, in the presidential elections Paksas defeated his former promoter, President Valdas Adamkus, who had successfully secured invitations for Lithuania to both the EU and NATO. Waging a media-savvy campaign that focused on poverty, corruption and poor government, Paksas won 54% of the vote and became the third president since the restoration of Lithuanian independence in 1990.

However, there were further changes to come. The Paksas administration was rocked by the leaking of a security services report in late October that alleged that the main financial backer in Paksas's presidential campaign, Jurijus Borisovas, a businessman of Russian origin, along with some of Paksas's close advisers, were linked with Russian organised crime. Subsequently, Paksas was charged with illegally granting Borisovas

Lithuanian citizenship. In late November, thousands of Lithuanians demonstrated in Vilnius, demanding Paksas's resignation. Consequently, four parliamentary groups decided to start the impeachment process. In early 2004 the Seimas began impeachment proceedings against Paksas. On 6 April 2004, the Parliament voted for impeachment on three charges: that he had leaked classified information to Borisovas about his investigation, that he had improperly restored Borisovas's citizenship and that he had interfered in a privatisation transaction. The vote was passed, effectively removing Paksas from the presidency.

After the 'Lithuanian Watergate' or 'Paksagate' scandal, the Liberal Democratic Party turned to radical anti-establishment rhetoric and was renamed the Order and Justice Party (Liberal Democrats) on 13 May 2006. In the 2004 parliamentary elections, the Coalition of Rolandas Paksas 'For Order and Justice' (which included not only candidates from his party but also several politicians from other parties renowned for their radical rhetoric) received 11.36% of the vote. In comparison with previous elections, the party's popularity had declined by almost half. A considerable number of Paksas's followers had transferred their votes to the newly created Labour Party (Darbo partija, DP) and its populist leader, Viktor Uspaskich. In the 2007 local elections, the TT received 13% of the vote nationally and was among the winners of the elections (Ramonaitė 2008). In the Seimas elections of 2008 the party received 12.68% of the vote.

Even though the party had received a considerable share of the seats in parliament, it had not been part of a ruling coalition until October 2012 when Lithuania's parliamentary election winner, the centre-left Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (Lietuvos socialdemokratų partija, LSDP) invited the TT to form a majority coalition government together with two other opposition parties: the populist DP, distinguished by its second place result, and the Polish-ethnic LLRA. As a result, the charge of fraudulent bookkeeping faced by the DP's leadership has overshadowed the TT's involvement, and, by the same token, Paksas's participation in the coalition-building process has not been recognised. For the first time in the TT's history it has become part of government and is responsible for running two ministries as part of its transformation into a 'systemic' party. Since Paksas's impeachment in 2004, the biggest centre-right political party, the TS-LKD, has maintained its promise that it will not form a coalition with the TT because of Paksas's alleged financial backing from Russia and because of the somewhat anti-system profile of the party. However, as the current political situation shows,

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the TT has opportunities to cooperate with the wider political forces on the left. It has successfully integrated representatives of the Polish minority—the LLRA—into its political group in the Seimas.

### PROGRAMMES, TOPICS AND MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

As was demonstrated in the introductory chapter of this book, there are several features that differentiate right-wing populist parties from other party families. First, they advocate against the political establishment by using anti-partisan rhetoric, by demonstrating their commitment to the 'ordinary people' and by their readiness to challenge the conventions of mainstream political discourse and deliberately violate taboos. Second, they exploit latent prejudices against strangers, usually using more or less open racism and xenophobia against immigrants and Muslims, Jews or Roma. In addition, they are usually sceptical of the European Union; sometimes exploit anti-interventionist, anti-American or anti-Israeli sentiments; and put strong emphasis on the nation and nationalism. The economic policy of right-wing populist parties is more diffuse, ranging from liberal positions in fiscal policy to complete protectionism.

In this part of the article we explore the main programmatic focus of the TT, testing whether the features specific to right-wing populist parties appear on the party's programme and whether they shape its identity. Using the criteria of right-wing populism, we will first look at the anti-establishment rhetoric of the party and its calls for institutional reforms, before analysing the stance of the party on the questions of immigrants, minorities, the EU and nationalist rhetoric in general. Finally, we will explore the economic policy of the party. The analysis is mainly based on the party's electoral manifestos for 2008 and 2012. Speeches and electoral appeals made during the election campaigns by the party's leaders and press interviews are used as complementary sources. Finally, data from the electoral surveys of 2008 and 2009 are used to analyse the party's electorate.

#### **Anti-establishment rhetoric and calls for institutional reform**

Populist parties argue that their authority emanates from the people. The people are viewed as a homogenous group and are juxtaposed with the political and economic elites. The elites are portrayed as corrupt, and blamed for usurping power from the people and for contravening the foundation of democracy, the idea that the people's will remains sovereign (Zaslave 2008). This kind of rhetoric is visible in both the 2008 and 2012

electoral manifestos of the party, as well as in the party leader's speeches. The party's new electoral manifesto, written for the parliamentary elections of 2012, opens with a call to form a new contract between the state and the nation in order to create 'The Third Republic'.<sup>3</sup> The TT appeals to the ordinary people in a patriotic and mobilising style. Integrity, honesty, moral politics and perfectionism are their main operating guidelines. The headline message of a 'new revived republic' clearly shows opposition to the current state of affairs, which is represented very critically. This call for a new contract, used by Jörg Haider in Austria during the 1990s, is intended to demonstrate the corruption of the current system, and therefore the need for a new moral order in a new system: a radical transformation from 'a party state to a citizens' democracy' (Moreau 2012).

The party programme is strongly critical of other political parties and the way the democratic system works in general:

The last two decades have particularly highlighted the fact that new and recently formed political parties are not able to evolve from amateurish, financially dependent organisations to state actors, and, more importantly, are not able to act as think-tanks to enhance people's well-being . . . That is, irresponsible political parties manipulate the confidence of voters and indulge the interests of the rich, who do not always behave fairly and strengthen themselves at the expense of others (TT 2012).

Corruption and protectionism are viewed as the main impediments to initiative and to the creativity of the people.

The party not only criticises the efficiency of the political establishment but also the lack of direct representation and the accountability of politicians to the people: 'Ongoing processes in the governance structure induce changes that increase the gap between citizens and public institutions' (TT 2012). To improve this situation, the party has suggested changes to the constitution as well as the implementation of reforms in public administration and the judicial system. It has demanded that the number of members in the Seimas

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3 The First Republic of Lithuania is considered to have been during the interwar period (1918–40) and the Second is the contemporary Republic of Lithuania since the re-establishment of its independence (1990–present).

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be cut from 141 to 71, and that MPs' benefits and privileges be eliminated.<sup>4</sup>

In the 2008 programme, there was a strong emphasis on increasing presidential powers, while the electoral manifesto of 2012 focuses on measures for direct democracy. The party proposes reducing the necessary backing for a referendum from 300,000 to 100,000 citizens. It also demands that mayors, elders, judges and procurators, as well as police chiefs, should be elected by local people rather than being 'dropped from above' by the governing elites. The programme states: 'Any important decision, from the building of a hospital to the construction of electrical power lines, including issues of strategic importance, must include consultation with the people' (TT 2012).

The discourse of the party also includes a 'conspiracy theory' emphasising the existence of foreign forces that govern Lithuanian foreign policy and allow criminals to flourish: 'There is no independent foreign policy, instead the state humbly implements the needs of powerful global forces; corruption and oligarchic control prosper in the country—the state is no longer legal but judicial—and it protects KGB reservists' (TT 2008).

Furthermore, Paksas is confident that his impeachment was nothing more than a technique for takeover: 'I would say that forces—internal, external and political . . . agreed on one aspect—that it was necessary to remove a president who poses a threat to their interests' (Liekis 2010). This kind of rhetoric, however, is less visible in the 2012 electoral manifesto.

### **Nationalism and attitudes towards minorities**

Right-wing or national populism is based not only on a vertical dichotomy between the people and the elite, but a horizontal one as well that relies heavily on the defamation of certain marginal groups in society. This 'politics of exclusion' may focus on immigrants; national, ethnic or sexual minorities; or other 'outsiders'. It is often combined with an appeal to patriotism and national identity. As the scapegoat, national populist parties usually blame big business, or organisations and institutions such as the EU or NATO. More generally, they express a fear of complicated developments, especially the processes of economic, political and cultural

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<sup>4</sup> The demand for a reduction in the number of seats in parliament is a typical populist demand in Lithuania, which simply reflects the view that MPs preferentially distribute roles and funds between themselves.



globalisation. Often, populist parties demand a return to a golden era of a nation-state free from interdependence in politics and economics.

The 2012 electoral programme of the TT emphasises a direct link with the 'people', who are homogenously labelled as a 'nation' without distinguishing between the various social groups. Both the 2008 and 2012 party manifestos are heavily loaded with concern for national identity and calls to revive patriotism. Nationalism and patriotism are among the five central values of the 2008 manifesto and among the three core values of the 2012 manifesto. The party promises to promote research into the state's history from its formation in the thirteenth century, and to stimulate academic debate at the national and international level that 'properly defends the Lithuanian identity and the dignity of our country and identity' (TT 2012). Moreover, the party is planning to revive ethnic regions and to promote traditional Lithuanian crafts.

Even though the party's election programme contains a hint of nationalism in the sense that it gives priority to the identity of the nation and its culture, and calls for the unity of the nation, there is no discussion about which social groups should be included or excluded. There is no anti-immigrant rhetoric or propositions that would discriminate against ethnic minorities. On the contrary, in the declaration of the Constituent Congress of the Party in 2002, it was stated that 'Ethnic minorities are an integral part of Lithuanian society' (Liberal Democratic Party 2002<sup>5</sup>). This attitude has been conscientiously followed thus far. Clear evidence of this is the integration of the LLRA into the TT group in the Seimas. Representatives of Polish minorities in Lithuania have worked together smoothly with the TT in parliament since 2008. In this respect, the TT is inclusive in terms of identity and in its attitude towards minorities in Lithuania (Balcerė 2011).

It should be noted that despite the moderate attitude declared by the party towards minorities, some MPs elected through the party list (while not members of the party) strongly support the traditional concept of family and actively speak out and act against sexual minorities. Such 'hot' topics are much appreciated by the Lithuanian media, and thus such actions receive attention and give the impression that these individuals' stances reflect the party's stance. On the other hand, the TT has never disassociated itself from the anti-gay statements made by members of its group in the Seimas.

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5 The TT was established on the foundations of the Liberal Democratic Party.

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Even though the TT declares that ‘membership of NATO and the EU is the most important guarantor of sovereignty, preserving identity and national dignity’ (Liberal Democratic Party 2002), it is also a member of the Eurosceptic EFD group in the EP.<sup>6</sup> The TT is in favour of a stronger role for national governments in the EU, especially in the cultural field. From this perspective the TT represents the national conservative electorate.

### **Economic policy and demands for social justice**

The economic policy of right-wing populist parties is rather diffuse. While some started out as liberal parties, others mainly target the working-class and economically disadvantaged electorate. Therefore, their economic policies may include neoliberal economic claims as well as demands for social justice, protectionism and welfare chauvinism.

While the TT originated from a liberal party, its current electoral programme is far from liberal. Social justice is one of the three main pillars (alongside direct democracy and patriotism) which, in the party vision, ‘The Third Republic’ should be based on in order to create a strong and wealthy future state. The TT claims that social justice is vital in order to eliminate the prevailing government attitude towards the citizen ‘as a source from which it must squeeze more tax’ (TT 2012). The party promises to ‘ensure a fair, normal wage for every honest and hard-working person, which will not humiliate his honour and dignity’ (TT 2012).

The tax policy of the party is neither leftist nor rightist. On the one hand, it criticises the current tax policy for forcing businesses and ordinary people to leave the country (thus implying that taxes are too high). On the other hand, the party supports the introduction of a progressive tax. The main emphasis is on reducing corruption and improving the system of tax collection, that is, diminishing the ‘shadow economy’. This is a way of transforming the problems of social inequality into an issue with the effectiveness and credibility of the state.

In general, the party’s economic programme appears to be a mixture of different and sometimes contradictory demands and promises. The party does not focus on the interests of any specific social class. It does, however, declare the need to improve the situation of the middle class, and special attention is devoted to the interests of farmers. The party

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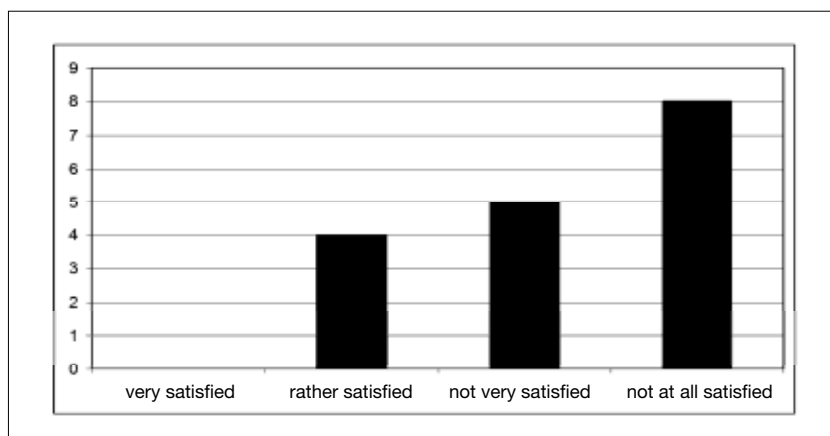
<sup>6</sup> See, for example, *EU Observer* (2012).

programme does not cite any claims for the need to protect the national economy, nor can any traces of welfare chauvinism be found.

### The party's electorate

The electorate of the party is not distinctive in any socio-demographic way. The voters of the party are surprisingly evenly distributed across different educational, occupational and even income groups.<sup>7</sup> Support for the party is higher among skilled workers, but the differences are not significant. The party is slightly more popular in small towns and in the countryside. According to data from the post-electoral survey, a considerable number of votes for the party come from ethnic minorities (Russians and Poles). This trend was especially visible in the local elections in Vilnius, where the party received an unexpectedly high share of the vote at the expense of the Russian Party (Lietuvos rusų sąjunga) (Ramonaitė 2007b).

**Figure 1 The proportions of voters for the TT coming from groups with different levels of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy**



Source: EES (2009), voter survey data.

The main attribute differentiating the electorate of the party is the level of political distrust or dissatisfaction with the political system. As can be seen from Figure 1, the party receives a much larger share of the vote among

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<sup>7</sup> Authors' own calculations using data from the 2008 post-electoral survey and the 2009 European Election survey.

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those with the greatest dissatisfaction with the way democracy works in Lithuania, and there are no supporters of the party among those who are very satisfied with the political regime. While other populist parties (e.g. the DP) are also competing for the votes of the protest electorate, the TT appears to mobilise those voters with the most pronounced anti-system attitudes.

The fact that support for the TT is not correlated with incomes or social status (in contrast to the DP's voters who are concentrated in the poorest social groups in Lithuania) suggests that dissatisfaction and anti-system attitudes are based on subjective rather than material indices of well-being. Qualitative interviews with the TT's electorate show that support for the party comes from politically active persons with patriotic attitudes who had a relatively high status in Soviet times and who have felt the decline in their status since independence (Ramonaitė 2007a). This hypothesis is supported by quantitative survey data which show that support for the TT is strongest among those who claim that life was better in Soviet times.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the survey data reveal that the electorate of the TT is more Eurosceptic than the average population. While, in general, support for the EU in Lithuania is among the highest in all European countries,<sup>9</sup> enthusiasm for Europe is much lower among supporters of the TT. As can be seen from Figure 2, only 28% of those who voted for the TT in the 2008 parliamentary election agree with the statement that membership of the EU is a good thing, while on average half of the total Lithuanian population agree with the statement. The data suggest that the TT is supported by those who go against mainstream public opinion.

In summary, the TT does not possess the typical characteristics of a right-wing populist party, mainly because there are no traces of discrimination against ethnic minorities or issues with immigration in the official party documents. It has, however, other features that make this party similar to typical right-wing parties, including its strong anti-establishment rhetoric, its emphasis on the identity of the nation and its inconsistent economic policy. The main electoral strategy of the party is to mobilise protest voters by channelling dissatisfaction with the state itself rather than by focusing

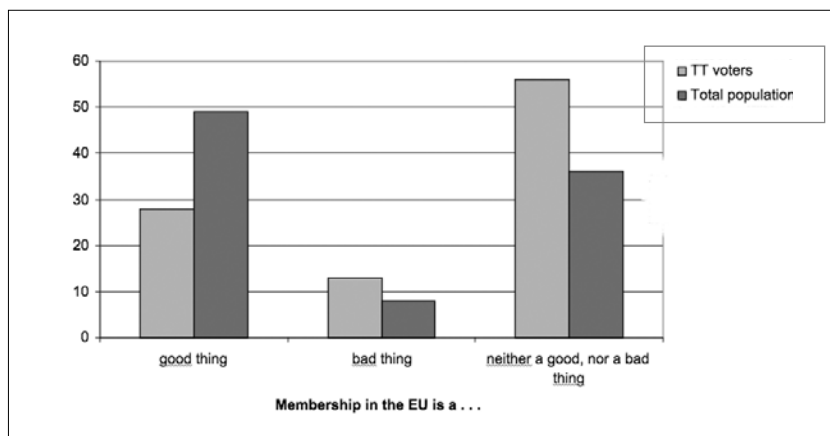
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<sup>8</sup> Authors' own calculations using data from the 2008 post-electoral survey. The data are, however, insufficient to confirm the hypothesis, as the number of voters for the TT surveyed was too low.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the data from the standard Eurobarometer survey.

on winning the votes of particular social groups. While not declaring a radical stance for itself, the party mobilises the electorate with the most outlying attitudes in society.

**Figure 2 Attitudes towards the EU among the supporters of the TT and among the total population (percentages)**



Source: EES (2009), voter survey data.

## INTRA-PARTY DYNAMICS

### Modes of leadership

In addition to populist discourse, populist parties combine centralised organisational structures with populist leadership. Centralised leadership dovetails with demands for an unmediated link between the leader and the people. Populist leaders portray themselves as representatives of the common people (Hartleb 2011). The person who represents these interests is often regarded as a 'saviour' figure, at least by his followers, in contrast to classic 'career politicians' (Weber 1992).

As has already been mentioned, the image and popularity of the TT are closely linked with the personality of Rolandas Paksas. For a large minority of Lithuanians, Paksas has the image of a near mythical hero—he is a pilot, a principled fighter of corruption, and a president unfairly brought down by an elite clique that could not tolerate an upstart outsider as the head of state. The party strongly exploits this image to mobilise its followers. In this

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respect the party could be seen as charismatic rather than programmatic or clientelistic (Kitschelt 1995).

Paksas is not, however, the sole and/or an autocratic leader of the party. When Paksas was elected to the presidential office in 2003, he had to suspend his membership of the political party following the provisions in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. At this time, Valentinas Mazuronis, a former vice-chair, was elected to lead the party. After his impeachment in 2004, Paksas decided to return to party politics and once again ran for the chairship. Since then, Paksas has retained his position as party chair (see Table 1) but Valentinas Mazuronis remains an important figure in the party because of the legal restrictions placed upon Paksas's ability to participate in political life.

**Table 1 Changes in the leadership of the TT, 2002–12**

Party chair	Start of term of office	Re-election	End of term of office
Rolandas Paksas	09/03/2002	—	10/01/2003
Valentinas Mazuronis	09/03/2003	—	11/12/2004
Rolandas Paksas	11/12/2004	12/05/2007 08/02/2009 12/12/2010 15/12/2012	

Source: Žvaliauskas (2007, 183); data collated by the authors.

Because of the impeachment, Paksas was prohibited by the Constitutional Court from running for presidential or parliamentary elections.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the Coalition of Rolandas Paksas 'For Order and Justice' in the 2004 parliamentary elections, as well as the list for the TT in the 2008 parliamentary

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<sup>10</sup> However, the decision was revoked after a verdict from the European Court of Human Rights. See, for example, *Lithuania Tribune* (2011).

elections, was led by Mazuronis.<sup>11</sup> Mazuronis was also the party's official candidate in the 2009 presidential elections. Paksas, however, led the party list for the 2009 EP elections as he was not prohibited from running for election to the EP. Contrary to the expectations of the party, the inclusion of the party leader's name on the list did not have a positive impact on the results of the party.<sup>12</sup>

### **Intra-party decision-making and democracy**

The structure of the TT and its principles of functioning are not much different from those of other Lithuanian parties. According to data from a study into internal party democracy, most Lithuanian parties are dominated by elites and do not create a favourable organisational climate for the active participation of ordinary party members in political decision-making (Žvaliauskas 2007). The TT is no exception. According to Žvaliauskas, the TT, together with the DP, liberals and the New Union, is one of the 'non-democratic' parties in Lithuania. However, only two Lithuanian political parties were considered democratic in 2007: the TS-LKD and the LSDP, and the differences between the parties were not, in fact, substantial (Butkevičienė et al. 2009).

As is stated in the statutes of the TT, the party chair is the sole authority, elected every two years. The party congress is the highest decision-making body and is composed of delegates elected from the local branches of the party. The congress elects a party chair and the members of the board, approves the statutes and the programmes of the party, and has the right to revoke the decisions of the other governing bodies of the party (TT 2012b).

While, according to Žvaliauskas, the procedure for the election of the party chair is fairly democratic, the elections to the chair of the TT could be called *elections of competitive imitation* because candidates: a) do not have competitors; or b) are very unequal, that is, the winner receives  $\geq 65\%$  of all the votes (Žvaliauskas 2007). In 2002 and 2003, only Rolandas

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11 In 2004, however, Mazuronis ended up third on the list after the preferential votes were counted. In 2008 he retained the top position on the list. See the website of the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania.

12 The party received 12.2% of the vote, the same share as in the 2008 parliamentary elections.

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Paksas and Valentinas Mazuronis were nominated respectively for election to the chair. In 2004 Paksas had an ‘artificially’ appointed competitor, Vytautas Valevičius, who won only 47 votes, while Paksas received 329 votes (88%). In 2007 a similar scenario was repeated, though with a new candidate—the previous party chair’s son, Andrius Mazuronis. Naturally, Mazuronis was crushed (by 65 votes to 625), and Paksas was re-elected with 90% of the vote. In the 2009 and 2012 elections no one stood against Paksas and he received 98% and 99% of the vote respectively. The remainder of the ballots were spoiled; nobody voted against him.

### **Modes of communication**

Populist parties share some key traits of media strategy, including personalisation, emotionalisation and an anti-establishment attitude (Plasser and Ulram 2003), and this can lead to exaggerated media attention, from which the parties profit (Mudde 2007). The TT has also demonstrated such traits, especially during the presidential election campaign shortly after the party’s foundation in 2002, when it ran an electoral campaign using slogans such as ‘Dictating to the Mafia!’ At that time, the party did not hesitate to use bitter rhetoric, negative campaigning techniques and even ‘black’ PR methods. The name of the party is itself a show-card that effectively targets the protest electorate who are dissatisfied with the lack of order and justice in the state.

In the 2004 and 2008 parliamentary elections, the party focused its electoral campaign on the image of Paksas, even if he himself could not run for election. Paksas’s image as a stunt pilot and rocker-motorcyclist bore similarities to Jimmy Carter’s image for his 1976 electoral campaign (Norkus 2008, 791). Furthermore, Paksas focused on being a simple, ordinary man with honest ambitions. He therefore ‘naturally’ deserved to be a businessman and prime minister—fighting, in both roles, against corruption.

Before the 2008 elections to the Seimas, Paksas organised some indirect publicity which was not officially part of the party’s electoral campaign. He toured Lithuania with an ostensibly fictional film called *The Pilot*, which centred on the story of a famous acrobatic pilot who entered politics and fought against ‘evil forces’. The plot of the 114-minute film is based on the story of the impeachment of Rolandas Paksas and is presented as a human



drama.<sup>13</sup> While the film was fictional and not a documentary, the characters of Paksas and other Lithuanian politicians are easily recognisable. The free showings of the film in cinemas before the elections raised concerns about violations of the law on electoral campaigning (*Kauno diena* 2008). In addition, the film was shown on television during the period when political campaigning was prohibited.

In terms of social media, it should be noted that the party is not innovative enough to use Web 2.0 tools. It does not have an official page on Facebook, the most popular social network in Lithuania; only a couple of individual party branches and politicians have profiles. Less than six months before the elections, the party created an official profile and a separate account on YouTube for the 2012 parliamentary election campaign, under the same name as the political programme, 'The Third Republic'. However, the videos, in which party leaders give official statements on party promises and policy positions, did not attract many viewers.

The party relies more on traditional methods of communication. Their preferred strategy is, as far as possible, to communicate directly with people from different social groups. Door-to-door canvassing is effectively used by the party for presidential as well as parliamentary elections. During election campaigns, the party's representatives, including Paksas, tour Lithuania, especially visiting the small towns and villages; they meet people in parish churches, schools and so on. Moreover, the party advertises in the national and regional media and uses other traditional channels of communication.

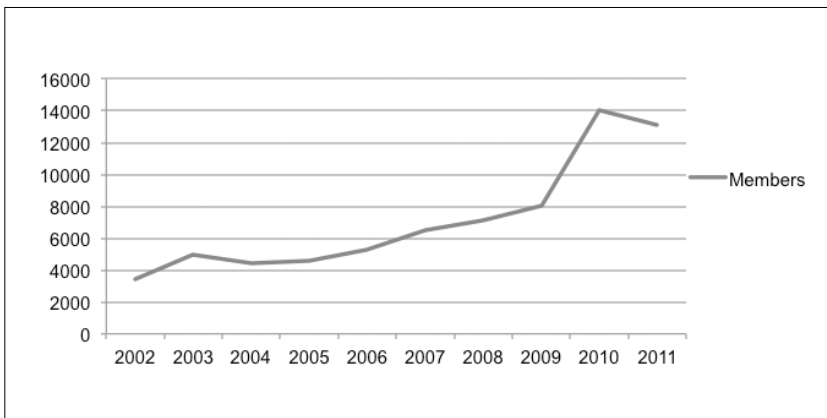
### **Membership and finances**

Party membership has been increasing during the last decade; nevertheless, it only averages around 3% of the total electorate (Statistical Department of Lithuania 2012). In terms of size, on its foundation in 2002 the TT was one of the five largest parties in the country and has gradually increased its membership. Since 2007 it has been the third-largest party in Lithuania in terms of membership, alongside the traditionally large parties of the LSDP and the TS-LKD. The peak of its membership, however, was reached just before the 2011 local elections when nearly 6,000 people joined the party in 2010 and it grew by 75%, with total membership exceeding 14,000 (see Figure 3).

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<sup>13</sup> See Matulevičius (2009).

**Figure 3** The membership dynamics of the TT



Source: Žvaliauskas (2007, 260); Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania (2012).

In recent years, state budget subsidies have formed the biggest share of the party's finances, while private financial support had previously been the main source of income for the party (see Table 2). As direct public funding from the state budget is allocated in proportion to the number of votes obtained, the TT only began to receive state subsidies after the 2004 parliamentary elections. Public funding for political parties was introduced in Lithuania in 1999, and the subsidies were substantially increased in 2004 (Žvaliauskas 2007, 189). Since 2004, subsidies from the state budget comprise the largest share of the incomes of all parliamentary parties—and the TT is no exception.

**Table 2 Incomes of the TT, 2002–10, Lithuanian litas (euros)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total income</b>	<b>Membership fees</b>	<b>Private donations</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Public funding</b>	<b>Loans</b>
<b>2002</b>	225,542 (65,374) (100%)	240 (70) (0.1%)	225,268 (65,295) (99.9%)	34 (9.90) (0.0%)	0 (0) (0.0%)	
<b>2003</b>	144,603.50 (321,341) (100%)	12,377 (3,587) (8.6%)	22,226.50 (6,442) (15.4%)	110,000 (31,884) (76.1%)	0 (0) (0.0%)	
<b>2004</b>	954,898 (276,782) (100%)	19,747 (5,723) (2.1%)	880,431 (255,197) (92.2%)	54,720 (15,861) (5.7%)	0 (0) (0.0%)	
<b>2005</b>	568,370 (164,745) (100%)	23,445 (6,796) (4.1%)	227,684 (65,995) (40.1%)	5,141 (1,490) (0.9%)	312,100 (90,464) (54.9%)	
<b>2006</b>	1,188,273 (344,427) (100%)	48,059 (13,930) (4.0%)	206,470 (59,846) (17.4%)	744 (216) (0.1%)	933,000 (270,434) (78.5%)	
<b>2007</b>	3,316,090 (961,186) (100%)	56,619 (16,411) (1.7%)	1,752,101 (507,588) (52.83%)	119,370 (34,600) (3.6%)	1,388,000 (402,319) (41.87%)	
<b>2008</b>	6,306,194 (1,827,882) (100%)	105,837 (30,677) (1.68%)	3,896,949 (1,129,550) (61.8%)	55,008 (15,944) (0.87%)	1,848,400 (535,768) (29.31%)	400,000 (115,942) (6.34%)
<b>2009</b>	3,141,429 (910,559) (100%)	83,598 (24,231) (2.66%)	343,687 (99,619) (10.94%)	521,44 (15,114) (0.02%)	1,680,800 (487,188) (53.5%)	981,200 (284,406) (31.23%)
<b>2010</b>	2,193,040 (635,664) (100%)	145,071 (42,050) (6.71%)	80,300 (23,275) (3.66%)	981 (284) (0.04%)	1,136,688 (329,475) (51.83%)	830,000 (240,580) (37.85%)

Source: Žvaliauskas (2007, 286–88); Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Lithuania (2012).

## The Lithuanian Case: National Populism Without Xenophobia

In 2007 and 2008, however, the financial donations from legal and natural persons exceeded the subsidy from the state budget. According to the Central Electoral Commission, in 2008 the TT predominantly received funding from individuals and these funds represented more than half of the total donations—1.85 million litas (€536,232) out of 3.75 million litas (€1,086,957). Recently, however, private donations to the party have drastically diminished.

The TT does collect a membership fee, but it is somewhat symbolic: the joining fee is 10 litas (about €3) and the annual membership fee is 12 litas. As can be seen from Table 2, membership fees are not an important source of income for the party. The same is true for other Lithuanian parties, except for the LSDP (Žvaliauskas 2007). However, even if the income from the membership fee is relatively small in comparison with the other incomes of the party, it is significant for the party's branches because 75% of the annual fee goes directly to the member's local branch (TT 2012b).

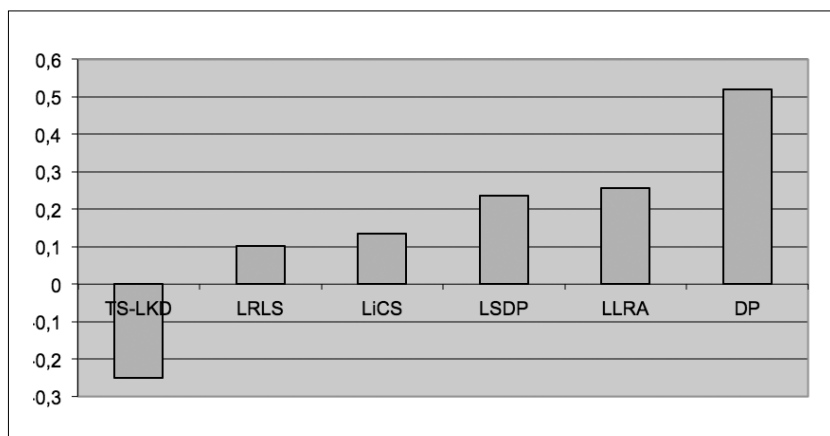
To sum up, this analysis of intra-party dynamics has demonstrated once again that the TT is not a typical right-wing populist party. Admittedly, the party relies on the charismatic appeal of its populist leader and the leader has no real competitors in the party. But, on the other hand, the organisational structure of the party is no more centralised than that of other Lithuanian parties. The TT is increasing its membership and gradually transforming from a political platform for one leader to a traditional mass party.

### EFFECTS ON THE PARTY SYSTEM

The breakthrough of Rolandas Paksas and the Liberal Union into the Seimas in 2000 brought dramatic changes to the Lithuanian party system. It was the beginning of a new stage in the development of the party system, and one characterised by instability, the collapse of the left–right dynamic and an outburst of populism. The party received most of its votes from former voters for the TS-LKD, the ruling party from 1996 to 2000, and the Centre Union. While the TT was established with a core of members from the Liberal Union who left the party to join the new political force, the identity of the party has changed substantially since the impeachment of Rolandas Paksas, and currently it is neither a competitor nor a potential ally of the liberals or the TS-LKD.

While there are no sufficient empirical data to assess the profiles of those who voted for the TT in 2004 (mainly due to huge under-reporting of the voting for the TT in public opinion polls), it is reasonable to assume that the core of the party's electorate was composed of those resentful of Paksas's impeachment. Currently, the electorate of the TT mainly overlaps with that of the DP and the other left-wing parties—the LSDP and the LLRA (see Figure 4 for the correlations between the propensity to vote for the TT and the other parties, demonstrating the potential overlap between the electorates). The only party with a negative correlation for the propensity to vote for the TT is the TS-LKD. This means that the TT and the TS-LKD are not competing for the same voters, even if their stance on some issues is quite similar.

**Figure 4 Correlations between the propensity to vote for the TT and the other main political parties**



*Note:* Correlation coefficients range from -1 to +1. The stronger the correlation, the greater the potential overlap between the voters of different parties. Negative correlations indicate an inverse relationship.

*Legend:* TS-LKD = Tėvynės Sąjunga–Lietuvos Krikščionys Demokratai (Homeland Union–Lithuanian Christian Democrats), LRLS = Lietuvos Respublikos Liberalų Sąjūdis (Liberals' Movement of the Republic of Lithuania), LiCS = Liberalų ir Centro Sąjunga (Liberal and Centre Union), LSDP = Lietuvos Socialdemokratų Partija (Lithuanian Social Democratic Party), LLRA = Lietuvos Lenkų Rinkimų Akcija (Electoral Action of Lithuanian Poles) and DP = Darbo Partija (Labour Party).

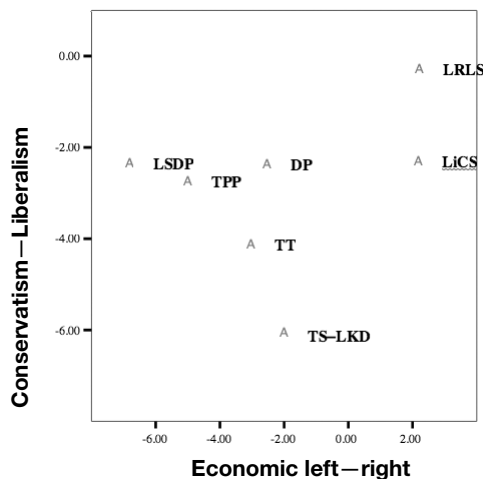
*Source:* EES (2009), voter survey data.

## The Lithuanian Case: National Populism Without Xenophobia

As can be seen from Figure 5, which is based on an estimation of the attitudes of the parties' candidates for the Seimas in 2008, the position of TT members on moral issues (e.g. abortion, the traditional family, the rights of homosexuals and the preservation of ethnic identity) is slightly more conservative than the average among parliamentary parties in Lithuania, but more liberal than that of the TS-LKD. On the economic dimension, the TT is at the centre, together with the DP. This analysis of the attitudes of the party elite reveals that the TT adjusts its position on many issues to reflect the opinion of the median voter (Ramonaitė et al. 2009). This strategy is typical of populist parties in Lithuania (Ramonaitė 2012).

While the position of the TT on the left–right economic spectrum and the liberal–conservative dimension is fairly similar to that of the TS-LKD, the two parties are in fact major adversaries. The reason for this is their differing outlooks on the Communism–anti-Communism spectrum, an East–West cleavage that shapes the competitive space among Lithuanian parties (Ramonaitė 2007a; 2009). On issues regarding the Communist past and/or relations with Russia, the average position of TT members is closer to that of the ex-Communist LSDP and the DP. This is why the TT is often regarded as a leftist rather than rightist party.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 5 Party positions on the economic left–right spectrum and the conservatism–liberalism dimension**



Source: Survey of the candidates for the 2008 Seimas elections. For more details see Ramonaitė (2012).

<sup>14</sup> See Jurkynas and Ramonaitė (2007) for more on the left–right spectrum in Lithuania.

After the impeachment of Rolandas Paksas and against the backdrop of the radicalising rhetoric of the party at that time, the TT was regarded as an outcast among the Lithuanian parties. However, its radicalism seems to be gradually diminishing and it is gaining credibility among the political elite (probably at the cost of losing its identity among the electorate). Recent agreements with the DP and the LSDP presuppose that the party is willing to change its role from that of an everlasting opposition to that of a governing party.

## OUTLOOK

This analysis of the TT has revealed an ambiguous picture. On the one hand, the party resembles a right-wing populist party far more than any other parliamentary party in Lithuania. The leader of the party presents himself, and is presented by others, as a political outsider. The party has a strong anti-establishment profile and is unafraid to use rude rhetoric and aggressive electoral campaigns. The party explicitly articulates the latent grievances in society, such as the lack of justice for ordinary people.

On the other hand, the TT is not a typical right-wing populist party as it does not channel the dissatisfaction and anger in society towards 'strangers', that is, immigrants or ethnic minorities. From this perspective, it can be argued that right-wing radicalism is not deeply entrenched in Lithuania. While the annual march of the radical right groups on 11 March (the anniversary of independence) attracts much attention in the media, the widely trumpeted danger seems to be strongly over-exaggerated. The radical right in Lithuania is small and does not have representation in the parliament. The TT is not linked to any radical right movements or organisations.

The organisational features of the TT correspond only partially with the 'ideal' type of right-wing populist party. The electoral appeal of the party is based on charismatic leadership. In terms of organisational structure, however, the party cannot be characterised as having a centralised leadership. While in the beginning the party appeared to be a 'one person' party, it is currently strengthening its structure and increasing its membership. With respect to internal democracy, the party functions in a similar way to other political parties in Lithuania.

## The Lithuanian Case: National Populism Without Xenophobia

The TT mobilises the protest votes in Lithuania, but its electorate is rather diffuse. The electorate of the party is distinctively anti-establishment and mildly Eurosceptic, but comes from different social strata, and particularly from the losers of the post-Soviet reforms. Surprisingly enough, support for the party is stronger among ethnic minorities in Lithuania, even though the party highlights nationalism and patriotism as its core values.

The reasons why the Lithuanian case does not correspond neatly to those of its Western counterparts are quite evident. First, the immigration problem which mobilises the radical right electorate in Western Europe is virtually non-existent in Lithuania. As has been noted by many scholars, the anti-immigration stance is the only distinct and specific feature of the family of radical-right parties (Ennsner 2012). In the absence of this issue, the niche for typical radical-right parties is less clear and the profile of right-wing populist parties is more diffuse. Second, public support for integration into the European Union in Lithuania is relatively high (see, for example, Gaidys 2007); therefore, an explicitly Eurosceptical position is not advantageous for political parties. Third, protectionist economic policy is not a viable option for a small economy such as Lithuania; therefore, such populist measures are not discussed in the Lithuanian public sphere.

One deep-rooted precondition for the rise of the radical right, however, is common to both Western and Eastern Europe. This is the widespread disappointment with and distrust of the traditional mechanisms of democracy, especially political parties (Norris 1999; Dalton 2004). As Zaslove (2008, 326) claims, 'as in the West, in Central and Eastern Europe populist parties exploit declining trust in political parties as a viable mediating institution.' Dissatisfaction with political institutions is the main source of support for populist parties in Lithuania.

While political distrust feeds both left- and right-wing populism, the prospects for left-wing populism seem to be greater in Lithuania for one particular reason. In contrast to some other post-Communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, political support is lowest among the most pro-Soviet electorate, that is, among the part of the society that was best integrated into the Soviet system and subsequently has had the most severe difficulties with adjusting to the new political and economic regime. Naturally, those people (including Russians and other ethnic minorities) were also the most deeply indoctrinated with the international ideals of the Soviet Union; therefore, they tend to be more pro-Russian and less nationalist (Ramonaitė et al. 2007). The rightist anti-Communist and anti-



Russian electorate, in contrast, tends to be more satisfied with the new democratic institutions (Ramonaitė 2007a) and is loyal to the traditional parties, namely the TS-LKD and the liberal parties.

Looking to the general picture, it can be argued that the ground is fertile for populism in Lithuania, but that the threat of radical right-wing populism is rather low. As the readiness of the TT to challenge mainstream political conventions gradually diminishes, the party is likely to become a 'systemic' party. Its current niche, however, might come to be occupied by other parties as the electorate in Lithuania is very volatile and the electoral market is open to new parties (Ramonaitė and Žiliukaitė 2009). So far the institutional measures (e.g. increasing the obligatory size of party membership, drastically limiting the opportunities for political advertising and recently prohibiting the provision of financial support for political parties from legal persons) to narrow the market have not been successful and new parties have entered the political arena at every parliamentary election since 2000.

The main prevention strategy that can be used against right-wing and left-wing populism in Lithuania is the reduction of the widespread political distrust in society. This goal, however, requires a wide range of different measures, not only including improving the performance of political institutions, but also strengthening the channels of communication between the state and society and, in particular, increasing the responsibility of the media and strengthening the traditional political parties. Anti-party sentiments in society can only be overcome by the enduring and systemic efforts of traditional ideological parties.

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# Polish Populism: Time for Settlement

Olga Wysocka

## INTRODUCTION

Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS), Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński's party, was established in 2001 when public debate was already shaped by noticeable social discontent and when corruption and unemployment made headlines. The party, based on Lech Kaczyński's popularity as Chairman of NIK (the Supreme Audit Office) and Minister of Justice, aimed to fight political and economic corruption, and accused the establishment, at that time part of the left, for the existing state of affairs. PiS applied populist strategy to establish a large centre-right conservative party. With time, its populism moved from strategy to 'thin ideology' (after Cas Mudde, see more later). In other words, PiS moved from being a party that used populist strategy to becoming a populist right-wing party.

The label 'populist' can be applied to the party because of two elements in its rhetoric, strategy and, later, ideology: its concept of the people and of their relation to those in power (Szacki 2003; Canovan 1981, 2002; Mény and Surel 2002; Taggart 2002). The glorification of the people became the most important aspect of PiS rhetoric. The case of PiS also perfectly fits Paul Taggart's concept of the people as a heartland, a heartland which includes those who have been kept out of power by a corrupt establishment, generally an unrepresentative elite. The elite is excluded from the heartland, because the elite has betrayed the people's interests and ignored their opinions. Moreover, the notion of the heartland also excludes all 'the others' who are against the people. In the party ideology, one can notice that the people as legitimate sovereign is distinguished from and opposed to the powerful elite, from whom power is to be retrieved (Canovan 2002, 34).

To argue that the populism of PiS can be seen only in terms of a relationship between the people and the elite does not give the full picture. Cas Mudde (2007, 2004) defines populism as an ideology in which society is separated into two homogenous groups, each antagonistic to the other, 'the pure

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people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people. For other scholars the elite has been defined as a 'set of elites' (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008), or populism has been defined as an empty shell (Meny and Surel 2002), which 'lacks core values' (Taggart 2002) or is not an ideology (Betz 2004). As will be seen below, the case of PiS reflects those concepts.

### PARTY DEVELOPMENT OVER THE YEARS

The origin of the party goes back to the beginning of the 1990s when the right was disintegrating. Different views, solutions and concepts prevailed about how Poland should be transformed and how democracy should be built in the country. However, the main issue that divided the right was the role of the former Communists. The Kaczyński brothers believed that as long as the former Communists had influence over political and economic life, the revolution to overthrow Communism was not accomplished. In such circumstances they created their first party, the Centre Agreement (Porozumienie Centrum, PC).

The new formation (a coalition of forces including the PC) won 8.7% of the vote in 1991. Nevertheless, due to complex relations among the other parties, Jan Olszewski (PC) was appointed Prime Minister. Olszewski's government was, in a sense, a symbolic one. It was the first government formed by a freely elected parliament in Poland after the Contract Sejm of 1989. However, the government was dismissed two weeks later, during a night session of parliament (Sejm), as a result of the publication of a so-called list of agents.<sup>1</sup> The end of Olszewski's government was an important moment in the political history of the Kaczyński brothers; afterwards they moved the party towards a strong anti-establishment stance.

In the next election, in 1993, the party did not reach the required 5% threshold. As a consequence, it found itself outside the Sejm and gained only one seat in the Senate. It was the left which won the 1993

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<sup>1</sup> The government was obliged to disclose the names of everyone who, in the period between 1945 and 1992, cooperated with the security service of the People's Republic of Poland. The documents were handed to the Sejm by the Minister of Interior Affairs, Antoni Macierewicz, on 4 June 1992. The list included names of important politicians. The first person on it was President Lech Wałęsa, described as a secret collaborator called Bolek. The President sent a motion for an immediate dismissal of Olszewski's government to the speaker of the Sejm.



parliamentary election with 37.2% of the vote. Just four years after the collapse of Communism, a post-Communist party came back to power. This was a shock for many right-wing politicians.

Over the subsequent years the party built its position by taking a strong stand against the left, using anti-elite rhetoric. The PC was an anti-establishment party but not a populist one, despite what some other scholars claim (for example, Busse 2007). However, the unsuccessful political story of the PC provides some basis—the connivance between former Communists and prominent Solidarity politicians—for the conspiracy theories applied later by Polish populists. This theory also became more prominent in the discourse of the Kaczyński brothers and evolved into an important element of populist rhetoric, particularly between 2001 and 2005.

In 2000 Lech Kaczyński had been appointed Minister of Justice and Prosecutor General (Prokurator Generalny) in Jerzy Buzek's centre-right government.<sup>2</sup> Kaczyński was popular because of his fight against corruption, which exposed serious problems in the system. Then, based on Kaczyński's popularity, the idea emerged of creating a new political organisation. PiS was established in 2001, like the League of Polish Families (a radical-right populist party led by Roman Giertych). Also similar to Giertych's party, Kaczyński was a new party with old faces. The party achieved a surprisingly high level of support.

The year 2001 was crucial for the Kaczyński brothers. Lech Kaczyński's popularity as the Minister of Justice was growing. PiS was established. It was also, however, a year of controversies featuring the brothers and involving unclear financing of the PC and some questionable actions carried out by Lech Kaczyński as minister. Finally, Lech Kaczyński was dismissed (Wroński 2001, 1). The parliamentary campaign was mainly based on the rejection of the right-wing governing formation: Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność, AWS) and the Freedom Union (Unia Wolności, UW). In the 2001 election PiS gained 9.5% of the

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2 It is important to mention the relation between PiS and, governing at that time, AWS, the Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność, AWS). It was a political coalition of over 30 parties, formed in 1996. Marian Krzaklewski was its first chairman. The party formed its coalition government under Jerzy Buzek (1997–2001). Kaczyński brothers rejected AWS. They marginalised themselves at that time but they also built a reputation as honest politicians who were not connected with corruption scandals in the AWS government. More about this later.

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vote and 44 (of 460) seats in the Sejm. The Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) won the election, gaining 44% of the vote. PiS again went into opposition.

For the 2002 local elections the party formed a coalition with the liberal conservative party Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska, PO).<sup>3</sup> It obtained only 12.1% of the vote. The two parties formed governing coalitions in only 4 of 16 regions. While the party did not gain significant support on the local level, Lech Kaczyński was elected Mayor of Warsaw. His spectacular victory in the capital city surprised many.

In 2005, Poles voted in both parliamentary (September) and presidential (October) elections. The proximity in time meant that the two campaigns were running simultaneously.

Opinion polls indicated a weakness on the left. Corruption scandals—for instance, the PKN Orlen–Rywin affair—affected the post-Communist party and were often exploited by the opposition. The parliamentary election was expected to produce a coalition of two centre-right parties: PiS and the PO (Roguska 2005). The coalition was a vigorous response to the left. Meanwhile, Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, the leftist candidate, was entangled in a corruption affair. He withdrew from the presidential campaign in September 2005, leaving the left discredited.

The absence of the left in the presidential campaign and its declining support in the parliamentary one resulted in important changes on the political scene. The significance of the traditional division between post-Communist and post-Solidarity ended during the electoral debates. The political discussions were mainly based on the competition between two potential coalition partners. A breakthrough in the campaign took place during Lech Kaczyński's speech at the Batory Foundation on 25 September 2005. As the party's presidential candidate, he introduced the slogan: 'solidarity Poland' (*Polska solidarna*) as opposed to 'liberal Poland' (*Polska liberalna*). He emphasised that after Cimoszewicz's resignation 'the disputes concerning the past have become not out of date but less relevant' (Kaczyński 2005). Liberal was a term no longer restricted to the economy but had developed a broader meaning relating to the discussion of values. Kaczyński called for a moral revolution and political reforms.

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3 Except in the Mazovia and Podkarpacie regions.

Donald Tusk, the PO candidate for the presidency, was a rival of Lech Kaczyński. He led with Kaczyński in the first round out of 12 candidates. As neither received 50% of the vote, a second round was held. In the last week of the election campaign, Kaczyński's team accused Tusk's grandfather of fighting in the German army during the Second World War. This turned out to be false but some scholars (Cześniak 2007) believe that it influenced the voting. Although the PO candidate Donald Tusk won the first round of the presidential election, the second round was won by Lech Kaczyński, with 54% of the vote (see Table 1).

**Table 1 Results of the 2005 presidential election**

	Presidential election 2005			
	1 <sup>st</sup>	round	2 <sup>nd</sup>	round
<b>Turnout</b>		<b>49.74%</b>		<b>50.99%</b>
<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Vote (000s)</b>	<b>Vote (%)</b>	<b>Vote (000s)</b>	<b>Vote (%)</b>
Lech Kaczyński (Law and Justice, PiS)	4,947,927	33.1	8,257,468	54.0
Donald Tusk (Civic Platform, PO)	5,429,666	36.3	7,022,319	45.9
Andrzej Lepper (Self Defence of the Republic of Poland)	2,259,094	15.1		
Marek Borowski (Social Democracy of Poland, SLD)	1,544,642	10.3		
Jarosław Kalinowski (Polish Peasants' Party, PSL)	269,316	1.8		

Source: State Electoral Commission (PKW)

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The strong and aggressive anti-liberal and anti-PO campaign of 2005 brought PiS 27% of the vote while PO scored only 24%. The party became the largest party in the Sejm. In 2005–7 PiS created a coalition with other populist parties (the League of Polish Families and Self Defence).

The 2006 local elections were led under the slogan ‘closer to the people’ (*Blżej ludzi*). The party reached 30.3% support and second place after PO (33.1%). The 2010 local elections again gave the party second place after PO (30.8%). PiS reached 23% support.

The parliamentary election results in 2005 and 2007 showed significant changes. Only four parties entered parliament in 2007: PO (41.5), PiS (32.1), Left and Democrats (the coalition of left parties) (13.1%), and the Polish Peasants’ Party (8.9%). The unquestionable winner was PO. Two other populist parties (Self Defence and the League of Polish Families) were eliminated from parliament. That was not the case for PiS. Even though the party lost the election, it won 5.1% more support than in 2005.

However, 2007 was the beginning of the end of the PiS party’s leading position in politics. The end came in 2010 when, in a plane crash on 10 April near the city of Smolensk in Russia, 96 people died, including President Lech Kaczyński, his wife Maria and many prominent Polish politicians from the right and the left, among them a considerable number of PiS politicians. They were on their way from Warsaw to attend an event marking the seventieth anniversary of the Katyn Massacre, a mass murder of Polish military officers by the Soviets (more about consequences of the plane crash in Smolensk in the Polish politics later in this paper). After President Kaczyński’s death, a presidential election took place in 2010. There were 10 candidates in the first round. Bronisław Komorowski of PO received 41.5% and Jarosław Kaczyński received 36.5%, precipitating a second round of voting. The final results gave Komorowski 53% of the vote and Kaczyński 46.9%.

The second challenge for PiS was the parliamentary election of 2011. It was not only that the party trailed the PO in popular support, it may also have had difficulty finding parties willing to enter into a coalition. Jarosław Kaczyński had publicly rejected allying his party with the post-Communist Democratic Left Alliance and the Polish Peasants’ Party. The 2010 and 2011 elections resulted in the PO holding both the presidency and the government (Tables 2 and 3). PiS again went into opposition.

**Table 2 Results of the 2010 presidential election**

	Presidential election 2010			
	1 <sup>st</sup> Round		2 <sup>nd</sup> round	
<b>Turnout</b>	<b>54.94%</b>		<b>46.99%</b>	
<b>Candidates</b>	<b>Vote (000s)</b>	<b>Vote (%)</b>	<b>Vote (000s)</b>	<b>Vote (%)</b>
Bronisław Maria Komorowski (Civic Platform, PO)	6,981,319	41.5	8,933,887	53.0
Jarosław Kaczyński (Law and Justice, PiS)	6,128,255	36.4	7,919,134	46.9
Grzegorz Napieralski (Social Democracy of Poland, SLD)	2,299,870	13.6		
Janusz Ryszard Korwin-Mikke (Freedom and Lawfulness, WiP)	416,898	2.4		
Waldemar Pawlak (Polish Peasants' Party, PSL)	294,273	1.7		
Others	685,555	4.4		

Source: State Electoral Commission (PKW)

## PARTY TOP REPRESENTATIVES

Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński's active involvement in politics began when they were about 20 years old. Both brothers were in opposition before 1989, although Lech Kaczyński seemed to be more involved with Solidarity. Lech's profession as a lawyer no doubt contributed to his activities. He was interned and participated in the Round Table talks. Jarosław's political career, unlike that of his brother, was mostly in the party, but he was described as 'the brain of the twins'. He established parties, wrote

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their programs and aimed to create the real Christian Democratic right.<sup>4</sup> He was the architect of a coalition with two populist parties that was established in an effort to realise his dream of a 'big influential right'. He has been described not only as the leader of the party but also as a front bench Member of Parliament. Many commentators have described him as Poland's most influential politician.

For almost two years the twin brothers held the most important offices in the state—Jarosław as the Prime Minister, Lech as President—and effectively ran the country. Therefore it is not surprising that in 2010, after Lech Kaczyński died, Jarosław decided to build the new face of the PiS party on the memory of his brother.

**Table 3 Results of the 2011 parliamentary election in Poland**

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Parliamentary election 2011				
<b>Turnout</b>	48.92%			
<b>Party</b>	<b>Vote (000s)</b>	<b>Vote (%)</b>	<b>Seats (%)</b>	<b>Seats (000s)</b>
Civic Platform (PO)	5,629,773	39.1	45	207
Law and Justice (PiS)	4,295,016	29.8	34.1	157
Palikot's Movement (Ruch Pi)	1,439,490	10.0	8.6	40
Polish Peasants' Party (PSL)	1,201,628	8.3	6.0	28
Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	1,184,303	8.2	5.8	27
Others	619,593	4.6	0.5	1

*Source:* The Polish State Electoral Commission (PKW)

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<sup>4</sup> The concept of a Christian Democratic right was, however, different from the one that exists in Western Europe. There was a meeting with Helmut Kohl in 1993 in which the Kaczyński brothers showed some of the anti-German tendencies that became so prominent later on.

## SOCIAL PROFILE OF VOTERS

Exit poll results (PBS 2004–7) may be helpful in assessing the socio-demographic structure of the party electorate. However, on the basis of this data, it is difficult to describe the average party voter with precision. First, although initially the electorate of PiS was mainly composed of male voters, the gender factor lost its importance in the 2005 and 2007 elections. One reason could be the shift to a mass party. Second, exit poll results show the increasing support of older people in 2005 and 2007.

That can be linked with a direct appeal to this social group, particularly in 2004 and 2005, and significant cooperation with Radio Maryja.<sup>5</sup> Third, PiS was also supported by young people, particularly in 2004 and 2007, when the party mounted a well-developed appeal to them, mainly through an impressive Internet organisation. Fourth, the party was initially supported by the educated sector of the electorate. This, however, changed in subsequent elections. It could be an effect of above mentioned forces, such as the party shift into a mass party and its cooperation with Radio Maryja. In 2005 and 2007, a considerable number of party supporters were recruited from people with primary educations. Unfortunately, on the basis of data provided by exit poll results, it is difficult to assess any demographic changes. The only information available related to the PiS party's support in the countryside, which increased significantly in 2007, the result of campaign targeting of Self Defence supporters.

It is worth having a closer look at what are believed to be the usual recipients of populist messages, middle-aged and elderly citizens who come from

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5 The radio describes itself as a Catholic and patriotic station. Today the name Radio Maryja describes not only the radio station, but also a TV channel, a newspaper and a school established and directed by Father Rydzyk. Moreover, it also describes the religious movement led by the father and the Radio Maryja Family. Father Rydzyk and Radio Maryja are praised for their activity by their supporters. At the same time Radio Maryja and its director have been criticised for their nationalism, ultra-conservatism, anti-Semitism and for excessive politicisation. Since Radio Maryja received a national concession in 1994, it has supported many right-wing parties and leaders. Its support for the League of Polish Families in the parliamentary elections in 2001 and of EP in 2004 was significant. Particularly noteworthy was the support for PiS during the campaign in 2005, which later affected the formation of the coalition between Self Defence, League of Polish Families and PiS. The signing of the Pact of Stabilisation, a coalition agreement between those parties, was broadcast only by Father Rydzyk's radio and TV stations because the three parties invited only these media. The limitation of the public media presence during an important political occasion caused a scandal and wide discussion on the role of Radio Maryja in Polish politics (Wysocka 2008).

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small towns and have only completed elementary or secondary education. This social group is described as Poland B by some sociologists. Opinion polls in 2001 and 2005 showed an increasing interest in populism, demonstrated by the support of the Polish middle class, and elaborated by intellectuals for populist parties. Nonetheless, it may be that asking which social group the populists represent is the wrong question. As populism is based on criticism of the elite, its supporters become more of a mixed group, united not by demographics but by opposition to an enemy.

### PROGRAMME

The first PiS political manifesto was introduced during an electoral convention in 2001. The party highlighted the fact that Poland was facing a serious crisis, including among its most troubling problems unemployment, the condition of public finance and the national health care system, and corruption. PiS underlined the importance of the nation, family and tradition, based on Christian values and the history of Poland's struggle for freedom.

These issues became the content of a new document for the party campaign: '2005 Programme: The Fourth Polish Republic—Justice for Everybody' (*Program 2005. IV Rzeczpospolita—Sprawiedliwość dla Wszystkich*).

The Third Polish Republic, the name given to the political order after 1989, was established in a country struggling with difficult problems and divided into rich and poor. In some minds, the only possible way to save the country was to establish the Fourth Polish Republic. The idea was introduced by a political coalition that included the Justice and Freedom party in the name of the best interests of both the Polish nation and Poles to reconstruct the Polish state. The country, according to Kaczyński, should be based on 'the rules of social solidarity' because '[a]ll Poles have to benefit from economic growth, not only a small group of rich people' (PiS 2005, 11).

The party aimed to ensure that Poles lived in a heartland. An ideal world was not reached in the Third Polish Republic because serious economic and political problems were left in the wake of Communism. The Fourth Republic was a vision of a country in which 'there will be law and order . . . because this is in the interest of ordinary Polish citizens. And Law and Justice is a party of ordinary Polish citizens' (Kaczyński 2006b).



Consequently the party declared 'a construction of a citizens' society' that would constitute the Fourth Republic of Poland.

The programme pointed to the specific measures necessary to repair the state. Some proposals are worth discussing in detail because they embody the party's populist rhetoric over subsequent years. First, in order 'to change the corrupt and diseased state, whether we want it or not, we cannot abandon lustration' (PiS 2005, 16).<sup>6</sup> This was also connected with the reconstruction of historical memory. The programme announced that 'we will restore the historical memory, we will show who was who. We will remember what constituted the nature of Communism and the People's Republic of Poland'. De-communisation was a crucial element—the institutions inherited from the Communist regime would be liquidated (PiS 2005, 17). Fundamental reforms were proposed to break down the network and to cut any links with the People's Republic of Poland, including reorganising the administration, judiciary, police, media, sport, economy and agriculture.

The party also published other materials and leaders presented public statements, mainly criticising the leftist government and domestic policy. Until 2005 the dominant division was between post-Communists and post-Solidarity. In 2005, the main aim of Kaczyński's project was to introduce a concept of a social state with a far reaching 'institutionalised solidarity'. The fundamental values: freedom, solidarity, dignity and justice were to be present but balanced. Indeed, freedom as the dominant value, as advocated by the PO, could turn against society and lead to hierarchy and oligarchy. Tusk's vision was described by Lech Kaczyński (2005) as 'a liberal experiment'. The system proposed by the PO was, in his opinion, not conducive to democracy. In consequence, as mentioned above, a new cleavage emerged: solidarity versus liberalism. The opponents of

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6 Lustration refers to the policy of limiting the participation of former Communists and especially informants of the Communist secret police (1944–90) in the successor governments or even in civil service positions. As was mentioned, the first lustration bill was passed in 1992, but it was declared unconstitutional. Several other projects were then submitted and reviewed, resulting in a new lustration law passed in 1996. However, the PiS government brought revolutionary changes to the process. Lustration was to be obligatory for 53 categories of people born before 1 August 1972 and holding positions of significant public responsibility, including lawyers, public notaries, attorneys, journalists and academic workers. However, key articles of that law were found unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court. Again this put the workability (and legality) of the whole process into question.

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liberalism strengthened their political position and as an effect of their negative rhetoric the word liberal developed a pejorative connotation.

A new political division was defined in 2007: pro- or anti-PiS. During the debate with ex-President Kwaśniewski, Tusk made a powerful appeal to all anti-PiS voters to support his party as the most effective way of defeating Kaczyński (Szczerbiak 2007). It was a new cleavage that dominated not only the political campaign but also became a dominant paradigm during following years.

Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński often criticised the establishment and referred to the notion of the network.<sup>7</sup> Jarosław Kaczyński expressed an opinion that 'Poland is a country of agents and a country controlled by agents' and that the 'Polish elite, unlike those in well-established democracies, does not have an understanding of the fundamental problems. The elite is rooted in the previous system' (Kaczyński 2002). 'The network has taken everything for itself. That explains why, after 1989, the people have not had a chance' (PiS 2005).

For a long time, it was unclear what the party's attitude to European integration would be. Although integration was a priority of Polish policy, the party declared that the leftist government of Prime Minister Leszek Miller had negotiated unfavourable conditions that would be damaging for Poland; integration would be even worse than remaining outside the EU.

The position changed during the party congress in January 2003. The delegates decided to support integration. Opponents of the decision were adamant: 'Catholic Poland should honestly say "NO" to Europe . . . the Union promotes social decadence. It means promoting actions against the family' (Jurek 2003, 1 and 7). Moreover, the radical wing of the party pointed out that adopting European anti-discrimination law would mean promoting homosexuality. The pro-European party members argued that economic and social issues were more important than Catholic themes (family ethics, the right to abortion and so on), which actually were not membership issues. This division between the two opposing groups (one open to modernisation and the West and the other more radical and ultra-Catholic), played an important role.

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<sup>7</sup> PiS was described as the party of 'men angry with life' (Janicki 2005).

Although the PiS government mainly concentrated on domestic issues, it announced in 2005 that foreign policy needed to be reclaimed from a post-1989 establishment that had been too conciliatory and insufficiently robust in defending Poland's interests abroad, especially in the EU. Kaczyński warned that 'our partners have to realise that Poland is beginning to practise a hard-line foreign policy' (Kaczyński 2006a). These words were translated into action in relations with the EU, Germany and Russia.

At every opportunity, the PiS government put forward Polish sovereignty and national interests. Consequently, the role of historical policy was important. In practice, Poland displayed arrogance towards other countries and institutions, rejecting international projects without proposing alternatives.<sup>8</sup> Such a policy, explained by government officials as protecting Polish national interests, was understood by opponents both in Poland and abroad as ignorance, and was often referred to as Polish nationalism. All criticism was rejected by PiS as groundless attacks.

Whether in opposition or in government, the Kaczyński brothers frequently used anti-German sentiments for the purpose of internal politics. Kaczyński demanded a special agreement barring any Second World War restitution.<sup>9</sup> They also complained about the proposed Russian–German pipeline on the bed of the Baltic Sea. Despite some merits, their campaign was rather emotional and tended to serve internal political purposes. Relations were further worsened as a result of the so-called Potato War.<sup>10</sup> The hard-line governmental rhetoric led to the isolation of Poland in the international arena.

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8 For example in 2007, during the summit in Brussels on the Lisbon Treaty, Lech Kaczyński demanded that Poland's Second World War dead and their potential offspring be counted into the formula for determining Poland's number of votes in the European Council. Also the PiS move to join the nationalist Union for a Europe of Nations (UEN) in 2004 and the European Conservatives for Reform (ECR) in 2009 was indicative of their Euroscepticism.

9 The problem of property ownership potentially concerns 12–13 million Poles who live in the territories taken from Germany in 1945. German citizens claim compensation for the property. Even if the German government does not support such claims, it refuses to accept responsibility for compensation.

10 The German left-wing newspaper *Tageszeitung* published a satirical article, entitled 'Poland's new potato'. The article presented the Kaczyński brothers' perceived xenophobic, homophobic and authoritarian stance.

### ORGANISATION

PiS has been a party with strong leadership on the part of the Kaczyński brothers. The major decisions (for instance programme, selection of candidates and so on) have been made by the executive body of the party and often during the party congresses. However, it was always clear that the force behind the whole process was the will of the Kaczyński brothers.

PiS used popular forms of communication such as rallies, protests and demonstrations. The Kaczyński brothers did not use the public media—mainly television—which was branded corrupt and immoral. Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński travelled directly to the people (Karnowski and Zaręba 2006). They presented their programme as heavily based on the common people's problems while the party and its leaders were victims of the media and the leftist government.

An important example of populists co-opting public sentiment took place in 2010, when Poles reacted with shock and grief to the airplane disaster that killed Lech Kaczyński. Almost immediately after the news broke, tens of thousands of Poles assembled in front of the presidential palace to lay tributes, including flowers, wreaths and candles. This lasted through the next week until Kaczyński and his wife were laid to rest at the Wawel Cathedral in Cracow. A week later Polish scouts put a wooden cross in front of the presidential palace to commemorate the victims of the crash. The cross provoked controversy, mainly related to questions concerning the separation of church and state. Polish Catholics wanted the cross to remain permanently in front of the palace, but after a summer of protests, it was ultimately transferred to St. Anne's Church in September. Commemoration ceremonies lasted for almost a month.

The emotions and public mobilisation inspired by those events were used by the PiS party to strengthen its support. The party organised meetings in front of the presidential palace during the subsequent years. At the same time conspiracy theories spread about the cause of the disaster. Members of PiS claimed that the Russians in the Smolensk Severnyi Airport control tower were ordered to keep the plane from landing so that the president could not attend the Katyń ceremony, which eventually resulted in the crash. Other politicians claimed that the Russians covered up a political assassination and asked for an independent investigation into the crash. Father Rydzyk claimed that the crash was the result of a

Masonic conspiracy against the PiS party. In such circumstances a new wave of popularity for PiS grew.

Interestingly, with regard to organisation, PiS transformed itself from an elitist to a mass party, as illustrated by its approach to membership. In 2001, when lustration was a strong element of the campaign, PiS introduced a strong internal selection process, especially for candidates to parliament. New candidates were subject to a special verification procedure; they had to respond to questionnaires about liability, whether legal actions had been taken against them and whether they had been affiliated with any official organisation in the People's Republic of Poland. Parliamentary candidates were also required to go through the lustration process and make their personal files available, giving information about their economic investments or the participation of their family members in state-owned companies (*spółki skarbu państwa*). Such in-depth verification also applied to candidates for party membership.

The poor results of the 2002 local elections prompted internal discussions which made it clear that the party needed new members. As a consequence the membership verification rules were softened. A new candidate needed to be supported only by two so-called introducing party members who guaranteed the candidate's loyalty. In 2006 the party had about 13,000 members, while by 2008, it had about 20,000.

PiS, the party furthest to the right on the political spectrum, quite often attempted to attract people from the left. In 2005, for example, in order to direct attention away from the fact that the party was strongly anti-Communist, Kaczyński left behind political issues and concentrated on social ones. He referred to a society divided into rich and poor, where liberals supported the rich. This was a division between liberalism and social solidarity and it made him more appealing to left-leaning voters. According to the research conducted after the 2007 election on changes in political preferences, PiS attracted supporters from two other populist parties (one of them on the left), partially through the application of a similar populist strategy (for more about electoral volatility see Pacewicz 2007; Markowski 2007).

### EFFECTS ON THE PARTY SYSTEM

Kaczyński's party won both presidential and parliamentary elections in 2005 but the political situation became complicated. It soon became clear that a coalition could not be formed because there were too many conflicting interests between the two victorious parties: PiS and PO. After the attempt proved unsuccessful, PiS tried to attract some PO members by offering them highly paid positions in state corporations and institutions.

The general impression is that chaos dominated the Polish political scene at that time. In January 2006 Jarosław Kaczyński proposed the so-called Stabilisation Pact (*Umowa Stabilizacyjna*) with the idea of uniting all of the non-post-Communist parties (Uhlir 2006). The offer was directed not only at PO and the agrarian Polish People's Party but also at Self Defence and the League of Polish Families. The first two officially declined any cooperation with populists and radicals, while Self Defence and the League seemed to be more sympathetic. Anti-establishment rhetoric and the appeal to the people were the common denominators of the latter two populist parties. Then Jarosław Kaczyński presented the pact as the only hope for political stabilisation in Poland and the cooperation with both populist parties as a necessity—a necessity to which his party was forced by the political irresponsibility of, mainly, PO.

The signing of the pact did not, however, bring stability. On the contrary, Self Defence and the League made numerous new political demands and used blackmail to get more political influence and offices.

Finally, in May 2006 Jarosław Kaczyński built a new coalition with two populist parties: the radical-right League and the agrarian Self Defence. Roman Giertych was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education. The appointment of Andrzej Lepper as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development was more controversial. He had been charged with numerous criminal offences and implicated in many scandals. Three days before his appointment to office, he was sentenced for slander to one year and three months in prison with a probation period of five years. All of this in a government that claimed to protect law and order in Poland. From its inception, this coalition was criticised by the mainstream media and by scholars (Krastev 2007, 2007a; Smolar 2007b; Rupnik 2007b; Smilov 2008).

PiS leaders justified the alliance by highlighting the party's determination to introduce the political reforms necessary for their project, the Fourth Republic. The new government led by Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński announced the end of post-Communism and attempted to question the existing mechanisms of checks and balances in order to promote a strong government which would fight corruption, bring an end to the network and guarantee a better life for the common people. The discourse of the governing parties was typical populist rhetoric, dominated by emotions, negations, betrayal and conspiracy theories. The main object of their attack was the judicial system, especially the constitutional tribunal, the civil service and other public institutions and structures, as well as the media. The end of the ideology of the post-Communism era served as justification for the controversial policies of the new government: taking control of the public media as well as of the media regulatory agency, dismissing previous managers in state-owned companies (some of them having been politically appointed) to make room for political cronies, dissolving the civil service and revoking the regulations, limiting political appointments in public administration as well as introducing a number of other practices that they condemned when used by their predecessors.

The PiS-led coalition was ridden with internal contradictions. The moral revolution proclaimed by PiS was increasingly seen as a double standard. One set of rules was used to condemn the corruption of the post-Communist Third Republic and another to explain the practices of the ruling party and the misbehaviour of its coalition partners. Meanwhile, since the inception of the coalition, the two smaller parties and their leaders were a constant source of embarrassment to PiS. The corruption and legal problems of many Self Defence members were in contradiction to the principles of the PiS government. The League of Polish Families was accused of pro-fascist inclinations. It was also a difficult partner for PiS as both parties were competing for the favours of the Catholic Church as well as the influential Catholic Radio Maryja and its director Father Rydyk.

On 4 December 2006, *Gazeta Wyborcza* published an article headlined 'A job in exchange for sex' (*Praca za seks*).<sup>11</sup> Although Lepper was dismissed, the coalition survived. However, the League of Polish Families and Self

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11 The new scandal concerned the Self Defence party leaders, Andrzej Lepper and Stanisław Łyżwiński, accused of forcing women to have sexual relationships with them in exchange for party jobs.

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Defence announced their intention to form a new coalition. They initiated a strong anti-PiS media campaign, while at the same time discussing with PiS conditions for the coalition.

During the summer of 2007 the political scene was dominated by accusations and arrests of prominent politicians such as Lepper. PiS was losing credibility but still leading in political surveys, along with PO. Jarosław Kaczyński decided to gamble on an early election.<sup>12</sup>

In spite of all the coalition's problems and the media attacks against it, in September 2007, just one month before the parliamentary election, PiS was still supported by 30% of Poles, a figure similar to 2005. The other two coalition partners were balancing on the threshold (5%). PiS had practically swallowed its two partners in the government. This phenomenon, however, could be partially explained by the health of the Polish economy, which some in the electorate attributed to government policy, and by skilful government campaigning, a strong presence in the public media and the use of compromising materials against the opposition and coalition partners. The party not only successfully used populist rhetoric as a strategy but also implemented populism as an ideology, including its campaign for the local elections of 2006, which used the slogan 'closer to the people'. This went on during the subsequent months at rallies, demonstrations, public speeches and other gatherings organised by the party, appealing to the common people against its opponents.

The campaign was short, as the parties had only six weeks to get their messages across to voters. Although since 2005 the political situation had often been tense enough for a new election to be likely, it seemed that when it happened in 2007 the opposition was caught off guard and in a weakened state.

The debates coincided with a change in PO's campaign strategy. Alex Szczerbiak (2007) noted that PO left behind the negativism that had dominated the Law and Justice rhetoric and the previous government. Rejecting the criticism that the party had moved to populism when it

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<sup>12</sup> An important motivation for PiS in resorting to a new election was the decision of the National Electoral Commission in early August 2007 to reject the party's annual financial statement (together with the SLD's) because it had accepted funds from foreigners and foreign institutions in 2006 (for more information on this, see Szczerbiak 2007a, 9).



promised to turn Poland into a second Ireland, Tusk labelled his new discourse 'responsible populism' (Tusk 2008).<sup>13</sup>

The effect of this strategy, combined with the scandals described above, was an unexpected growth in support for PO of about 40%–45%. During the last week of the campaign PiS shifted back to its strongest arguments, namely corruption, particularly when CBA arrested a little known deputy of PO in a sting operation against bribery.

One more important factor should be mentioned here. NGOs and ad hoc civil society initiatives played a particularly important role in resisting populism in government. It was an interesting sociological phenomenon, the waking up of Polish civil society. From the end of 2005, when the government started to introduce many controversial proposals, the involvement of NGOs in politics was particularly visible. An impressive number of critical reports concerning government policies was published by a range of NGOs as well as by newly formed initiatives.

In this context, it is also important to stress the role of young people who were motivated to participate in the vote by the shame of nationalism and an old image of Kaczyński. The youthful appeal of PO was also an important factor which encouraged the high participation in the election process of younger generations.

The major Fourth Republic cleanup project, the lustration of public officials, an attempt to dismiss the former Communist secret police agents who were still in power, triggered a popular movement of civil disobedience. The growing number of protests and demonstrations, illustrating the activation of social groups that was noticeable in 2005–7, has to be analysed together with the moral revolution introduced by PiS. Rejecting the ideals of the Third Republic of Poland, the party also rejected the ruling social class, called by some 'the winners of transformation'.

From the above description, one may distinguish certain waves of populism within PiS. The first phase reached full momentum in the parliamentary

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13 Referring to the Irish economic model, the party declared that it would abandon excessive regulation, bring about an economic miracle and create possibilities for all citizens, including Poles living abroad (for more information on this, see Szczerbiak 2007a).

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election in 2001. PiS took advantage of the social frustration caused by the previous reforms and the fear of unknown European institutions. The populists turned those issues into electoral themes. Liberalism was another important factor that emerged in the populist rhetoric. It could be found on two different levels: social, related to EU issues; and economic, concerning political elites from both left and right. Formerly ruling parties were criticised for having used the reforms to reach their own objectives. PiS did not deny the necessity of such reforms, but criticised the way they were carried out, in that they divided society into two groups: the rich and the poor.

The second phase took place during 2005–7 and this period can be labelled ‘populism comes to power’. The election of 2005 marked the new political division. The former division, between post-Communist versus post-Solidarity Poland, was replaced by the notions of liberal Poland versus social Poland. However, with the new division, neither new values nor new programs were introduced and in fact the division was based on the same old problems: loyal people stood against the corrupt oligarchs of the Third Republic. The heartland of the populists was a homeland of social security in a powerful state based on Christian values. The rejection of liberal economic reforms was based on discrediting the circle of mediators who introduced them. The status of Poland within EU structures was to be based on its political history as well as on the belief that Poles deserve it all. Nonetheless, at that stage what dominated populist rhetoric was the fight against the network and the idea of a new, improved Fourth Republic that was expected to bring a moral renewal to the country.

The third phase started in 2007, when PiS used its populist rhetoric in opposition. Depending on the need, that rhetoric could be more radical or less. The new cleavage that emerged after 2007 separated those who were for PiS from those who were against.

## OUTLOOK

As opposed to the Western countries, where the populism directed against the establishment is mostly based on stable political systems and their predictable structures, Poland lacked such mechanisms. The populist anti-establishment concept was created on the basis of the lack of a clear settling of accounts with Communism and because the former Communists were allowed to participate in power.

PiS justified taking control of democratic institutions and procedures by claiming that all those who contributed to the building of the Third Republic by definition belonged to the network. The same theory was used to pre-empt all criticism: if the mass media exposed incompetence and corruption in PiS protégés, that only showed that the mass media were also defending the secret arrangement. This made the ideology of the end of post-Communism irrefutable in the Popperian sense and thus precluded any possibility of reasonable discussion. It made populism grow even more in the years 2005–7.

It is worth drawing attention to the credibility of the notion of a network and to the meaning of the Round Table generation in Polish political life because it has its repercussion for the future. When the principal initiators of the settlement of accounts came to power, they planned to enhance the process of lustration and to deprive former Communist security service agents of privileges, such as high pensions. Those measures were meant to produce a clear symbolic rift between post-Communism and the Fourth Republic and put an end to what was so painful in the post-Communist period—that all those who had been privileged or had oppressed others under the Communist system simply changed their status or retained their privileges. Yet it turned out that the coalition created in order to make changes consisted of people who still had connections to the past, such as Self Defence. Soon it also turned out that the files describing the cooperation of politicians with the Polish secret service during the Communist era contained evidence of guilt in some cases but in others confirmed that documents had been fraudulent altered by the Communist authorities (including the Jarosław Kaczyński files that, according to him, were fabricated). All this hinders the possibility of a valid, legal settling of accounts with the Communist past. Therefore, populism becomes the attempt to do that. The more attention was given to settling accounts, the more willingness there was to continue the government's bad practices. Finally, the whole lustration process is going on today but it does not raise such difficult emotions as during the 2005–7 populist government.

Paradoxically, it was the populists, by definition anti-EU, who were taking up European subjects at national level and who were introducing the topic of the future vision of Europe to Polish public debate. At the European level though, populism has little relevance because it lacks a European people as a pivotal populist asset. In this respect, the European subject will be still an important element for future populists. It is enough to mention here the

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current economic crisis in Europe and frequent protests against national governments (and indirectly against the Union).

PiS was, above all, striving for power, asking which establishment actions had a negative impact on the people. The major problem of the transformation lay in the consequences of the liberal reforms, such as the rise in the unemployment rate, corruption, deregulation, integration with the European Union, lustration, the unsolved issues of the former Communist secret service agents, all of them enabling PiS to build a conspiracy theory. All these elements were present, with differing intensity, in the populist discourse. Populism was largely founded on public opinion, which in turn provided the topics for populist debate. Such themes as the unemployment rate, corruption and state effectiveness will be still important topics for populists in future.

While in active opposition, PiS blamed the ruling corrupt elite for the bad state of affairs. Populists were treated as radicals or even extremists by the establishment as well as the media, and as a consequence they were marginalised. The political mainstream stood united against them. Such marginalisation only led to the strengthening of populism within PiS.

When the party came to power in 2005, events that took place in some Western countries did not occur in Poland. The *cordon sanitaire* established by big parties (for instance in Belgium) did not appear; the political scene was too weak for that. Coming to power did not eradicate the populism of the parties in question, as it did with Jörg Haider's Freedom Party of Austria, for example, after 2001. Despite the critical opinions of other European countries, no (informal) Community sanctions were applied, unlike in the case of Austria.

Populism in Poland became the element that defined the government. The fight against the network, the oligarchy, the secret service, corrupt politicians and former Communists entered the government's agenda for good. Radical populism threatened to come to power in the country but in reality it proved to be weak and empty. The Polish case shows that the populists are not able to govern successfully. The division between the people and the elite that defines populists is a master card when power is to be gained but becomes counter-productive when in power.

There is however still a potential for radical populism in Poland as long as there is a room for creating the concept of the network. Smolensk is still

an important topic in Poland. In 2012 Polish military authorities exhumed bodies of wrongly identified victims of the April 2010 airplane crash, like Anna Walentynowicz, one of the founders and heroes of the country's Solidarity movement of the 1980s; Teresa Walewska-Przyjalkowska, a scientist and well-known social activist; and the last president in exile, Ryszard Kaczorowski, who served briefly as head of the London-based government in exile from 1989 to 1990. The final total for the exhumations may reach 15. The Polish government has tried its best to soften the political damage caused by exhumations. Prime Minister Donald Tusk stood before the Polish parliament and apologised to the victims' families for the incorrect identification of their loved ones, adding that he took full responsibility for the Polish state's mistake. Supporters of PiS see the incorrect burials of well-known figures as an abomination. Jarosław Kaczyński also suggested that the Smolensk tragedy was no accident.

Conspiracy theories have been circulating among PiS supporters for a long time. Moreover, the newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* published an article claiming that traces of explosive material had been found on the wreckage of the Tupolev-154, the ill-fated aircraft that had carried President Kaczyński and his entire entourage. The accusation prompted Jarosław Kaczyński to declare that there was an assassination and not an accident. Although few days later *Rzeczpospolita* retracted the story, saying that it made a mistake, the exhumations of Smolensk victims have turned the two year old tragedy into a current political issue. As long as the Smolensk case produces such confusion, there is a huge potential for rebuilding the concept of the network, in which the governing elite will be an enemy (for example, a cooperating mastermind in assassination) and populist appeal will be used as the best strategy to mobilise the electorate against the government.

Although PiS was against strict constitutionalism and procedural democracy, it based its legitimacy on a democratic system. When accused of being anti-democratic, the party responded that the people had elected them and they governed in the name of the people. In Jarosław Kaczyński's opinion the problem was that defective liberal democracy was dangerous because it was a threat to the people. Having come to power, they aimed to improve the constitutional framework. At the same time, it was the constitution and other legal instruments of the state that hindered populist interference with the system. As long as elected representatives disappoint the Polish electorate there will be room for populist politicians who will attempt to speak in the name of the people. The question is rather whether populism can be again a threat to Polish procedural democracy?

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As mentioned earlier, until 2005 in Poland the main political divisions originated from the notions of post-Communism and post-Solidarity. The new opposing terms, solidarity Poland and liberal Poland, based on social values and an appeal to ethics, were no different to those previously applied. Some authors have also noted a new division over the Smolensk tragedy, between those who believe that it was an accident and those who believe it was an assassination (Dudek 2013). The legacy of the past has not been overcome. The case of Poland proves the theory of, among others, Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau (2008) that politics cannot be defined by technical issues. In 1990 the Polish elite believed it to be possible, claiming that the mere fact of having fought Communism entitled them to conduct reforms without public consultation. Populists (e.g. Lepper) quickly began to argue that politicians do not respect the will of the common people but care only about their own interests. Mouffe and Laclau also state that the lack of a clear division between left- and right-wing forces does not necessarily mean that the social divide is not present, as was demonstrated in Poland in 2005.

Researchers often wonder whether populism is a problem of democracy itself or whether there exists 'a democratic populist pathology' (Mair 2002, Kitchelt 2002, Markowski 2004, Lang 2005). In Poland populism was, above all, a warning sign that pointed to constrictions in liberal democracy. But if populism were treated as the people's answer to failures of liberal democracy, why did it cause so much anxiety and concern? According to Paweł Śpiewak (2004, 13), 'populism can often be a solid basis for a near fascist reign that uses similar slogans (the enemy, the cult of the leader, aversion to the law and to democratic institutions, utmost demagoguery) and that utilises similar techniques to mobilise the masses'. Many Polish intellectuals shared those concerns. In the opinion of leftist commentator Sławomir Sierakowski (2007) populism is not a political project but 'an ugly tumour on liberal democracy that does not perform its duties well'.

However, the biggest danger is that 'the populists after having won in a spectacular manner can cease to be populists and become a real threat' (Sierakowski 2007). The arguments mentioned were raised by many left- and right-wing critics of populism in Poland and, up to a point, the facts demonstrated a real populist threat. In Poland it found expression in a continual rebellion against the restrictions imposed on democracy by the law and by institutions that were not directly rooted in the will of the people. This was a rebellion waged by the leaders of populist parties, mainly by PiS. They all supported populist democracy against liberal democracy and

the elite, who had been neither elected nor chosen by their party. Hence the constant attacks against the Polish Constitutional Tribunal, against the independence of courts, the central bank, journalists and academics. Hence the winner-takes-all personnel policy when it came to filling government and other positions. This proves that the victory of populism was a problem for democracy; those parties did not represent or respect the will of the people. Discontent with the functioning of democracy in Poland is primarily a result of disappointments and unrealised expectations. After 1989 the main parties that were supposed to offer a strong link between the people and the state proved to be rather weak in their institutional dimension, appearing and quickly disappearing, laying the groundwork for the populists to question representative democracy, which was an easy task.

The case of Poland has demonstrated that democracy is resistant to populism. It was the rule of law that ultimately judged the merits of populist actions. Their promises remained unfulfilled, and when confronted with the reality of power, the populists turned out to be incapable of acting efficiently.

Only a few contemporary authors claim that populism can bring positive changes. One of them is political scientist Philippe Schmitter (2006). His reasoning, although not related to the case of Poland, is relevant: Polish populists managed to weaken parties that were based on backstage intrigues and corrupt practices.

The case described could be viewed as an example of the saving aspect of democracy described by Canovan; even if the events of 2005 were based on the past, Polish politics reflected the contemporary problems of most democratic European countries. It is democracy itself and not the European policy of consensus which causes the emergence of populism. The case of Poland demonstrates that populism has been present and will be present in any political system. Issues such as who can be considered the people, how do the people protest and how does the populist language develop all depend on the number of demands met by the social system as well as on the rejected demands which trigger a popular reaction against the system. Nonetheless, it is certain that as long as there is democracy, populism has a reason for existence.

Although it has been proven that populism in Poland appeared as a result of democratic dilemmas similar to those present in Western European countries, it remains different from its Western equivalents as

it emerged in entirely different circumstances: the fall of Communism and the transformation. Polish populism was an attempt to settle the past. Gradually, populism became not necessarily the expression of a rejection of democracy but the sign of a rebellion against prevailing liberal values.

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# The Slovak National Party: A Fading Comet? On the Ups and Downs of Right-wing and National Populism in Slovakia

Grigorij Mesežnikov and Oľga Gyárfášová

## INTRODUCTION

The Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana, SNS) has been an integral part of Slovakia's party system since 1990. In its activity, the SNS combines radical nationalist rhetoric and authoritarian proposals with political and electoral mobilisation using the 'ethnic card'. It became the leading representative of the country's nationalist forces in the early 1990s, and since then it has acted as the main driver for nationalist socio-political discourse, influencing policies in selected areas of public life, either in the position of a parliamentary or a co-ruling party.

The SNS was founded and officially registered in the spring of 1990, a few weeks before the first free and democratic parliamentary elections in Slovakia. In its programmatic documents the SNS defines itself as 'a nationally oriented, conservative, centre-right party, based on the European Christian value system, with three programme pillars—national, social and Christian. The SNS continues the Cyrillo–Methodian, Štúr's and Memorandum [of the Slovak nation] state-building traditions, in line with the legal acts that led to the sovereignty of the Slovak nation and the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic' (SNS no date).

The SNS declares itself a 'party, which adheres to the ideological legacy of the founders of the [historic] SNS in 1871' (Stanovy 2012). Its mission is 'to unite the Slovaks at home and abroad; to maintain the national sovereignty of the Slovak Republic; to increase, strengthen and improve patriotic awareness of the Slovak nation, especially in linguistically mixed

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areas of the Slovak Republic; and to improve the attitudes of citizens to Slovak statehood' (SNS 2009a).

The SNS's leaders portray their party as the major political defender of the national interests of Slovakia and the Slovaks. They frequently use right-leaning anti-Communist rhetoric, but the party's socio-economic programme also features strong elements of state interventionism, paternalism and redistributive social policy measures. The verbal SNS commitment to democracy and democratic values coexists with some policy proposals that contain steps that contradict the basic principles of liberal democracy.

According to terminology suggested by Cas Mudde (2011, 12), the SNS can be defined as a 'populist radical right' party, whose ideological background combines a mixture of nationalism and xenophobia, authoritarianism and populism. However, in the case of the SNS, the proportions of the three elements mentioned are uneven: the shares of radical nationalism and xenophobia seem to be greater than the share of populism. Common populist methods usually include appeals to ordinary people via promises to protect their interests against those who do not care about them in an effort to attract so-called protest voters, and harsh criticism of the political establishment, incumbent administration and established 'mainstream' parties for their alleged corruption. Populist parties often have an unclear programme orientation and proclaim the 'people's character' of their own political creed, while attempting to appeal to the broadest possible electorate and labelling certain social groups as 'isolated' from the common folk (e.g. the wealthy, capitalists and sophisticated intellectuals).

They have egalitarian motives when addressing voters and a generally anti-elitist rhetoric. Finally, they like to advertise how their own 'know-how' can solve existing social maladies, with promises of swift changes for the better and the ability to adapt proposed solutions to meet prevailing public opinion trends. However, being a permanent constituent part of the established party system since its foundation, and frequently participating in clientelist and corrupt practices while in government, the SNS feels that its populist appeal is limited in terms of its ability to mobilise voters. The party is perceived by a significant segment of the electorate to be part of the corrupt political elite.

Shortly after its founding, the SNS began to advocate for Slovakia's independence from the common Czechoslovak state. Their efforts to

promote the idea of Slovakia as an independent state in the country's social and political discourse intensified after the first free parliamentary elections in 1990, which propelled the SNS to the position of a parliamentary party. From 1990 to 1992 the SNS acted as a leading force in the separatist camp, demanding the division of the Czechoslovak federation and the announcement of an independent Slovak state.<sup>1</sup>

### **The SNS in elections**

The SNS's electoral results between 1990 and 2012 are marked by a relatively high degree of volatility (see Table 1). With the exception of two elections, the SNS has succeeded in gaining seats in parliament in every election since 1990. The two exceptions are 2002, when the SNS was divided into two formally independent organisations (the SNS and the Real Slovak National Party (Pravá Slovenská národná strana, PSNS)), and 2012, when, after a shortened electoral tenure, the party failed to surpass the 5% threshold. The SNS is the only party in Slovakia which has succeeded in returning to parliament after a previous electoral failure—all other parties that have lost the status of parliamentary party have failed to reverse the situation in subsequent elections. The 2006 general election marked the party's 'triumphant comeback', when the nationalists won almost 12% of the vote and joined the ruling coalition led by Direction–Social Democracy (Smer–Sociálna Demokracia, Smer-SD). However, the SNS performed rather weakly in the 2010 national elections when, with only 5.1% of the vote, it only just passed the electoral threshold; this enabled it to join the opposition. In the premature election of March 2012, the SNS failed to reach the 5% threshold.

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1 In addition to the right-wing nationalist SNS, the constituent parts of Slovakia's nationalist scene (however marginal) after 1990 were ultra-nationalist political organisations based on the ideology of the obsolete Slovak nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s. They operated in the 'grey area' of the political scene, oscillating around the line that separated legally existing political parties from extremist groups openly promoting racist and fascist views. Towards the end of the first decade of the 2000s, these formations de facto disappeared from the political scene: they did not run in parliamentary elections in two last electoral cycles and their results in the parliamentary elections of 1992, 1998, 2002 and 2006 were insignificant. However, in 2010 the overt extremist party, the People's Party–Our Slovakia (Ludová strana Naše Slovensko, LS-NS), participated in parliamentary elections for first time and gained 1.33% of the vote (33,724 votes). This extremist organisation has increased its electoral support in the last two years—in 2012 it won 1.58% of the vote (40,460 votes)—and has growing support from young voters.

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**Table 1 The SNS's results in parliamentary elections, 1990–2012**

	1990	1992	1994	1998	2002	2006	2010	2012
<b>SNS</b>								
Share of the vote	13.94%	7.93%	5.40%	9.07%	3.32%	11.73%	5.07%	4.55%
Number of votes	470,984	244,527	155,359	304,839	95,633	270,230	128,490	116,420
Number of seats out of 150 (MPs)	22	15	9	14	0	20	9	0
<b>PSNS*</b>								
Share of the vote					3.65%			
Number of votes					105,084			
Number of seats (MPs)					0			
					<b>SNS+PSNS</b> <b>200,717</b>			

\* In 2001, after a conflict arose between two key members of the party's leadership—the chair and the vice-chair—the SNS split into two separate organisations—the SNS and the PSNS, but neither of them succeeded in qualifying for a seat in the 2002 parliamentary elections. The two 'national parties' reunited in 2003 as a single organisation, the SNS.

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 1990–2012.

In the elections to the European Parliament in 2009, the SNS won 5.55% of the vote, which was enough to gain a mandate for one MEP. While in the 2004 EP elections the SNS–PSNS coalition was supported by just 14,150 voters (2.01% of the vote), in 2009 it was supported by 45,960 voters (see Table 2). Although a gain of one seat in the EP could be viewed as an SNS success in comparison to the extremely poor performance of 2004, the party's overall result was significantly lower than its support according



to the opinion polls. This indicates that in certain types of elections the SNS has a limited ability to mobilise its supporters. This phenomenon manifested itself in the European elections, despite the fact that the SNS attempted to draw heavily on its traditional mobilising tool, the so-called Hungarian card.

**Table 2 The SNS's results in European Parliament elections**

	2004 (SNS–PSNS coalition)	2009 SNS
Share of the vote	2.01%	5.55%
Number of votes	14,150	45,960
Number of seats (out of the 13 Slovakia has in the EP )	0	1

*Source:* Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

In its lifetime, the SNS has been through several serious internal conflicts, which have led to three organisational splits—in 1994, 2001 and 2011. In 1994, the moderates within the party's leadership left the SNS and established the separate political organisation, the National Democratic Party—New Alternative (Národnodemokratická strana—Nová alternativa), which merged with the liberal-oriented Democratic Union (Demokratická únia) in 1995. In 2010, strong internal tensions appeared within the SNS leadership, partly as a result of the efforts of the vice-chair to use the party's defeat in parliamentary elections to change the party's leadership and to fulfil her own ambitions of attaining the highest position in the party. These efforts failed, however, and the incumbent chair was able to maintain his position. Subsequently, in 2011 two SNS MPs left the party and established a new organisation, Nation and Justice (Národ a spravodlivosť, NaS). Neither the SNS nor the NaS gained a seat in parliament in the 2012 elections.

Five politicians have served as statutory representatives (chairs) of the SNS from its foundation until 2012: Víťazoslav Moric, Jozef Prokeš, Ľudovít Černák, Ján Slota and Anna Malíková (now Belousovová). The

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most prominent among these is Ján Slota, with whom the SNS has been inextricably linked since 1994 when he became party chair for the first time. Slota, a mining engineer by profession, was one of the founding members of the SNS in 1990. He ran for the SNS in the first free parliamentary elections in 1990 and was elected as a deputy to the Federal Assembly of Czechoslovakia. In 1990 he was also elected mayor of Žilina. Subsequently he was re-elected three times to the same position and served as the city's mayor until 2006. As a politician he tried to acquire as many public roles as possible. In 1992 he was elected to the national parliament, where he served as an MP until 2012 (except during the 2002–6 electoral period), and in 2001 and 2006 he was elected to the Žilina regional assembly. In 2004 Slota ran in the presidential elections, but won only 2.5% of the vote. During his years of continuous tenure as mayor of Žilina (1990–2006), Slota succeeded in building a system of city government based on opaque decisions, nepotism, party and personal clientelism; promoting the power ambitions of the mayor; and failing to uphold some of the citizens' constitutional rights (for example, the right to information).

As chair of the SNS, Slota introduced an intra-party model based on the total usurpation of the decision-making process by the chief representative, on the enforcement of the indisputable authority of the leader within the internal party structures and on boundless personal loyalty to the chairman. Any expression of disagreement with Slota's stances within the party usually leads to the punishment of the dissenters. Being the highest SNS representative, Slota acts as the main messenger for the party's political and ideological credo. He has become a personified symbol of ethnocentric nationalism, xenophobia and anti-minority sentiment in their most aggressive forms. He is known for his frequent expressions of verbal aggression, abusive behaviour and offensive statements, as well as for his alcoholic excesses. He obsessively expresses a negative attitude towards ethnic Hungarians, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, representatives of Hungarian political parties in Slovakia, Hungary as a country, and the government and political representatives of the Hungarian state. He does this in the context of the alleged 'Hungarian threat' to Slovakia and Slovaks. He also speaks repeatedly about Roma in a defamatory manner and has proposed solutions to the 'Roma issue' that would mean the introduction of discriminatory and repressive measures. Aside from this, Slota constantly tries to emulate his own image of a 'strict' politician, encouraging Slovaks to stand against their historic enemies and fight with an 'iron fist' against all 'immoralities'. He has made offensive homophobic statements, called for the shooting of paedophiles, attacked 'stupid intellectuals' and denounced

the 'Western quasi-culture' which supposedly negatively affects young Slovak people (SITA 2006a).

Slota has often been an instigator of scandals related to his lifestyle and episodes from his past. Public information about Slota's property has caused serious doubts about the legality of its acquisition. The media have published information about apparent discrepancies between Slota's officially recognised income and the extent of the property that he owns (such as the luxury limousines driven by him and members of his family) (SME 2008c). In 2008, the Slovak media published information about Communist secret police (ŠtB) data filed at the Nation's Memory Institute that confirms that in 1971, at the age of 17, Slota moved for a short time to Austria, where he stole private cars. According to the files, before moving to Austria Slota committed criminal acts in Slovakia (stealing textiles and meat products from shops in the small village of Koš in the district of Prievidza).

### **Voters' profile**

In spite of the fact that the SNS electorate has been volatile, we can identify some more or less stable demographic features. Similar to other radical right-wing parties, the party has more male supporters than female. As illustrated by exit polls in 2010 and 2012 (see Tables 3 and 4), there is quite a significant gender bias, something which cannot be observed in any other party in Slovakia. As far as education is concerned, SNS voters are mostly recruited from those who have graduated from high school or vocational training schools (i.e. they are mainly blue-collar workers). Professionals, intellectuals and university degree holders are under-represented among SNS voters. However, it must be emphasised that social status and social class are not strong predictors of electoral decisions. On average, SNS voters are younger, and ethnically they are Slovaks. The party is more popular in rural areas and in small towns. As for regional distribution, the party has a stronger following in northern Slovakia, interestingly enough in the regions where there are no ethnic Hungarians. As evidence of the SNS's popularity in this region of Slovakia, it should be remembered that Ján Slota has, on three occasions, been elected as mayor of Žilina, the regional centre of north-west Slovakia. This phenomenon has been labelled as the 'bubble effect' and provides empirical evidence that anti-Hungarian feelings do not stem from everyday contact but rather that resentment is highly politically instrumentalised.

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**Table 3 Election results among male and female voters, 2010 (%)**

	Smer SD	SDKÚ DS	SaS	KDH	Most Híd	SNS	SMK	LS HZDS
Male	26.7	14.8	13.3	8.3	8.6	7.0	5.6	5.2
Female	29.1	16.7	11.7	11.4	7.9	4.6	6.1	4.3

Source: MVK (2010).

**Table 4 Election results for different social groups, 2012 (%)**

		Smer SD	KDH	OLaNO	Most Híd	SDKÚ DS	SaS	SNS
<b>Nationally</b>		<b>44.4</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>4.6</b>
Gender	Male	43.6	7.9	8.6	6.5	5.8	6.9	5.3
	Female	44.9	9.8	8.7	7.2	6.4	5.1	4.0
Age	18–19	31.4	7.5	13.8	5.8	1.9	7.1	5.7
	20–39	35.9	8.1	11.2	6.5	6.7	10.3	4.8
	40–59	45.7	8.6	7.9	8.4	6.4	4.2	5.1
	60+	56.2	10.4	5.4	5.3	5.4	2.0	3.5
Ethnicity	Slovak	48.5	9.6	9.4	3.4	6.5	6.4	5.2
	Hungarian	4.1	1.7	1.8	41.1	1.5	1.4	0
	other	47.2	8.3	4.8	4.6	9.3	6.0	1.5
Residence	Rural*	50.2	8.9	6.6	6.2	4.0	3.7	5.0
	Urban**	38.3	8.8	10.6	7.7	8.4	8.2	4.1

Note: \* communities with less than 5,000 inhabitants; \*\* communities with more than 5,000 inhabitants.

Source: FOCUS (2012).

When we look at the values and attitudinal profile of SNS voters, typically they have negative views and attitudes towards minorities, mainly the Hungarian one, but also towards minorities in general. In economic issues SNS voters tend to have more leftist views, namely wanting greater state

intervention, higher redistribution, and more state paternalism and etatism. SNS voters do not represent typical transition and/or integration losers. This social group was much more effectively mobilised by the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko, HZDS), the strongest party of the 1990s, which was led by Vladimír Mečiar and combined national populism with social demagogy.

## PROGRAMMES, TOPICS AND MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

The SNS does not belong to those Slovak political parties that could be clearly identified as pro-reform organisations. It is an etatist party, criticising 'neo-liberal' models of economic reform, emphasising state protectionism and applying methods of cronyism.

The SNS's economic programmes are marked by protectionist and nationalist rhetoric. The party's manifesto from 1994 stated: 'The SNS prefers the concentration of capital, production tools and property in the hands of national bodies as a guarantee of Slovakia's economic power. The SNS does not and will never support the sale of any (public) wealth into the hands of anonymous multinational cosmopolitan entities that use their economic power to gain political influence' (SNS 1994).

In its 2002 electoral manifesto, the SNS stressed the necessity of a 'social (welfare) state' (SNS 2002). In 2006, the manifesto advocated the development of a 'market economy for the twenty-first century which corresponds with the national, Christian and socio-economic conditions of Slovakia', and in 2010 it criticised the 'old practices of neoliberalism' which were considered unable to solve the problems associated with the current financial and economic crisis. The SNS criticised proposals to solve these problems through the 'growing use of foreign investment and the sale of property', and expressed its support for the policy of public procurement and public investment (SNS 2010).

In 2012, the SNS promised to introduce a 10% tax on 'dividends of foreign multinational companies and monopolies' and to eliminate the 'discrimination' against domestic companies eligible for investment aid in favour of foreign companies (SNS 2012).

Between 2006 and 2010, when the SNS was a part of a coalition with the 'social democratic' Smer-SD, the party had to justify its support for the socio-economic policy of the 'socialist' government. The SNS's

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leaders at that time emphasised the ‘social’ dimension of the party’s programme. SNS vice-chair Anna Belousovová claimed that the SNS’s programme was based ‘on the values of European social culture’ (SITA 2006c). From time to time as a ruling party, the SNS submitted proposals that demonstrated its more significant—compared to Smer-SD’s—‘pro-reform’ agenda; however, the feasibility of these proposals was virtually zero (for example, a proposal to reduce the basic tax rate from 19 to 17 or even 15%). The SNS did not support the proposal to establish a single state health insurance company, and it stood against the empowerment of trade unions and disagreed with changes that could lead—according to the SNS—to a ‘business downturn’. All of these stances, however, were situational posturing by the party rather than real policymaking proposals.

The SNS’s positions on the character of the state are affected by its ethnic and nationalistic approaches (i.e. the obvious preference for the national principle over the civic one), as well as by its tendency to mythologise history. It also neglects issues related to regime types, the quality of democracy, the liberal democratic foundations of the country’s constitutional system and the importance of abiding by the principles of constitutional liberalism. The SNS is a strong opponent of the civic concept of the political nation. It perceives the current Slovak Republic as a national state of ethnic Slovaks and furthers a concept of assimilation with respect to ethnic minorities that is based, among other principles, on a priori questioning of ethnic Hungarians’ loyalty to the Slovak Republic.

In their interpretation of national history, SNS leaders, similar to other national populists, tend to mythologise the past, presenting the titular nation as older than it is and placing its ethno-genesis as far back in history as possible. They also show a clear inclination to positively evaluate historical authoritarian personalities and a tendency to favour historical periods in which the nation was ruled by authoritarian regimes.

### **Attitude towards ethnic minorities and immigrants**

In many EU countries immigration issues are becoming more and more urgent and are receiving increasing media attention. In Slovakia, however, the migrant community is very small, at less than 1% of the population as of 2010. Moreover, a large proportion of the migrants are EU citizens and not third-country nationals. Consequently, nationalistic and xenophobic parties in Central and Eastern Europe, including the SNS, tend to target the traditional native minorities, not the ‘new’ minorities.

The SNS presents the most hostile attitude to ethnic Hungarians among all of the relevant political parties in Slovakia. Its leaders question the very existence of this ethnic community within Slovakia's territory, arguing that this part of Slovakia's population is the product of the language assimilation of autochthonous Slavic inhabitants by immigrant Hungarians. In 2008 Ján Slota declared that 'there are no Hungarians living in Slovakia as they are all in fact Slovaks who express themselves in Hungarian. A great number of them are Magyarised Slovaks' (SME 2008a). Ethnic Hungarians are portrayed by SNS leaders as disloyal to the state and as a potential source of danger to the majority nation. The entire community is attributed negative qualities and, consequently, legitimate demands from ethnic Hungarians' political representatives are a priori ascribed the worst possible connotations. When interpreting the historical context of Slovak–Hungarian relations, SNS representatives emphasise the tribulations of the Slovaks and highlight the injustices caused by Hungarians.

The SNS has repeatedly tried to make the Slovak parliament hold a special vote to confirm the unalterable status of the 'Beneš decrees'. Its attempts from 2002 to 2005 were unsuccessful. In 2002, Slota declared that he would like to 'dust off the Beneš decrees' in order to 'let those who wish to own Hungarian passports promptly leave Slovakia's territory via its southern border' (SME 2002). In an interview for the Czech daily newspaper, *Lidové noviny*, Slota said that he envied the Czechs for getting rid of ethnic Germans via the Beneš decrees. The interview's context suggested that his envy ensued from the fact that Slovakia had not managed to do the same with ethnic Hungarians (Palata 2006).

SNS representatives have constantly fuelled the feeling that Slovakia is threatened by its southern neighbour, Hungary, and have reiterated the need to defend the country and its sovereignty. Their formulations of proposals for concrete measures indicate that the party completely overlooks the fact that Slovakia and Hungary are bonded by alliance and partnership ties based on both countries' memberships in the EU and NATO. In 2008, Slota publicly criticised plans to intensify the construction of road infrastructure between Slovakia and Hungary, warning that the bridges built over the River Ipel' may one day serve to bring armoured vehicles from Hungary to Slovakia.

The SNS has submitted numerous proposals that could complicate the implementation of ethnic Hungarians' minority rights to political representation, education, culture and regional development, and to the

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use of their language. In the mid-1990s, as a co-ruling party, the SNS tried to push through the concept of 'alternative education' within the ethnically mixed territory of southern Slovakia. If the SNS had succeeded with this proposal, teaching in minority languages in Slovakia would have virtually disappeared. The SNS's Ján Mikolaj, who was minister for education from 2006 to 2010, drafted a new education strategy for ethnic minorities and proposed alterations to textbooks designed for ethnic Hungarian pupils; he wanted to replace the historical Hungarian names for geographic entities in Slovakia with current Slovak names. This provoked strong protests from ethnic Hungarians.

Between 1998 and 2006 and 2010 and 2012, the SNS stood strongly against all measures put forward by the pro-democratic centre-right cabinets of Mikuláš Dzurinda and Iveta Radičová to improve the situation of ethnic minorities, particularly Hungarians. These included an amendment to the Education Act allowing the issuing of bilingual school certificates, the adoption of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the ratification of the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the establishment of a faculty for Hungarian teachers at Nitra University, and the establishment of the university in Komárno.

The SNS has also presented the most radical nationalist views among the relevant political organisations on the so-called Roma issue. It has fuelled the majority population's feeling of the danger posed by the growing and maladjusted Romany population, emphasising 'specific' features of Romany mentality and portraying them as incompatible with those of non-Roma origins. In such interpretations the Roma are privileged over the majority since they draw greater benefits from welfare funds compared with other citizens. SNS representatives have proposed measures that could further deepen the social exclusion of the Roma and their isolation from the majority society. Some have even insinuated that the best solution would be to drive the Roma out of the country. In 2000, SNS vice-chair Vítázoslav Moric called on the government to create reservations for maladjusted Roma. 'If we don't do it now, the Gypsies will do it in 20 years for us', he said, and he continued:

There is nothing illegal about creating a reservation for the Roma; after all, there are reservations for Indians in the US. It is in Romany communities that the vast majority of mentally retarded people are born . . . What is humane about letting one idiot father another idiot, letting mentally retarded people reproduce and increase the percentage of idiots and imbeciles in our nation? (SITA 2000).



In 2002 Slota, known for his offensive statements on Roma (according to him 70% of Roma citizens are criminals), said that his party's priority was to 'tackle the Gypsy issue thoroughly and promptly, [to improve] law enforceability with respect to this ethnic group, and to change the [Roma's] philosophy of procreating [in order to] live on welfare benefits and allowances' (SITA 2002b). He also used phrases such as 'the ethnic privileging of the Gypsies' and 'the bleeding dry of the state's social security system' (SITA 2002b).

### **Attitudes towards Islam**

The SNS is not the only relevant political party in Slovakia that emphasises Christianity as a fundamental pillar of European civilisation and presents itself as a principled Christian force. However, it is the only political organisation (apart from marginal extremist groups) that associates itself with openly anti-Islamic attitudes. According to the SNS,

Islam wants to change the cultural face of Europe. We declare clearly—no to the Islamisation of the EU, no to Turkey's membership in the EU. We will initiate the creation of a European cultural wall against those forms of multiculturalism which are alienating us from our substance and which are leading [Europe] into ethnic conflicts. We protest against the violent suppression of Christianity (SNS 2012).

Moreover, the SNS stresses that it is 'committed to defending Christian values on the continent through its strong stances against the policy of multiculturalism, the Islamisation of Europe and liberal immigration policy, and against disproportionate favouring of those ethnic groups which are not able to adjust themselves [to European cultural patterns]' (SNS 2012).

Opposition to Islam was one of the official reasons given as to why the SNS has maintained close relations with the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) of Heinz-Christian Strache. Before the 2012 parliamentary elections, FPÖ representatives visited Bratislava in order to demonstrate their support for the SNS as an 'alternative social party'. The two parties have carried out negotiations regarding their resistance to the possible Islamisation of Slovakia and Austria and, in July 2011, they signed a bilateral memorandum on mutual cooperation and understanding.

### Attitudes towards the EU and foreign policy positions

For right-wing national populists in Slovakia—similar to their counterparts in other European states—the contemporary European Union symbolises a barely acceptable model, combining elements of internationalism, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, and greater openness to the outside world, as well as a system of norms and values that contradicts their belief of the need to establish the dominance of domestic (indigenous) ethnicities. They do not believe in the principle of human equality and they are against cultural diversity. Right-wing nationalists and populists are against the current EU, not because they cannot imagine closer and broader cooperation between European nations, but because they reject the principles and relations which constitute the core of the current process of European integration.

Their Eurosceptic views are part of their ‘anti-globalism’ agenda. Their criticism of globalisation is based on the idea that globalisation is an economically and politically motivated process of dissolving national borders, which is endangering national economy and national identity. Thus, it should be stopped by any means possible. Small states should remain autonomous and intact, and they should fight against the dominance of bigger entities. In such a perception, the EU is just one of the tools of globalisation.

The stances of the SNS on issues of European integration are an amalgam of isolationism, revisionism, negationism and national egotism. The main points of the SNS’s ‘Euro-agenda’ include:

- rejecting the principle of solidarity as a cornerstone of internal relations within the EU;
- considering the possibility of the country leaving the EU and the rejection of the common EU currency;
- preference for the model of a ‘Europe of nations’ over the model of a European ‘superstate’;
- doubting the legitimacy of EU institutions;
- accusing the EU of being too bureaucratic, over-centralised and disregarding of the nations;
- blaming the EU for the promotion of internationalist policies and principles (e.g. multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism), and for the introduction of alien cultural patterns (Islam);

- considering the EU as an actor of globalisation, endangering nations and their ethnic and cultural uniqueness;
- insisting on the EU and Europe being a ‘club of Christian nations’;
- considering EU regulations as the main threat to national sovereignty;
- accusing the EU of keeping states like Slovakia dependent on ‘foreign actors’ and preferring ‘lazy’, ‘hazardous’, ‘tubercular’, ‘irresponsible’ and ‘sick’ states to the ‘working nations’;
- rejecting EU financial bailouts (loans to Greece, the European Stability Mechanism and the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF)); and
- identifying with the ‘alternative political forces’ in Europe who are critical of the EU, and maintaining relations with neighbourhood nationalist parties (i.e. the FPÖ).

In its 2012 electoral manifesto, the SNS promised as its first step after the elections to initiate such legislative changes as would lead ‘in the case of extreme necessity to protecting state sovereignty by secession from the EU and by terminating the use of the current common currency, the euro’ (SNS 2012).

The SNS characterised ex-post membership of the eurozone as a big mistake (as a ruling party the SNS supported the idea between 2006 and 2010). In November 2011 the party suggested launching negotiations regarding Slovakia’s withdrawal from the eurozone. Prior to this, party leader Slota had proposed that the government and parliament begin discussions about Slovakia’s withdrawal from the EU. In December 2011 the SNS even suggested re-opening the accession treaty with the EU, blaming the Union for the destruction of Slovakia’s industry and agriculture.

The SNS has proposed that the EU stop ‘pouring money into uncertain euro bailouts’ and expel problematic (in SNS terminology ‘lazy’, ‘hazardous’ and ‘cancerous’) countries from the eurozone. It has labelled the EU principle of solidarity ‘inefficient’. According to Slovak nationalists, the EU offers solidarity to ‘rogue states which are [irresponsibly] spending money’ rather than to ‘working citizens’. In August 2011 SNS leader Slota said that it was impossible to rescue the eurozone and that the ‘sick part’ of it should be amputated in order to save its ‘more-or-less’ healthy part (SITA 2012). Slota also argued that support of the EFSF is a ‘crime against the Slovak nation’ (SITA 2011a).

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In its typically alarmist manner, the SNS argues in its programmatic document that 'It is bad enough that we have had governments that have sold our sovereignty and the economic interests of Slovaks. Slovakia is now in positions of psychological, political and economic submission, and total dependence. Economically we depend heavily on foreigners, while domestic small businessmen are vegetating' (SNS 2012).

SNS attitudes in the area of foreign policy and international cooperation are marked by suspicion of neighbouring Hungary, general isolationism, anti-Americanism, a rejection of transatlanticism and occasional sympathy for the foreign policy measures of the current Russian leadership. The constant aim of the SNS's foreign policy agenda is to provoke and feed the sense of threat emanating from neighbouring Hungary. On various occasions, the SNS has demanded from each Slovak government 'decisive steps' against Hungary (such as sending diplomatic démarches; strengthening border controls with Hungary; recalling Slovakia's ambassador from Budapest; the abolition of the Basic Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation between the two countries, signed in 1995; suing Hungary in the International Court in The Hague; and the termination of diplomatic relations between Slovakia and Hungary). The SNS's leaders have repeatedly argued that ethnic Hungarians living in Slovakia are trying to create territorial autonomy in the southern part of the country that will eventually lead to the secession of this territory and its affiliation to Hungary. Šlota has frequently claimed that Hungary is preparing for armed conflict with Slovakia and has called for an increase in the fighting capacity of the Slovak Army. The rhetoric used by SNS representatives in relation to Hungary has revealed that the SNS sees Hungary not as a partner and an allied state, but as a country hostile to Slovakia and with expansionist intentions that should be resisted by all possible means. In May 2010, Šlota openly said that the SNS considers Hungary as a potential aggressor.

The SNS was the only relevant political party in Slovakia (along with the Communist Party of Slovakia) to reject Slovakia's membership in NATO on principle. The SNS has often declared its stances in foreign policy areas to be close to Russia's positions in international relations. For example, the SNS clearly took the Russian side in the conflict with Georgia in 2008, accusing Georgia of attempted genocide and denouncing the Slovak media's bias against the Ossetians. In early 2009, Šlota described Ukraine as 'a clear culprit' in the Russia-Ukraine gas crisis which affected Central European countries (Hvat' 2009).

## INTRA-PARTY DYNAMICS

The SNS is an example of a political organisation with a centralised decision-making process. The party's statutes prescribe an extremely strong position for the chair. He is the chief executive official and sole legal representative of the party, elected for four years, and responsible for summoning and chairing party congresses and suggesting their agendas. If any resolution or decision of any of the party's organisational units 'contradicts the statutes or programme objectives, or damages the reputation of the party', the chair is authorised to suspend such acts. The chair also has veto power in personal issues. He has the final say on the lists of candidates for election to the national parliament, European Parliament and other institutions.

The party's leader plays a key role in the adoption of important decisions, and asserts authority in a manner that prevents the appearance of alternative proposals—using external coercion and intimidating potential opponents. One of the manifestations of such pressure is the way in which the election of the party chair is organised and his confirmation in this position at the party's congresses. Public (open) voting is used, meaning that the vast majority of delegates have to manifest their loyalty to the chair by public acclamation. In such a situation, not voting for the chair creates a real risk of persecution. At the party's congresses Ján Slota is usually elected to the chair by acclamation. At the 2009 congress, which was presentational and demonstrative in style, Slota said that the event had to show that the party is united and 'rock solid' (SITA 2009). Delegates voted for the confidence of the party's leader in a public vote. There was a unanimous affirmative result and subsequent stormy applause, which testified to the unity of the party and its leadership. Slota's strong position in the party over the years is demonstrated by the fact that the party's congresses are held in Žilina, where Slota served as mayor and which is considered his personal stronghold. As chair, Slota personally authorises virtually every important party position or decision, and all his statements and actions (including the most controversial ones) are wholeheartedly supported by the party's leadership.

How do Slovak voters perceive the leaders? In Slovakia the most popular parties are those with strong charismatic leaders. In the 1990s this was HZDS; more recently it has been Smer-SD. Such parties do not usually survive a change at the top and their popularity is strongly tied to popular

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trust of the leader. This is not the case for the SNS, even if parties with similar profiles are usually led by strong authoritarian leaders.

Slota, who has led the party for a long period, has been—throughout his leadership—the most trusted politician among adherents of the party, but not an unconditionally beloved leader. Even the emotional ties of supporters towards the party itself are comparatively lower than for other parties in Slovakia (Bútorová and Gyárfášová 2011). The vast majority of voters say that they vote for the party because they believe that it will defend the national interests of Slovakia/Slovaks. It is not respect for the leader that encourages them to vote for the party, or any other programmatic goal, simply national interests. In this respect the SNS is a typical single-issue party, a party with clear ‘issue-ownership’. Thus we could argue that its nationalistic agenda is strongly aligned with voters’ concerns.

### **Membership**

During its existence, the SNS has passed through two main phases in terms of building its membership. In the first decade of its existence, the party focused on the expansion of its membership. While in 1996 the SNS had roughly 7,000 members, by 2001 its membership had doubled. After the internal conflicts and splits in the SNS in 2001 and its reunification in 2003 under the restored leadership of Slota, the party began to apply strict selection criteria to its membership. In 2006, the SNS congress changed the party’s statutes, strengthened the competences of the central leadership (the presidency) and deepened the centralised nature of the party. In line with these changes, the presidency took over some of the competences of local power structures, such as approval of the adoption of each new member. Slota stated that this was done with the ‘preventive’ aim of avoiding any cleavages within the party. The new arrangements for the admission of members caused a fall in their numbers and led to the SNS becoming one of the parliamentary parties with the smallest membership.

There was some increase in SNS membership between 2006 and 2010, when the SNS was part of the ruling coalition. However, the party still has one of the smallest memberships in Slovakia (from 2010 to 2012 of all the parliamentary parties, only the liberal Freedom and Solidarity party (Sloboda a Solidarita, SaS) had fewer members than the SNS).

**Table 5 SNS membership**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of members	1,198	1,370	1,531	1,617	1,839	2,412

Source: SNS annual reports, 2006–11.

## Financing

Throughout its entire existence, the SNS has been entitled to receive a subsidy from the state budget on the basis of its results in parliamentary elections.<sup>2</sup> The structure of the party's income between 1992 and 2011—as for the majority of other Slovak parliamentary parties—can be characterised by considerable dependence on subsidies from the state budget (see Table 6).

**Table 6 Financing of the SNS, 1992–2011**

	Amount (millions of Slovak crowns)	Share (%)
<b>Total party income</b>	329,096	100.0
<b>Subsidies from the state budget</b>	274,361	83.4
<b>Membership fees</b>	10,008	3.0
<b>Private donations</b>	9,484	2.9
<b>Party's own activities</b>	35,243	10.7

Source: SNS annual reports, 1992–2011.

<sup>2</sup> According to the law on political parties, each party that wins more than 3% of the vote in parliamentary elections is entitled to a subsidy from the state budget to cover its election costs. If a party exceeds the 5% threshold and gets into parliament, it is entitled to an additional subsidy for its operational costs for each of the deputies.

### EFFECTS ON THE PARTY SYSTEM

The establishment and activities of the SNS have had a significant impact on the configuration of Slovakia's party system, the nature of interactions between political parties, coalition-building processes, governmental policies in several areas, and the overall state of public and political discourse.

Positioning itself as a nationally oriented right-wing Christian party, in the 1990s the SNS mainly competed against two political organisations, the HZDS and the Christian Democratic Movement (Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie, KDH). Since the beginning of the 2000s, the SNS has been faced with another strong electoral competitor, the left-leaning Smer-SD, which has positioned itself as the party defending the national and state interests of Slovakia with a policy marked by elements of ethnocentrism.

However, the two strongest electoral competitors of the SNS—the HZDS and Smer-SD—have gone on to become the SNS's main coalition partners. The modus operandi of the HZDS and Smer-SD regarding the SNS was to take away as many votes from the SNS as possible but, at the same time, after the elections (if the SNS got into parliament) to use the SNS as the first option in the creation of a ruling coalition.

Past experience of building coalition governments in Slovakia shows that the SNS's coalition potential is dependent mainly on the ambitions of other parties, particularly the 'nationally oriented' populist organisations. In the country's modern political history, the moderate democratic centre-right parties (the Christian democrats, conservatives, liberals and civic democrats) have never approached the SNS with an offer to form a coalition government. In contrast, the populist parties—namely the nationalist authoritarian HZDS and the left-leaning 'social-democratic' Smer-SD—have invited the SNS to form common ruling coalitions. As a result, the SNS has been part of coalition governments on three occasions (1993–4, 1994–8 and 2006–10), which has allowed it to influence public policies in important areas.

In either position (government or opposition) the SNS has operated as a real opponent of the liberal democratic model of society. Benefiting from being a constituent part of a pluralistic political system, the SNS has, at the same time, contributed to the worsening of the system by challenging



some of the basic principles of a liberal democratic regime, mainly the principle of equality, and by introducing a hard-line radical nationalist discourse. A response to this can be observed in the actions of the other parties that are aligned with the basic elements of the SNS's credo (anti-minority positions, nationalist proposals in the area of symbolic politics, etc.). As a major SNS coalition partner between 2006 and 2010, Smer-SD, for instance, adopted and implemented (in a more moderate form) several initial legislative proposals made by the SNS (a law on patriotism, an amendment to the education law and a law on the merits of the pre-war Slovak politician Andrej Hlinka, etc.).

In the parliamentary elections of 2010 and 2012 the SNS lost a substantial part of its traditional electorate. The poor election results in 2010 for the SNS were caused by several factors, including

- frequent corruption scandals involving SNS nominees and cabinet members between 2007 and 2010, when the SNS was part of the ruling coalition;
- the offensive behaviour of SNS chair Ján Slota, who used extremely vulgar vocabulary and aggressive rhetoric against political opponents and even against opinion and social groups, and who was living the lifestyle of an unbelievably rich man;
- the ruling Smer-SD's adoption of nationalist issues (including the 'Hungarian issue'), which constituted a substantial part of the SNS's political agenda; and
- the SNS's poor communication with potential voters, especially in the pre-election period.

As a result of the 2012 elections the SNS lost their position in parliament. The main political beneficiary of the SNS's poor result was the self-declared 'social democratic' Smer-SD, which succeeded in attracting a number of traditional SNS voters through its nationalist propaganda. However, the secondary beneficiary—not surprisingly—was the extremist ĽS-NS, which attracted part of the traditional SNS electorate. It seems that the ĽS-NS may continue to benefit from further possible weakening of the SNS as this extremist organisation is evidently trying to apply proactive tactics to gain the votes of the most radical core of the SNS's electorate. Still at the stage of a proto-party organisation, and not meeting all the parameters needed to become a relevant political party (cross-country party structures, a professional party apparatus, a high-quality intellectual background, a

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developed programmatic platform, mass membership, sufficient electoral support and coalition potential, etc.), the ĽS-NS, which is feeding on the wave of anti-Roma sentiment among part of the population, is trying to fill the 'empty space' in the party system.

### **Links to extremists**

The SNS keeps its distance from the extremist ĽS-NS, emphasising the 'stupidity' of their leaders and members. However, criticism of the ĽS-NS is not motivated by a principled disagreement with its openly xenophobic (or racist) stances, but primarily by the fact that the extremists compete with the SNS for a similar segment of the electorate and could create a threat to the electoral strength of the SNS and its long-term political survival.

The links between some SNS members and Slovak right-wing extremists is a special issue that from time to time attracts public attention. SNS representatives always react sharply to any comparisons of the party with extremist groups, usually arguing that the true patriotism of the SNS has nothing to do with the activities of extremists. However, links between some members of the SNS's youth organisation (the MSNS) and the illegal right-wing extremist scene were revealed in 2002, when a prosecutor accused Zuzana Papugová, the chair of Košice's regional organisation, of propagating fascism. This was as a result of events that occurred during a procession organised by the MSNS in Košice against Slovakia's accession to NATO, which was attended by members of the skinheads' movement. Police found materials promoting fascism in Papugová's flat. Police also found that she had participated in the creation of Slovak versions of web pages on which neo-Nazi materials, written by foreign authors, were published. SNS leader Malíková protested against the police's conduct and accused the secret service of intentionally smearing the SNS in order to have a pretext for banning the party before the parliamentary elections. Eventually, the SNS distanced itself from Papugová, but only after the weekly magazine *Plus sedem dní* had published a photograph of Papugová giving a Nazi salute in front of the Nazi flag.

### **Shifts and balances within the electorate**

High volatility is a constitutive feature of politics in new democracies. This relates not only to the party system, but to electoral choices as well. As we can observe (see Table 1), with the exception of the founding elections of

1990, the electoral popularity of the SNS peaked in 2006, when it achieved a share of 11.7% of the vote. Four years later the SNS had lost more than half of its electorate, mostly in favour of Smer-SD. As indicated in a post-election survey, the main reason for switching was that voters attributed more economic and social competence in the harsh years of the crises to Smer-SD. Moreover, Smer-SD presented not only strong competence in economic and social issues, but it also offered 'nationalism light', which was more acceptable to mainstream voters. The other two beneficiaries of the SNS's electoral losses were the SaS, a liberal newcomer, which was attractive due to its novelty and lack of political contamination, and the extremist ĽS-NS, which was supported by a smaller number of former SNS voters, mainly younger people who had switched to a more radical nationalist alternative. Although this party won just 1.3% of the vote in 2010, its popularity among young male voters must be taken seriously.

These findings prove that significant shifts in support have occurred, mainly within the existing two blocks of the future coalition and opposition—in this case the movement of SNS voters to Smer-SD.<sup>3</sup> This trend continued in 2012 when Smer-SD attracted voters from both of its former coalition partners, the SNS and the HZDS.

### **Consequences for public debate and public opinion**

The discourse of the SNS is based on ethnicity. It addresses 'Slovaks', referring to 'us' (Slovaks) and 'them' (Hungarians or Roma, or any 'others'). The 'ethnicisation' of public discourse is one of the main consequences of the SNS's campaigning and rhetoric. Of course, there are other political parties and leaders who have contributed to this, but the SNS has dominated nationalistic discourse and moved the borders of what is permissible and what is mainstream far beyond liberal democratic civic culture. The 2010 election campaign appealed to the electorate by using nationalistic and xenophobic slogans such as 'We will not give up Slovakia!', implying that the SNS would not give up Slovakia's territory to Hungary. Territorial integrity and the spectre of irredentism—one of the constituent parts of national populism—were put across in the slogan 'Let our borders remain our borders'. The SNS's billboards spread the image of

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3 Using the terminology of Kitschelt et al. (1999, 400), we can state that party volatility in Slovakia has been 'shallow' and 'intra-block' rather than 'deep' and 'inter-block'.

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the Hungarian enemy and called for vigilance, suggesting that Slovakia—its integrity, its children, the lives of its men, and so on—was in danger.

Another ethnic group that is stereotypically depicted by the SNS as a threat to all decent hard-working and order-loving Slovaks is the Roma. Interestingly enough, in 2010, and more so in 2012, the nationalistic appeal of the SNS was not as electorally successful as it was in 2006. However, it opened the door for less radical nationalism to be more *salonfähig* (acceptable).

In terms of modes of communication with voters and campaigning, the SNS has a rather old-fashioned style. Party representatives are not as present on, and do not use, social media as frequently as the representatives of other political parties. In the 2012 electoral campaign the party mainly used billboards, TV and radio spots and newspaper advertising to spread its message (Czwitkovics 2012).

## OUTLOOK

The SNS, the main representative of right-wing nationalist populist politics in Slovakia, has been an integral part of the country's political system since 1990. During two decades of democratic transition it has attracted a relatively large electorate, enabling it to be represented in parliament and on three occasions to be part of coalition governments. The party did not get into parliament in 2012; however, opinion polls conducted after the recent elections have indicated that a traditional core of SNS voters still supports this party, giving it a clear chance of remaining a relevant political force for some time to come. The SNS is the only party in Slovakia which has succeeded in renewing its status as a parliamentary party after a failure in elections. Thus, it would be too early to disregard the SNS as an active political player even though currently it is struggling.

The political strength of right-wing nationalist populism in Slovakia depends on a variety of factors. On the macro-social level these factors include the overall state of society, which is shaped by the consequences of the transition from an authoritarian regime to a liberal democracy. In general, the successes of the transition have diminished the space for the activities of radical right-wing nationalists, but, on the other hand, the failures have created a more favourable environment for them. On the socio-cultural level, right-wing populists and nationalists are able to capitalise on the inherited and persisting patterns of the population's political culture and

value orientations (i.e. adherence to authoritarian methods; nationalism; paternalism; and distrust of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity). On the level of political interactions, the main factor boosting the position of right-wing populists is the preparedness and willingness of other political actors to coalesce with them. The negative consequences of such alliances, which are based primarily on power interests and considerations, can be observed—for example in the periods 1994–8 and 2006–10—in Slovakian policies and public discourse, including the worsening of conditions for certain groups of the population (namely ethnic minorities) and the spread of ethnic nationalism as a political mobilisation tool. The rejection of coalition partnerships with right-wing populists and radical nationalists would lower the SNS's political relevance. Centre-right democratic political forces have so far excluded the SNS from their coalition strategies, and they should continue with this approach.

Recently (after the 2010 and 2012 general elections) we have been able to observe a slight decline in the mobilising potential of a nationalistic agenda. This is due to the fact that the centre-right government (2010–12) did not use the ethnic card and, in spite of the nationalist policy of Viktor Orbán's Hungarian government and the radical rhetoric of the extremist *Jobbik* party, Slovakia has tried to maintain good bilateral Slovak–Hungarian relations. The 'complementarity of national populisms', which worked so efficiently between 2006 and 2010, has been weakened as social and economic issues are now at the top of the government's agenda. Another factor which has contributed to reduced national and ethnic mobilisation was the demise of the Party of Hungarian Coalition (Strana maďarskej koalície, SMK) in 2009, which was the only relevant political representation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia, and the founding of the *Most-Híd* (Bridge) party, which aims to appeal to other ethnic minorities living in Slovakia, but above all wishes to be a party of both Hungarians and Slovaks. However, this does not mean that the nationalistic agenda has declined or entirely disappeared from Slovakia's domestic politics. It remains a sleeping potentiality and we can identify two poles of dangerous development. One is the rising popularity of the ultra-nationalist extremist LS-NS, which uses the Roma issue for its radical appeal and could act in a similar way to *Jobbik* in Hungary. The other phenomenon is the widespread 'soft nationalism' which is present in the appeals of the mainstream parties, including the left-oriented governing Smer-SD. It is sometimes difficult to identify and discover this political rhetoric, but it contaminates the political and public discourse and could create fruitful soil for further national populism in the style of the SNS.

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Part III:

Comparative Analysis and  
Transnational Cooperation



# Populism in Western and Eastern Europe Compared

Florian Hartleb

## INTRODUCTION

'Is populism in Western Europe and Central Eastern Europe the same thing?' (Herman 2012). Only a few studies have investigated, compared and contrasted populism in both regions in order to understand any parallel developments (Bachmann 2006; Frölich-Steffen 2008), and only more recent accounts have included Central and Eastern Europe. Many studies (Decker 2004, 15) claim that the different backgrounds against which populism has emerged in these diverse regions make a direct comparison difficult; some solve the problem by simply excluding the regions of Central and Eastern Europe. Even portrayals of 'twenty-first century populism in Europe' neglect the democracies established in 1989 and 1990 (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008).

This research scepticism is rooted not only in the traditional Western European perspective inherent in many studies. It also has a real basis in Europe's divided history. Two main assumptions need to be distinguished to explain the unexpected resurgence of populism and nationalism after the collapse of the Communist regimes. The first is that as an effect of the post-Communist transformation, the social costs of the post-Communist transformation and the still incomplete nature of modernisation make a large number of modernisation's losers susceptible to mobilisation by populist movements. The second emphasises the structural differences between Western and Eastern Europe by focusing on their separate views of the nation and its benefits. The national question (or, especially in the Baltic states, the question of re-independence) has forcefully re-emerged in post-1989 Eastern Europe, whereas in Western Europe, democracy and the nation state developed in tandem as a long-term process of societal homogenisation (Blokker 2005, 388).

The national and right-wing populist-party family is a permanent factor in elections throughout Europe and also rather heterogeneous, as the results of this book reveal. There are parties with xenophobic elements such as

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the National Front (Front National, FN), Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang, VB), Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ), the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF) and Slovak National Party (Slovenskánárodnástrana, SNS). There are parties more or less without xenophobic elements, such as The Finns, formerly The True Finns (Perussuomalaiset, PS), the Dutch Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV), besides its anti-Islamism, Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, SD), Norwegian Progress Party, Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP), Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) and Lithuanian Order and Justice (Tvarkairteisingumas, TT).

This produces an obligation to understand that populism and extremism are not synonymous terms and must be carefully distinguished—at least for the non-xenophobic group (Hartleb 2011, 28–30; 2012b). Moreover, rather than being anti-systemic, these parties are anti-elitist, combined with a politics of national identity. They are more or less ideological and dogmatic, based on a particular world view, but they also have a capacity for programmatic flexibility.

This chapter reveals the winning formula of national and right-wing populist parties based on similar opportunity structures: supply-side volatility, which occurs when a party that won votes at one election disappears from the ballot and new parties form. In this circumstance, voters cannot hold politicians accountable by reaffirming or withdrawing their support from one election to the next, and may be attracted to flash parties which have no record on which they can be judged. There still are critical elections, political realignments (Norris 1997) that produce a dramatic change in the political system, in most cases away from the consensual democratic model and towards a more contentious one. In general, the results have led to significant changes, even to some upheavals. After a short overview concerning the question of party institutionalisation, the following article focuses on the winning formula in the West and the East both on the policy level and the personal (charismatic) level. At the end, it gives some perspectives, especially on the consequences for liberal democracies.

### INSTITUTIONALISED VERSUS NON-INSTITUTIONALISED PARTY SYSTEMS

The institutionalisation of a party system is a process which takes time. This has been obvious in Poland, especially in the 1990s. In 1991, only 42% of the eligible electorate voted in the parliamentary elections, which

saw 29 different parties elected to the lower house. Therefore, the term 'couch party' was introduced in order to describe parties without a classical membership base and organisational structure (Bale and Szczerbiak 1996). As the 1990s have shown, the ideological weapons of the parties in the East have differed from those traditionally found in Western Europe (Hloušek and Kopeček 2010, 3). Some parties simply labelled themselves as moving in the Western European direction without sharing the same programme and convictions, including the classical right–left opposition. This is visible in the government-building process. The Slovak Social Democrats (Sociálna Demokracia, Smer–SD) under Robert Fico included the radical right-wing populist SNS in government from 2006 until 2010, which led to their suspension at the European level; the Social Democrats and left-wing populist Labour Party in Lithuania (Darbo Partija, DP) recently did the same with the TT after the elections in October 2012.<sup>1</sup>

A high level of supply-side volatility creates a 'floating system of parties' (Rose 2000). The situation was described in 2002: 'Studying the radical right in transformation countries in Central and Eastern Europe not only resembles shooting at a moving target but also shooting with clouded vision' (Minkenberg 2002, 361). According to the expert Herbert Kitschelt in 2000, most parties in Eastern and Central Europe can be seen as combining programmatic, clientelistic and charismatic elements in different proportions. He looked mainly at what voters' ties to the parties were based on. Voters are drawn either to (1) the party candidates as personalities (charismatic parties), (2) the expectation of material or non-material benefits (clientelistic parties) or (3) the hope of gaining indirect advantages in the form of the general collective good if the party wins the elections (programmatic parties) (Kitschelt 2000). Obviously, 'Eastern Europe's right-wing populism is a very special case' (Bauer 2012, 58), an observation that is based not only on the increase in the number of empirical cases available for comparative research of the in-depth analysis of populism (Mudde 2007). Because of the changing dynamics in Western Europe and the ongoing structuring of party systems in what are no longer new democracies, this argument has lost its persuasiveness. The ideological and political orientation of the parties in Eastern Europe is 'much more firmly established and predictable than in the early 1990s' (Hloušek and Kopeček 2010, 7).

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1 See the respective chapters in this volume.

## Populism in Western and Eastern Europe Compared

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Developments 20 years after the transition are still driving a lot of changes, predominantly in Central and Eastern Europe, in the post-transformation period. Relatively weak civil society and dissatisfaction with political institutions offer openings for new competitors. In Central and Eastern Europe, the socialist heritage has left deep marks on the existing political culture, with a negative effect on the trust in institutions, political elites and parties as a linkage between citizens and institutions. But, as the well-known researcher on transformation and system change Wolfgang Merkel pointed out in 2006, the Central Eastern European democracies (perhaps with some exceptions such as Romania and Bulgaria, where a high level of corruption exists) no longer differ in the quality and stability of government from their Western European counterparts (Merkel 2006, 413).<sup>2</sup> This has led to an existing convergence around both the institutions of liberal democracy and the practices of representative politics.

The well-integrated countries in the European framework and the EU are no longer in an era of transformation but that does not prevent a 'populist backlash in Central and Eastern Europe' (Rupnik 2007, 24). The controversy in Austria, where sanctions were imposed at the EU level after the radical right-wing populist FPÖ participated in government, has not died down. In other words, when it comes to the meaning of identity politics and the establishment of parties expressing them, the question that needs to be asked at the national and European level is this: Is Austria the future of Eastern Europe? (Rupnik 2007, 24–5; Linden 2008, 5); at least, as a 'lasting imprint', it indicates some possible 'parallel[s] between Austrian right-wing populism and its East European variants' (Heinisch 2008, 54). So a comparison between the party systems of West and East has some legitimacy, as does a discussion of whether the concept of populism is applicable. The cases of Poland and Slovakia in particular have shown that there is some empirical evidence on which to base a discussion even of a 'populist zeitgeist' (Mudde 2004). To see it from another perspective, recent research raises the question of whether party developments in Central Eastern Europe are setting a trend for Western Europe and bringing representative democracies under pressure (Bos and Segert 2008). There is a risk, however, in making such a specific clinical examination, of putting West and East in artificially created categories (Herman 2012). Especially within the West, some countries have successful right-wing populist parties and others, such as Germany, Spain and Portugal, do not.

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<sup>2</sup> This assumption is based on transformation indicators such the Bertelsmann Transformation Index and those provided by Freedom House.

## WINNING FORMULA POLICIES

### **Immigration with law and order in the West—law and order alone in the East**

The topic of homeland security and the slogan ‘law and order’ has a high priority in both West and East. Lately, even party names indicate the importance of law and order in their strategies, such as in Poland (PiS) and Lithuania (TT). It is presented as a problem to be solved by reinforcing the police and making a lax justice system ‘toe into line’ (Moreau 2012, 133). Law and order refers to the populist ideal of the homeland, searching for a narrative which simultaneously launches a moral attack against the status quo and against the decline of morality. Populist parties argue that the current system works better for the criminals than for the victims. Their law and order policy demands a more visible police presence and other symbols of national security.

In the narrow sense, differences exist between West and East. In Western Europe, right-wing populism often combines law and order with an anti-immigration stance or at least a critical stance; in Eastern Europe opposition to immigration is practically non-existent, except for marginal discussions of such things as the ‘Chinese invasion’ (Moreau 2012, 134). Lithuania’s TT for example has no anti-immigration stance on its agenda. On the contrary, the populist party is supported by Lithuanian ethnic minorities. The notion of the enemy within, especially with its focus on the Roma population, replaces the dangers of immigration in the public discourse. An important exception is the Slovakian case, in which the SNS states in its programme that ‘Islam wants to change the cultural face of Europe. We declare clearly—no to Islamisation of the EU, no to Turkey’s membership in the EU’ (see the chapter on Slovakia in this book). The SNS also cooperates in this closely with the FPÖ.

In general the discourse on multiculturalism and its perils is a Western European one. This includes, especially in recent debates, the immigration of Muslims, a topic that provoked a radical response from Geert Wilders (Wilders 2012) and from some radical-fundamentalist Islamists as well. Often, a populist party combines a critical stance with specific campaigning, such as the FPÖ’s use of the slogan ‘*Daham statt Islam!*’ (Feeling at home instead of having Islam!) or its fanning of fears about a Turkish EU-membership (see the chapters on Austria and France). In

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the French context, the National Front describes Islam as fanatical and expansionist, and immigration from Muslim countries is likened to an 'invasion'. Moreover, Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders and Heinz-Christian Strache stress that Islam is incompatible with European cultural and political values. The rise of a politicised Islam, evident for example in the Muhammad-cartoons incident of 2004, international acts of terrorism and, more recently, the Islamist upsurge in the countries of the Arab Spring, give resonance to attacks on street prayers, the wearing of the veil and the consumption of halal meat as undermining Western values.

At the moment, the question of immigration in Western Europe has a great deal of value attached to it: the right-wing populist parties and their representatives capitalise on rhetoric such as 'the boat is full'. Surveys indicate that approximately two-thirds of citizens in the European Union are of the (long-held) opinion that the upper limit for taking in immigrants has been reached. With these kinds of mindsets, it's not just a case of saying no to asylum seekers or immigrant workers; there is verbal expression of a deep insecurity and unease. Many experts agree that politicians and social establishments have already accommodated the radicals among the immigrants for far too long, saying that they have overlooked the cultural conflict between orthodox Islam and libertarian European societies where, for example, women are emancipated (Cuperus 2011). They argue that politicians and key figures have been nurturing a romantic, but unrealistic idea (Scheffer 2002). Nearly all right-wing populist formations regard European culture as under threat, warning against the Islamisation of Europe and that native national identity is under threat. This influences the political discourse in general, opening a more honest and open debate about the illusion of a multicultural society.

What is more, anti-immigration and anti-Islam political groups have made gains in parliaments across Europe, while countries have banned Islamic attire such as burkhas, headscarves and veils—moves that challenge the European ideal of liberal, tolerant society. Many have accused Muslim immigrants of not doing enough to assimilate to their adopted countries. Flashpoints between immigrant and host communities have centred on wearing veils and on building mosques, obvious symbols of a non-Christian culture in Europe. But some say the drive for assimilation is unrealistic as a result of discrimination against immigrants and inequalities in education, housing and the labour market.



## Euroscepticism

As a result of the centrality of EU issues in the legislatures and recent foreign policy ambitions of the post-Communist states, these issues are far more relevant in Eastern Central European accession countries than in Western Europe. In the 1990s, the issue of Europe was scrutinised through the prism of national politics more intensely in the post-Communist states than in Western Europe. The attainment of membership in the European club was seen by the vast majority of the politico-economic elites as essential to the development of the respective nation states. The 1993 package of Copenhagen criteria thus correlated strongly with most of the platforms of the reform-oriented parties in Eastern Europe. The desire to establish democracy and the rule of law, combined with protection from a neo-imperialist Russia and the defence of human rights and minorities, seemed to accompany the aspirations for a functioning market economy. Thus, on the 15 February 1991, the Declaration of Cooperation was signed in the Hungarian town of Visegrád, located to the north of Budapest. Three states participated in this agreement: Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which subsequently split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The declared goals of the now four Visegrád states as well as the newly independent Baltic States were and still are overcoming dictatorship, establishing democracy and a market economy, and achieving European integration. The central issue was an irreversible and definite westernisation of their respective countries. The Copenhagen criteria thus were aimed at urging the domestic parties into legislative acceptance of the Community *acquis*.

The actual, successful accession negotiations were connected to this pro-European course. The internationally renowned Hungarian political scientist Attila Ágh, for example, speaks of a 'new conflict of values' between Eurosceptics and supporters of Europe, which is illustrated more and more in poll results. The currently much discussed 'post-EU-accession syndrome' (Ágh 2008) in Eastern Central Europe is the consequence of disappointed expectations—particularly regarding economic development—having a direct impact on the political contest. On the other hand, the Polish case shows that Eurosceptic forces could not stop the widespread will towards further European integration because it promised a better economic situation. The Eurosceptic wave has been overcome in Poland, largely because the transformation was successful and because EU membership played an obvious role in this. In Lithuania, the broad pro-European consensus is only marginally influenced by

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Eurosceptic tones. While, in general, support for the EU in Lithuania is among the highest in Europe, enthusiasm for Europe is much lower among supporters of TT. The party plays a pragmatic double role typical of the nature of populism. Even though TT declares that 'membership of NATO and the EU is the most important guarantor of sovereignty, preserving identity and national dignity', it is also a member of the Eurosceptic group in the European Parliament. TT is also in favour of a stronger role for national governments in the EU, especially in the cultural field. Most often the parties' Euroscepticism is consistent with the attitudes of the population. When one analyses Central Eastern Europe more broadly, for example, one finds that 'Europe' is only of minor importance as an issue of party politics in the Baltic states.

Right-wing populist political parties exploit and foment sentiments in the population against a Europe which is supposedly ruled by the EU at the cost of individual national identities. The European Union is generally regarded by them with great distrust, as expressed by the slogan 'Europe yes—EU no!' Right-wing populists warn against a massive loss of national sovereignty and identity to the institutions in Brussels which, according to this logic, lack connection with the citizens and, therefore, lack democratic legitimacy. According to the right-wing populist argument, the dark side of the Brussels Alliance—centralism and the 'frenzy of the Eurocrats' regulation'—is a contrast to what they aim to embody: closeness to the people and quick, non-bureaucratic responses to the needs of the national population. With this, they infer a dilemma as far as European integration is concerned: that the will of a European population could not properly be predicated on agreements and votes decided primarily by representatives of state governments and based on decisions of the European Parliament where representing the people is a lesser priority. However, right-wing populists, unlike right-wing extremists, do not reject the European unification process. What they criticise foremost is not whether it is done but how. Populists denounce the weaknesses of European foreign policy and security policy and in so doing, in their typical black-and-white approach, promote a bastion of Western Christianity against wayward Islam. Some of them also denounce free trade movements in the internal market, claiming that it gives succour to organised crime. They nourish an already serious anti-EU resentment, which is, for them, a useful political tool. Some right-wing populist parties exhibit an ambivalence when it comes to the EU, especially on immigration issues. Populists aiming to survive for the long term do not call for the EU to be boycotted; rather, they promote 'a Europe that is an economic and cultural fortress'.

The Finnish case illustrates that Euroscepticism can even be a ‘winning formula’, ‘filling a gap in the party system’ as illustrated by Timo Soini’s campaign slogan, ‘Whenever the EU is involved, you get problems’ (Raunio 2012). Contrary to right-wing extremist positions, however, the right-wing populists do not oppose the process of European unification as such. They primarily criticise how it proceeds. The subject of the EU can be instrumentalised in several ways. Thus populists can denounce the weakness of European foreign and security policy and promote a Christian bastion against Islam in their usual simplistic manner. Specific actions are against EU membership for Turkey, an emotional, multi-dimensional debate which recently has lost energy as the topic has lost relevance, even in France and Austria; or against the free movement of goods in the single European market, as mentioned above. They rely upon politically exploiting the powerful potential of anti-European sentiments. Populists who want to survive in politics will apparently not call for a boycott of the EU but seek to promote and market an economic and cultural fortress of Europe. Finns have not traditionally been among the greatest EU enthusiasts. National identity prevails over European sentiment there. But until now, the EU issue has not been a major political priority, reflecting a silent acceptance of the pro-European stance of successive governments. With the rise of PS, however, the dividing line between those who are in favour of European integration and those more critical of it has become an electoral one. Also, inspired by the Finnish example, other parties reject the principle of European solidarity: the FPÖ and the SNS (see the chapters in this book). It appears that the concept of Euroscepticism will remain a changing one. Whether Euroscepticism will have a future as an ideology or as a political strategy will therefore depend on national and European political elites successfully campaigning for Europe and the EU and taking concrete steps to develop a European public opinion.

### **Differences and similarities across the EU**

Right-wing populist parties put forward their demands concerning the relationship between the state and the economy ambivalently. Their repertoire includes the prevention of state intervention in the economy, tax reductions, the reduction of the state apparatus, the privatisation of state and communal tasks and ultra-liberal ideas in the realm of tax and cultural policy, but also endorsing state-wide advances in various economic and societal matters, acting in favour of protecting the national economy, demanding that states implement protections in the fields of health and that they support the population’s ‘real’ needs. The VB claims, for instance,

that social security must remain a task of government and privatisation must be stopped (see the chapter on Belgium). TT claims even a Third Republic to create a strong and wealthy future state (see the chapter on Lithuania). Compatible demands—an increase in social security, especially for the ‘little people’, an increase of payments for families or the police, and a reduction of state projects or the privatisation of public-owned companies—have become common denominators in these parties. In Scandinavia and Finland the populist parties support the Nordic welfare state in which welfare services are guaranteed for everybody and supplied largely by the public sector. Protecting the welfare system goes hand in hand with claims for a responsible—in the sense of a restrictive—national immigration policy. In the most recent manifesto, the Norwegian Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet) links immigration to threats to the survival of the welfare state, to crime and potential cultural conflicts (see the respective chapter in this book).

Right-wing populism accepts market principles on a fundamental level. The parties mix neo-liberal deregulation (based on an anti-globalisation sentiment) and income distribution that favours upper-income brackets with social demagogy and state social protections. With this contradictory ideological conglomeration they appeal to a large number of voters. Populist rightists operate a double strategy: on the one hand, they speak in favour of deregulation for the state; on the other, they have the aim of protecting their country from other countries using regulatory measures. The threat of international competition posed by low-salary countries is one of their justifications for protectionism.

An emphasis on individual productivity sets up a suspicion of the social welfare network, and produces socio-demographic positions that are aimed against ‘social parasites’. The ideas of right-wing populists tend to represent opposition to current politics rather than an independent programme. Their ‘positive’ attitudes and activities, on the other hand, must be vague enough that the state can be reintroduced via the back door as the patron of the local economy. That results in a mixing of market-centred and protectionist ideas. Deregulation is recognised as a requirement and a recipe for business success and economic prosperity, but if there is little confidence in one’s own international competitiveness, then right-wing populists want sufficient room to use state support and protectionism to secure the future they have promised. Thus, right-wing populists view economic protectionism as having nationalist undertones.

Among those who draw a parallel between economic protectionism and the protection of the family are VB, the PS, PiS and TT (see the respective chapters).

## ROLE OF CHARISMATIC LEADER

Some parties focus on a top-down model based on elite empowerment. Even the new communication technologies may weaken the deliberative aspect of party organisations and give the leader more leeway (Pedersen and Saglie 2005, 363). Poorly institutionalised parties often opt for strong leadership as a replacement for the organisational constraints that characterise highly institutionalised parties. They lack the guarantee of participation and electoral support that established parties in general enjoy. Right-wing populist challengers especially are aligned to charismatic leaders who have much greater freedom to manoeuvre. Populism is a symptom of a fundamental change in the functioning of a party because the party is no longer growing from its base according to a pyramid structure, but becomes a virtual facade around a single person. The rather loose internal organisation goes hand in hand with the top-down approach. This can produce a strong democratic deficit in the parties, since they are subject to authoritarian leadership. Especially in Central and Eastern Europe, the party chair often exercises that kind of strong influence, for instance in Poland, Slovakia and Lithuania (see the chapters on these countries in this book). But this development, in which strong leaders dominate their parties, is not new; even in the old Western European democracies there were dominant party leaders, such as Franz Josef Strauss of the Bavarian Christian Social Union (Christlich-Soziale Union), who was party leader from 1961 until his death in 1988.

Clear, top-down alignment is often a feature of right-wing populist parties. As noted by Betz (1998, 8–9), the most successful of them are led by charismatic figures capable of setting the political and pragmatic direction. The successions of leadership play a crucial role because these parties are very dependent on the charisma of their leaders. The cases of France, Denmark and Norway demonstrate that the role of leader is not reserved for men anymore, either in leadership or in voters, as it was during the era of ‘men parties’. A charismatic leader (as described by the great sociologist Max Weber) embraces the task assigned to him and demands obedience and loyalty in the pursuit of his mission (as used in its original religious sense). Success depends on whether he accomplishes it. If those

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to whom he devotes himself fail to recognise this mission, then his claim to leadership will fall apart. The leader is recognised as long as he knows how to retain recognition by 'proving his worth' (Weber 1956, 663). In addition, most parties display a highly centralised organisational structure. The PS is an example of such a party that recently succeeded. As the Finnish researcher Tapio Raunio has written in a study of this party,

[a]s is typical for populist and radical right parties, The (True) Finns is a highly leader-dependent organisation. A highly popular party leader, the role of Soini should not be underestimated in the success of The (True) Finns. A charismatic figure known for his witty and insightful comments, Soini was the vote king in both the 2009 European Parliament and the 2011 Eduskunta elections, winning most votes of the individual candidates (Raunio 2012, 6, note 2; see also his contribution in this book).

But in the presidential elections in January 2012, Timo Soini failed as a candidate and reached only 9.4% of the votes.

PiS has been a party with strong leadership by the Kaczyński brothers. In the case of Slovakia, the party's leader, linked in the past with the figure Ján Slotá, plays a key role in the adoption of important topics. In extreme cases, parties bear the name of their party leader, as in the Netherlands, which listed Pim Fortuyn on the national level in 2002, or, in Hamburg's Bürgerschaft (regional parliament), the Schill Party of the former judge Ronald Barnabas Schill in 2001. Core questions are decided by the leading figure, without including the party rank and file (except for 'acclamation') or senior personnel. Sometimes, this figure coerces the party into allowing him or her to make policy decisions in public in order to exercise pressure on functionaries and members. In any case, there is a symbiosis between the party leader and the subordinate party levels. One example is the Dutch Party for Freedom of Geert Wilders, which has just one member, the party leader himself. It perfectly fulfils the criteria of so-called couch parties (where all the members can fit on a single couch) or even a chair party, with Wilders in the chair.

A common ground among populist parties in Western Europe lies in the personality factor; even the Eastern European parties are fixated on leaders and their charisma. It means that the authoritarian-led parties function entirely according to populist logic. Voter anxiety also creates opportunities for a populist seducer, as the voters and the followers hope

for a saviour. A populist leader, who portrays himself as the defender of the man in the street and/or the national interest, maintains that image by invoking the hypothetical will of the people. A number of rhetorical stylistic devices may be used (Jaschke 1990, 88–9):

- The trick of persecuted innocence: the leader portrays himself as a victim, wrongly stigmatised by the media and by the old, established parties.
- The crusader mentality: the leader wants to fight for the man in the street, who is finally demanding his rights. He acts vicariously against corruption and sleaze.
- The trick of tirelessness: the leader wants to act the part of a persistent and stubborn fighter for what is right.
- The emissary trick: the leader adopts the image of a patron of the nation, bringing welfare and security (against immigrants and other enemies).

Even scandals can help as long as the populist leader declares himself a victim. The Lithuanian case shows that after a personal impeachment scandal, Rolandas Paksas has continued his party project even more successfully (see the chapter in this book). In Poland, the Kaczyński brothers presented their programme as heavily based on the common people's problems while the party and its leaders were a victim of the media and the leftist or liberal government (see the chapter in this book).

The populist at the top of the party is acting in some circumstances like a pop star; he downgrades his co-workers and members to the status of fans and the party to a simple electoral association. The strategic concept calls for intra-party cohesion, not for a pluralistic concert of voices. Non-political attributes have a high impact on the image: appearance and charisma squeeze out competences as relevant assessment criteria for voters, supporters and party members. Political issues are reduced to second place. The leader alternates between wishful thinking and pretension. A continuous tension between claims and reality, appearance and substance, sets in. If he finds himself in the crossfire of criticism (more than the usual need for articulating critiques), this can paralyse the party's capacity to act. If the leader becomes vilified as a result of electoral failure, this will easily lead to internal quarrels and discord in a party that seems unstable. Such parties are rarely able to recover from coup attempts and palace revolutions. They are dependent on their leaders; the fate of the party is connected to that of the leader.

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Right-wing populist parties always claim to fight corruption while they themselves are often involved in scandals, as the example of the FPÖ reveals. Sometimes the career of a populist does not develop along the same lines as those of a typical politician; the populist is a newcomer (or acts like one) and can thus distance himself outwardly from conventional types of politicians. He pitches his lack of experience in politics as a positive quality. Furthermore, he adopts the image of the anti-career politician, assuming the role of a non-politician who has won his spurs elsewhere—in business or entertainment. During the election campaign he attempts to continue developing the element of the new (other) politician, based on mythology.

The populist preaches, in his own words, that hard work automatically leads to success—as his own example demonstrates—and that high aims can be fulfilled with the aid of courage, self-confidence and belief in one's own strength. Thus, Christoph Blocher from the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei) incarnates a dual function. On the one hand, he works as a billionaire chemicals entrepreneur—he is obviously a successful businessman. On the other hand, as a farmer by training, he has the barnyard smell of the ordinary man still clinging to him. He has always maintained his distance from the elites, who have never regarded him as one of their own (see the chapter in this book). The business-firm model of parties (Hopkins and Paoluci 1999)<sup>3</sup>—which has occurred not only in authoritarian systems, as with oligarchs entering politics in Georgia and Armenia, but under businessman Silvio Berlusconi in Italy as well<sup>4</sup>—started in 1994 and now continues in Austria with billionaire entrepreneur Frank Stronach.

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3 To sum up, business firm parties have the following features: they profit from upheavals (within or after a crisis, or as a consequence of rapid changes); they benefit from association with the personal advantages of an entrepreneur or investor (gaining public credibility); the role of party bureaucracies is kept to a bare minimum; grassroots memberships are limited and not needed; party members are mainly officeholders who see the party as a vehicle for acquiring political positions; they rely on marketing experts and opinion polls; party slogans reflect opinion polls.

4 Berlusconi profited from the collapse of the Italian party political system in 1993 and made use of the unique opportunity after a breakdown of morality in the party system. Forza Italia (after the football slogan 'Forward Italy') started by fostering its formation in the world of business, journalism and liberal professions to attract centre-right voters and put a halt to the dissolution process affecting the right. The party programme was based on opinion polls and modern marketing methods. Forza Italia's organisation was based on the idea of a party of the elected people, giving more importance to the whole electorate than to the party's members.



The second generation of right-wing party leaders can be described as more moderate in terms of making no mistakes that would allow opponents to portray them as neo-fascists or Nazis. In France, Belgium, Austria and, especially, Slovakia, some links to fascist or Nazi groups on the regional level or within the youth branch exist, although media coverage of the links led the leadership to distance itself from those groups. The enforced moderation applies in the cases of Scandinavia and Finland as well. In Sweden, the Swedish populist party tried to free itself from neo-Nazi roots (see the chapter in this book). Marine Le Pen would not describe the Holocaust as ‘a small detail in history’ (as her father did) and Strache would not mention a ‘proper employment policy in the Third Reich’ as an attack on the current national government (as Jörg Haider did in 1991 during a parliamentary debate in Carinthia). The new generation is not anti-Semitic, or even anti-Israel. Geert Wilders, who has visited Israel many times and has many contacts there, is, in fact, a great friend and supporter of Israel.

Wilders has little in common with the Le Pens or Haiders of Europe, who appeal to primitive instincts. Geert Wilders is egocentric, but he is not a racist. Strache visited Israel in December 2010 to sign a declaration of the country’s right of existence. This is the opposite of Jörg Haider, who visited Saddam Hussein when the latter was already isolated from the international community, and so provoked an international scandal (Haider 2003). It seems likely that Strache has adopted this pro-Israel stance for tactical reasons—that is, to counter accusations that he is a neo-Nazi—whereas Wilders’s support for Israel is rooted in long-held convictions. Timo Soini of the PS, whose Master’s thesis, written many years ago at the University of Helsinki, was, significantly, on populism, also shows no racist or radical features. It would be a mistake for political opponents of these populists to put them in the racist, extremist corner, which would actually help Strache, Wilders and company.

## CONSEQUENCES FOR THE FUTURE OF LIBERAL REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACIES IN EUROPE

The populist electoral consolidation in a number of Western European countries has been echoed by a recent electoral breakthrough in Sweden, Finland and with similar parties gaining substantial ground in Central and Eastern Europe (Ivaldi 2012, 15). Based on the findings in this book, the effects on the liberal democracies are the following:

- Populists criticise the mode of governing by established party cartels, for instance by claiming to represent the people against the political class (see also Beyme 2011, 59).

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- They challenge the traditional rules of the consensual model of democracy (Austria; Switzerland; and, within the framework of the polder model, the Netherlands,<sup>5</sup> which is now under fire; Finland; Norway; and Sweden) and procedural democracy (Poland).
- They break up the pro-European consensus (Finland, France and the Netherlands).
- They enforce an anti-Islam discourse without any taboos (France, Belgium and the Netherlands).
- They attack minorities in the party's home country (in Slovakia, ethnic Hungarians and Romas).
- They place themselves in an outsider role profiting from a *cordon sanitaire* declared by all other parties (France and Belgium).

Populist parties sometimes claim they will fundamentally change the republic (in the respective European countries without monarchies). Jörg Haider spoke of a Third Republic (Haider 1994, 189) and in Poland there was talk of a Fourth Republic under Kaczyński. The same in Lithuania: the party's new electoral manifesto, written for the parliamentary elections of 2012, opens with a call to form a new contract between the state and the nation in order to create the Third Republic (see the relevant chapters in this book). The programmes of the PS identify the party as a populist movement, with the 2011 election programme in particular distinguishing the populist version of democracy advocated by the party as distinct from the more elitist or bureaucratic version of democracy (see the chapter on Finland in this book). In Poland, fundamental reforms were proposed to break down an alleged 'network' and cut any links with the People's Republic of Poland, including reorganising the administration, judiciary, police, media, sport, economy and agriculture. The case of Poland simultaneously has demonstrated, as do the Austrian and Slovakian cases, that democracy is resistant to populism after populist parties come to power in national government. It was the protection of the rules of law—the enemy of populism—that became the tool used to judge the merits of the populists' actions. Their promises remained unfulfilled and when confronted with the reality of power, the populists turned out to be incapable of acting efficiently. When it comes to immigration policy—at least at the national level—the impact of populist parties has been more indirect and mediated through the party's strong agenda-setting function, which of course should

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5 'Polder model' is the term for the formal cooperation of employers, trade unions and independent government-appointed members of the Social Economic Council.

not be overestimated. In recent years, the established parties' successful 'defuse strategy' seems to have been complemented by a more subtle 'adopt strategy' (see the chapter on Norway). Furthermore, the questions of a modern environmental policy in the national and international context, educational justice and the finality of Europe lie at the centre of consideration and discussion. Paradoxically, it was the populists in Finland who, while being by definition Eurosceptic, were taking up European subjects at national level and who were introducing the topic of the future vision of Europe to national public debate.

Yet there are major problems standing in the way of the desired aim for traditional parties to differentiate themselves from each other. Given the wide variety of political expectations and priorities within the population, the task of gaining and, above all, securing a large voter potential for the long term by means of specific policies and aims appears difficult, maybe impossible. With regard to the organisational strengthening of parties, there are various proposals that aim to make membership more attractive and to make procedures within parties more transparent and open. To a certain extent, the first steps have already been enacted in this respect or are at the planning stage. However, the extent to which such activities will be able to halt the decline of the major parties and their organisational weakening has yet to be determined.

One fundamental trait of populism lies in its defensive attitude towards the political system and its identification of scapegoats. 'Us' against 'the powers that be'—this populist slogan is targeted against representative bodies and thus classic institutions. The more recent successes of right-wing populist parties were in fact not the result of propagating a neo-Nazi programme, but of seizing upon populist campaign strategies and, in programmatic terms, reducing them to socio-populist protest. Thus, the simple dichotomy 'we upright democrats against evil, anti-constitutional extremists', popularly used in politics, does not apply.

It is possible to believe that the current rise of populism is just a temporary aberration on the road to normal 'European' party politics. An alternative explanation is that there is a process of profound political transformation throughout Europe with traditional programmatic parties gradually giving way to new, situational political players. In this brave new world of populist politics, there is no need for coherent party platforms and stable loyalties (Hartleb 2012a). Parties have to adapt their communication via slogans

and sound bits, which they have already started, while keeping up stability, credibility and loyalty among the electorate. Otherwise, political parties are simply interchangeable vehicles of unpredictable emotions produced by (social) media and marketing. In an era of 'populist Zeitgeist' (Mudde 2004), they lose their deeply rooted functions in society, being no longer able to bring people's interests (inputs) into the decision-making process (outputs).

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# A Thorny Way to Find Friends: Transnational Cooperation and Network-building amongst Right-wing and National Populist Parties

Petra Vejvodová

At first glance, engagement in discussion of right-wing and national populist parties in the context of European networks and supranational cooperation may seem an attempt to connect two entirely incompatible worlds. For various groups, the EU has served as a byword for progress and liberalism; it has been the guarantor of peace and democratic development since the end of the Second World War. According to this view, the nationalism typical of national populist parties stands in opposition to this Union. Yet these parties themselves endeavour to cooperate internationally and to create their own networks. Moreover, the elections of the European Parliament (EP) put these parties in an interesting position by providing them with access to the supranational level, which itself offers interesting possibilities and political opportunities. The supranational (European) level is becoming more important for right-wing and national populist parties, even though critique of the EU is among the constants of their programmes. The partial transfer of national sovereignty to the European level gives the EU the power to set individual policies. This creates a situation that political actors wish to respond to and indeed must.

Tarrow argues that political opportunities are important for political action in that they offer a chance for political action (1998, 71–7). Political opportunities are understood as consistent, though not necessarily permanent or formal, dimensions of the political environment. By creating expectations of success or failure, they offer stimuli for action (Tarrow 1998, 71–7). Although the idea of political opportunity is primarily used

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as a conceptual tool in studying political movements, some of its basic elements and aspects can be used equally well for understanding political parties. Generally speaking, the concept of political opportunity structure helps to answer questions such as ‘Why are certain political actors mobile and active?’

The EU is a very complex system and at the same time the most important determinant of political opportunity structure in Europe. The very existence of such an organisation allows the political entities to define their attitudes and relations towards it. In establishing its stance towards the EU, a political party influences the scope of opportunities it can grasp within the political arena. Furthermore, within this context opportunities present themselves that are attractive to the political actors in terms of the success they desire. Cooperation on the European level, or more specifically within the EU, is interesting for right-wing and national populist parties even though these parties stand in opposition to the Union, or at the very least criticise some of its aspects. The possibility of involvement in European parliamentary life entices these parties to participate in elections and to compete for seats, because the EP provides them with an opportunity to represent political opinions and ideas. The formation of parliamentary groups and European political parties allows similarly minded actors to strengthen their common voice and to increase their collective political weight. The EP is also a forum for promoting new political topics. It opens another way for parties to enter the political arena and to influence policymaking.

The European level offers another chance of success for parties which have failed in national or local elections. Indeed, some parties exert more influence on the European level than they do in their own countries. Obviously, the material aspect of cooperation on the European level, that is, access to EU funding for political parties and parliamentary groups, must not be forgotten either.

The international cooperation of right-wing and national populist parties is partially pragmatic and partially ideological. Pragmatically, these parties—of which many are unable to achieve significant success on the national and local levels—enter international networks seeking larger partners and an increase in their influence, at least on the international level. Right-wing and national populist parties are often small and isolated; international networking has the potential to compensate for this disadvantage. In the international networks, they find large and important partners such



as the Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) or the French National Front (Front National, FN). Ideologically, these parties consider cooperation as a tool for promoting their positions. They believe that they will be able to cooperate with ideological partners in the promotion of common interests. Ideological proximity brings them so close that cooperation seems very natural.

Richard Stöss (2000, quoted in Hübner 2008, 17–18) has defined three types of supranational cooperation used by the far right. These types can also be used for describing right-wing and national populist parties. The first type is informal cooperation, often based on individual relations; it encompasses individual contacts across the boundaries of nation states, the exchange of literature and propaganda pamphlets, attendance at various events organised by like-minded entities abroad and so on. Simply put, this is the daily agenda of any political party. The second type covers institutionalised structures and activities taking place among political entities originating from various countries. This includes regular missions, jointly organised events, the periodic exchange of information, but also the formation of political alliances such as parliamentary groups in the EP and European political parties. This type of cooperation brings various benefits to those involved: it helps them to gain recognition, broadens their outlook and, last but not least, assists the smaller and less experienced entities in obtaining international experience and in professionalising their agendas and manner of presentation. By becoming involved in parliamentary groups and European party structures, parties increase their relevance and intensify political pressure in the promotion of their interests. Stöss's third type covers independent international organisations with a defined programme, membership mechanism, statutes and so on. Representatives of multiple countries are involved in such organisations.

## RIGHT-WING EXTREMISTS, RIGHT-WING POPULIST OR WHAT?

In this chapter, terms are used which are interconnected but also the potential source of confusion because they refer to overlapping ideological positions. Moreover, research into the right and far-right wing of the political spectrum has itself produced a broad variety of terms, classifications and definitions. Throughout this chapter, the terms 'far right', 'right-wing extremists' or 'right-wing and national populists' are used. The attribute 'far right' is understood as a general umbrella term describing political parties at the right end of the ideological spectrum. The far right includes two basic

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subgroups: right-wing extremists and right-wing and national populists (Charvát 2007; Smolík and Vejvodová 2010). Right-wing extremism can be defined as a movement denying individual liberty, the democratic principle of human equality and equality of rights for all members of the political community. Right-wing extremists oppose liberal and democratic forces and the democratic constitutional state. They stress its replacement by an authoritarian system in which rights are based on ascribed characteristics, such as race, ethnicity or religion (see for example Backes and Jesse 1993; Betz 1998; Hainsworth 2000; Mareš 2003).

The party alliances discussed in this chapter have attracted right-wing extremists; some of them include more or less influential factions voicing extremist views. Also, a significant number of their supporters and voters believe in right-wing extremist ideas. Many of the political parties use verbal extremism. But generally, they have been careful to stress their commitment to representative democracy and the constitutional order. More importantly, contemporary far-right political parties have adopted programmatic radicalism and a populist appeal. The welfare state and multicultural society have become their main targets (Betz 1998, 3–4).

Anti-establishment populism (see Schedler 1996) and ethno-nationalist xenophobia have become the main features of contemporary right-wing and national populist parties. Right-wing and national populists accept the democratic system, but their anti-establishment attitudes remain very strong. According to Hartleb (2011, 24) right-wing populism comprises a conglomerate of trends which appeal to the ‘man in the street’ rather than to specific social strata, classes, professional groups or sets of interests. Two dimensions are important. First is a vertical dimension related to a general characteristic of populism—dissociation from the political classes which is expressed in an attitude of ‘us’ against ‘elites’. Second is a horizontal dimension specific to right-wing populism—dissociation from immigrants, aliens and criminals. In this instance the attitude is ‘us’ against ‘the outsiders’ (Betz 1998, 4; Hartleb 2011, 24).

### COMMON THEMES

On the agenda of right-wing and national populist parties, common themes can be observed which provide the parties with space for cooperation and networking. The following themes have been identified (Hübner 2008, 13–14):

- the rejection or criticism of the EU as an international institution and an actor in economic globalisation;
- emphasis on national self-determination and the organisation of the European order according to nationally defined communities;
- the achievement of ethnic and cultural homogeneity in their individual countries by stopping immigration, by displacing immigrants and also by (forcibly) assimilating immigrants and ethnic minorities;
- a strong emphasis on the idea of a Christian Europe, accompanied by demands for repressive measures against Islam and its teachings, and a ban on the construction of mosques and minarets;
- the rejection of Turkey's accession to the EU;
- defence of a traditional understanding of marriage and the family, including a prohibition on abortion;
- criticism of homosexuality;
- support for direct democracy and a greater role of citizens in the decision-making process, for instance by holding referenda on issues such as European integration;
- a policy of zero tolerance in fighting corruption;
- the deportation of immigrants who have been convicted of criminal offences;
- restoration of the death penalty;
- an economic policy based on supporting small and medium-sized business, traditional crafts and agriculture;
- social-welfare and employment policies adapted to the needs and interests of the individual nations.

In examining more closely the individual structures and networks of cooperation, it becomes apparent that right-wing and national populist parties are indeed able to cooperate on four issues which are common to their respective agendas. First, there is the EU itself, whose development and evolution are scrutinised. Right-wing and national populist parties accuse the EU of having become a 'superstate', and consider it restrictive of national sovereignty. The EU's liberalism and social-democratic values are also criticised. Parties from post-Communist countries try to attract attention by comparing the EU to the Soviet Bloc, in the sense that both impose limitations on state sovereignty. Similar analogies have been drawn by leaders of Western European parties. Umberto Bossi, leader of the Italian Northern League (Lega Nord, LN), has repeatedly referred to the EU as 'the Soviet Union of Europe' (Mudde 2007, 160–1). Many parties discussed here had been supportive of the process of European integration

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in the past, but the 1992 Maastricht Treaty changed this attitude, as it is considered a tangible step towards the formation of a supranational body. The German party The Republicans (Die Republikaner, REP), for example, described the Maastricht Treaty as 'Versailles without weapons'. Jean-Marie Le Pen compared it to the Treaty of Troyes. Right-wing and nationalist parties generally consider the EU an arena where the activities of left-wing and 'pseudo-humanistic' forces allow uncontrolled immigration and the proliferation of destructive postmodern values. Their critique is also combined with censure of democratic political representation on both national and European levels. They tend to see European integration as a bureaucratic and elitist phenomenon undermining concepts and values, such as the nation state, national identity, state sovereignty and national affiliation (Vejvodová 2012). Furthermore, they consider the EU as an offshoot of globalisation, which they oppose. Right-wing and national populists create a space where the voice of popular opposition and protest against purportedly anti-national developments may be heard.

Second, a very popular and significant topic is the question of immigration and the perceived threat of the Islamisation of Europe. This has led to a discussion over Turkey's accession to the EU. Immigrants from the Third World are considered the cause of all problems, including unemployment and crises within social security systems (Mudde 1999, 188; Rydgren 2008, 746). Social issues such as high crime rates are turned into ethnic ones. One of the major proponents of this topic is the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP), which links crime with immigrants in a highly populist way. In 2003, the party ran an anti-foreigner campaign, in which asylum seekers were portrayed as criminals and drug dealers. The United Nations Refugee Agency said the party's propaganda contained some of the most anti-asylum advertisements ever seen in Europe ('Swiss right' 2003). In 2007, the posters taped on the walls at a political rally captured the rawness of Switzerland's national electoral campaign: three white sheep stand on the Swiss flag as one of them kicks a single black sheep away. 'To create Security', the poster read (Sciolino 2007). The party's official documents about migration stress the relation between immigration and criminality even more (see SVP 2009).

The problem of 'Islamisation' is now frequently discussed. Election campaigns on both European and national levels emphasise the alleged threat. The rejection of Turkish EU membership has become a feature of the successful campaigns of political parties such as the French FN.

Among its most important proponents are the British National Party (BNP), the Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang, VB) and the SVP. In its programme the BNP proposes to 'reach an accord with the Muslim world whereby they will agree to take back their excess population which is currently colonizing this country, in exchange for an ironclad guarantee that Britain will never again interfere in the political affairs of the Middle East' (BNP 2010a).

The third big issue is 'globalisation'. According to the right-wing and national populist political parties, globalisation creates the foundations for such negative phenomena as immigration and economic crises. It is perceived as a factor in the loss of identity and the destruction of traditional patterns of life in Europe (Grumke 2009, 23). Nationalist parties regard globalisation as an instrument created deliberately to destroy 'Volk and Nation' and to 'denationalise' the nation state. They present themselves as the defenders of nationalism, of national traditions and of values (Scharenberg 2006, 80).

The fourth common theme proceeds in fact from the previous three. It unfolds from the shared criticism of the EU, immigration and globalisation, with these three elements considered threats to Europe and to the tradition of Western civilisation based on Christian values. The fourth shared theme might be called the defence of European civilisation, of Europe's roots, values and culture. It is difficult, however, to set this theme apart from the general agenda of the national populist parties; it does not stand on its own, but permeates the three others. In other words, the individual steps taken to defend European civilisation and its values are based on the previous three themes.

It is worth recalling that the idea of a common Europe based on shared roots and traditions had already been present among the extreme right before the Second World War. After the defeat of the Nazi 'Fortress Europe' in 1945, the concept of Europe reappeared and survives in its basic form to this day. Obviously, aspects such as the white race and Aryanism were removed and replaced by Western civilisation and culture: European chauvinism took the place of Fascist nationalism. In this context, Filip Dewinter, a Flemish politician and one of the leaders of the VB, and the intellectual of the French right, Guillaume Faye, have even called for a new *reconquista*, a fight against the colonisation of Europe by the Third World and Islam (Schiedel 2011, 39).

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Besides the ideological issues, pragmatism is an important element. Collaboration can yield such positive outcomes as visibility on the international level, easier access to other potential partners, and shared expenditure on political campaigns. By creating a European political party or a group within the EP, parties gain access to valuable EU funding. Parties are thus highly motivated to cooperate with each other. But there are two sides to the coin with regard to EU money: EU funding may entice the far right entities to institutionalise and strengthen their mutual relations. At the same time, pragmatic thinking may discourage such cooperation. Pragmatism may tempt parties to join another (usually bigger and more stable) group instead of creating a new one whose survival is insecure.

### GROUPS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES

In addition to Islam and globalisation, the EU, and in particular criticism thereof, is another common theme. The EU is often described by right-wing and national populist entities as a kind of dictatorship or ‘bonzocracy’ (see e.g. Raunio in this volume). It is somewhat paradoxical, then, that despite all the criticism directed by these parties at the EU, they have nonetheless become involved in its functioning and participate in the institutions that they apparently hate so much. Consider for example their endeavours to win seats in the EP and to found parliamentary groups as well as European political parties. The reason is very simple: the EU and its institutions are a good source of funding for parties which are sometimes not doing very well financially. Especially attractive is membership in one of the EP’s groups. A group can be created by no less than 25 MEPs representing at least seven member countries.

Andreas Mölzer, a member of the FPÖ and an MEP, is often described as the driving force behind the idea of a united European far right. It was partly due to his activities on the European level that he became an important member of his party and a distinctive personality. Bruno Gollnisch, representative of the French FN, has been another key person in the European integration of national and populist parties, especially in the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, and is in this sense the successor to the party’s former chairman, Jean-Marie Le Pen. Whatever the attempt to unify the far right at the European level—whether using the theme of anti-globalisation, Islamophobia, or some other—the alliances they created are by no means stable or viable in the long term. Quite the contrary, they have failed due to particular national interests and personal clashes between the leaders who struggle to reinforce their positions within the European far right.

The first important attempt to unify nationalist political parties in the EU came after the 1984 election. The reason for this timing is evident. The first election of the EP was held in 1979 and political parties could not previously compete. In 1984, the first parliamentary group was created, the European Right. It functioned until 1989 and was led by the then-chairman of the FN, Jean-Marie Le Pen. After the 1989 election the group renamed itself the Technical Group of the European Right (Mudde 2007, 178; for more details see Osterhoff 1997; Steuwer 2006).

The Technical Group of the European Right suffered from ideological differences between the FN and the Flemish Block (Vlaams Blok). Tension was created by two types of nationalism, namely state nationalism and ethnic nationalism (Mudde 2007, 167). In the EP, deputies from the German REP and the Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano, MSI) demonstrated their inability to cooperate within one ideological family. The REP joined the Technical Group in 1989, while the MSI refused cooperation because of a German–Italian dispute over the status of South Tyrol (Fiala et al. 2007, 174).

During the 1990s, there was little attempt among the right-wing and national populist parties to enforce cooperation. It was essentially Jean-Marie Le Pen alone who aimed to change this, promoting the idea of cooperation and striving to bring this idea to life in various projects. In 1997, for instance, the creation of the European National Union (Euronat) was announced, a far-right organisation with no direct link to the EU. The basic idea of Euronat was the rejection of the EU, NATO and any other prospective attempt to enforce European integration based on a common government or parliamentary arrangement. The message of the movement was expressed in the slogan ‘Europe of European States’ (Fiala et al. 2007, 175).

In organisational terms, the structure was loose, with most activities led and coordinated by Le Pen. He even envisaged a worldwide platform, Mondo-Nat, but these plans were never realised.

During the 1990s Le Pen visited some Eastern European countries to promote his project. He received quite a lot of support. But Euronat did not attract far-right parties from Western countries. Yet, the Czech Coalition for Republic–Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro Republiku–Republikánská strana Československa, SPR-RSČ), the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja, MIÉP) and the Slovak

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National Party (Slovenská národná strana, SNS) connected through Euronat. Later other European parties—amongst them the VB and the Sweden Democrats (Swedendemokraten, SD)—also became members, although some left the platform again after a short while. Many of them can be described as right-wing extremist political parties (see above).

Researching the history of party membership is difficult due to Euronat's short and shadowy existence (Mudde 2007, 176). The true purpose of Euronat was revealed a few years later, however. After the EP election in 1999, in which the far-right parties were unsuccessful, the level of cooperation amongst Euronat members decreased. The founding member, the French FN, began to lose interest in continuing the Euronat experiment. As the 2004 EP elections confirmed, membership in Euronat did not ensure the positive results that had been expected (Vejvodová 2012, 218). Furthermore, there were obvious disagreements in Euronat between the German People's Union (Deutsche Volksunion, DVU) and the Czech SPR-RSČ concerning the Sudetenland question. Problematic relations between Slovak and Hungarian members also weakened the coalition.

Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty (ITS) was another political group of the national populist political parties in the EP. It was created in January 2007, after Romania and Bulgaria had been admitted into the EU. Members of the ITS included the Attack Political Party (Politicheska partiya Ataka) from Bulgaria, the Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare), FPÖ, VB, FN, MSI and the Social Alternative (Alternativa Sociale), as well as one independent MEP from Great Britain (Fiala et al. 2007, 177).

Its formation was initiated at a meeting in Vienna organised by the FPÖ in 2005. Officially, it was set in motion by the Austrian think tank Freiheitliche Akademie. Delegates agreed to intensify common action, and the pan-European party ITS was subsequently created in 2007. In the Vienna Declaration, members announced the intention to establish a Europe of free and independent nations within the framework of a confederation of sovereign nation-states (Fiala et al. 2007, 177; Mudde 2007, 180). Further common interests were the rejection of Turkish EU membership, and the protection of Europe from 'Islamisation', immigration and American imperialism. The main points of the Vienna Declaration clearly articulated a new globalised nationalist agenda which included the following points:

- the establishment of a Europe of free and independent nationals within the framework of a confederation of sovereign nation states;



- the renunciation of all attempts to create a constitution for a centralist ‘European superstate’;
- the clear rejection of the extension of European integration to geographical, cultural, religious and ethnically non-European areas of Asia, Africa and the MENA region, such as Turkey;
- the effective protection of Europe against the dangers of terrorism, aggressive Islamism, superpower imperialism and economic aggression by low-wage countries;
- an immediate stop to immigration—including family reunification—in all states of the EU;
- a pro-natalist family policy which aims at the promotion of large numbers of children of the European ethnic communities (*Völker*) within the context of a traditional understanding of the family;
- the joint struggle of European ethnic communities against the social and economic effects of globalisation;
- the restoration of social justice for European ethnic communities and the social systems of the member states of the EU (Liang 2007, 14).

ITS was created on the shared principles of defending Christian values and roots, protecting the culture and traditions of European civilisation, caring for the traditional family, which is considered the foundation of society, and on the conviction that an entity must be created that will oppose the binding and bureaucratic European ‘superstate’ (‘EU’s surprise’ 2007; Hübner 2008, 24).

ITS was the shortest lived European political grouping, however, as it lasted only 10 months. Its collapse was precipitated by Alessandra Mussolini’s remarks. Mussolini, a member of the Social Alternative, referred to Romanians as ‘habitual law-breakers’. Five Romanian MEPs subsequently withdrew from the group. This left the ITS with only 18 MEPs, insufficient to form a political group in the EP (‘EU far-right bloc’ 2007; Vejvodová 2012, 223).

After the ITS’s failure, four of its members, the FPÖ, the FN, the VB and the Bulgarian Attack Political Party, announced their intention to continue their cooperation in accordance with the Vienna Declaration. This was in January 2008 and led to the formation of another party for which two working names were proposed: European Patriotic Party and European Party of Freedom. Once again, its goals were to defend a Europe of free nation states against the threats of Islamisation, immigration, and Turkish EU membership (‘EU far-right groups’ 2008; ‘FPÖ to help’ 2008). To be

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recognised as a European political party, they needed three other MEPs. They never attracted them, however, and the project soon foundered.

The next attempted collaboration dates from October 2009. Delegates from Jobbik, the Belgian party Front National, the French FN, the Italian MSI and the Swedish National Democrats (Nationaldemokraterna) announced the creation of the Alliance of European National Movements (AENM) in Budapest. Negotiations were also conducted with the BNP, the Ukrainian party Freedom (Svoboda) and the Republican Social Movement (Movimiento Social Republicano) of Spain. These parties became members in the first half of 2010. The last wave of expansion brought Portugal's National Renovator Party (Partido Nacional Renovador) and Sweden's National Democrats into an alliance that was to become an official European political party. The strategic aim was to create a corresponding political group in the EP within a short time.<sup>1</sup> The alliance was based on the common goal of protecting Europe from religious, economic, and financial imperialism, while opposing the EU and globalisation in general. The purpose of the alliance was to

reject all attempts at creating a so-called European 'super-state', it calls for a solution of the immigration problem . . . , it advocates the effective protection of Europe against the new threats of terrorism, as well as political, economic, financial or religious imperialism. It calls for strong pro-family policies to reverse Europe's population decline and the promotion of traditional values in society. It also seeks a joint struggle against the destructive effects of globalisation (De Santis 2010).

The common declaration of the AENM members demands the 'creation of a Europe of free, independent and equal nations in the framework of a confederation of sovereign nation states, refraining from taking decisions on matters properly taken by states themselves' (BNP 2010b). The AENM was recognised as a European political party in 2012. The leader of the FN, Marine Le Pen, announced her withdrawal from the AENM at the end of 2011, however. Subsequently, she became a member of the European Alliance for Freedom, a pan-European political party that was founded in 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> Twenty-five deputies from seven countries are needed to create a political group in the EP. In the electoral period of 2009–14, there were enough deputies in the EP from far-right parties to form a group, but not all of them intend to join this alliance. This is due to the persistence of conflictual relations.

Three alliances formed from other right-wing and populist parties contested the 2009 European election: the Union for the Europe of the Nations (UEN), the Alliance for Europe of the Nations (AEN) and Independence/Democracy (Ind/Dem). The UEN, created in 1999, brought together far-right and conservative parties. And indeed it was the conservative camp, especially the Irish Republican Party (Fianna Fáil) and the Italian National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale), which kept a tight grip on the direction of the group. Of the national populist parties discussed in this book, the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF), the Polish Law and Justice party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) and the Lithuanian Order and Justice party (Tvarka ir teisingumas, TT) were represented. After the 2009 election, the Danish and Lithuanian MEPs left the UEN for the newly created group Europe of Freedom and Democracy.

The politics of the UEN were essentially based on criticising the EU. The group viewed Europeanisation as a threat to the cultural identity and self-determination of its states and regions, with the latter applying mainly to the Italian LN (Hübner 2008, 32). The primacy of nations as political entities was clearly advanced as an idea that should never be abandoned. Created in 2002, the Alliance for Europe of the Nations (AEN) was another European political party affiliated with the UEN group. Again, political parties from various camps were represented in this group, ranging from conservatives through national populists to the extreme right. The Lithuanian TT, the Polish PiS and the Slovak SNS had their representatives in this alliance.

Independence/Democracy (Ind/Dem), founded in 2004, was another strongly heterogeneous group in which right-wing and national populist parties appeared. Parties from the far right played only a minor role in this group, however. Its programme rejected the European constitution and the creation of a European superstate and demanded respect for, and the protection of, traditional cultural values.

In light of later developments and further attempts to establish an international network of national populist parties, the steps taken in 2009 by the Austrian FPÖ are interesting, though they appear rather unfortunate and futile in retrospect. At the beginning of 2009, the FPÖ once again attempted to create a unified political organisation that would bring together the nationalist parties. The FPÖ called for another meeting in Vienna which was subsequently attended by representatives of the SVP, VB, FN, DF

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and the German Pro Movement (Pro-Bewegung).<sup>2</sup> The FPÖ, and its MEP Andreas Mølzer in particular, were very enthusiastic about the strength of rising European nationalism with their enthusiasm seemingly supported by the results of the European parliamentary election in 2009. They were convinced that this time they would be able to create a group under their leadership. After the election, however, a political group associating right-wing and national populist parties was created, Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD), but without the involvement of either the FPÖ or the Dutch Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid).

MEPs elected for the Italian LN, the Danish DF, the Lithuanian TT, the Finnish party The Finns (Perussuomalaiset) and the Slovak SNS became members of the EFD, as did MEPs from the Greek nationalist party the Popular Orthodox Rally (Laikós Orthódoxos Synagermós), the Movement for France (Mouvement pour la France), the I Love Italy party (Io amo l'Italia), the United Poland party (Solidarna Polska), the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) and the Dutch Reformed Political Party (Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij). The latter two parties announced that under no circumstances would they accept FPÖ representatives in the group, saying that there was no place in the organisation for parties with a racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic agenda (Schiedel 2011, 99). The group is chaired by Nigel Farage (UKIP) and Francesco Speroni (LN).

At the beginning of the parliamentary term 2009–14, the FPÖ was an isolated party in the European Parliament, unable to find a group that would accept it or, conversely, one that the FPÖ would itself be interested in joining. The success of the Slovak SNS, which polled 5.6% of the vote in the 2009 election and became a member of the above-mentioned group Europe for Freedom and Democracy, sent a clear signal to the FPÖ. In the summer of 2011, the FPÖ and the SNS agreed on a partnership for a 'Europe of nation-states with Western-Christian roots which must be revitalised and defended'. A bizarre alliance was created between the two parties: one asserts the inviolability of the Beneš decrees while the other abounds with revanchism (Schiedel 2011, 32). The FPÖ needed the SNS as an intermediary in order to enter the EFD group, however, and was therefore willing to overlook this fact.

The EFD arose from a merger of two groups which existed before the 2009 election, Ind/Dem and UEN, which were unable to renew their separate

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<sup>2</sup> A German political group which focuses on and stimulates Islamophobia.

activities after the election as they had insufficient membership. There was considerable discussion about the name of the group, with proposals including 'A Europe of Free Peoples' and 'A Europe of Peoples for Liberty'. EFD adopted a four-point programme consisting of the following:

- freedom and cooperation among people of different states;
- more democracy and respect for the will of the people;
- respect for Europe's history, traditions and cultural values;
- respect for national differences and interests: freedom of votes (UKIP 2009).

In 2010, Nikki Sinclair, an MEP for the UKIP, attempted to open a discussion within her party concerning the EFD. Sinclair asked the UKIP to leave the group, as the party demands Great Britain's exit from the EU, whereas the group is more geared towards cooperation with the Union. For Sinclair, a situation in which UKIP MEPs, who were elected on the basis of a party programme that included Britain's withdrawal from the EU, were sitting next to MEPs opposed to withdrawal was unacceptable. She also pointed out that MEPs who promote extremist views and do not eschew racism, anti-Semitism or support for violence are involved in the EFD group. She directly mentioned the LN, noting that the party was previously expelled from the Ind/Dem group for its extremist attitudes (Sinclair 2010).

Towards the end of 2010, a new European political party was created, the European Alliance for Freedom (EAF). It gathers together representatives from the FPÖ (Andreas Mölzer and Franz Obermayr), the VB (Philips Claeys and Peter Kleist), the FN (Marine Le Pen), the TT (Rolandas Paksas and Juozas Imbrass), the German group Citizens in Rage (Bürger in Wut) (Torsten Groß) and the SD (Kent Ekeroth). One representative of UKIP (Godfrey Bloom) and a non-aligned MEP elected for Malta (Sharon Ellul-Bonici) are also members of the party. The official party seat is in Malta, and the party is chaired by Godfrey Bloom.

Ideologically, this party is related to the Europe for Freedom and Democracy group, but some members of the latter, such as The Finns and the DF, prefer to keep their distance from the EAF. For some time, the reason might have been the membership of Krisztina Morvai, leader of the Hungarian Jobbik's candidate list for the EP election, who announced at the beginning of July 2011 her entry into the EAF (Hungarianambiance 2011a). In July of 2011, however, Krisztina Morvai announced in a television broadcast that she was

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abandoning the European party due to the differences and disagreements existing between the FPÖ and Jobbik (Hungarianambiance 2011b).

The EAF was recognised by the EP as a European political party in the spring of 2011. The chief goals of the party include stopping the process of European integration and, potentially, even effecting its reversal. It also decided to fight centralisation, immigration and the 'Islamisation of Europe' by tightening asylum and migration policies. The party is opposed to Turkey's accession to the EU (Schiedel 2011, 97–9).

The EAF has articulated its main goals as follows:

- to campaign for a non-centralised, transparent, flexible and democratically controlled EU and the rejection of any development leading to a European superstate, given that there is no such thing as a 'single European people';
- to pursue true subsidiarity and self-rule ensuring that democracy is preserved on the basis of sovereign parliaments in member states, over which the citizens exercise democratic control;
- to sustain diversity and accountable cooperation at a European level among free peoples able to regulate themselves in accordance with mutually agreed-upon common standards;
- to uphold freedom of political expression and association across Europe and especially within the structures of the EU;
- to promote a political environment in which movements, political parties and other political organisations are given equal opportunity to voice their concerns and advance their political positions;
- to ensure that the peoples and nations of Europe are allowed to pursue their right to strengthen their own historical, traditional, religious and cultural values;
- to defend civil liberties and ensure that no characteristics of a totalitarian nature emerge in the continuing political development of the EU, while identifying already existing anti-democratic legislation for the purposes of revoking it (EAF 2010).

## AN ANTI-ISLAMIC ALLIANCE

One factor that helps to unite some political parties in Western Europe is their shared Islamophobia. Islamophobes argue that Christian and Muslim cultures are incompatible; they attempt to frighten native European inhabitants with predictions of a Muslim invasion of Europe and the latter's

Islamisation. This is one of the themes on which the right-wing and national populist parties in Western Europe are able to agree and find a common tongue. This theme also elicits a response from the electorate. In Eastern Europe, however, the issue of Islam has failed to gain importance; an issue more burning for the electorate—that of the Romani—has taken its place.

By identifying a common enemy, Islamophobia is able to unify various groups within the right-wing and national populists and allows these activists to form new alliances. Islamophobia has great transnational potential at the moment, because right-wing and national populists are defined, above all, by negative, even paranoid stances towards what they call the ‘Green threat’, i.e. Islam: ‘We are European brothers, because we never want to Islamise ourselves’ (quoted from Schiedel 2011, 35).

In early 2008, representatives of the FPÖ, the VB, Pro Cologne (pro Köln), the FN and the separatist Platform for Catalonia (Plataforma per Catalunya)<sup>3</sup> met in Antwerp to announce the creation of a network they called ‘Cities against Islamisation’. The network’s charter pronounced that Islam is neither a European nor a Western norm and that its values are at odds with those of the West. Members of the network made a commitment to carry out collective action to prevent the spread of Islam in Europe, and also agreed on a joint information campaign intended to improve the defences of individual Western European cities against Islamisation (Schiedel 2011, 88).

Another joint project, ‘Euroregionale Kommunal’, initiated by the Austrian FPÖ, the VB and the German REP, was announced in early 2008. The allies met in June at the European congress of the REP in Rosenheim, Germany. The meeting was organised around the question ‘Which direction should Europe take?’ Filip Dewinter called for the creation of a ‘European front’ standing against illegal immigrants and Islamisation and in support of identity and sovereignty. ‘Islam does not belong in Europe, which is a continent of castles and cathedrals and not a continent of mosques and minarets’, said Dewinter (Hübner 2008, 27).

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3 In November 2011, Heinz-Christian Strache (FPÖ) and Filip Dewinter (VB) again met with this political formation at its party meeting in Barcelona during the election and voiced their support for it. This was preceded by a meeting in Vienna between the chairman of the Catalan party, Josep Anglada i Rius, and Strache. They presented their common friendship and shared responsibility for European nations and their freedom, as well as responsibility for the protection of European values, which are at this time said to be threatened by globalisation, mass migration and radical Islam (Schiedel 2011, 88).

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The Anti-Islamisation Congress, held on 20 September 2008, provided another opportunity for the national populist political parties to meet to discuss their common Islamophobic agenda. Jean-Marie Le Pen, Filip Dewinter and Mario Borghesio (LN) announced their participation in the congress, saying that the Islamist conquest of Europe and its nation states must be stopped. Nick Griffin from the BNP also announced that he would attend, but his name soon disappeared from the list of participants. The FPÖ indicated that it would send a four-strong delegation: party chairman Heinz-Christian Strache, Andreas Mölzer MEP, general secretary Harald Vilimsky and Vienna councillor David Lasar. In the end, the Austrian delegation did not arrive. The last-mentioned party member declined to attend, as he did not wish to participate in a congress that refused to distance itself from anti-Semitism. Strache preferred to remain in Austria, as it was shortly before the election to the National Council (Schiedel 2011, 88). The congress thus ended in a fiasco, with representatives of the national populist parties unable to meet.

The representatives attempted to demonstrate their ability to cooperate on the Islamophobic agenda in May 2009 in Cologne, where the political movement Pro Cologne organised the second Anti-Islamisation Congress. The invitees once again included the FPÖ, VB, LN, and FN (Vejvodová 2012). The congress faced the same problems as the previous one: many of those invited did not arrive, while those who did were met by large-scale public protests. One of the few who attended and spoke was the chairwoman of the now-defunct Czech National Party (Národní strana), Petra Edelmánová.

In March 2010 the movement Pro Cologne invited representatives of Islamophobic political parties for what they called an 'Anti-Minarett Kongres'. In his speech Dewinter mentioned Islam several times in the context of conquests and called the religion a 'beast'. He even compared multiculturalism with AIDS, claiming that just as AIDS weakens human immunity, multiculturalism weakens the immunity of nations and civilisation (Schiedel 2011, 90). The following year, the VB organised an Anti-Immigration Congress in Antwerp, where representatives of many national populist and extremist political parties were present. In addition to the FPÖ, the REP, SD, LN, DF and SVP sent their deputies. A delegate representing the US Tea Party movement was also present. Among other things, the speaker for the SD said in his speech that the Islamisation of Europe and immigration go hand in hand (Schiedel 2011, 90). In May 2011, the stalwarts of Islamophobia also met on a 'March for Freedom', organised by Pro Cologne. Participants once again included Filip Dewinter, several FPÖ members and Rolf Schlierer of the REP.



## THE LIMITS AND OBSTACLES TO NETWORK-BUILDING

It is clear that the stability of right-wing and national populist groups in Europe is poor and that their long-term relationships are fragile at best. The broader the scope of the EU, the more difficult it becomes for parties to unify. Some parties cannot cooperate because of historical issues: in Central Europe, for example, due to the Beneš Decrees. Other barriers arise for more ideological reasons. Right-wing and national populist political parties can be united in their critique of the EU, but when it comes to the question of just how Europe is to develop, unity amongst the politicians disappears. The sort of Europe they want to emerge in place of the current EU is obscure. The following questions surface: Should membership be defined by nation or by state? What degree of integration would be desirable? What sorts of policies would be necessary to establish cooperation?

The model of a Europe based on nations is preferred by parties whose ideologies are founded on ethnic nationalism (the VB). A Europe based on states is preferred by parties based on state nationalism (the French FN). Moreover, opinions even differ over certain policy issues: for example, the question of collective security or military cooperation. Some parties, such as the FPÖ, want a European army committed to partnership with NATO. Others prefer a Europe independent of NATO, because they consider this alliance an instrument of the US (Mudde 2007, 169; Vejvodová 2012, 224). Which are the policies to be solved together and which to be confined to the national level? These are contentious issues.

Nationalism is the common denominator of the problems mentioned above. First, nationalism causes problems on the path to cooperation because, by its very nature, it assumes the defence of national traditions, goods and values. Cooperation between European nationalist parties therefore faces a unique problem. Members of other political families (liberals, conservatives, socialists and others) share the same values and principles in every policy. Their respective nations or states of origin are of little relevance. Nationalism is not a central or exclusive feature of their ideologies. They share universal values. Therefore, the creation of the international structures needed to attain their goals is much simpler. The right-wing and national populist parties are different in this respect. Nationalist political parties consider themselves the keepers of traditions specific to their countries of origin. They must defend them against all other traditions. Therefore, they often stress nationalism in a chauvinist way, which thus causes conflicts (Vejvodová 2012, 224).

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History also creates barriers to collaboration. Nationalist political parties use history to define their own identity and position in the system. They simplify by distinguishing two crucial categories: 'us and them' (us and our enemies). History has witnessed innumerable conflicts between various nations. Some interpretations of national histories supported by the nationalists inevitably come into sharp conflict with the perspectives of other nations and countries. This is especially true if they are accompanied by territorial controversies or the existence of irredentism among national minorities (Mareš 2006, 7). Nevertheless, cooperation is important to the right-wing and national populist parties in the contemporary world, and some political parties have been able to overcome historical disputes.

The element of leadership inherent to the national populist political parties also plays a very important role. Many parties are built on the charismatic leadership of strong authoritative personalities. Leaders of large parties with elaborate visions of a successful European right are intent on strengthening international cooperation. They definitely project their own ambitions onto the international movements they foster and build international ties according to their own ideas. They want their respective political parties to be the acclaimed international leader. This yields the effect that the most successful parties are not able to cooperate because their strong leaders struggle with each other. For a long time, Jean-Marie Le Pen tried to assume leadership on the European level. Some parties were unable to accept this and did not support him and the FN. For example, the FPÖ and the FN never cooperated during the leadership of Jörg Haider. This was due to 'egoistic battles for dominance' between Haider and Le Pen (Vejvodová 2012, 225–6).

## CONCLUSION

In the twenty-first century, deeper internationalisation is apparent and the existing international community is increasingly offering political opportunities to other political subjects to enter this international environment. Although the ideology of right-wing and nationalist populist political parties is based on nationalism, the right of self-determination and the protection of one's nation and its interests, the political environment is changing in a way that offers political opportunities for nationalists as well. Liberal streams create a space for nationalists as a by-product of internationalisation. The re-nationalisation and re-ethnicisation propagated by the nationalist populist political parties can be seen as a fundamental

alternative to the dominant ideology of liberal globalisation and must be taken seriously (Grumke 2012), especially in consideration of the EU. The EU exercises real influence at the national level of every European state in ways experienced personally by their citizens.

The right-wing and nationalist populist political parties have come a long way along a course of development full of attempts to create international ties and full of break-ups as well. During the 1990s and still at the beginning of the twenty-first century, failures have predominated. National interests and personal disputes have caused the biggest problems. But nowadays it appears that these political parties have found a common direction, and they seem poised to cooperate. They have defined common topics and interests at the European level, and they have declared the will to promote them. The protection of European civilisation has become the core of this cooperation. Other issues such as anti-immigration, warning against the Islamisation of Europe, anti-globalisation, the protection of traditional values and strong critique of the EU fit into this framework very well. Naturally, the political parties themselves will determine how they manage the opportunities that have been presented to them and how they are able to communicate these topics to the public while promoting their common interests.

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# Part IV:

## Political Implications





# Strategic Responses to the Populists' Advance: Options for Christian Democratic and Conservative Parties

Karsten Grabow and Florian Hartleb

Our analysis has shown that the advance of right-wing and national populist parties has had a negative impact on both conservative and Christian Democratic parties. They have not all been affected to the same extent, since still other parties have been exposed to the successes of the right-wing populists. But this impact has certainly been felt by a number of conservative and Christian Democratic parties—including the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), the Belgian (Flemish) Christian Democrats (CD&V), the Dutch Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA), the French Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), the Norwegian Conservative Party (Høyre) and the Swiss Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP)—while especially in Denmark and Sweden, the Social Democrats have suffered more from the right-wing populists' advance than the centre-right parties.

In this concluding chapter we discuss strategic responses to the right-wing and national populists' advance. In part this will be retrospective in that we take into account the strategies that the conservative and Christian Democratic parties affected have adopted in recent history. However, our reasoning also points to possible strategies for preventing the right-wing and national populist parties from making further progress.

Conservative and Christian Democratic parties have essentially four strategies<sup>1</sup> with which to respond to right-wing and national populists. First, they can completely distance themselves from them. This strategy is

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1 In a Chatham House report on potential counteractions, supported by the Stiftung Mercator and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Matthew Goodwin (2011) recently distinguished five possible response strategies, which in part overlap with ours: (1) exclusion, (2) defusing, (3) adaptation, (4) principle and (5) engagement. While principle is in our understanding closely connected with exclusion or, as we put it, demarcation, we are discussing the strategic response options for EPP member parties, whereas Goodwin focuses primarily on centre-left parties.

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usually labelled the *cordon sanitaire* and involves a complete demarcation from the right-wing and national populists. Second, conservative and Christian Democrats can adapt some of the right-wing populists' demands for their own purposes to reclaim straying voters and to restrict the size of the right-wing populist group. Third, moderate conservative and Christian Democratic parties can act with the right-wing populists' silent support. This is a strategy of toleration by the populist parties. Finally, the moderate conservative and Christian Democratic parties can build formal coalitions with the populists. Across Europe we have observed all of these response strategies over the past decade and a half (see Table 1 below).

While the majority of conservative and Christian Democratic parties responded from the onset with strict demarcation from the right-wing and national populist competitors, other EPP members exercised different strategies. The French UMP, for example, decided to emphasise topics that had earlier been monopolised by the National Front in order to appeal to potential swing voters at its right edge. The Dutch and the Flemish Christian Democrats and the Danish Conservative People's Party set up toleration models for right-wing populists, while the Austrian People's Party went so far as to build a formal government coalition with the Freedom Party in 2000.

The EPP members' reactions were not static, however. The pragmatic relationship between the Danish KF and the populist DF cooled significantly prior to the election of 2011, and the KF turned to a strict demarcation strategy. The Dutch Christian Democrats obviously regretted their cooperation with the PVV and also turned back—too late, as it turned out—to demarcation. Other conservative and Christian Democratic parties, too, changed their behaviour and opposed the right-wing populists. Although strictly opposed to The Finns' Eurosceptic and nationalist positions both during the electoral campaign and in later negotiations about the government coalition, the Finnish National Coalition Party (KOK) has not been able to completely escape the gravitational pull of Timo Soini and his party. Especially in European matters, the KOK has felt pressured to take more restrictive positions (see Raunio in this volume). Similarly, the Norwegian Conservatives have become somewhat more restrictive on immigration in view of the success of the Progress Party (see Jupskås in this volume).

**Table 1 Examples of strategic responses of Christian Democratic and moderate conservative parties to the populists' advance**

<b>Complete demarcation</b>	<b>Partial approximation</b>	<b>Toleration by populist parties</b>	<b>Coalition</b>
CVP, Switzerland PO, Poland KF, Denmark (since mid-2011) M, Sweden TS-LKD, Lithuania KOK,* Finland → SDKÚ-DS, Slovakia Høyre,** Norway →	UMP** , France	CDA, Netherlands (2010–12)  KF, Denmark (until autumn 2011)  CD&V***, Belgium (2007–8) →	ÖVP, Austria (2000–2)

*Legend:* CVP = Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei (Christian Democratic People's Party), PO = Platforma Obywatelska (Civic Platform), KF = Det Konservative Folkeparti (Conservative People's Party), M = Moderata Samlingspartiet (Moderate Rally Party), TS-LKD = Tėvynės Sąjunga-Lietuvos Krikščionys Demokratai (Homeland Union-Lithuanian Christian Democrats), KOK = Kansallinen Kokoomus (National Coalition Party), SDKÚ-DS = Slovenská Demokratická a Kresťanská Únia (Slovak Democratic and Christian Union), Høyre (Right) = Conservative Party, UMP = Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (Union for a Popular Movement), CDA = Christen Democratisch Appèl (Christian Democratic Appeal), CD&V = Christen Democratisch & Vlaams (Christian Democratic & Flemish), ÖVP = Österreichische Volkspartei (Austrian People's Party).

The symbol → means the party is moving in the direction indicated, towards the next category.

\* On further European integration, especially bailout measures.

\*\* On immigration.

\*\*\* At the federal level there were different kinds of cooperation between the CD&V and the 'borderline-case' N-VA (see the chapter by Pauwels in this volume and Van Hecke 2012, 54–6). At state level there is a coalition between the two parties in Flanders. On the classifications of the individual parties, see the country studies in this volume.

*Further sources:* personal interviews by Karsten Grabow with leading party representatives between June and September 2011.

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In order to analyse these strategic shifts more precisely, we have to distinguish at least three different levels of analysis. First, if conservative and Christian Democratic parties adapt to the demands of right-wing populist parties, do they do this for all of those demands or just for some? Second, what are the reasons for these shifts, and finally, can we observe any success in either the response strategy in general or in shifts in these response strategies insofar as they have ensured that the right-wing and national populist parties remain small in size?

To begin with the first question: if democratic parties, regardless of their principal ideological orientation, adapt to address right-wing populist demands, they run some heavy risks. One is the potential loss of credibility, both with the electorate and with the wider public. More centrist voters of either conservative or Christian Democratic parties may feel repelled if their party turns to more restrictive or even anti-immigration positions, if it simplifies the subject of asylum in the way that populists do, or if it suddenly identifies minorities as a source of societal failures. By contrast, swing voters, especially those who sympathise with some of the core demands of right-wing parties, will usually stay out of the reach of conservative or Christian Democratic parties, even after such adaptations to right-wing demands. There is always the problem of the original and the copy, of *Schmied* and *Schmiedl*, as the Austrians say, who have had bad experiences in recent years with the ÖVP's plan to adapt certain right-wing populist positions for their own use. More recently, Nicolas Sarkozy was unsuccessful when he pretended to be as tough as Marine Le Pen on immigration and fighting suburban crime (his core message in the 2007 campaign), before finally introducing elements of Euroscepticism in the electoral campaign of 2012. Adaptation may contribute to retroactively legitimising the right-wing populists' positions (Goodwin 2011, 24).

On European integration and European institutions in particular, Christian Democrats are strategically trapped. For decades, European integration—continuing without serious legitimacy problems and with Europe becoming larger and larger—has been seen as a 'Christian Democratic project' both in the Christian Democratic self-understanding and in public opinion (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach 2011). Yet today a majority of voters in the Member States have lost confidence in the EU, especially since some countries' taxpayers have been made responsible for billions of euros of other countries' deficits. Under these conditions, the current, unified Europe is no longer automatically a convincing, mobilising idea for the

majority of voters.<sup>2</sup> Yet, it would cost Christian Democracy a great deal of credibility and a cornerstone of its self-understanding if it were to adopt a course that involved distancing itself from the EU. It is no wonder then that where a strategic change among EPP members has taken place, it has happened within the more conservative parties, for example, the Finnish KOK and Norwegian Høyre, and that this shift has been directed against further European integration and mutual financial responsibility, including bailouts.

The reasons for a given response strategy, our second level of analysis, are numerous. In general, if a party adapts to address the demands of another, it does so because it wants to regain the support of straying voters. More precisely, if conservative and Christian Democratic parties approach the positions of right-wing parties they do not only want voters back; in strategic terms they also want to restrict the size of their unpleasant competitor. This strategy can also be seen as integrative and stabilising for democracy—as in the famous quip by former German CDU chair Franz-Josef Strauß that on the CDU/CSU's right, there should be no room for any right-wing party.

Complete demarcation is usually explained as a moral position ('we will never cooperate with those parties', a *cordon sanitaire*). It also has a strategic basis, however. The Polish Civic Platform (PO), for example, completely ignored the positions of Jarosław Kaczyński's Law and Justice in order not to provide a base from which the national populists could attack.

Demarcation not only means that the populists are ignored but also that a democratic party sticks to its principles (Goodwin 2011, 24). As we have mentioned above, both responses, demarcation and principle, are closely linked. Defending unpopular and complicated realities and explaining them patiently to the voters seems much more difficult than adapting to populist demands, but a party must protect its credibility. It can be difficult to convince the public that a position is sound, and to create awareness of

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2 Recent polls reveal that the percentage of voters who have become more sceptical of the EU in general and especially of the rescue packages for distressed economies has increased significantly. In 2002, shortly after the introduction of the common currency, almost 50% of Germans had confidence in the EU institutions. This percentage fell to 33% in late 2011, when two-thirds of German voters expressed little or no confidence in the EU (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach 2011, 3, and Appendix, Table 7).

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political realities. During preliminary research on the topic of populism, a representative of the Austrian People's Party told one of the authors of this chapter, 'Usually we need either twenty minutes to explain our positions on Europe in a talk show or it requires one full page in a daily. Heinz-Christian Strache, in contrast, needs only two words, "paid enough!" . . . and he has full attention.'

Tolerance and even more formal cooperation also follow power and tactical considerations, for instance the setting up of a minimal winning coalition with the conservative or Christian Democratic party as the senior partner instead of as a junior partner in a grand coalition. Yet these strategies are usually justified by the representatives of democratic centre-right parties by the argument that through government participation, right-wing populists can be demystified. The temporary crash of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) after two unsteady years in government as the ÖVP's junior partner seems to confirm this line of reasoning, at least at first glance. While of equal strength after the parliamentary election of 1999—both the FPÖ and the ÖVP won roughly 27% of the vote—the right-wing populists' vote share fell dramatically in the early election of 2002, to just 10%, having been unable to realise any of their electoral promises while in the coalition (Pelinka 2005, 98). The ÖVP, however, triumphed in the election. Its share of the vote totalled more than 42%. A narrative was born: that right-wing populists could be demystified through their participation in government.

The fact that this is not always true is revealed by a look at Switzerland, however. In contrast to the Austrian FPÖ's government experience, participation has not harmed the Swiss People's Party. Since it was founded, the party has participated in the Swiss federal government, the Bundesrat, first by inheriting the role from its predecessor and then by improving its results over time. In 2003 it became the strongest party in Switzerland and claimed a second seat in government. The reasons for its continuing success are primarily to be found in the Swiss institutional system. Unlike the ministers of the FPÖ, the SVP members of the Bundesrat need not respect coalition discipline. The seven-member Swiss federal government is a collective body of equals that had acted in unison until the SVP expanded its influence. Instead of respecting this consensus style, the SVP's federal councillors chose to follow their own agenda, especially Christoph Blocher, long-time mentor of the party. Early in 2004 he became the head of the Federal Justice and Police Department, and just a few months after assuming office he pushed through a tougher immigration and asylum law, as he had promised to do (Geden 2005,

79–80). This effort, the party's steady attack on the consensus style of traditional Swiss politics, the repeated calls for even more referendums, and a series of SVP initiatives to deport criminal immigrants—the so-called *Ausschaffungsinitiative*—paid off for the SVP, even though it had behaved like an opposition party in government. Though it suffered a small decline in votes in 2011, it is still by far the strongest party in Switzerland.

Though there is no resilient proof that demystification by government participation is an effective strategy, probably the least effective reaction strategy is toleration. It does not contribute to any demystification of right-wing populists at all. Instead this strategy paves the way for populists to exercise political influence without being responsible for decisions. They can continue to exploit political grievances and can mobilise everyone who is dissatisfied with the performance of the political establishment.

There is no clear-cut answer to the question of what the right strategy is in the battle against right-wing populists. Neither is there a clear path to success. Complete demarcation has in part been beneficial for some EPP member parties, such as the Polish Civic Platform or the Swedish Moderate Rally Party. As well as providing a positive public image, it has contributed to good election results. In other cases—the Danish Conservative People's Party and the Swiss Christian Democrats—complete demarcation has not paid off on election day. This does not mean, however, that some adaptation in the light of right-wing populist demands would have contributed to better electoral results. The Danish KF was voted out of government, but for reasons which were not related to its positions vis-à-vis the DF (Klein 2011). Also, formal coalitions and the official involvement of right-wing populists in state affairs are no remedies against right-wing populists. Since 2002 the FPÖ has regained its former strength (see Heinisch in this book).

That is to say, and not only for Austria, that the politics and the strategies of conservative and Christian Democratic parties are not the only reasons for the advance of right-wing populists. Thus, conservatives and Christian Democrats are definitely not the only actors who should think hard about how best to deal with right-wing and national populism. Finding effective tools in the battle against the advance of these demagogues is a challenge for the whole of society. Yet, given progressing Europeanisation—which is a new breeding ground for populists—national efforts are presumably no longer sufficient to keep the right-wing populist parties small.

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There is no ideal solution for conservative and Christian Democratic parties in the confrontation with right-wing and national populist parties. Complete demarcation is obviously, in the long run, not an effective or durable response strategy. The same is true for the strategy of adaptation or the formation of coalitions. Also, the hope that right-wing populists will self-destruct over internal discord, low levels of professionalism or their peak candidate's propensity for scandal—all of which have befallen some right-wing populist parties from time to time—is at best a feeble response strategy. Once right-wing and national populists have established themselves, there are few ways to get rid of them. The best strategy—regardless of whether they are left-wing, right-wing or nationalist—is to prevent their rise in the first place. It is, however, too late to do this in the countries which we have explored in this study.

This does not mean that the establishment of right-wing populist parties must be seen as inevitable. Democratic forces in general and conservative and Christian Democratic parties in particular must fight back against populist attacks. Both prophylaxis and continuing confrontation with right-wing and national populist parties offer at least two different approaches.<sup>3</sup>

The first one is action, especially if a party is in local, regional, or especially national government. Democratic parties with political responsibility must reduce the social exclusion that results from long-term unemployment and little or even no education. They also have to reduce life-long dependence on social transfers and prevent the impoverishment of entire areas or neighbourhoods. People who feel excluded or left behind show a higher predisposition for the right-wing populists' easy 'solutions'. Thus, the established democratic parties should intensify their efforts to help people to find perspective in their lives, and to find jobs, training and meaningful leisure activities—in short, to help people gain access to a social life

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3 At first glance, 'engagement', that is, steady confrontation with right-wing populists at the local level through the democratic forces' own faithful party activists, seems to be another good response strategy, as suggested by Goodwin (2011, 26). However, this could be a counter-strategy for all established democratic parties, not specifically for democratic centre-right parties. Moreover, we have doubts about whether this can be achieved. Right-wing populist parties are usually controlled by a strong leader who influences public opinion through the national media from his or her home base without much in the way of local party organisation. Thus there is usually a weak physical presence available for other parties to confront. As outlined in the Introduction, apart from the response strategies discussed here, another highly relevant actor that can influence the populists' trajectory is the media.



and participation in society. Democratic forces must drain the swamp by improving social conditions and so weakening the demand side of populism.

What is more, Christian Democratic and conservative parties should rigorously use existing integration, social and safety laws—or even improve them—so that parallel worlds in immigrant communities, no-go areas and the incentives to abuse welfare state benefits do not exist. Domestic security laws and zero tolerance for crime, completely independent of the question of whether it is committed by natives or immigrants, differ from the first kind of prophylaxis because these steps fall clearly into the domains of conservative and Christian Democratic parties. More than other parties they place the most stress on the rule of law and the legal state monopoly. All West European countries are immigration countries. Without denying both the need for and the obvious advantages of immigration hospitality, it is also important that immigrants accept the need to participate in the labour market and in society as a whole and are ready to accept the norms and rules of the host country. This has to be emphasised by Christian Democratic and conservative parties repeatedly in words and actions because the political left is—for reasons having to do with political correctness—less ready to do so.

Moreover, it is essential, especially for the traditionally pro-European Christian Democratic parties, to enhance the reputation of the European Union and its institutions and—more urgently than ever before—to give the common European currency new stability and credibility. As we have seen from the most recent elections in Finland and France, and from recent polls in other countries like Austria, Germany and the Netherlands, a significant number of voters can be mobilised by fears of fiscal overtaxing and uncertainty related to the European rescue packages for distressed economies in the European neighbourhood. The fact that Geert Wilders and his PVV could not improve their results in the latest Dutch election through their anti-Brussels campaign should not tempt one to assume that uncertainty related to the euro has been resolved. The present state of the common European currency, the institutions of the European Union, and the power and regulation claims of the EU authorities remain triggers for substantial dissatisfaction within the European electorate, especially in those countries whose citizens have to carry the heaviest burden (Puglisi 2012; see also note 2). So, it is not only all those who make their living from the European institutions and further integration who should

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recognise the EU as beneficial for them, but Jane Bloggs too, who has relied on the promise of stability since the euro was introduced in 2002. If this promise is broken, it is likely that the trust and patience on which the European project depends will decline significantly. This would create both a massive crisis of legitimacy for all pro-European parties and an excellent opportunity for populist forces to blame Europe and Europeans for such a malady. Therefore, it is necessary for pro-European Christian Democratic and conservative parties to refresh mass consent for the European project. Such consent is apparently hard to achieve, given the highly different styles of policymaking among the EU members and the different expectations among the citizens of EU Member States. Yet, refreshed consent requires much more responsive decision-making (without turning to populist models to achieve this), stronger emphasis on the benefits of closer European cooperation, and compliance with basic but strict rules for state funding and the responsibility of state officials. This seems necessary in order to give European cooperation new legitimacy and to eliminate the breeding ground for right-wing and national populists, especially in the northern countries of the eurozone.

A second way for Christian Democratic and conservative parties to counteract right-wing populists is to openly confront their propaganda. Right-wing populists are basically both demagogues and 'Nay-sayers'. They mobilise 'against something' or 'against somebody', but rarely do they offer a constructive proposal for a given political or societal problem. There are voters who are—for different reasons—relatively easily inspired by the populists' simple messages and their negative campaigning. But democratic forces in general and Christian Democratic and conservative parties in particular are required to show the public what the populists' messages really are: mostly empty propaganda without a trace of a solution. Even if the democrats' explanations take more time than the right-wing populists' easy polemics and even if the democrats' explanations of complicated political questions sound too complex to many voters, the democratic parties must explain to the public, patiently and openly, their ideas, goals and plans for action. In this respect, the populist propaganda may even help the democratic parties to more easily identify those problematic policy fields with which a portion of the electorate is dissatisfied or worried. In this way right-wing and national populist parties can be seen—at least temporarily—as a helpful early-warning system whose signals the established democratic forces must interpret correctly.

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The CES also contributes to formulating EU and national public policies. It produces research studies and books, electronic newsletters, policy briefs, and the twice-yearly *European View* journal. Its research activities are divided into six clusters: party structures and EU institutions, economic and social policies, EU foreign policy, environment and energy, values and religion, and new societal challenges. Through its papers, conferences, authors' dinners and website, the CES offers a platform for discussion among experts, politicians, policymakers and the European public.

The **Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS)** is a political foundation. It is based in Germany, where its 16 regional offices and 2 conference centres offer a wide variety of civic education conferences and other events. Our offices abroad are in charge of more than 200 projects in over 120 countries. At home as well as abroad, our civic education programmes promote liberty, peace and justice. We focus on consolidating democracy, on the unification of Europe and on the strengthening of transatlantic relations, as well as on development cooperation.

As a think tank and consulting agency, our soundly researched scientific analyses are meant to offer a basis for possible political action. In Germany, we offer more than 2,500 events every year, which attract close to 150,000 participants. We provide moral and material support to intellectually gifted young people from not only Germany but also Central and Eastern Europe and developing countries.

Exhibitions, readings and awards are also distinctive elements of our work. We promote young artists and each year award our prestigious literary prize. Our scholarship programmes help young journalists, offering them projects specifically geared to their needs. The Archive for Christian Democratic Policy conducts research into the history of Christian Democracy in Germany and in Europe as a whole. Interested readers profit from an enormous number of documents, modern media presentations and a library containing more than 157,000 publications on politics and contemporary history.





Karsten Grabow and Florian Hartleb (Eds.)

# **Exposing the Demagogues**

## **Right-wing and National Populist Parties in Europe**



Europe's right-wing and national populist parties are on the upswing, even despite some recent electoral setbacks. They have entered parliaments across Europe and some parties are even participating in national governments. What is remarkable is that right-wing and national populist parties have changed their mobilisation tactics. While predominantly xenophobic in the past, right-wing populists now mobilise against further European integration—and not without success.

For all actors involved in EU politics, these developments should be taken seriously. As political think tanks either directly involved in EU politics or deeply committed to the idea of European integration, the Centre for European Studies (CES) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) analyse the reasons behind the advance of Europe's right-wing populist parties. In addition, this volume discusses possible response strategies for the member parties of the European People's Party in order to counter the progress of right-wing and national populists.