New far right parties and the (silent) counter-revolution

Session 03

Álvaro Canalejo-Molero

University of Lucerne

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Overview of the last session

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Take-home points from Session 2:

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2. However, **changes in the socio-economic structure** accompanied by **mobilization through extra institutional channels** can generate an **opportunity window** for newcomers

3. Yet these **changes are unlikely to be large**, because **the conflict structure tends to absorb new issues**

Overview of the last session

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5. Their success depended on **(1) the degree of social change**, (2) **the degree of institutional constraint**, (3) **the openness of the party systems** and (4) and **the structure of political competition**

- In this session we will discuss how **change can trigger change**; that **political dynamics are not often linear**, and that changes can be **bottom-up, but also top-down**

The weakening of party ties

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- People seemed to vote based on their individual preferences on temporarily salient issues rather than as an expression of group identity (i.e., **the 'issue voter'** thesis)

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- "Rural areas tend to have more family tied structures and also a lower level of education which results in more social group centred voting" (Miguel's reponse paper)

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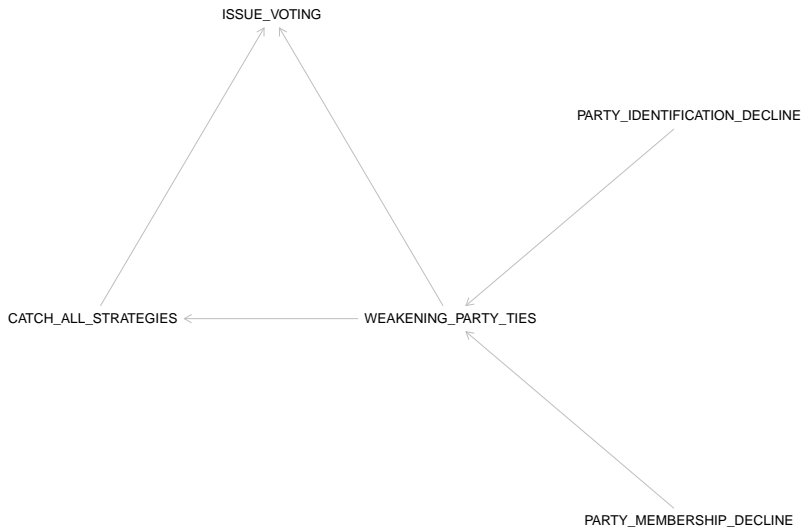
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- Thus, they would devote **less effort to develop programmatic linkages and a a strong organization**

- Instead, their mobilization strategies would increasingly focus on altering the **saliency** of **valence issues** in which to prove their credibility as capable managers of the *res publica*

The weakening of party ties

ISSUE_VOTING

PARTY_IDENTIFICATION_DECLINE

CATCH_ALL_STRATEGIES ← WEAKENING_PARTY_TIES

PARTY_MEMBERSHIP_DECLINE

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- But **were these outcomes true?**
- Let's focus on the first two!

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- In other words, the undergoing process seemed to be one of *de-alignment* **rather than** *re-alignment*

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- Most importantly, these parties **resembled those extreme right parties of the inter-war period because they were able to attract highly diversified voters**, cross-cutting existing cleavages

- On the other hand, they were different from the inter-war extreme right parties and their **successors** because **they didn't reject the democratic principles of popular sovereignty**

The (silent) counter revolution

Table 1. Electoral results of ERP's in the 1980s; percentages of vote

Country	Party	81	82	83	84	84E	85	86	87	88	89	89E
Austria[1]	FPÖ	–	–	5.0	–	–	–	9.7	–	–	–	–
Belgium[2]	VlB	1.1	–	–	–	1.3	1.4	–	1.9	–	–	4.1
Denmark	FRP	8.9	–	–	3.6	3.5	–	–	4.8	9.0	–	5.3
France[3]	FNs	0.2	–	–	–	11.2	–	9.8	–	9.6	(14.4)[4]	11.7
Germany[5]	NPD	–	–	0.6	–	0.8	–	–	0.6	–	–	1.6
	REP	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	7.1
Greece	EPEN	–	–	–	–	2.3	0.6	–	–	–	0.3	1.2
	KP	1.7	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Italy	MSI	–	–	6.8	–	6.5	–	–	5.9	–	–	5.5
The	CP +	0.1	0.8	–	–	2.5	–	0.4	–	–	–	–
Netherlands[6]	CP86											
	CD	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.1	–	–	0.9	0.8
Norway	FRPn	4.5	–	–	–	–	3.7	–	–	–	13.0[7]	–
Portugal	PDC	–	–	0.6	–	–	0.7	–	0.5E	–	–	0.7
Spain	AP	–	26.2	–	–	–	–	26.0	24.7E	–	25.8	21.4
	FNs	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.6E	–	–	0.4
	Falange	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0.1E	–	0.1	0.2
Switzerland[8]	AN/											
	Vigilantes	–	–	3.5	–	–	–	–	2.9	–	–	–

Figure 2: Table 1 from Ignazi (1992)

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- Let's reflect on the answer given by Ignazi: that as the same way that a silent revolution had occurred, a (also) **silent counter-revolution** was struggling to be born

The (silent) counter revolution

- Now let's take a look at the cover of a political science best-seller book published in 2019 with more than two thousand citations (by February 2022)
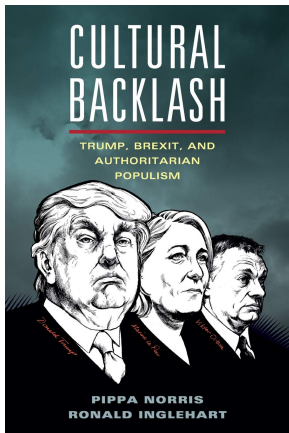

Figure 3: Cover of Cultural Backlash (2019)

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- **We will talk extensively about the last point tomorrow!**

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- He made two important contributions:

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  2. Coined the term of **political resentment** to explain its success

A new party family? The populist radical right

- Some scholars pointed to **the post-industrial transition** as one of the main factors explaining support for PRR parties, as unskilled and semi-skilled workers had to compete with the incoming immigrant population for increasingly underpaid jobs (*economic explanation*)

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- **The politics of resentment** introduces an alternative and complementary explanation. These people would be also disappointed by the promises of growth made during their youth, and resented towards the political system that provided financial aid to foreign-born citizens and new middle classes (*cultural explanation* and counter-argument to the silent revolution thesis)

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  2. "They are **right-wing** in their rejection of individual and social equality, in their opposition to the social integration of marginalized groups, and in their appeal to xenophobia"

  3. "They are **populist** in their instrumentalization of sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment and their appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense"

A new party family? The populist radical right

"In short, they tend to combine a **classic liberal position on the individual and the economy** with the **sociopolitical agenda of the extreme** and intellectual **new right**, and they deliver this amalgam **to those disenchanted with their individual life chances and the political system.**" (Betz, 1993, pp. 413–414)

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- **A new party family?**

The impact of PRR across Europe

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  1. **Converted old parties**, like the FPÖ in Austria or the SVP in Switzerland (the role of leader change and charisma)

  2. **Truly new parties**, like the FrP in Denmark and the FN in France

Comparing first movers: Austria & France

- The **Austrian FPÖ** was a liberal conservative party that had lost support in the mid 1980s but recovered after the young charismatic and populist Jörg Haider was elected to the chair of the party in 1986. In 1991 became the second largest party at the national level. In 1999 became the most voted party in a general election and formed a coalition government with the Christian-democrat ÖVP

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- The **French Front National** was founded in 1972 by right-wing radicals and gained from virtually zero in the 1981 elections to 9.6% of the vote in 1988. However, it wasn't until a moderation shift by Marine Le Pen in 2011 that the party became the third largest party in a presidential election, and then the second largest party in 2017

The impact of PRR across Europe

Table 1. Highest and latest electoral results of main PRRPs in Western Europe, 1980–2011

Country	Party	Highest result	Latest result
Austria	Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)	10.7	10.7
	Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)	26.9	17.5
Belgium	Flemish Interest (VB)	12.0	7.8
	National Front (FNb)	2.3	–
Denmark	Danish People's Party (DFP)	13.8	12.3
Finland	None	–	–
France	National Front (FN)	15.3	4.3
Germany	The Republicans (REP)	2.1	0.4
Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	5.6	5.6
Ireland	None	–	–
Italy	Northern League (LN)	10.1	8.3
Luxembourg	National Movement (NB)	2.6	–
Netherlands	Party for Freedom (PVV)	15.5	15.5
Norway	None	–	–
Portugal	National Renovator Party (PNR)	0.3	0.3
Spain	National Front (FNe)	0.5	0.0
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (SD)	5.7	5.7
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party	28.9	26.6
United Kingdom	British National Party (BNP)	1.9	1.9

Source: Election Resources on the Internet: Western Europe, Manuel Álvarez-Rivera,
http://electionresources.org/western.europe.html

Figure 4: Table 1 from Mudde (2014)

Current trends on the PRR

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- "It can also be seen that more parties have been added to the political spectrum" (Miguel's response paper)

- "One aspect that drastically has changed during this time, is how people inform themselves and how that also influences the political views of the voters. Social media plays a vital role on today politics and also how parties interact with their voters" (Miguel's response paper)

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  3 The end of the 'Iberian exceptionalism' (**Vox and Chega in Spain and Portugal**, respectively)

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  3. The end of the 'Iberian exceptionalism' (**Vox and Chega in Spain and Portugal**, respectively)

- Here, a factor that we haven't discussed until now may play a role: *international diffusion and contagion*

The impact of PRR across Europe

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  5. **Individual-level factors** (habits, attitudes and group identities)

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- But we will debate these points tomorrow!

References

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