Successes of the Right – failures of the Left?

The development of right-wing liberal, right-wing conservative and right-wing populist parties in Western Europe

by

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The dominance of right-wing parties in Western Europe

In the course of the 1990s the political Right in Europe experienced an upswing. In almost all the countries of Western Europe parties of the right-wing camp were able to score notable election gains. Together with parties from the right end of the spectrum, such as populist right-wing parties, moderate right-wing, conservative and liberal parties in many West European countries accounted for the majority of the votes, which they then translated into parliamentary majorities.[1] The greatest electoral successes of the right-wing camp in the last ten years were in Denmark, France, Italy, The Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland. Since 1999 the European Parliament has also been dominated by the European People's Party and a clear majority of the right-wing camp. At present right-wing parties are represented in most West European governments.

On the other hand, the once great and in many countries dominant social democratic parties are either in free fall or have consolidated themselves at a much lower level of voter support. The same applies to communist and socialist parties. The decline of the French and Italian communists, which even in the 1980s were still the largest parties of the Left in Western Europe, exemplifies this. Only a few countries offer counter-examples, such as the Socialistisk Folkeparti in Denmark or the Left Party in Germany, both of which succeeded in expanding their voter base in the last elections.

The extent to which the balance of power inside the right-wing camp has changed is shown by such cases as Italy and France, where today's most successful right-wing

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[1] The term "right-wing parties" is used here to refer to liberal, conservative and populist right-wing parties. According to Norbert Bobbio left-wing and right-wing parties can best be distinguished on the basis of their respective attitudes to equality and inequality. Whereas left-wing thinking assumes the basic equality of human beings and requires a strong legitimation for social inequality, right-wing thought assumes a basic inequality. Quoted after Fuhse, Jan A.: *Links oder rechts oder ganz wo anders? Zur Konstruktion der politischen Landschaft* in Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft, 2004, 33 (2): 209-226.
The present study only deals with right-wing parties that were represented more than once in the national parliaments in the last 15 years or exerted palpable influence on the inter-party competition. In the three countries – Austria, France and Italy – which are taken to exemplify the argument, the parties are divided up as follows: Conservative parties are the Austrian People's Party, the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire, and Forza Italia (with reservations in the case of the latter in view of its strong populist and economic-liberal components); populist right-wing parties are the Freedom Party of Austria and the Alliance for the Future of Austria, the Front National (with a strong right-wing-extremist component) and Lega Nord (with a regionalist orientation); liberal parties are the Liberal Forum, Union pour la démocratie Française and its successor organization, Mouvement Démocrate.

parties reconstituted themselves. In Italy the collapse of the party system and the disappearance of the Democrazia Christiana (DC) was followed by a realignment of the Right, with Berlusconi's Forza Italia emerging as the dominant force in the right-wing camp. In France a weak and fragmented right-wing camp was replaced in the 1990s by a new political force, the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP), which has had a majority of the votes and seats and the office of the presidency since 2002. In other countries the large traditional parties of the right-wing camp, such as the conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) or the liberal and conservative parties in Switzerland, Denmark, The Netherlands or Norway, had to contend with new challengers bent on taking votes away from them. Populist right-wing parties, such as the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), the Swiss People's Party (SVP) or the Norwegian Progressive Party (FrP) have occasionally succeeded in mobilizing sufficient support to break the dominance of the conservative and liberal parties in the right-wing camp. As of now there are many countries in which populist right-wing parties have radically changed the party systems, either calling in question the supremacy of established social democratic, liberal or conservative parties, or promoting the dominance of the political Right. Austria, Denmark and Switzerland are outstanding examples of this. In Austria during the 1990s the FPÖ was able to win a significant share of the vote and influence the composition of the government. In Denmark in 2001 the Dansk Folkeparti (DF) became the second strongest force in the right-wing camp and occasionally supported the liberal-conservative minority government. In 2003 the Swiss People's Party became the strongest party and toppled the constitutionally prescribed consensus government.[2]

The successes of right-wing parties at electoral, parliamentary and government level testify to a new dominance of the political Right in Western Europe. This dominance, however, is hardly ever undivided and is by no means confined to a shift in voting patterns between parties of the left- and right-wing camps. There have also been major changes and power shifts among right-wing parties themselves. The traditionally large, mainly conservative or liberal parties of the Right have scarcely managed to survive the changes in the party systems unscathed.

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[2] The election results of all European countries over long periods can be consulted at http://www.parties-and-elections.de/.

Even among the right-wing parties hardly any are able to form their own parliamentary majority, the exceptions being the conservative parties of France and Greece. In all other countries the larger right-wing parties are also dependent on alliance and coalition partners. In Italy, Denmark and Sweden coalitions of various right-wing parties are currently in power. In other countries, such as Austria, Germany or The Netherlands, conservative parties have formed grand coalitions to govern alongside social democrats. Only Norway, Spain and Portugal are governed by social democratic parties or Centre-Left alliances. The new alliances and coalitions among the parties of the Right show that the party systems have also changed with regard to their cooperation patterns.

Current composition of governments in West European countries

Country	Year of taking office	Government
Belgium	2007	Grand coalition of social democratic, conservative and liberal parties
Denmark	2007	Liberal-conservative minority government
Germany	2005	Grand coalition of social democratic and conservative parties
France	2007	Conservative government
Greece	2007	Conservative government
UK	2005	Social democratic government
Ireland	2007	Conservative-liberal-Green government
Italy	2008	coalition of conservative, liberal, populist right-wing and post-fascist parties
Netherlands	2006	Grand coalition of social democratic and conservative parties
Norway	2005	Centre-Left coalition
Austria	2008	Grand coalition of social democratic and conservative parties
Portugal	2005	Social democratic government
Sweden	2006	Liberal-conservative coalition
Spain	2004	Social democratic minority government

Source: http://www.parties-and-elections.de

These developments indicate that the electoral successes of right-wing parties are not just a cyclical effect of switching majorities between opposition and government, but that these parties have undergone profound changes that have contributed to their success. For not only have the majority ratios shifted in favour of right-wing parties, but more fundamental changes have taken place in the party systems and individual parties. The number and strength of the parties have changed as the result

of the emergence of new political forces. Relations between the parties as well as the coalition and alliance strategies have changed. The success of populist right-wing parties, like that of the French UMP and Berlusconi's Forza Italia, shows that the most successful right-wing parties are parties that have only just been founded or have undergone a fundamental reorientation. This is indicated by new organizational forms and changed alliance and coalition strategies, which also entail a renewal of mobilization strategies and programmatic profiles.

This raises the question of what distinguishes liberal, conservative and populist right-wing parties, and what are the reasons for their success? What conclusions can be drawn from this with regard to the question of what left-wing parties can do in the way of criticism and concrete actions in order to bring about a change of political direction? General development trends will be identified in relation to the following four basic questions:

1. What distinguishes liberal, conservative and populist right-wing parties as right-wing parties? Does the "Right" have a common ideological core?

2. How is the electoral base of liberal, conservative and populist right-wing parties composed? Are the constituencies of these parties distinguished by certain common features?

3. What are the main political aims and issues of the Right? What does it understand by state and democracy, and what kind of vision of society is represented by right-wing parties, and how is this reflected in their actions when in power?

4. What strategies, what organizational and social resources, and what alliance and coalition strategies have contributed to the success of right-wing parties?

The following study is mainly focused on broad development trends, although reference will also be made to individual cases to exemplify certain points.

Right-wing parties – where they come from and what unites them

The emergence of parties and party systems is always an expression of social conflicts of interest. In Western Europe the most important of these conflicts have included the socio-economic conflict between capital and labour, the conflict between secularism and religion or between different confessional groups, and the territorial

conflict between centre and periphery. Along these fault lines there emerged on the one side secular, anti-capitalist political forces, such as communist and socialist parties. On the other side there arose pro-capitalist political forces, above all conservative parties, which clung to traditional values and social orders; Christian Democratic parties based on religious values; and secular, liberal parties. These parties differed markedly from one another not only in terms of their ideological orientation, but also in terms of their social base.

Two major currents determined the formation of right-wing parties in Western Europe in the post-war period: liberalism and conservatism. In most West European countries liberal and conservative parties were fixed components of the party system. Large parties representing one or other of these currents dominated many party systems right up to the 1970s and 1980s – in France the Gaullist party, in Italy the Christian Democratic DC, and in Germany the CDU/CSU. In other countries the dominance was less marked, though even there conservative or liberal parties played a major role in the competition for votes, parliamentary seats, and the power to form a government. Liberal and conservative parties always had a competitive relationship with each other, even if they often collaborated to form a government.

Historically liberalism and conservatism represented opposite poles, which today is manifested in the ideological roots of the parties. Conservatism was distinguished by its attachment to traditional norms and social orders, seeing the family as the nucleus of society and a strong state as a necessary instrument for keeping order. As against this liberalism focused on the individual and individual rights, in particular human freedoms, whence its preference for markets and minimalist view of the state.

Among the major conservative parties of Western Europe we may include the Christian Democratic parties, whose ideology is founded on Christian values and the traditions arising therefrom. In Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland these parties were among the most important parties of the right-wing camp. Of the liberal parties only a few - such as the Freethinking Democratic Party (FDP) in Switzerland – have succeeded in establishing themselves as dominant political forces. Much more frequently, as in Germany, they found themselves in the role of the "smaller coalition partner", which still often enabled them to have more influence on policy than their electoral or parliamentary strength would suggest.

In their pure form the two political currents have long ceased to be embodied by the parties that bear their name. Indeed, on some basic issues they drifted together. After all the evolution of the parties and party systems of Western Europe was not only influenced by ideological currents, but also by other factors: historical caesurae, such as fascism and National Socialism, the institutional framework, the social structure, and the main fault lines in the social fabric also helped shape the parties, which adapted their basic ideology to these events. One example of this is the acceptance of formal democratic principles by nearly all parties. Another thing was that the right-wing parties repeatedly had to adapt to changed circumstances, such as the erosion of traditional voter bases or political changes, and realign their positions and strategies. An example of this is the decision of the Christian Democratic parties to open their ranks to non-religious categories of voters.

At the same time liberal and conservative parties mutually influenced each other. In the second half of the last century conservative parties increasingly adopted liberal ideas. The most lasting influence of liberal ideas on conservative parties was to be seen in the field of economic policy. But unlike the liberals, conservative parties usually remained true to the middle-class- and family-oriented welfare-state model and hence to a social blueprint featuring traditional life styles and roles. In the more recent past many conservative parties have increasingly turned to values-conservatism.[3] Liberal parties have also changed and either moved towards conservative social blueprints, i.e. adopted more values-conservative attitudes, or assumed a more social-liberal orientation.

Conservative and liberal parties found common ground in their acceptance of the capitalist economic model, a vision of an economy and society organized on the performance-based competitive principle, and the acceptance of socio-economic inequality that entailed. They were substantially aided in discovering this common ground by the East-West conflict, the existence of communist regimes, and their common rejection of a socialist or communist social blueprint.

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[3] In recent years values-conservatism, or the preservation of traditional values, has come to the fore again in conservative parties. By distancing themselves from structural conservatism, conservative forces sought to underline their willingness and capacity for reform and thus to combine conservatism with modernity.

Challenges to both liberal and conservative parties[4]

In the last thirty years the main challenges facing liberal and conservative parties were the rising power of social democratic parties in the 1970s and 1980s; the programmatic orientation of these parties to the Lisbon strategy since the end of the 1990s; the erosion of social structural milieus and hence also of their traditional constituencies; the emergence of new parties, above all in the form of right-wing populism; and the loss of a common bond – anti-communism – following the collapse of the socialist regimes.

The 1970s and 1980s witnessed a power shift in the countries that had previously been ruled by right-wing parties. Socialist or social democratic parties, which had opened themselves to wider sections of the electorate, were able to win majorities for the first time and assume the reins of government. Since then, however, the major parties of both the right and the left have experienced a sharp decline in voter support. The demographic and socio-economic development caused by modernization and individualization processes was accompanied by an erosion of socio-cultural milieus and brought lasting changes in voting patterns, political attitudes and participatory behaviour. The social cohesion of the established parties weakened, and their traditional constituencies and membership figures shrank, while the proportion of non-voters and swing voters grew.

The emergence in the 1980s of Green parties on the one hand and populist right-wing parties on the other greatly accelerated the erosion of support for the main established parties. Social democratic and conservative parties were equally affected by this. Whereas support for the new Green parties generally stabilized at between five and ten percent of the vote, populist right-wing parties were able to achieve even greater gains and in some cases to raise their share of the vote to 20 percent. The emergence of populist right-wing parties led in many countries to major changes within the right-wing camp and the entire party system. Some of these parties were new political formations, like the Progressive Parties in Denmark and Norway or the Lega Nord in Italy. But some of the most successful of them were parties that had long been in existence but had undergone a reorientation, like the Freedom Party of

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[4] A detailed examination of the longer-term and more recent changes in the party systems of individual West European countries is to be found in Niedermayer, Oskar, Richard Stöss, and Melanie Haas: *Die Parteiensysteme Westeuropas.* Opladen, 2006.

Austria (FPÖ) or the Swiss People's Party (SVP). Populist right-wing parties have now become an integral part of the party systems in many countries, having left other right-wing parties far behind them and (potentially) qualifying as alliance and coalition partners.

Italy constitutes a special case, as the development of the party system there underwent a serious rupture when a large-scale bribery scandal known as Tangentopoli (= Bribesville) led to a radical reformation of the parties and the party system in the early 1990s. The 1994 elections saw the emergence of the newly founded Forza Italia (FI), the post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale (AN) and the populist right-wing regional party Lega Nord (LN) as the new forces to be reckoned with in the right-wing camp, which have repeatedly been in government since. The Italian social democrats, and the communists even more so, have had the greatest difficulties in finding a counterweight to the right-wing alliance headed by Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia.

The developments since 1990, which mainly affected the communist parties at first, did not leave the parties of the Right unaffected either. They had lost the common enemy that had often had a unifying effect. "Anti-communism" had lost its attraction, not only because the communist regimes of Eastern Europe had collapsed, but also because most social democratic parties had in the meantime brought their programmes up to date and opened their ranks, a process that was accompanied by their acceptance of the existing economic and social order. The orientation of social democratic parties to the Lisbon strategy since 2000, when they pledged themselves to a European knowledge- and innovation-based economic model and the principles of competition and growth, reinforced the convergence between the parties in the field of economic and social policy. This in turn intensified the competitive relationship between moderately right-wing and social democratic parties on the one hand while driving left-wing, communist and socialist parties even further to the edge of the political spectrum. Nevertheless, conservative and liberal parties have often proved better at adapting to these new conditions by making strategic and programmatic adjustments, as is shown by their election results and participation in government. Still, the successes of populist right-wing parties and the power shifts between right-wing parties also indicate that the liberal and conservative parties had to reorient themselves in order to survive.

The "newcomers": Populist right-wing parties

For the traditional parties of the Right the successes of populist right-wing parties represented the greatest challenge, as they were not only rivals for voter allegiance, but also strongly influenced the political agenda. The specific reasons for their almost universal success and in mobilizing support are manifold. Some attribute the ubiquitous emergence of populist right-wing parties in the last two decades to modernization processes that have radically changed the relationship between the individual, society and the state. Social modernization processes, particularly economic change and ongoing individualization, formed a favourable breeding ground for populist right-wing parties. The negative consequences of modernization processes were seized upon by right-wing populists, who were able to exploit the increasing fears of loss of status among sections of the population for their own ends. Other conditions favouring the emergence and success of new parties in the course of these modernization processes also favoured the success of populist right-wing parties:

As a result of the dilution of traditional milieus the binding power of the established parties within the social structure weakened. The tendency of voters to change their allegiance or abstain increased, and more and more voters turned away from the traditional parties. As a result the number of floating voters increased markedly, and a considerable voter potential for new parties arose. At the same time, for many voters the political solutions offered by the established parties lost their attractiveness, as being patently inadequate to reflect the new issues and problems. The ideological convergence of the major parties, at least in the perception of many voters, was steadily increasing, which meant that fewer and fewer voters regarded them as political alternatives. This voter potential and the "supply gap" have been successfully exploited by populist right-wing parties in many countries to win over floating or undecided voters by making them a political offer that diverges markedly from that of the established parties and evidently addresses the needs of these voters.[5]

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[5] On the causes of this success see also Arzheimer,Kai and Elisabeth Carter: *Political Opportunity Structures and Right-Wing Extremist Party Success*. European Journal of Political Research 2006, **45** (3): 419-443.

The programme offered and the mobilization strategy pursued by populist right-wing parties are thus important ingredients of success, which distinguish them from other right-wing parties, whether liberal or conservative. Two important features, the stressing and preservation of national identity and an emphatically anti-elitist attitude, characterize these parties. Key features of populist right-wing demands, with which they can demarcate their position in relation to the other parties, are a highly restrictive immigration and asylum policy (summed up by the term "zero immigration") and an excluding, discriminatory migrant policy – demands that are accompanied by welfare-chauvinistic arguments and xenophobic racist attitudes. Eurosceptic and anti-globalization positions are also used to concoct a threat to national identity in a way that suggests that the existence of the nation state and the national identity or the national good are seen as threatened by moves towards European or international integration. The highly anti-elitist attitude of populist right-wing parties appears in the construction of an antagonism between rulers and ruled, in which these parties claim to be the true representatives of the people. Radical, defamatory and discrediting criticism of the existing, representative democracy, its institutions and elites, is used to exploit and encourage existing discontent with the political system. This criticism gives rise to more radical demands for a reformation of the political system. As an alternative to the existing political order, right-wing populists aspire to a direct, identity-based form of politics and democracy. Popular sovereignty and the popular will are not only raised to the level of calls for action, but are to be implemented by plebiscite. Demands for the strengthening of direct democratic instruments or the direct election of parliamentary deputies are the result. It is only natural that this relentless insistence on the popular will should contain an anti-pluralist element. Majority rule is axiomatic. There is as little room here for minority interests as there is for the protection of elementary human and civil rights or democratic principles. In case of doubt these are to be subordinated to the will of a majority, a proceeding to be justified by the supposed will of the majority which is seen as being identical to the common good.

The common ground of populist right-wing, conservative and liberal parties lies in their acceptance of the competitive principle and its attendant inequality. But while populist right-wing parties justify inequality in terms of national identity, liberal and conservative parties do so in terms of performance. With their combination of nationalist and populist elements populist right-wing parties have been the most

successful parties in Western Europe as regards the tapping of new constituencies. However, the electoral successes of populist right-wing parties were achieved not only at the expense of other right-wing parties, but often at the expense of left-wing and social democratic parties as well. Thus in the 1990s the FPÖ was able to win over many former social democratic voters, while the Lijst Pim Fortuyn and parties like the Front National succeeded in making inroads into the former strongholds of the social democrats and the traditional voters of the Left, such as the working class.[6] In some cases conservative and liberal forces appear to have adapted better to this new situation, judging by their election results.

The voter base of right-wing parties

Three long-term changes in voting behaviour affecting all relevant parties must be borne in mind when analysing the electoral base of these parties. First, the proportion of voters without party allegiance has increased, i.e. the traditional constituencies of the large established parties have shrunk.[7] Secondly, this has brought about an increase in political mobility and the proportion of swing voters and those who are late in deciding what party to vote for. This means that the significance of short-term factors in determining voting behaviour and election outcomes has increased. Thus election campaigns and the presentation of both parties and candidates can play a decisive role up to the election day itself. Thirdly and finally, there has been a sharp rise in the number of abstainers, which means that the overall capacity of the parties to mobilize support has declined. Social democratic parties are usually harder hit by the abstentions of former voters than their competitors in the right-wing camp. The last parliamentary elections in France (2002, 2007), Austria (2006, 2008) and Italy (2008), in which the abstention rate was high, revealed that the electoral successes of the right-wing camp were less due to its ability to mobilize support than to the massive failure of the social democratic and left-wing parties to do so.

In view of these developments a large mobilization potential of voters without party allegiance has arisen, from which new and mainly populist right-wing parties such as

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[6] Cf. Kitschelt, Herbert and Anthony McGann: *The Radical Right in Western Europe. A Comparative Analysis.* Ann Arbor, 1995. Evans, Jocelyn: *The Dynamics of Social Change in Radical Populist Right-Wing Party Support.* Comparative European Politics 2005, 3, 76–101.

[7] Holmberg, Sören: *Partisanship Reconsidered* in Dalton, Russel J. and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (eds.): Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior. Oxford, 2007: 557-570.

the FPÖ have been profiting since the 1980s. The mobilization capacity of the individual right-wing parties during this period varies greatly, however. Most countries witnessed strong voter fluctuation between the individual right-wing parties, although the percentage of the vote accounted for by the right-wing camp as a whole remained very stable or even grew. 'This applies to almost all West European countries in which several right-wing parties were competing with one another. In most cases the balance of power between the conventional right-wing parties changed markedly as a result of the success of the populist right-wing parties. In the Scandinavian countries it was mainly conservative parties that lost support, while liberal and populist right-wing parties were able to assert themselves as the stronger forces in the right-wing camp. In Switzerland the populist right-wing SVP became the dominant force in the right-wing camp at the expense of other right-wing parties. In other countries the large right-wing parties, such as the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), Forza Italia (FI) or the UMP, owed their recent major electoral successes to the strong voter fluctuation within their own camp.

An impressive example of how fickle voter preferences for individual right-wing parties can be is provided by Austria. In the 1980s the FPÖ was first able to encroach on the constituency of the conservative ÖVP, a trend continued in the 1990s, when many former ÖVP voters switched to the FPÖ. By this time the populist Right was also succeeding in winning over former social democrat (SPÖ) voters, so that between 1986 and 1999, when its successful mobilizations peaked, the FPÖ had profited in approximately equal measure from swing voters from both the two major parties.[8]

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[8] Picker, Ruth, Brigitte Salfinger and Eva Zeglovits: *Aufstieg und Fall der FPÖ aus der Perspektive der empirischen Wahlforschung: Eine Langzeitanalyse* (1986-2004). Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft 2004, **33**(3): 263-279.

Stimmenanteile der österreichischen Parteien 1994-2008
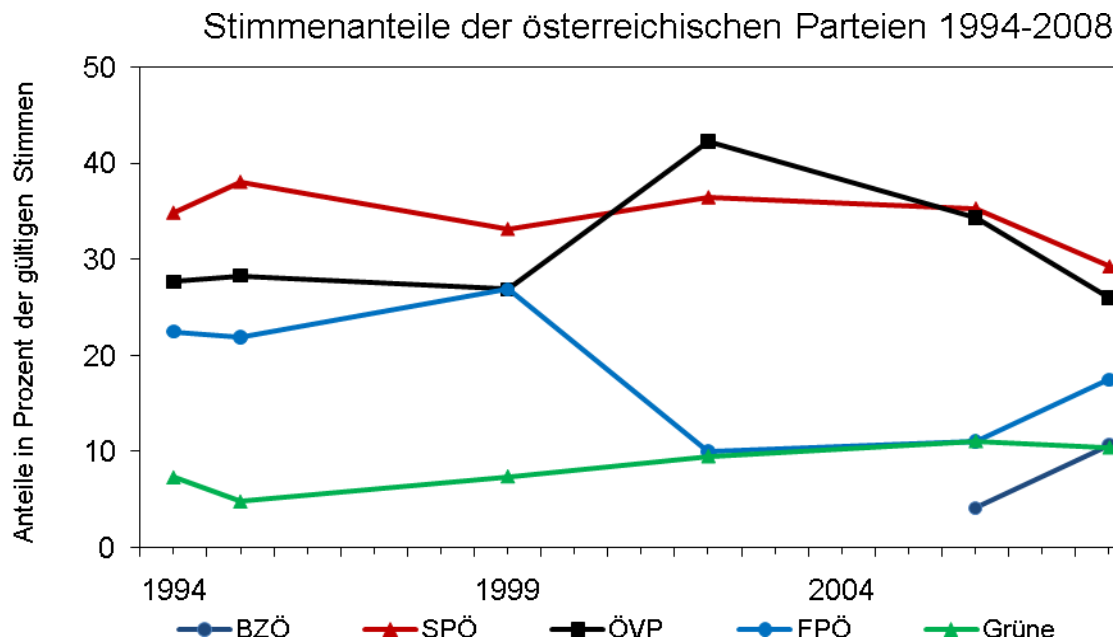
What is remarkable about this is that the FPÖ was able to retain most of the former SPÖ and ÖVP voters, who continued to vote for it. By 1999 the FPÖ was threatening to replace the ÖVP as the country's second strongest political force. The elections following the collapse of the first ÖVP-FPÖ government witnessed voter swings on a hitherto unprecedented scale. While in the 1990s the FPÖ was the first to profit from swing voters, in 2002 this trend shifted temporarily in favour of the ÖVP. The FPÖ lost over half the share of the vote it had in 1999, which fell from around 26% to 11%, while the ÖVP was able to absorb the bulk of the voters who had abandoned the FPÖ, considerably raising its share of the vote to around 42% and becoming the strongest political force. In the 2006 elections both ÖVP and SPÖ lost most of their voters to the non-voter camp and the two populist right-wing competitors FPÖ and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ).[9] The 2008 trend continued when the ÖVP again lost voters to the non-voter camp and the BZÖ, while the SPÖ lost votes mainly to the FPÖ and the abstentionists. This means that for the past ten years or

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[9] The Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) split off from the FPÖ in 2005, with Jörg Haider taking all the FPÖ ministers and large sections of the parliamentary party with him to the BZÖ. Overnight the FPÖ ceased to be part of the government. Among the constituency parties, however, Haider was ultimately only able to win over the Carinthian organization in a relatively consolidated state for the BZÖ. Since then both parties contest elections separately, the FPÖ being the stronger force nationwide and the BZÖ more or less reliant on its stronghold in Carinthia. For more on the split in the FPÖ see Luther, K. R. (2005): *The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)*. Working Paper 22, Keele University: 1-29.

so, although conservative and populist right-wing parties account for a majority of the vote, the competition between them has intensified considerably, and the voter base of the individual parties has become more unstable. This also means that the composition of their constituencies varies considerably from election to election. The reasons for the strong voter fluctuations are mainly to be found in the performance of the parties when in government. In the 1990s the FPÖ profited from the apparently inescapable grand coalition of SPÖ and ÖVP which had governed Austria since 1986. With populist arguments the FPÖ skilfully exploited popular dissatisfaction with the government's handling of certain issues. In government with the ÖVP, however, the FPÖ proved to be an unreliable partner whose internal party conflicts finally brought about the collapse of the first ÖVP-FPÖ coalition. By contrast the ÖVP had asserted itself as the dominant and competent ruling party and in 2006 profited from this image as epitomized by Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel. The ÖVP strategy of embracing the FPÖ had worked, in that it had addressed some of the issues of the populist Right and made the latter accept responsibility by integrating it in the governing coalition. In the subsequent elections of 2006 and 2008, on the other hand, the ÖVP lost again. First it lacked a leadership personality, as Wolfgang Schüssel had not stood for election, secondly the split in the FPÖ had returned the FPÖ to the more favourable role of opposition party and, finally, in 2008 BZÖ and FPÖ were again able to profile themselves as opposition forces and mobilize against the grand coalition. The phenomenon of populist right-wing parties being mainly successful as opposition parties and losing support in government is to be observed in many other cases. Only in Denmark, where the DF's participation in government is informal, and in Switzerland, where the participation of the SVP is institutionalized, has the populist Right been successful in government too.[10]

Similar voter swings – albeit under different conditions – also took place in other countries. In Italy, following the collapse of the party system and the disappearance of the Christian Democrats, the newly founded Forza Italia (FI) was able to win the

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[10] Reasons for the failure of populist right-wing parties in government are seen by Heinisch (2003) in structural weaknesses, programmatic incoherence, lack of professionalism and talented personnel, and the incapacity to resolve internal conflicts. Under the conditons of participation in government populist issues and strategies become a disadvantage. Heinisch also points out, however, that under certain conditons populist right-wing parties can succeed as ruling parties. Heinisch, Reinhard: *Success in Opposition – Failure in Government: Explaining the Performance of Populist Right-Wing Parties in Public Office.*West European Politics 2003, **26**(3): 91-130.
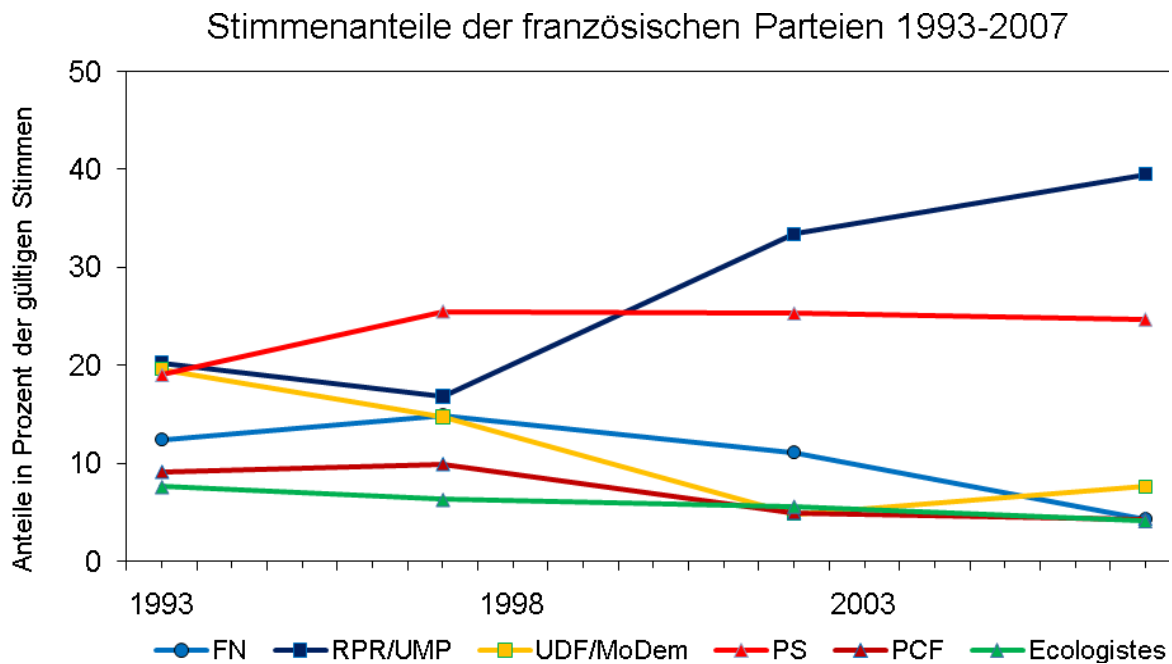
allegiance of a large proportion of the former Christian Democratic voters in 1994. Since then, with a share of the vote between 20 and 30 percent, Forza Italia has dominated the right-wing camp. The post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale (AN) received between 10 and 15 percent, the Lega Nord (LN) between 5 and 10 percent, and two small Christian Democratic groupings about 5 percent of the votes. In the 1996 elections only Alleanza Nazionale and Lega Nord were able to raise their percentage of the vote, while Forza Italia stagnated. In 2001, on the other hand, Forza Italia profited from high transfers of votes from its allies, AN and LN, which was mainly due to the focusing of the election campaign on the person of Berlusconi. In the 2006 elections, on the other hand, Forza Italia suffered slight losses, while AN, LN and the Christian Democrats remained stable or even managed to improve their position. In 2008 the Lega Nord was again able to increase its percentage of the vote, while FI and AN, which campaigned as an electoral alliance, were able to raise their common percentage of the vote only slightly. This means that in Italy the fluctuations in the Right's overall share of the vote in the period since 1996 tended to be slight – between 47 and 52 percent. Greater fluctuations and voter swings occurred between the individual parties of the right-wing camp. Here, too, we see that alliance and coalition strategies were important factors for the showing of the parties. Thus the smaller forces tended to do better when they campaigned independently, and retained their profile, whereas Forza Italia found more favour with the voters when it formed an alliance with AN and LN. But the right-wing parties were only able to win a parliamentary majority within the framework of an alliance.[11]

Even more striking in recent years have been the shifts in voter support within the right-wing camp in France. In the 1990s the right-wing camp was seriously split. Each of its three strongest forces – the conservative-Gaullist Rassemblement pour la République (RPR), the party alliance Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF), and the Front National (FN) received 14-15% of the vote.[12] Competing with the right-wing parties were the Socialists (PS), the Communists (PCF) and the Greens, who finally won a majority in 1997 with the alliance Gauche Pluriel. Up to that moment the dominant forces had been the RPR on the Right and the Socialists on the Left, who

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[11] On the significance of the alliance question in Italy cf. Bartolini, Stefano, Alessandro Chiaramonte and Roberto D'Alimonte: *The Italian Party System Between Parties and Coalitions.* West European Politics 2004, **27**(1): 1-19.

[12] All data on the share of the vote of the French parties refer to the first round of voting.

usually fielded the presidential candidates with the best chances of winning.[13]

Stimmenanteile der französischen Parteien 1993-2007

Source: http://www.parties-and-elections.de/france2.html

In the presidential elections of 2002 two candidates of the right-wing camp confronted each other for the first time. The Socialist candidate, Lionel Jospin, had unexpectedly dropped out of the race as a result of serious splits on the Left, the failed alliance policy of the PS, and other strategic mistakes. The run-off was between Jacques Chirac (RPR/UMP) and Jean-Marie Le Pen (FN). The RPR took advantage of the situation to unite the middle-class Right in the UMP against its greatest competitor, the Front National.[14] In realizing this project the RPR was helped by the fact that the party alliance UDF had been in a state of virtual dissolution since the end of the 1990s, so that large sections of the UDF joined the newly founded UMP.[15] In the presidential elections of 2002, the UMP candidate, Chirac, profited greatly from the fact that people from across the entire political spectrum were prepared to vote for him just to stop Le Pen. In the following parliamentary elections, however, the newly founded UMP managed to win over not only former RPR voters,

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[13] Under the majority voting system for parliamentary elections introduced in the mid-1980s the big parties are dependent on alliance and coalition partners in order to win parliamentary majorities, while the small parties are dependent on alliances in order to be represented in parliament at all.

[14] For more details on the founding of the UMP see Knapp, Andrew: *From the Gaullist Movement to the President's Party* in: Evans, Jocelyn (ed.): *The French Party System*. Manchester/New York 2003:121-136.

[15] On the slow dissolution of this confderation of parties see Sauger, Nicolas: *The UDF in the 1990s: The Break-up of a Party Confederation* in: Evans, Jocelyn (ed.): *The French Party System*, Manchester/New York, 2003**:** 107-120.

but also large sections of the former UDF and even some FN supporters.[16] In 2007 the UMP was able to make even greater inroads into the constituency of the Front National, whose share of the vote had fallen from about 11 to 4 percent, while the UMP was able to increase its share of the vote from 33 to almost 40 percent in the first round of voting. Of the 3.8 million voters who had supported Le Pen just a few weeks earlier in the presidential election, 40% voted for the UMP in the parliamentary elections.[17] The situation in which parties of the left- and right-wing camps used to compete in more or less fragile alliances to win a majority of votes has been replaced by one in which the fusion of various right-wing forces in the UMP and its success in winning over former UDF and FN voters have made the UMP the dominant force with the best chances of achieving a majority.

All three examples make clear that the ties of party loyalty have slackened and short-term economic factors become more important for determining election outcomes. Not only voter fluctuation in general, but fluctuations within the political camps has markedly increased. Particularly striking is the strong exchange of voters between the more moderate conservative or liberal forces on the one hand and parties of the populist and extreme Right on the other. The latter have succeeded in expanding their voter base well beyond their traditional ideological constituency. Some conservative parties, however, like the UMP, the ÖVP on occasion, or Forza Italia, have succeeded in winning back voters from these parties. By means of programmatic and strategic adaptations, which will be examined in more detail below, both populist right-wing and conservative parties have successfully – though often only in the short term – rallied voters behind them. In these three cases liberal parties like UDF/MoDem or the Liberal Forum in Austria lost out. This, however, is not a general trend, as the Dutch VVD is a liberal party that has been able to assert itself as a political force to be reckoned with, even if it was pushed into third place by the Socialistische Partij in the last elections.[18]

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[16] For more details on the events surrounding the 2002 elections and their consequences see Cole, Alistair: *A Strange Affair: The 2002 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in France. Government and Opposition 2002*, 37 (3): 317-342.

[17] CEVIPOF - Ministère de l'Intérieur: Le Panel Electoral Français 2007, P4 – Résultats détaillés. http://www.cevipof.msh-paris.fr/PEF/2007/PEF2007.htm).

[18] The Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie had its greatest success in 1998, when it won almost 25% of the votes, making it the second strongest force after the social democrats. Between 1994 and 2007 the Liberals were always represented in the government.

The voter fluctuations indicate a destabilization of the constituencies in the right-wing camp. But whereas more voters switched from one right-wing party to another, social democratic and left-wing parties had to accept major and more lasting losses to the populist right-wing parties and abstainers. It is less the fluctuation of voters between the political camps, but rather that within the political camps and between the camps and the non-voters that currently determines the balance of power between the parties. What matters is whether parties are in a position to mobilize voters at short notice and lure them out of the non-voter camp or stop them from migrating to it.

The social base of right-wing parties

Strong conservative or liberal parties owed their support to the fact that they addressed new strata of the population instead of clinging to their traditional, religious-based and middle-class electoral clientele. They became "mass parties" in the sense that they were able to attract voters from all strata of the population. Finally some populist right-wing parties, such as the FPÖ or SVP, managed this feat as well.

Because of the strong voter fluctuation and the occasionally considerable expansion of their voter base the social structural composition of the constituencies of individual right-wing parties varies widely. Both populist right-wing and conservative parties mobilize voters from all social groups, albeit from some more than others.

The voter base of conservative parties like the ÖVP, UMP or the Forza Italia, which replaced the Christian Democratic DC, bears the features of a traditionally conservative constituency. Thus an above-average number of conservative voters are religiously committed. On the other hand workers organized in trade unions continue to be clearly under-represented, while office workers, the self-employed, tradespeople and farmers are over-represented. Also, the traditionally strong roots of conservative parties in rural areas and certain stronghold areas are still recognizable. Even Forza Italia drew on the traditional support for the DC in the economically prosperous north of Italy. On the other hand for many conservative parties the aging of their traditional constituency may become a problem in the future. Younger voters are noticeably under-represented in the conservative constituency, while older voters are over-represented. With regard to gender-specific voting behaviour there is no clear trend, and the differences in the voting behaviour of men and women are only slight.

In contrast to the conservative constituency, the voter base of populist right-wing parties presents other features, even if these parties have increasingly succeeded in addressing voters from all strata of the population. A conspicuous feature of populist right-wing parties is that they can all mobilize to a greater extent than other parties male and youthful voters, young men being particularly strongly represented. Far more than their rivals, the FPÖ in Austria, the Alleanza Nazionale and Lega Nord in Italy, the LPF in The Netherlands and the Progressive Party in Norway have met with an enthusiastic response from younger voters.[19] Among vocational groups populist right-wing parties have primarily attracted voters from the lower middle class, above all the self-employed and small businesspeople. To begin with, populist right-wing parties like the Lega Nord and FPÖ succeeded in mobilizing former Christian Democratic voters. However, religious-based voters tend to be under-represented in populist right-wing parties. In the 1990s, with the expansion of their voter base, most of these parties succeeded in mobilizing a disproportionate number of voters from the working class and low-status groups, such as the unemployed. The FPÖ, FN and the Norwegian Progressive Party were able to make particularly strong inroads into this voter category. Initially voters for populist right-wing parties tended to have secondary education, but the appeal to poorly educated voters has increased markedly over the years. Highly qualified voters, on the other hand, are far less inclined to vote for populist right-wing parties. Today the constituencies of most populist right-wing parties have a classless profile, which is in contrast to the traditional battle lines of the class conflict.[20] An important reason for the support of apparently opposed interest groups is the mixture of liberal economic and protectionist positions in populist right-wing parties, a contradiction concealed by the ethnocentric solutions put forward. The class conflict has had the populist right-wing core issues superimposed on it.[21]

In Austria these differences between the conservative ÖVP and the populist right-wing FPÖ emerged with particular clarity in 1999, when the FPÖ had its greatest electoral success to date. The FPÖ was able to win the highest percentage of the

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[19] Evans, Jocelyn and Gilles Ivaldi: *Les dynamiques électorales de l'extrême-droite européenne.* Revue Politique et Parlementaire 2002, 1019: 67-83.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ivarsflaten, Elisabeth: *The Vulnerable Populist Right Rarties: No Economic Realignment Fuelling Their Electoral Success.* European Journal of Political Research 2005, **44**(3): 465-492.

vote – over 30% – among men, especially young and unemployed men. With regard to the age structure the FPÖ was also clearly ahead of the other parties in attracting younger voters, whereas ÖVP and SPÖ met with a better response among older people, especially pensioners. Among workers more voters had decided in favour of the FPÖ than for the SPÖ in these elections. The ÖVP remained the leading party for the self-employed and farmers, though the FPÖ continued to be the second strongest force among the self-employed.[22]

In France too the Front National was able over time to increase considerably its share of the vote among workers, which by 2002 was just as high as it was for the moderate right-wing parties. In 2002 about every fifth worker voted for Le Pen. A more influential factor, however, must have been the steep drop in support for the left-wing parties and the marked increase in non-voters among the workers.[23]

Only the Italian parties failed to follow the proletarianizing trend, as LN and AN steadily lost working-class voters, whereas by 2001 Forza Italia succeeded in rallying most of the workers behind it,[24] which was partly due to the ideological traditions of the AN, as a post-fascist party, and the LN, which followed a very neoliberal line. However this does not explain the success of Forza Italia among the workers. Another special feature of Italy is the regional distribution of the parties: whereas the AN's support is largely in the south, the Lega Nord is limited to the north, which, given the socio-economic differences between the regions, has an influence on the social structural composition of the parties. Thus the Lega continues to enjoy disproportionate support among the self-employed and small tradespeople of the

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[22] Cf. Plasser, Fritz, Peter A. Ulram and Franz Sommer: *Nationalratswahl 1999: Transformationen des österreichischen Wahlverhaltens* in: Khol, Andreas et al. *Österreichisches Jahrbuch for Politik 1999*, Vienna/Munich, 2000: 49-83.

[23] In the presidential elections of 1988 63% of the workers had voted for a left-wing candidate, but by 2002 this figure had fallen to 43%. Cf. Evans, Jocelyn and Nonna Mayer: *Electorates, New Cleavages and Social Structures* in: Cole, Alistair et al.:Developments in French politics 3. Houndsmill, 2005: 35-53. Cautrès, Bruno and Nonna Mayer: *Les métamorphoses du "vote de classe"* in: Cautrès, Bruno and Nonna Mayer (eds.): *Le nouveau désordre électoral. Le leçons du 21 avril 2002. 2004 Paris*: 145-159.

[24] Evans Jocelyn A. and Ivaldi Gilles: *Electoral Dynamics of the European Extreme Right*. Working Paper, July, 2002, http://www.politik.uni-mainz.de/ereps/papers.htm.

intermediate strata.[25] The strongholds of Forza Italia, on the other hand, are located in the south and north of Italy.[26]

More significant differences are to be found in the attitudes and motives of voters. Most of those who vote for conservative parties place themselves in the middle of the Left-Right spectrum or slightly right of centre. Among those who vote for populist right-wing parties the proportion of those who consider themselves to be further to the right is much higher than in the case of conservative parties. Other important motives for voting for populist right-wing parties are protest, a desire to vote established parties out of government, fear of loss of status, and xenophobia, whereas conservative parties profit much more from their image as parties of government and the economic competence ascribed to them.

Analyses of the 2007 presidential election in France showed that voters for Sarkozy's UMP and Le Pen's FN were more likely to have positive attitudes to national identity and rejectionist attitudes to immigration and immigrants. These voters are also more likely to have a conservative vision of society. But when it comes to economic policy their views differ markedly: Whereas among Sarkozy's supporters neoliberal attitude patterns and positive attitudes to liberalization and the competitive principle are more frequently to be found, Le Pen's voters tend to reject economic liberalism. In other countries too the supporters of populist right-wing parties differ strongly from their conservative or liberal counterparts in their attitude patterns and voting motives. 'This applies to the fears concerning the future and the danger of losing status, various other resentments and the xenophobic and welfare-chauvinist attitude patterns more frequently found among populist right-wing voters.

However the typical voters of populist right-wing, conservative or liberal parties no longer exist in the relatively successful parties, whose success is based among other things on the fact that they have succeeded in penetrating all strata of the population. Left-wing parties should ponder the fact that sections of their traditional electoral clientele, especially workers, more frequently tend to vote for populist right-wing parties. As the voter movements between the Austrian parties show, many voters

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[25] Betz, Hans-Georg: Against Rome: *The Lega Nord* in: Betz, Hans-Georg and Stefan Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right. Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*, New York, 1998: 45-57.

[26] Fix, Elisabeth: *Italiens Parteiensystem im Wandel. Von der Ersten zur Zweiten Republik.* Frankfurt a.M./New York, 1999.

switched from the social democrats to the populist Right in the 1990s. In the same period the FPÖ scored notable successes among workers, of whom only a few could be won back.[27]

Although the strong fluctuation of voters, the increased willingness to switch loyalties, and the changed significance of social structural factors for voting behaviour permit the conclusion that under certain conditions successful mobilizations can turn to the advantage of other political parties, the fact that the fluctuation within the right-wing political camp is particularly strong, makes any penetration of the right-wing constituency by left-wing parties seem unlikely, particularly as the competition within the right-wing camp is so intense. Voters with a traditionally left-wing background who changed to populist right-wing parties out of economic or protest motives could be won back by means of targeted campaigns.

Because of the mobilization difficulties of left-wing parties many of their potential voters may not vote at all, as the rise in the abstention rate among French workers shows. A more promising strategy for left-wing parties would therefore appear to be the targeted mobilization of non-voters and young voters, who represent a considerable potential and whom the established parties also find difficult to mobilize. An analysis of this body of non-voters with regard to its social structure and attitude patterns and of the reasons for abstention would undoubtedly be instructive for left-wing parties. The parliamentary elections in France, which were characterized by a very high abstention rate, showed that young voters, women, voters with little education, those in dependent employment, and those without religious affiliation (i.e. groups traditionally associated with social democratic or left-wing parties) were more likely not to vote. These trends have been confirmed by a study of non-voters in many other countries.[28]

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[27] Between the elections of 1983 and 1999 a total of about 688,000 voters had abandoned the SPÖ for the FPÖ. In the same period only 181,000 voters left the FPÖ for the SPÖ. And even in 2002, when the FPÖ suffered massive losses, only 135,000 of the 1999 FPÖ voters changed over to the SPÖ, while the bulk of former FPO voters (some 600,000) went over to the ÖVP. Cf. Picker, Ruth, Bernd Salfinger and Eva Zeglovits: *Aufstieg und Fall der FPÖ aus der Perspektive der empirischen Wahlforschung: Eine Langzeitanalyse (1986-2004)*. Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft 2004, **33**(3): 263-279. Ogris, Günther, Christoph Hofinger and Ursula Breitenfelder: *Wählerströme bei der Nationalratswahl 2002*. Forum Parlament 1/2003: 2-5.

[28] De Nève, Dorothée.: *NichtwählerInnen – eine Gefahr für die Demokratie?* Opladen & Farmington Hill, Barbara Budrich Verlag, 2009.

The programmatic renewal of the political Right

At first glance nothing would appear to have changed in the ideological orientation of conservative and liberal parties, but the focal areas of their policy and hence their programmatic profile have changed considerably. Changes in the problems they face and in their freedom of action, combined with the appearance of populist right-wing parties, have led to a reorientation of conservative and liberal parties.[29] The most important area in which voters continue to ascribe superior competence to liberal and conservative parties is economic policy, in which conservative and liberal parties subscribe to similar principles. The performance-based competitive principle determines not only their economic policy, but also their welfare policy and their vision of society. At the macro level it is liberalization, privatization, deregulation and subsidiarity that are raised into principles of conduct, and at the individual level personal freedom, individual initiative and responsibility. The state is there to provide incentives and is reduced to a few core functions such as external and internal security, education, a minimum of social security, and the provision of infrastructure. Yet even these core functions are increasingly being outsourced and relegated to the realm of individual responsibility. This is exemplified by the ÖVP's 2002 election programme: "As much private initiative as possible and as much government action as necessary."[30] For conservative parties, however, this reduction to core tasks is not necessarily accompanied by a dismantling of the state apparatus or a diminution of the state's right to intervene. On the contrary, the resourcing and scope of its core functions are increased, as in the fields of external and internal security.

Within the framework of this relatively stable ideological base, the last 10-15 years have witnessed clear shifts in emphasis and focus on the part of conservative parties. Thus although their market liberalism has hardly changed, it has become less radical and is given less prominence. Welfare-policy issues and the preservation of social security systems have gained in significance as against market-liberal demands. Such a shift has clearly been undergone by the French RPR, which after a brief phase of blatant neoliberalism did not exactly abandon its economic-liberal

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[29] On the development of Christian Democratic parties in the 1990s see Duncan, Fraser: *A Decade of Christian Democratic Decline: The Dilemmas of the CDU, ÖVP and CDA in the 1990s.* Government and Opposition 2006, **41**(4): 469-490.

[30] Austrian People's Party: Das Österreich-Programm der Volkspartei, 2002, http://www.oevp.at.

principles, but did place more emphasis on regulatory instruments in employment and social policy. This shift was caused by the restrictions on governments' freedom of action: on the one hand the rights and opportunities of the state to intervene in the economy were restricted as a result of liberalization and globalization, while on the other the social consequences of economic and social developments had to be confronted in order to keep voters well disposed.

The social question is seen by conservative parties as mainly an employment issue, and their response to it is economic growth, individual enterprise, and individual initiative. Social problems should only be taken up by the state to a limited extent. Instead individual provision and civil-society commitment should relieve the state of this burden. This means that the welfare state should be restricted to certain benefits. Only certain sections of the population are regarded as legitimate recipients of state transfer payments: this applies particularly to families and pensioners, as social security is also primarily measured in terms of performance.[31] With regard to these groups conservative parties have even strengthened their welfare-policy commitment. Their strong commitment to pensioners also has an important strategic significance, however, as the elderly constitute a considerable part of their constituency. As prominent representatives of a policy of family promotion, based mainly on financial transfer payments, conservative parties insist on their traditional vision of society, in which the family is the basis of society. "We want to promote the family as the nucleus of society."[32]

The main differences between liberal and conservative parties are to be seen in their vision of society, as liberal parties also believe in cultural and individual liberalism, whereas conservative parties are guided by the ideal of a traditional social order and are very hesitant about incorporating new life styles in their vision of society and policies, so that even today we must think in terms of a roll-back.[33]

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[31] One of the principles of the Austrian People's Party is that: "The desire to perform and the willingness to take entrepreneurial risks must be encouraged. Personal performance in the family, society, politics, the economy and culture should be the measure for wages and salaries in a free market economy as well as for vocational and social advancement. Austrian People's Party: Statement of Policy. Vienna, 1995: 7.

[32] Austrian People's Party: Statement of Policy. Vienna, 1995: 5.

[33] This development becomes very clear if we look at the example of the failure of the EU's gender-mainstreaming policy. "Gender Mainstreaming passé – es lebe die Geschlechterpolitik!" Der Freitag vom 08.03.2009, http://www.freitag.de/positionen/0910-geschlechterpolitik-frauenpolitik-eu/.

The basic ideological pattern of a liberal economic and social order on which today's liberal and conservative parties broadly agree is also embraced by populist right-wing parties. The economic and welfare policies of populist right-wing parties strongly resemble those of conservative parties, being based on the performance-based competitive principle. Nevertheless many populist right-wing parties have repeatedly distanced themselves from neoliberal policies on the grounds of national interest. Parties like the LN or FPÖ tend to get caught up in programmatic contradictions, when economic liberalism clashes with protectionism. The protection of the national or regional economy and affluence as well as the primacy of the social and economic interests of the Austrians or northern Italians come before neoliberal principles if it comes to a choice. Anti-globalization voices are repeatedly heard from the ranks of the populist Right when, for example, a national company is to be taken over by an international corporation. Furthermore many populist right-wing parties have mobilized their followers against further steps towards European integration, such as the introduction of the euro or the eastward enlargement of the EU and the increased mobility of migrant workers they brought in its wake.[34] Right-wing populists are more vehement than conservative parties in putting forward welfare-chauvinist arguments. The supposed threat to the national welfare is used to justify discriminatory policies against migrants. "Welfare state, not immigration"[35] or "Secure pensions, not millions for asylum-seekers"[36] were slogans used by the FPÖ in the 2006 election campaign.

If we look at the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition, for example, we see that anti-liberal economic policies were not seriously pursued, but merely used for mobilization purposes. Even on the core issue of immigration the FPÖ made concessions to its coalition partner, the ÖVP, on the question of economic interests. Not "zero immigration", but immigration based on time limits determined by economic usefulness was the leitmotiv of the ÖVP-FPÖ government.[37]

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[34] Some examples: In the run-up to the introduction of the euro die FPÖ initiated a referendum on the schilling and called for the reintroduction of border controls; in 2005 the SVP launched a campaign against Switzerland's joining the Schengen Area; and the Dansk Folkeparti has been mobiliizing against any further steps towards integration.

[35] Source: http://www.hcstrache.at/downloads/08,97592727165,0808.pdf.

[36] Source: http://www.hcstrache.at/downloads/08,49157818128,0808.pdf.

[37] Government programme (04.02.2000: 49); http://bkacms.bka.gv.at/2004/4/7/Regprogr.pdf (consulted: 02.02. 2006)

Like conservatives, right-wing populists embrace a vision of society based on the performance-based competitive principle and traditional roles and morals. Unlike conservatives, however, right-wing populists define society categorically as an ethnic and cultural community. Together with their extreme anti-elitist attitudes, the strong emphasis on the preservation of national (or regional) identity and interests is an important reason for the success of populist right-wing parties in mobilizing support. With their criticism of established parties and existing institutions and their rigid, xenophobic stand on migration policy, which they see in terms of social and internal security, right-wing populists have not only been very successful in mobilizing voters, but also added new issues to the political agenda which were insufficiently addressed by the established parties.

Under the twin pressures of competing for votes and proposing political solutions the agendas and profiles of conservative and liberal parties have changed. External factors such as European integration, symptoms of the crisis such as persistently high unemployment – not to mention the world economic crisis or the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 – have added certain issues to the political agenda and brought about a new or improved formulation of how right-wing parties see the state, society and democracy.

The state as guarantee of security

The role of the state as a guarantee of social, internal and external security has undergone a redefinition in the programmes of right-wing parties since internal security became a key issue. Whereas external and social security continue to be writ large, the tasks of the (nation) state are reduced and transferred. External security is increasingly transferred to the international level, and social security to the social and individual level. On the other hand a new focus of action by the (nation) state is internal security. The lack of internal security, the violation of existing laws, and crime are regarded as the greatest threat to public order, and combating them has been declared a key task of the state. Questions of internal security have gained considerably in significance. Chirac, Sarkozy, Berlusconi and the Austrian ÖVP and FPÖ have made internal security a key election issue.[38] The war on crime and, since

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[38] On the role of the election campaign issue of internal security in France cf. Mayer, Nonna and Vincent Tiberj: *Do Issues Matter? Law and Order in the 2002 French Presidential Election* in: Lewis-

2001, on terror as well, border security and the related issue of immigration, now occupy a key position on the political agendas of all right-wing parties. Immigration is regarded as one of the main threats to internal security and public order. The stigmatizing and criminalizing of migrants on grounds of "illegal immigration" are assuming xenophobic features disguised as concern for the rule of law and law-abidingness. In 2008 under the pretext of fighting crime the Italian government drastically tightened the immigration regulations once again to make entering the country without the necessary papers not just a misdemeanour, but a punishable offence which will later be accounted a criminal record, making the acquisition of a valid residence permit and further integration practically impossible. This example shows how systematically the criminalizing of migrants through the tightening up of regulations is pursued. With a rigid expulsion policy and "success reports" on the deportation of migrants, regardless of their humanitarian situation or the amount of time they have spent in the country, ruling parties like the UMP or FI have sought to demonstrate their tough approach and divert attention from the real problems, such as those encountered in the suburbs of French cities and the often social causes of crime or alienation.

Not only the threat to state authority, but also the need to keep the peace are harnessed to the law-and-order agenda and used to justify highly restrictive migration and asylum policies. The social question is being redefined by parties like the UMP to make it no longer concerned with social inequality, but with individual security and the most elementary rights.

"Fear and anxiety threaten the weakest and poorest among us, those who cannot defend themselves; violence and disregard for the law are destructive of social cohesion. Respect for the law is essential to life in society. […] The authority of the state and the judiciary must ensure that everyone is held accountable for his actions."[39]

This is blatant alarmism. The preservation of the most elementary individual rights, such as the inviolability of the person, which should be taken for granted in democratic societies, is cast in doubt. The state is reduced to its most elementary

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Beck, Michael S. (ed.): *The French Voter. Before and After the 2002 Elections.* Houndmills/ Basingstoke/Hampshire/New York, 2004**:** 33-46.

[39] "La peur et la crainte menacent alors les plus faibles et les plus démunis d'entre nous, ceux qui ne peuvent se protéger; la violence et le non respect de la loi finissent par détruire le lien social. La vie en société passe par le respect de la loi. […] L'autorité de l'Etat et la justice doivent assurer que chacun réponde de ses actes." Source: Union pour un Mouvement Populaire: Charte de valeurs. http://www.u-m-p.org/site/index.php/ump/l_ump/nos_valeurs/charte_des_valeurs.

function, the maintenance of its monopoly of violence and the protection of individual rights. Yet the methods used and the projection onto certain social groups must be regarded as highly problematic. The means to be used to guarantee security often exceed the limits set by the rule of law or are applied with complete disregard for any violation or restriction of individual freedoms they may entail, as will be shown in the following section. Furthermore, suspicion is focused on certain social groups. In this connection the exploitation of xenophobic, Islamophobic and social resentments is no longer confined to populist right-wing parties. The appeal to the "decent, law-abiding citizen" has long since found its way into the rhetorical repertoire of other politicians. In the 2007 election campaign Sarkozy stressed that he was the candidate of those people in France who got up early and worked hard.

How central these issues have become is reflected not only in the election campaigns and programmes of right-wing parties, but also in their actions when in government. Notwithstanding the demand for a roll-back of the state, which is raised for other policy areas, rights of access by organs of the state have been expanded on grounds of internal security without regard for possible restrictions on individual freedoms.

The introduction of video surveillance of public spaces, the granting of expanded rights of access to the police ("face controls" or stronger rights of access to private homes) or wider forms of access to personal data, such as data retention, the passing on of data on air passengers, and easier online searches, were justified in these terms. In Italy the government even resorted to the use of the army for domestic security purposes. Following a recent series of violent crimes in Rome Berlusconi ordered the deployment of troops. A veil of silence is drawn over the fact that the resourcing of the police in Italy has been stagnant for years and even reduced recently.[40] The measures taken in the field of internal security reveal a contradiction between the demands for a roll-back of the state and outsourcing of state functions and the simultaneous expansion, occasionally repressive, of the state's rights of access, which are further removed from democratic control through the outsourcing of state functions.

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[40] "Sicherheit al Silvio", Süddeutsche Zeitung, 04.08.2008, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/896/304868/text/.

At the same time the utterances and attitudes of some politicians and parties indicate a lack of respect for the rule of law in that they undermine the authority of the state and democratic institutions. France's President Sarkozy recently abolished the system of independent examining magistrates, a move that was tantamount to the politicization of the judiciary.[41] Also, the personal and political concerns of individual politicians are promoted by methods of dubious legality. Leading the field in this regard is Silvio Berlusconi, who on several occasions, in violation of constitutional principles, has amended the law in order to evade prosecution on charges of corruption and bribery.[42] Last year Berlusconi had a law passed granting immunity from prosecution for those who hold the highest offices of state. A similar law had been passed in 2003, but had been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.[43] Berlusconi's dubious interpretations of the law are not just in his own favour. In 2004 he announced that anyone who had to pay tax in excess of 50 percent of his income was justified in breaking the tax law.[44] In Austria the FPÖ created a sensation with similar behaviour. For years Jörg Haider, as governor of Carinthia, refused to implement a ruling of the Austrian Constitutional Court on equal treatment of the Slovene minority in Carinthia.[45]

Examples such as these could be multiplied, but it must be clear by now that the concept of the state has changed greatly. On the surface the state is defended as the custodian of the law and the rule of law, yet in the case of a potential threat individual rights are subordinated to the collective national security. In addition, there is a highly opportunist attitude to constitutional institutions and the law of the land, which take second place to personal interests and political calculation. The separation of powers

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[41] *Auf dem Weg in einen "Berlusconi-Staat"?* faz.net, 04.02.2009, http://www.faz.net/s/RubDDBDABB9457A437BAA85A49C26FB23A0/Doc~EB0B6E93DBDDF4D22A9 508565ABCC4F9E~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html

[42] Cf. Rusconi, Gian E.: *Berlusconi'smo. Neuer Faschismus oder demokratischer Populismus?* Blätter für deutsche and internationale Politik 2002, **47**(8): 973-980.

[43] "Keine Strafverfolgung for Berlusconi", Süddeutsche Zeitung, 10.07.2008, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/296/448030/text/.

[44] Berlusconi in Corriere della Sera, 17 February 2004.

[45] "Kärnten: VfGH mahnt weitere zweisprachige Ortstafeln ein" DiePresse.com, 03.07.2008, http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/395857/index.do?from=simarchiv. For more information on the conflicts between the Austrian government and the Constitutional Court see Otti, Albert and Michael Karsten Schulze: *Die Gewalten auf Konfrontationskurs? Eine Fallstudie über das Verhältnis von VfGH und Regierung in den Anfängen der Wende.* Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft 2004, **33**(1): 67-79.

and the rule of law are increasingly evaded by interventions on the part of governments or government majorities.

The reactions to the economic crisis

Given the fact that the role of the state is now primarily concerned with the maintenance of order and no longer with economic matters, the current reactions of governments to the economic and financial crisis are interesting. Despite the superficial impression that the state was intervening more strongly again in economic affairs, the reactions to the crisis rather confirm existing structures. Even if only tentative conclusions can be drawn at this stage from the reactions to the crisis, and these reactions differ according to the economic situation and existing structures, certain common features are discernible:

A coordinated, regulated economic or financial policy continues to appear a long way off, and attempts at a coordinated reaction to the crisis at European level have so far come to nothing. On the contrary, only national bail-out plans have been put forward so far, from which the EU was excluded, European rules being seen as obstructive and even flouted. Proposals for European coordination have been successful in just a few cases. The attempt by France's President Sarkozy, who summoned a crisis summit with Germany, the UK and Italy, with a view to coordinating a European economic and financial policy, drew criticism, as Sarkozy's real aim was to undermine the deficit criteria and the principle of subsidiarity. The French finance minister's proposal of a European bail-out fund for banks aroused as much criticism as calls by French government representatives to relax the Maastricht criteria.[46] The Austrian government's project for a European Plan to bail out and prop up the East European states found few supporters.[47] One reason for the failure of these initiatives is that most of them are dictated by national interests. The Austrian government, for example, has a massive interest in propping up the East European states and banking systems, as Austrian banks have invested strongly in its East European neighbours. How much people have gone back to thinking in national terms and how much importance is attached to national interests is shown by the utterances of Sarkozy and the French government, who have raised very

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[46] "EU warnt Sarkozy wegen Auto-Hilfen" Handelsblatt, 10.02.2009.
[47] "Österreich muss zittern" Die TagesZeitung, 10.03.2009.

protectionist demands even at the cost of a clear rebuke from European competition watchdogs.[48]

On the other hand the national aid packages serve mainly to preserve existing structures in the financial sector and protect corporate structures and national economic interests. The French government is doing all it can to rescue the domestic car manufacturers Peugeot, Renault and Citroen, just as in Germany the focus is on Opel. In early December French President Sarkozy presented a stimulus package of 26 billion euros, which is mainly intended to shore up the car and constructions sectors.[49] The bulk of this package will be used to improve companies' liquidity by means of fiscal measures and bring forward government investment projects. France plans to protect big industrial corporations against foreign takeovers with a 20-billion-euro state fund. Particularly vigorous measures are also being taken to help the French car industry: a "scrapping premium", tax breaks for new cars, cheaper government loans, and an investment fund for supplier firms. In return the government required the car manufacturers not to close any location and do everything to preserve jobs. Sarkozy's other conditions, not to relocate any more locations or to give preference to French suppliers, were rejected by the companies in the knowledge that they would be violations of European competition rules and would be hardly enforceable. [50] With such demands and harsh words for bank managers Sarkozy fishes for votes in the most populist manner, by exploiting the widespread fears of loss of status, welfare-chauvinism, and anti-elitist attitudes among French voters.

Other European countries have so far reacted with very similar measures, albeit on a smaller scale. In Italy the Berlusconi government put together a crisis package estimated at about six billion euros. The Italian version comprises tax breaks for companies and possible support for banks, as well as such consumption-promoting measures as purchase coupons and reductions in the electricity bills of low-income families.[51] In Austria, which has been less hard hit by the financial and economic

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[48] "Sarkozy brüskiert Europa" Süddeutsche Zeitung, 09.02.2009.

[49] "Sarkozy gibt 26 Milliarden für Konjunktur aus." Die Welt, 04.12.2008.

[50] "Sarkozy brüskiert Europa" Süddeutsche Zeitung, 09.02.2009,
http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/67/457724/text .

[51] "Wer geht mit der Konjunktur?" Süddeutsche Zeitung, 13.01.2009,
http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/668/454351/text/.

crisis, the government adopted most of the measures of its German neighbour: raising of state guarantees for savings deposits; loans for banks and insurance companies; a scrapping premium, and a tax reform.[52] Most European governments are reluctant to acquire bigger stakes in or nationalize companies, although taxpayers' money is to be used to maintain the competitiveness and existence of some sectors and companies artificially. But such measures are reserved for exceptional cases. Only in France is the nationalization of companies under consideration by the conservative government, and the current economic policy seems like a renascence of Gaullism, a vision of France in which the state is indeed expected to play an active role in the economy.[53]

The stimulus packages on offer so far tend to reinforce economic structures, while at the same time undermining the competitive principle. Loans, deficit guarantees, investment programmes and subsidies are distributed in an attempt to preserve and strengthen existing corporate structures. Even while using taxpayers' money to rescue companies, most governments rule out nationalization. At the same time measures that would directly promote consumption are, apart from benefits for car buyers, largely dispensed with, while investment is promoted instead. In so doing, however, liberal and conservative parties undermine the competitive principle they held aloft for so long and the oft-extolled economic globalization. Hardly any governments are willing to undertake structural measures such as a fundamental reform and stronger regulation of financial markets or an active redesigning of existing corporate and employment structures. Nor is any account taken of the necessity of accompanying this by a more intensive employment policy that would not only counteract the rise of joblessness, but also bring about a long-term change in employment structures. Instead of training courses short-time work is subsidized and the dismissal of many employees calmly accepted. Only the Swedish right-wing coalition seems to be adopting another approach that attaches more importance to social and employment policies. Instead of providing funding to save the carmaker

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[52] On Austrian banking and stimulus packages see *Presseberichte und Beschlussfassungen des Nationalrats*: http://www.parlament.gv.at/PG/PR/JAHR_2008/PK0818/PK0818.shtml, http://www.parlament.gv.at/PG/PR/JAHR_2008/PK0834/PK0834.shtml, http://www.parlinkom.gv.at/AK/SCHLAG/102Steuerreform%20BR_Portal.shtml.

[53] "Lieber arm statt reich auf Pump" in Faz.net, 22.11.2008, http://www.faz.net/s/Rub117C535CDF414415BB243B181B8B60AE/Doc~E76F8FE71310141FF8E34 485ADFF25573~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html.

Saab from insolvency, the Swedish government decided to spend money on training courses, retraining schemes and job placements, for which over 350 million euros were made available at the beginning of the year.[54]

In view of current developments and the one-sided measures adopted by governments left-wing parties would appear to be well advised to rethink their economic and employment policies, as rising inflation, reduced purchasing power and increased unemployment are the likely consequences of present policies. In order to assuage the growing fears of a loss of social status among increasing sections of the population, a socio-economic perspective must be systematically developed with alternative models and proposed solutions.

The revitalization of Christian values and national identity

As already indicated, conservative, liberal and populist right-wing parties share a vision of society that is essentially based on the competitive principle and in which individuals and civil society are seen as the main contributors. However, unlike liberal parties, populist right-wing and conservative parties subscribe to an ideal of social order that puts more stress on traditional roles and order patterns. Thus the UMP, ÖVP and FPÖ, like the Forza Italia, emphasize the role of the traditional family as the nucleus of society:

 "We think that the family is the fundamental element of our society. Nowadays families and society are increasingly fragmented. We on the other hand think that the active role of the family must be clearly recognized, in awareness of the fact that it cannot be replaced by other social configurations."[55]

It is on this issue that liberal parties differ most clearly from conservative parties, as the former generally cultivate a more liberal vision of society that is more open to modern lifestyles.

Right-wing populists on the other hand represent a vision of society based on an organically developed community defined in ethnic and cultural terms. From this ethnic and cultural community right-wing populists derive an identity based on the will

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[54] http://www.manager-magazin.de/unternehmen/artikel/0,2828,druck-609658,00.html.

[55] "Noi pensiamo che la famiglia sia l'elemento fondamentale della nostra società. Oggi le famiglie e la società sono sempre più frammentate. Noi pensiamo che sia invece necessario riconoscere chiaramente il ruolo attivo della famiglia, nella consapevolezza che questa non può essere sostituita da altre figure sociali." Source: Forza Italia, Carta dei valori, 2004, http://www.forzaitalia.it/images/cdv/cartadeivalori.pdf.

of the people, whose true representatives they claim to be. At the same time this community constitutes the solidary community, in which prosperity is shared, and the political community, the *demos*, on which popular sovereignty is based. This makes it an exclusive vision of society that resolutely excludes people of different origin from economic, social and political life. This is most clearly expressed in calls to bar non-citizens from access to social-security benefits or the franchise, and to prolong and obstruct naturalization procedures.[56] Thus a doubly exclusive social structure is advocated: a vertical one based on the competitive principle and a horizontal one, which defines belonging in terms of origin.

In recent years conservative parties like the UMP or ÖVP, finding themselves under pressure from populist right-wing parties, have repeatedly adopted at least elements of this populist right-wing social order. The preservation of national identity and national interests have also been rediscovered by conservative politicians, incorporated into their manifestos and translated into government action. Unlike populist right-wing parties, liberal and conservative parties that have adopted such positions do not raise national identity and national interests to be the supreme principle of conduct, but justify them more in terms of economic policy and as subordinate to economic-liberal considerations.

All right-wing parties, however, are once again thinking increasingly of social and political issues in national categories. This is expressed not only in the parties' positions on migration and integration, but also in their attitudes to affluence, security, democratic participation and European issues. Conservative or liberal parties, which have gone through a particular evolution, strongly emphasize utilitarian motives. This means economic benefit for their own country. Social policy measures, which are primarily intended to maintain the economic productivity of the individual, are restricted (even) more severely to citizens. The immigration policy is largely connected with economic usefulness. Catchwords like "*migration choisie*" ("selective immigration"), "seasonal labour models" or "blue cards" are models derived from the

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[56] The Front National justifies the general discrimination against people without French citizenship with the term "préférence nationale". In addition to its demands for an immigration ban, only limited terms of residence, and more stringent naturalization requirements, the FPÖ also favours the exclusion of migrants from social security systems: "Private Versicherungspflicht für Ausländer und Ausgliederung aus der allgemeinen Sozialversicherung." Source: FPÖ: "Wahlprogramm der Freiheitspartei" 2006, http://www.fpoe-parlamentsklub.at/fileadmin/Contentpool/Parlament/PDF/Wahlprogramm_FP__2006.pdf

gastarbeiter system. Account is taken mainly of corporate interests, of skilled and highly qualified but also cheap labour. Immigration, however, is seen in a negative light. Migrants' stay in the country should be only temporary, and social, economic, social or political participation rights should be denied migrants.[57] In Austria, under the grand coalition of SPÖ and ÖVP, immigration quotas were introduced in the early 1990s. Since then the qualifications for residence or even the possibility of acquiring citizenship have become more and more restrictive, especially under the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition.[58] The first Italian immigration act of 1986 was followed in 1990, 1998 and 2002 by other laws aimed at further restricting the possibilities of legal immigration and combating immigration. The laws introduced by the Berlusconi government in 2002 and 2008 drastically reduced the opportunities and rights of immigrants to enter the country, while the scope for expulsion was expanded. By setting entry quotas and requiring an offer of work predating the date of entry, Italy followed the trend towards an immigration policy on the "*gastarbeiter* model", i.e. one based on the economic usefulness of immigrants. On the other hand hardly anything was done for the social integration of immigrants, so that naturalization continues to be relatively difficult and based on the *jus sanguinis.*[59] France's immigration policy also followed this trend from the 1990s onwards until Sarkozy established the model of "migration choisie" (selective immigration).[60] In France, on the other hand, because of the republican principle, the participation rights of migrants with regular residence status and the social rights of migrants naturalized in accordance with the birthright principle (*jus*

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[57] For a brief survey of current naturalization laws and integration conditions in Europe see *Europa*: Einbürgerung im Vergleich in Migration und Bevölkerung, http://www.migration-info.de/migration_und_bevoelkerung/artikel/060304.htm.

[58] The relevant measures were incorporated in the new law of residence and the 2005 amendment to the law on citizenship. migration und population – Newsletter. October 2005, http://www.migration-info.de/migration_and_bevoelkerung/artikel/050803.htm. For more information on the Austrian debate on migration policy under the ÖVP-FPÖ government see König, Karin and Bernhard Perchinig: *Austria* in: Niessen, Jan, Yongmi Schibel and Cressida Thompson: *Current Immigration Debates in Europe*, Brussels/Vienna 2005,
http://www.migpolgroup.com/multiattachments/2956/DocumentName/EMD_Austria_2005.pdf.

[59] Cf. Migration und Bevölkerung – Newsletter. September 2003 and September 2008. http://www.migration-info.de/migration_and_bevoelkerung/artikel/030704.htm and http://www.migration-info.de/mub_artikel.php?Id=080705. On the Italian debate on migration policy see Chaloff, Jonathan: *Italy* in: Niessen, Jan, Yongmi Schibel and Cressida Thompson: *Current Immigration Debates in Europe*, Brussels/Vienna 2005,

[60] Cf. Länderprofil France in Focus Migration, March 2007. A survey of the development of the immigration policy in France may be found in: "La politique d'immigration (1974 - 2005). 30 ans de maîtrise des flux migratoires", http://www.vie-publique.fr/politiques-publiques/politique-immigration/index/.

soli) are somewhat more elaborated and secure. [61] However, this has not prevented governments from stepping up the unequal treatment of migrants by forms of law whenever possible. [62]

The utilitarian immigration model, which has become established in most European states, has now been adopted at the European level as well. The "blue card" constitutes a European regulation for immigrant workers from so-called third countries. It is a measure aimed chiefly at highly qualified and skilled workers and represents a further barrier to economically undesirable immigrants while luring well trained workers away from their own countries. [63] Other forms of immigration on the other hand are regarded as undesirable and a threat to society, public order and the national identity. It was mainly conservative and populist right-wing parties that got this policy established.

The established parties of the Right, such as the UMP, FI or ÖVP, have thus incorporated in their manifestos what the populist right-wing parties placed on the political agenda in the 1980s and 1990s. Migration policy is now an important political issue for parties and governments, while national identity and national prosperity have become motives for government action, and what used to be xenophobic rhetoric is now a central argument in election campaigns. [64]

Symbolic acts were also used to show the new relevance of national identity and migration policy. In France under President Sarkozy a Ministry of Immigration, Integration and National Identity has been set up. [65] Denmark has had since 2001 a Ministry of Fugitives, Immigrants and Integration, that significantly was introduced by

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[61] For a comparative view of the legal position of migrants see Migrant Integration Policy Index, http://www.integrationindex.eu/Integrationsindex.

[62] In the course of the 1990s various legal measures were adopted to make access to social-security benefits more dependent on residence status, thus depriving more and more groups of the right to apply for such benefits.

[63] Cf. Migration und Bevölkerung – Newsletter. September 2008, http://www.focus-migration.de/Einzelansichten.1316.0.html?&tx_wilpubdb_pi1[article]=1456&cHash=2aeaa8ece7

[64] In Austria the grand coalition of SPÖ and ÖVP helped make migration policy into an important issue, which shows that even in the 1980s not only right-wing parties, but also social democratic parties saw migration as a problem and supported a more restrictive policy. The main beneficiary of this was the FPÖ, whose positions were thereby legitimized. Cf. Zuser, Peter: *Die Konstruktion der Ausländerfrage in Österreich. Eine Analyse des öffentlichen Diskurses.* Reihe Politikwissenschaft. Institut für Höhere Studien. Vienna 1996**:** 1-89. On the more general influence of populist right-wing parties on migration policy see Schain, Martin A.: *The Extreme Right and Immigration Policy-making: Measuring direct and indirect effects.* West European Politics 2006, **29**(2): 270-289.

[65] Ministère de l'Immigration, de l'Intégration, de l'Identité nationale et du Développement solidaire, http://www.immigration.gouv.fr

the conservative-liberal minority government, which was supported by the populist right-wing Dansk Folkeparti. In November 2008 the Dutch social democrat Minister of Integration, Ella Vogelaar, resigned because she had been criticized by members of her party and governing coalition for showing too much understanding for young people with a migrant background[66] – another example of the fact that sections of social democratic parties also support and stand up for this new policy.

In conservative parties of a Christian Democratic hue these tendencies were accompanied by another development: the revitalization of Christian values. This trend became particularly strong after the attacks of 2001. The Forza Italia's Charter of Values contains strong references to traditional, Christian values:

"This is the centre of our design […]: The defence of moral principles and civic and religious values, the defence of the family and of our roots, the pledging of newcomers to respect our culture, the defence of our enterprises, of our work." [67]

Nowadays politicians of right-wing parties invoke the Western Christian tradition on frequent occasions, even that of the waste disposal scandal in Naples. After the waste had been disposed of by the government Berlusconi declared: "Now Naples is an occidental city again, in which garbage is no longer left lying about."[68] Even parties like the FPÖ, which have a more secular bent, now claims to have religious motives. In the case of the FPÖ this was recently expressed in Islamophobic slogans such as "Daham statt Islam" (Home and not Islam) or "Vienna must not become another Istanbul "[69]. And even in France, which has always had a strongly secular tradition, the UMP has recently been stressing Christian values and calling the republican principle of secularity in question.[70]

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[66] Migration und Bevölkerung – Newsletter. December 2008, http://www.migration-info.de/mub_artikel.php?Id=081005.

[67] "Questo è il centro del nostro disegno, tanto sul lato politico quanto sul lato economico, tanto in Italia quanto in Europa: la difesa dei principi morali e dei valori, civili e religiosi, la difesa della famiglia e delle nostre radici, l'impegno a rispettare la nostra civiltà da parte di chi entra, la difesa delle nostre imprese, del nostro lavoro." Forza Italia, Carta dei valori, 2004.

[68] Quoted after Süddeutsche Zeitung, 4.8.2008.

[69] A reproduction of the poster may be found at: http://www.demokratiezentrum.org/de/startseite/wissen/bilder.html?index=1840.

[70] As early as 2004 Sarkozy caused a stir with his book "La République, les religions, l'espérance", which contained statements touted as positive secularity. According to them Sarkozy saw religious values as necessary to the maintenance of a moral and social order. Neither the Republic nor the laws followed any moral principles and could not guarantee a moral order. Instead the importance of religious values in the secular French Republic had been underestimated for far too long – an attitude which he underscored in his acceptance address on being named Honorary Canon of the Lateran

Summing up these developments we find a highly exclusive social model emerges that excludes people of different origins and different faiths and grants opportunities to participate only to those who are willing and able to be economically productive. This model is a far cry from the idea of an open, tolerant and democratic society.

Democracy as an instrument of power

For some time now nearly all parties right across the political spectrum have been making an issue of the malfunctionings of democracy, above all the steady drop in electoral turnout and citizens' loss of trust in political institutions and political actors. However the conclusions the parties draw from this and the "solutions" they propose vary greatly, as they depend on the different institutional conditions in their countries, their ideological orientations, and their own role in the political system.

Liberal and conservative parties have come to accept a rather formalistic concept of democracy, which regards formal processes such as parliamentary decision-making, elections and occasional referenda, as the core of democracy, these processes being based on competition and pluralism and assuming the validity of individual freedoms. This formal, representative, parliamentary concept of democracy is quite different from the concept of democracy held by left-wing parties, as it is largely limited to the sphere of political institutions. Left-wing parties, on the other hand, frequently demand the penetration of other social spheres – the world of work, for example – with democratic structures and processes. Secondly, the left-wing concept of democracy is more normative in nature, i.e. democracy means more than just the observation of procedures, but is linked to certain values, such as greater equality and more equal rights. By comparison the conservative and liberal view of democracy seems like a minimalist concept that focuses on representation, participation through elections and polls, competition between political actors, and majority decisions.

The concept of democracy held by populist right-wing parties differs from this on one central point. Although these parties have accepted the procedural aspect of democracy, they assume the existence of a popular will whose legitimate representatives they are, and deny any pluralism of interests. They therefore demand

a direct relationship between rulers and ruled. This is expressed in demands for direct elections of personalities, referenda and criticism of such representative institutions as parliaments. The democratic model of populist right-wing parties has strongly anti-pluralist features, is strictly geared to majorities, and is tantamount to a plebiscitary presidentialism. Opinion-forming processes are reduced to the act of giving assent and the government (executive) is strengthened at the expense of the other branches, the legislative and judiciary.

Some elements of populist right-wing notions of democracy have also found their way into the rhetoric of liberal and conservative parties. "Closeness" or "proximité" to the citizen are the catchwords with which these parties attempt to counter political apathy and rising mistrust. The idea is to suggest a direct relationship between citizens and politicians. Demands for more direct democracy have also crept into their manifestos with a view to creating the impression that they want to involve voters more in political decisions. On closer inspection, however, these demands turn out to be not so much instruments for strengthening popular sovereignty and citizen participation in the political process as instruments for strengthening the executive while undermining parliamentary co-determination and control. Furthermore many of these demands have a symbolic character, as they do not go beyond lip service and have no effect on citizen participation. Either the hurdles and restrictions on direct democratic procedures are set so high that they continue to play a minor role in political practice or, much more frequently, they do not go beyond lip service, as so far demands for strengthening direct democratic procedures have found hardly any reflection in government action. What we have seen in the case of reforms of political institutions is that the decision-makers involved have been acting in their own short-term interests. The demands raised during election campaigns and the actual treatment of democratic institutions usually turn out to have an instrumental nature dictated by tactical calculations concerning how to remain in power. This has been most clearly shown in the past by the electoral reforms in France or Italy, which were clearly motivated by the desire to put undesirable political competitors at a disadvantage.[71] Not that this kind of conduct is peculiar to right-wing parties – it may

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[71] See "Berlusconi's faules Vermächtnis", Süddeutsche Zeitung, 24.01.2008, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/124/430875/text/. On the (manipulative) practice of election system reforms see also: Nohlen, Dieter:, Opladen, 2004 (4th ed.).

be observed in all parties, regardless of ideological origin, when they are in government and fear losing their power.

Apart from the reform of existing political systems and constitutions, there have been radical changes in constitutional practice. Recent years have witnessed a concentration of power in the executive. As a result of the process of European integration national parliaments – regardless of the political orientation of their ruling parties – have been weakened rather than strengthened. On the one hand they have lost their legislative powers to the European level, while on the other the formal and informal participatory powers of parliaments have been restricted. At the same time, however, governments were granted negotiating powers.[72] Other developments also promoted the concentration of power in the executive. Increasingly massive use was made of the instruments of government in order to control the parliament and steer the parliamentary opinion-forming process. By means of summary proceedings and a flood of very extensive bills parliament was effectively prevented from working efficiently. This applies as much to the French and Italian governments as to the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition in Austria.

Recent years have seen a clear trend towards concentration of power in France, where from 2002 onwards the central institutions – presidency, National Assembly and Senate – are dominated by the UMP and democratic control by parliament or the opposition can only be exercised within narrow limits. The UMP's dominance of the most important institutions largely overrides the division of powers between the legislative and executive branches. President Sarkozy's latest move to abolish the office of examining magistrate and replace it by a state prosecution service under the Ministry of Justice is also an extension of political power over the judiciary.[73] Measures like these underline that the hegemonic position of the UMP in the French political system is more than a product of fortuitous, political majority ratios, but is being systematically strengthened. In other countries government domination of the political system may not assume such proportions, but such tendencies are discernible in Austria and Italy, too. Under the Berlusconi governments there were repeated cases of massive criticism of and intervention in the administration of

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[72] Cf. Suzanne S Schüttemeyer: *Neue Problemlagen. Informationen zur politischen Bildung*, Heft 295. Bonn 2007. http://www.bpb.de/popup/popup_druckversion.html?guid=4QNOKV&page=1

[73] "Nicolas Sarkozy confirme qu'il veut supprimer le juge d'instruction", Le Monde, 07.01.2009.

justice.[74] In Austria, where broad sections of society were strongly penetrated by the dominant parties SPÖ and ÖVP, the FPÖ's participation in government did not lead to the abolition of proportional representation at all, although the FPÖ had demanded it so vehemently during the election campaign. Instead both ÖVP and FPÖ secured their opportunities of exerting influence when it came to the filling of key positions in institutions, enterprises or public media. So the party-political dominance of all institutions hardly changed, only the political loyalties of the new appointees.[75]

Thus we may note two trends that are detrimental to democracy and threaten to consolidate the dominance of right-wing parties: First, some right-wing governments and parties show an increasing tendency to reduce democracy to direct democracy, thus bypassing control institutions representing the interests of large sections of the population. Secondly, the concept of democracy of whatever provenance is increasingly subordinated to an instrumental approach to democratic institutions and procedures motivated solely by a desire to stay in power and achieve political aims.

The Right's new canon of values

The new canon of values put forward by the political Right consists of economic liberalism, national identity and religious, or more specifically Christian, values. Society is interpreted as a community of those who are able and willing to perform, of well-behaved, upright and adjusted citizens with civic virtues and Christian values. On certain issues certain parties – mainly conservative but some liberal, like the Dutch Liberals – have drawn closer to populist right-wing parties and helped them to realize their aims. This is shown in the increased stress on national identity, particularly noticeable in the field of migration policy and internal security, and in the adoption of populist elements intended to symbolize a more direct policy.[76] However there are still significant differences between conservative, liberal and populist right-wing parties in the accentuation of individual aspects that should not be overlooked.

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[74] Cf. Rusconi, Gian E.: *Berlusconi'smo. Neuer Faschismus oder demokratischer Populismus?* Blätter für deutsche and internationale Politik 2002, **47** (8): 973-980.

[75] Müller, Wolfgang C. and Marcello Jenny: *"Business as usual" mit getauschten Rollen oder Konflikt- statt Konsensdemokratie? Parlamentarische Beziehungen unter der ÖVP-FPÖ Koalition.* Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft 2004, **33** (3): 309-326.

[76] On the success of populist right-wing parties in setting agendas and their influence on the actions of governments see Minkenberg, Michael: *The Radical Right in Public Office: Agenda Setting and Policy Effects.* West European Politics 2001, **24** (4): 1-21.

The ideological traditions of the parties and their social roots are still discernible. Thus the revitalization of Christian values in conservative parties with a Christian Democratic character has a different significance than it does in the more secular populist right-wing or liberal parties. Equally the call for a strong state – whether in relation to a protectionist economic policy or repressive security measures – comes more easily from conservative or populist right-wing parties than it does from liberal parties. These differences also explain why liberal parties like the Liberal Forum in Austria, MoDem in France or the Freethinking Democratic Party in Switzerland often lost out to populist right-wing or conservative parties. How strongly these individual aspects are stressed and what different forms they assume depends on the ideological tradition of the parties, their potential constituencies, and the prevailing traditions of the country in question.

The stirring up of fears of loss of status in combination with xenophobic and Islamophobic statements clearly strikes a chord with many voters. For left-wing parties this creates a dilemma, as voters who were traditionally inclined to vote for them often switch to populist right-wing parties for precisely these motives. The adoption of such positions would, however, place left-wing parties in an impossible position, as xenophobic or discriminatory sentiments run counter to the ideological foundation of the Left, which is the striving for universal equality. On the other hand, the adoption of contrary positions would not help the image of left-wing parties in competitive situations. The arguments are too complex to counteract the simplistic slogans of the Right. This does not mean, however, that left-wing parties should drop their commitment to oppose xenophobia and racism – on the contrary, they should oppose them all the more by waging campaigns to educate voters. But in competitive situations left-wing parties should accept that there are widespread fears of loss of status and resentments among voters and show these voters an economic perspective and political alternative.

The strategies of right-wing parties

The strategies of parties have changed to meet new competitive situations and changes in resourcing. This applies to parties across the whole political spectrum. The local grass roots and ancillary organizations that used to be characteristic of mass parties have lost their significance with the rise of the mass media, above all

television and the Internet. Falling membership, the importance of visual media, and the professionalization and concentration of power in the party executive have done a lot to change the organizational structures and strategic options of political parties. Sharp rises in campaign costs, the professionalization of campaigning and changes in electioneering techniques have not only forced parties to make strategic adaptations, but also made other demands of their material and personnel resources and organizational structure. Changed majority ratios and the disappearance of clear election majorities have also necessitated adaptations of their political alliance strategies. Right-wing parties have evidently been more successful at adapting their strategies to meet these challenges than left-wing ones.

New organizational structures

Traditional mass parties with highly developed internal party opinion-forming processes are on the way out. This is not just because the membership figures have long been in decline. Although there are still parties like the ÖVP which have retained their mass character, the parties more frequently encountered and more successful today are parties of a new type in which new forms of membership and new organizational structures have evolved.

Many parties, such as Forza Italia, FPÖ Lega Nord or the UMP present themselves less as parties than as movements. This is often expressed in the very name they adopt. The UMP has the word "movement" in its name, and in the 1990s the FPÖ attempted to rename itself the "Freedom Movement", in order to erase the word "party" from its name. In this way these parties have expressed at the symbolic level their distance from and scepticism regarding the established parties. But the new quality is not confined to the name. It is also expressed in new, graduated forms of membership which distinguish supporters, members and activists. On the other hand the apparent opening suggested by the term "movement" was accompanied by a strong hierarchization and centralization of internal party structures. Internal party decision-making processes were also strongly hierarchized and centralized, being more top-down than bottom-up. Decisions on policy, strategy and personnel appointments are taken by the party leadership. In the special case of the Italian Forza Italia the party is run on business principles. Employees of Berlusconi's holding

company Fininvest[77] made up a large proportion of the candidates, while the election campaign strategy and positioning of the FI is not determined by internal party opinion-forming processes, but to a much more than usual extent by professional surveys and marketing strategies. The candidates, clubs and members of Forza Italia constitute a distribution system which markets the products Berlusconi and Forza Italia.[78]

Even if these forms of centralization and professionalization at Forza Italia represent an extreme variant, similar tendencies are discernible among other parties of the Right. Both in the Lega Nord and the FPÖ hierarchization has assumed highly developed forms. Higher levels have in the past repeatedly intervened strongly in the work of subordinate party bodies to remove, for example, unpopular office-holders from the party. This hierarchization and centralization of the parties was accompanied by a strong personalization. Silvio Berlusconi, Nicolas Sarkozy and other leaders of populist right-wing parties, such as Umberto Bossi, Pim Fortuyn, Jörg Haider or Hans-Christian Strache, as key leadership personalities, made major contributions to the successful mobilization of their parties, whose strategies and organizations were built around them. In the 2001 election the alliance led by Forza Italia relied entirely on Berlusconi's personality and even forbade constituency candidates of the alliance to have their own portraits on campaign posters.[79] Even in the case of the ÖVP, which only went along with these trends to a limited extent, the significance of a central leadership figure, Wolfgang Schüssel, and the campaign centred on him, was palpably responsible for the party's success in 2002.

Many parties of the right-wing camp have geared their organizational structures and election campaigns to a single charismatic leader who determines the image of the party in the public mind – hence the authoritarian leadership structures of these parties, which have no room for internal party opinion-forming processes and democracy. The lean, hierarchical structures do, however, enable the parties to react very flexibly to changes as the leadership can simply order in an authoritarian fashion

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[77] The group of companies that belong to Berlusconi or his family includes several large enterprises, including a banking and insurance firm, a publishing house, a film production company, AC Milan and Mediaset, Italy's largest private television company with several television stations,

[78] Dreier, Volker: Forza Italia: *Triumph der Telekratie? Zu Morphologie, Erfolg und Zukunft einer politischen Bewegung.* Sozialwissenschaftliche Informationen 1994, **23** (4): 285-292.

[79] Donovan, Mark: *Election report. A New Republic in Italy? The May 2001 election.* West European Politics 2001, **24**(4): 193-205.

a change of programme or a strategic change of course. But although the strong personalization is currently bringing right-wing parties advantages, particularly with regard to their image and media presence, it also entails risks. For if the charismatic leader goes, leaving a vacuum at the top that leads to a leadership dispute, this strategy can become a major disadvantage. This was clearly shown after the electoral defeat suffered by the FPÖ following a change of leadership and internal party disputes; by the fate of the ÖVP after Wolfgang Schüssel's resignation, and by the gap caused by Pim Fortuyn's death, which left his party leaderless.

The new political bedfellows

Another important ingredient of success for right-wing parties was the integration of or cooperation with other forces of the right-wing camp. In many countries changes in majority ratios and competitive structures are reflected in the alliance and coalition behaviour of the parties, especially right-wing parties. Occasionally adaptations of the alliance and coalition strategies were promoted by the election system. In France the winner-takes-all system and the fragmentation of the right-wing camp, especially by the Front National, forced the middle-class parties to develop new alliance strategies. In Italy the new election system adopted in 1994 also necessitated new alliance and coalition strategies. In other countries, such as Austria, Denmark or The Netherlands, the changed majority ratios have required some rethinking with regard to coalition strategies.

The changed alliance and coalition strategies of right-wing parties are an important reason why right-wing parties now and in recent years have so often formed governments. The strategies of the right-wing parties varied according to their different institutional conditions. In all cases the new alliance and coalition strategies indicate an opening of the established conservative and liberal forces, and in particular an opening to the right, as is shown by the participation in government by right-wing populists in The Netherlands, Austria and Italy.

How strongly the prevailing political majorities depend on successful alliance strategies is shown with particular clarity by the example of Italy. As early as 1994 Berlusconi managed to integrate the Lega Nord, the successor to the post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale, in an electoral and government alliance. This was a strategic alliance, especially on the part of the Lega Nord, which did not have much in

common with its allies on the issues. Above all the centralism and nationalism of the AN were in stark contrast to the federalism and regionalism of the Lega. So the first alliance did not last long, with the Lega soon leaving the government. When the next elections were held in 1996 it contested them alone, and the newly formed Centre-Left alliance Ulivo (Olive Tree) was able to carry off the victory. The elections of 2001 were held under exactly the opposite circumstances. The Centre-Left alliance crumbled, whereas Berlusconi was able to renew the alliance with the Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale and hence to win decisively in the constituencies the number of votes needed for a parliamentary majority. The next change of power in 2006 was again of short duration, as Prodi's government alliance soon fell apart as a result of internal conflicts, and the motivation behind the electoral alliance – defeating Berlusconi and his right-wing alliance – proved an insufficient basis for governing together. Berlusconi's right-wing alliance was able to return to power with its position strengthened.

Other examples of the changed coalition behaviour of right-wing parties are provided by Austria and The Netherlands, where populist right-wing parties – the FPÖ and the Lijst Pim Fortuyn – were brought into government. In Austria the ÖVP first decided to form a coalition with the populist right-wing FPÖ in 1999 and continued this coalition even after the premature collapse of the coalition government in 2002. As a result of this new coalition strategy the ÖVP emerged as the dominant force. This not only enabled it to contain temporarily the success of the FPÖ, but made it the only party in a position to choose between several coalition partners. This gave the ÖVP much more negotiating clout in the coalition talks and increased its influence within the government. A special case may be seen in the fusion of different right-wing forces to form the UMP in France. This fusion was made easier by the special circumstances of the presidential elections of 2002, enabling the Gaullist RPR and elements of the UDF to form a new party. Yet although the UMP initially arose as a coalition movement against the extreme right presidential candidate Le Pen, there is clear evidence that forces from the right-wing fringe were also included. Thus there are holders of party-political and elected offices in the UMP who used to belong to the Front National. Representatives of the bourgeois camp who used to cooperate with the Front National and were expelled from their parties for that reason in the late 1990s, are again holding high office in the UMP, such as Jean-Claude Gaudin, for example, who used to cooperate with the Front National.

Given this situation strategies intended to signal an opening and cross-party cooperation across the entire political spectrum have to be seen in perspective. By consulting experts, as under the Berlusconi governments, or including politicians from the other camp, like Foreign Minister Kouchner in France, or representing certain sections of the population in the government, right-wing parties attempt to demonstrate competence and openness, although these qualities are belied by the right-wing orientation of their alliance and coalition strategies.

If the alliance strategies of right-wing parties are important for their government majorities, the deficits of left-wing parties regarding their alliance strategies are self-evident. Bitter proof of this is to be found in the examples of Italy and France, where left-wing forces have been split up into the smallest of groupings. In France it was the failure of left-wing forces to cooperate during the presidential elections of 2002 that enabled Le Pen to be admitted to the run-off, thus paving the way for the dominating position of the UMP today. Communist parties, on the other hand, have generally emerged from alliances with social democratic parties, for example, as losers. The reasons for the miserable failure of left-wing parties to get anywhere in alliance with other parties and the resultant organizational fragmentation must absolutely be taken into account in any strategic reorientation. Left-wing parties should refrain from premature participation in government, especially as minority coalition partners. Their negotiating position is extremely weak, not only because of their election results and the parliamentary balance of power, but also because of the lack of alternative coalition partners.

Important social allies of right-wing parties

The most important social sponsors of right-wing parties have traditionally been corporations and industrial associations. This situation has not changed in any way. Right-wing parties continue to seek contacts with companies and industrial associations. Italy, where a leading politician and a leading entrepreneur are united in one person, Berlusconi, is nevertheless an exception. It is more usual to find close link-ups between conservative or liberal parties and industry, as in Austria, where the ÖVP dominates the chambers of economics and agriculture and its most important social allies have traditionally been business, the self-employed, and farmers. Although Austrian parties are mainly financed by the state, an important donor is the

Association of Austrian Industry, which primarily supports the ÖVP, although it also supported the FPÖ until 1993.

The proximity of right-wing parties to wealthy corporations, which is natural for reasons of tradition and ideology, brings these parties enormous strategic advantages. In view of falling membership figures, state party financing and donations are now the most important financial resources of the parties. In connection with the professionalization of campaigns and rising campaign costs the proximity of right-wing parties to wealthy industrial associations or corporations is therefore a clear advantage. On the other hand it has to be assumed that their influence on the parties has grown stronger.

For parties of a Christian Democratic hue another important social ally is the church, especially the Catholic church. Berlusconi, whose Forza Italia has inherited the legacy of the Democrazia Christiana, must now be realizing how much this support is sought and utilized, most recently in the case of assisted suicide. Such support can be decisive in mobilizing voters in strongly religious societies.

However the nature of the links between parties of the right-wing camp and these social sponsors vary considerably. Traditionally strong conservative or liberal parties receive greater support from business and industrial associations. Christian Democratic parties can rely more on the support of the churches. But populist right-wing parties like the FPÖ are in a worse position in this respect. Representatives of the churches are often among those who criticize and protest against populist right-wing parties, which are thus more dependent on financing by private individuals for campaigning and electioneering purposes.[80]

In relation to other important social organizations like trade unions the attitude of right-wing parties is not unambiguous. Differences in the significance and functioning of trade unions in the individual countries are reflected in the strategies of the parties. The politicized trade unions in countries like Italy or France often tend to be sources

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[80] Precise data on the parties' sources of finance are hard to come by. For information on the relationship between different sources of income in the case of the Austrian parties see Sickinger, Hubert: *Überlegungen zur Reform der österreichischen Parteienfinanzierung.* Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft 2002, **31**(1): 73-90. On party financing in France see Bourrel, Sophie: *Le financement des partis politiques et le Front National* in: Villalba, Bruno and Xavier Vandendriessche: *Le Front National et le droit. Le Front National au regard du droit.* Villeneuve d'Ascq 2002**:** 153-164.

of protest against right-wing governments. Thus in these countries trade unions continue to be regarded by right-wing parties as adversaries. In countries where trade unions are organized by industry and integrated in corporatist structures, as in Austria through the social partnership, the relationship is less confrontational, as the trade unions there have a high degree of organization and enjoy higher esteem in general. The overall tendency, however, is to try to reduce trade-union influence. A wide variety of methods have been tried to undermine the power of trade unions, including integration in the political process, attempts to delegitimize or split them, the founding of rival employee organizations, or the weakening of corporatist structures.[81] In Italy the Berlusconi government succeeded in splitting the trade unions in 2000, thus weakening them politically. In Austria, on the other hand, the ÖVP-FPÖ government managed greatly to diminish the influence of the social partners on government policy. To that extent the hostile intention of right-wing parties to break the power of the trade unions evidently remains unchanged. Trade unions are often, as in Italy or France, important sources of protest against these governments and thus useful allies for left-wing opposition parties. How important the role of trade unions can be in the realignment of the political Left is shown by the example of the Left Party in Germany.

The media – partners or victims?

In addition to the social sponsors the media play a central role in the political process. The interplay of media and politics is of vital significance during election campaigns and the competition for votes. The media systems in the individual countries differ greatly, as does the regulation of the political canvassing. Two major trends have not only affected the development of media systems, but also changed the relationship between politics and media: The first is the declining importance of print media, the dominant role of television and the growing significance of the Internet for the political process. Secondly state monopolies, especially in the field of electronic media, have been broken up and supplemented by privately owned media, a process accompanied by the strong concentration of the private media market in a

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[81] Cf. Tálos, Emmerich and Christian Stromberger: *Verhandlungsdemokratische Willensbildung und korporatistische Entscheidungsfindung am Ende? Einschneidende Veränderungen am Beispiel der Gestaltung des österreichischen Arbeitsrechtes.* Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft 2004, **33** (2): 157-174.

few hands. The formerly important party press and the predominance of state-owned media have thus lost their significance.

Both developments opened up to political actors new possibilities of communication and strategic options. These developments were linked to systematic distortions in media coverage arising out of the media logic of newsworthiness, simplicity of presentation, and advertising costs, which benefited certain political actors:

- Ruling parties and mass parties, which have a higher profile
- Parties which have sufficient resources for costly television time and other means of canvassing
- Calculated breaches of taboos and scandals that draw media attention.
- Personalities are easier to present than political issues.
- Large parties benefit from state grants and refunding of campaign costs, which are generally measured in terms of electoral strength. Sometimes this also affects state regulation of political canvassing.

As a result of the above factors certain political actors, candidates and parties are disproportionately represented in the media. Right-wing parties profit particularly from these systematic distortions, not only because of their electoral successes and participation in government, but also because of their strategic orientation. Right-wing parties, especially when they appear as potential governing parties, also profit from their close ties to wealthy business donors, as they find it easier to raise the necessary resources for large-scale canvassing independently of state sources of finance. In addition to having more favourable material conditions, right-wing parties have also been smarter in gearing their strategies to the needs of the media. Many right-wing parties have hitched their fortunes to charismatic leaders to whom the media respond strongly.

Another aspect repeatedly enabling certain parties of the right-wing camp to attract media attention was their political style. Calculated violations of taboos and provocations, whether in regard to historical revisionism or defamatory attacks on political opponents, were initially used by populist right-wing parties like the FPÖ to attract media attention, a strategy now used by politicians of other parties as well, as the numerous *faux pas* of Berlusconi and Sarkozy show. Thus some right-wing parties and politicians have been better at adjusting to the needs of a media public.

A far more troubling development is the interconnectedness of media and politics, a phenomenon to be observed in various forms. A particularly conspicuous example of this is the combination of media and political power in the person of Berlusconi, whose broadcasting empire dominates the private media landscape in Italy, both radio and television. He also occupies a powerful position in the publishing market, which he has used to manipulate news coverage and public opinion in his own favour. The fact that Berlusconi as head of government controls both his own private stations and the state-owned television is a very serious problem, as the media in a democracy are not only an important channel of information but also an instrument of control. The concentration of media and political power has reached a critical mass in Italy. Italy is thus far removed from a pluralist media landscape, and the accumulation of institutionalized political and media power in one person has so far been addressed half-heartedly at most.[82]

The media reform in France being pushed through by President Sarkozy is headed in an equally worrying direction. The intended restrictions on advertising for public television stations will considerably weaken the latter's position in relation to private channels. Furthermore state access, i.e. of the government and the president of the day, to the publicly-owned television stations is to be increased again. Apart from that the current French president already wields considerable power over the media through his close personal contacts.[83] In Austria, too, the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition used its term of office to fill key posts in the still dominant state-owned radio and television stations with their own people, instead of reducing political influence, as these parties had long and often demanded when out of power.

In addition to the structural and strategic benefits the right-wing parties have taken advantage of in the past, there are increasing attempts to manipulate the media landscape in their own favour and consolidate their supremacy over public discourse. If these processes continue, they will result, as already discernible in Italy, in a situation in which the government determines the media, press coverage and public opinion, reversing so to speak the opinion-shaping process. Left-wing parties must search much more energetically than before for alternative channels of

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[82] For more information on this see Krempl, Stefan: *Das Phänomen Berlusconi. Die Verstrickung von Politik, Medien, Wirtschaft und Werbung*. Frankfurt a. M. 1996.

[83] "Ein Netz von Freunden" Süddeutsche Zeitung, 08.05.2007, http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/582/405360/text/.

communication, as offered by the Internet, for example. By means of a concentrated deployment of their resources and a media-savvy strategic orientation they must also try to win back their place in the public discourse. At the same time the parties of the Left must adapt their strategies to the various forms of communication and learn to express complex issues in a simpler and more visual manner.

Reasons for the dominance of the political Right

In recent years many right-wing parties were successful on two fronts: First the right-wing camp in most West European countries was able to rally a rising or continuously high percentage of the vote behind it. Secondly, in many countries they succeeded in winning the parliamentary majorities needed to form a government. The reasons for this vary. The successful mobilizations of liberal, conservative and populist right-wing parties follow very different patterns. The election results of these parties are neither uniform nor stable over time. Only populist right-wing parties have actually succeeded in expanding their voter base. Established liberal and conservative parties, on the other hand, had to come to terms with a steady decline in their electoral support before managing to consolidate their share of the vote at a lower level in recent years. For the individual parties in the right-wing camp the vying for votes has increased considerably, as is shown by the strong voter fluctuation between liberal, conservative and populist right-wing parties. The electoral successes of the right-wing camp were therefore in most cases shared successes to which the mobilization difficulties of social democratic and left-wing parties also contributed.

Nevertheless the question remains as to what the reasons for successful mobilization or the prevention of failures are. There must have been both programmatic and strategic factors that enabled liberal, conservative or populist right-wing parties to be more successful in addressing voter concerns. The successes of populist right-wing parties are primarily attributed to the fact that they were able to raise their profile vis-à-vis the established parties by adopting new issues and positions. These parties played on voters' resentments and fears of loss of status with xenophobic, welfare-chauvinistic, law-and-order-positions combined with harsh criticism of the established parties, thus winning votes, a development that took place at the expense of the established parties. Most conservative and some liberal parties, however, have successfully incorporated these issues in their political programmes. This applies

particularly to security issues and migration policy, where the parties have clearly moved nearer to populist right-wing positions. This could lead to highly restrictive migration models or an aggressive policy of internal security at the expense of individual rights and the rule of law becoming part of government policy. Given their ideological traditions it was much easier for conservative parties to incorporate these new issues and restrictive positions in their manifestos than left-wing parties. Such basic principles as performance and competition; a minimalist and restricted notion of equality; a state reduced to the most basic functions (albeit one that acts as a "strong state" when it comes to performing its core tasks); and a return to national and Christian values are key planks in the platform and the common ground of today's right-wing parties. Left-wing parties, on the other hand, obviously have the greatest difficulties either in proposing an alternative to the new canon of values of the political Right or in getting such an alternative across to the voters.

In addition to their programmatic adjustments right-wing parties also underwent strategic transformations, in which changed organizational structures and a focus on central leadership personalities constituted important ingredients of success. Furthermore their ties to certain influential social allies were intensified. The close links between parties and private corporations and with the media have proved in some cases, like Italy or France, to be problematical, as it leads to the concentration of media, economic and political power. Democratic institutions and procedures, on the other hand, have been increasingly undermined by right-wing governments, and the danger of their being replaced by a sham populist democracy is great. Although citizens will be called upon to take part in plebiscites and apparently involved in decision-making, it will be on the basis of inadequate information and a strongly manipulated public opinion. This concentration of power may help further to consolidate the supremacy of right-wing parties.

Another important ingredient of success was the adaptation of alliance and coalition strategies. The presence of right-wing parties in governments is only partly explained by their electoral successes, as in many cases their alliance and coalition strategies played a greater role. Established conservative and liberal parties, which themselves have often had to accept a marked decline in their voter base and their percentage of the vote due to new political forces such as populist right-wing parties, successfully adapted and expanded their alliance and coalition strategies. A particular innovation

was the opening of their coalition strategies to populist right-wing parties. In this way liberal parties like the Dutch VVD or conservative parties like the ÖVP secured their participation in government and gained a more powerful negotiating position.

How strongly these strategic realignments, the professionalization and centralization of the parties, the personalization of campaigns, and the pursuit of cooperation strategies, have influenced the success of right-wing parties in the recent past, is shown by the nature of the failures of both right-wing and left-wing parties. Splits, leadership disputes, internal party conflicts, the lack of cohesion in their alliances and coalitions and the crumbling away of social cooperation partners and structures, such as ancillary bodies, trade unions or local grass roots organizations, have largely contributed to the erosion of the electoral base of left-wing parties. Yet there seems to be a noteworthy number of potential voters who have no political home and in view of social structural features and attitude patterns, such as widespread resentments and fears of loss of status, must surely be open to left-wing notions of society. But this would seem to require a programmatic adaptation on the part of left-wing parties, which offered alternative solutions to current problems that clearly differed from the solutions proposed by right-wing parties while also taking account of the main problems facing voters, above all their economic perspectives or lack thereof. Yet strategic adaptations are probably even more important. Above all communication with potential voters must be made more efficient. Getting their alternative solutions across and restoring their positive image must be a major aim of any new strategies adopted by left-wing parties. A more effective mobilization strategy would also require a reorganization of internal party conflict-resolution procedures and a minimum of unity in left-wing parties. Poaching on the preserves of the right-wing camp, whether by raising national-protectionist demands or trying to woo the voters of right-wing parties, would appear, in view of the strong competition between liberal, conservative and populist right-wing parties and for ideological reasons, to be the least advisable strategy.

In order to develop successful, left-wing strategies and be able to give more concrete recommendations in individual cases, a comparative analysis of successful and unsuccessful left-wing parties would certainly help establish the reasons for their success or lack of it. Furthermore a systematic analysis of their constituencies would surely help them to tap the increasing potential of both non-voters and swing voters.

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