Exclusionary Populism in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland

Author(s): Hans-Georg Betz

Source: *International Journal*, Summer, 2001, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer, 2001), pp. 393-420

Published by: Sage Publications, Ltd. on behalf of the Canadian International Council

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/40203575

HANS-GEORG BETZ

Exclusionary populism in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland

SINCE THE LATE 1980S, A NEW BREED OF RADICAL right-wing parties and movements has gained considerable political ground in a number of liberal democracies. Several characteristics distinguish them from the more traditional parties: reliance on charismatic leadership; the pursuit of a populist strategy of political marketing with a pronounced consumer (that is, voter) orientation; and an appeal to popular anxieties, prejudices, and resentments. Typically, new populist parties and movements have marketed themselves both as uncompromising defenders of the rights and interests of the common people and as the only true representatives and promoters of 'genuine democracy.'

At the same time, they espouse an ideology that is perhaps best described as a type of exclusionary populism.[1] At its core is a restrictive notion of citizenship that holds that genuine democracy is based on a

Associate professor, Department of Political Science, Canadian Centre for German and European Studies, York University. *The author would like to thank Margaret MacMillan for very helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.*

1 A number of similar concepts have been proposed to capture the essence of the contemporary radical right. Among the most interesting are 'holistic nationalism' (Roger Eatwell, 'The rebirth of the "extreme right" in Western Europe?' *Parliamentary Affairs* 53[July 2000], 407-25), 'ethnocratic liberalism' (Roger Griffin, 'Interregnum or endgame? The radical right in the "post-fascist" era,' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 5[June 2000], 163-78), 'integralism' (Douglas R. Holmes, *Integral Europe: Fast-Capitalism, Multiculturalism, Neofascism* [Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 2001]), and 'reactionary tribalism' (Robert J. Antonio, 'After postmodernism: reactionary tribalism,' *American Journal of Sociology* 106[July 2000], 40-87).

culturally, if not ethnically, homogeneous community; that only long-standing citizens can be full members of civil society; and that society's benefits should accrue only to those who, either as citizens or at least as taxpayers, have made a substantial contribution to it.[2] The spirit of this common doctrine has found poignant expression in the notion of one's 'own people first' and the call for 'national preference.'

In its more extreme cases, exclusionary populism takes the form of cultural nativism. The contemporary radical right couches its exclusionary agenda in the language of traditional liberalism, advancing the notion of 'rights' - of 'ethnic people,' to a 'culture,' but also to individual safety - that address 'deepseated and understandable fears about the erosion of identity and tradition by the globalizing (but only partially homogenizing) forces of modernity.'[3] In almost all cases, exclusionary populism follows the 'post-racist' turn introduced by the French intellectual new right. The *nouvelle droite* took leave of the traditional focus on inequality while affirming 'the incommensurability of different cultures.' The goal was to preserve 'collective identities (and inter-communitarian differences) at all costs.'[4]

Rather than promoting notions of ethnocultural superiority, the aim of exclusionary populism is to protect 'the own' society, culture, and way of life against alien intrusion and contamination.[5] In contemporary right-wing discourse, this means, above all, safeguarding and defending the achievements and gains of European culture and civilization against challengers ranging from American popular culture to Islam.

Just why popular politics of exclusion have been particularly successful in Western European countries and regions - Norway and Denmark, France, the Flemish part of Belgium, Austria, the northern part of Italy, and Switzerland - is an intriguing question.[6] These areas

2 This includes 'guest workers' but not refugees and asylum seekers.

3 Griffin, 'Interregnum or endgame?' 173.

4 Pierre André Taguieff, 'From race to culture: the new right's view of European identity,' *Telos* (nos 98-99, 1993-4), 101; on 'post-racism' see Ezio Mauro, 'Il paese post-razzista di Bossi e Berlusconi,' *La Repubblica*, 31 March 2000.

5 Pierre André Taguieff, 'The new cultural racism in France,' *Telos* (no. 83, 1990), 109-122; Taguieff, *Sur la nouvelle droite* (Paris: Decartes 1994), 254-65, 99-125.

6 For an overview of the right-wing populist party family see Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall, eds, *The New Politics of the Right* (New York: St. Martin's 1998); Paul Hainsworth, ed, *The Politics of the Extreme Right* (London: Pinter 2000).

are not only among the most affluent, but they also have some of the lowest levels of unemployment in Western Europe. For example, in 2000, the annual average unemployment rate in Switzerland was 2.0 per cent; in Austria it was 5.8 per cent, the lowest since 1992 and considerably below the European Union (EU) average. In northern Italy, by the end of 2000, it was below five per cent in the northwest and significantly below four per cent in the northeast (compared to 10.0 per cent for Italy as a whole). When severe labour shortages threatened to derail the economic boom, companies located in these communities, together with regional employers associations, responded with an aggressive campaign to attract foreign workers from eastern Europe and the developing world. Expectations are that two decades hence immigrants will account for 15 per cent of the population of the Italian northeast.[7]

The situation in northern Italy is one of the most striking examples of a secular trend that has begun to affect all West European countries. Even in Austria, which experienced a rather swift and dramatic rise in unemployment in the 1990s, industry and employers associations are increasingly vocal in their demands to government to open the country's doors to more foreign specialists to fill the rapidly growing number of vacancies, particularly in the information technology sector.[8] In Switzerland, despite traditionally high levels of foreign residents, experts have warned that serious labour shortages will occur in the absence of an active recruitment policy.[9]

Exclusionary populism has emerged at a time of profound socioeconomic and sociocultural change, both of which are intimately tied to the process of globalization. As Roger Griffin has argued, in 'a situation where the very stability and globalization of liberal capitalism nourishes (*sic*) local fears of the erosion of cultural identity,' 'ethnocentric and hence traditionally ethnocratic' passions are 'the order of the day for those who feel threatened by the pace of change.'[10] Thus, the success of

7 Lollo Mario, 'Gli industriali e le richieste degli extracommunitari,' *La Stampa*, 16 November 2000.

8 Conrad Seidl, 'Babys besetzen keine Topjobs,' *Standard*, 28 December 2000.

9 See Credit Suisse, 'Der schweizerische Arbeitsmarkt - ein wachstumslimitierender Faktor?' Economic Briefing no. 19, September 2000, http://www.credit-suisse.com/en/economic_briefing/eb19_de.pdf.

10 Roger Griffin, 'Afterword: last rights?' in Sabrina P. Ramet, ed, *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press 1999), 312.

exclusionary populism reflects 'the loss of authority of nation-states and an attempt to reassert it or to assert other forms of identity.'[11] As Robert Antonio recently pointed out: 'globalization, deregulation, and the erosion of the Cold War geopolitical system [have] helped fuel new aspirations and struggles for local autonomy and assertions of collective identity against freely moving capital, goods, jobs, people, and images.' The result is a 'new tribalism,' which 'bears the imprint of and helps drive postmodernization, especially its centrifugal forms of cultural fragmentation, antiuniversalism, and identity politics.'[12]

It is hardly a coincidence that exclusionary populism particularly appeals to those groups who lack the necessary educational credentials and skills to benefit from increased globalization and who are opposed to policies aimed at further liberalizing international trade and attracting foreign direct investment and qualified immigrants. The resulting growing 'proletarization' of exclusionary populist support has, in turn, strengthened protectionist tendencies inherent in exclusionary populism.[13] But that does not mean that the success of right-wing populist parties is little more than a revolt of 'modernization losers' or that it reflects merely a 'globalization backlash.'

The rise of exclusionary populism has also coincided with a significant increase in popular dissatisfaction and disenchantment with traditional political parties, political élites, and the process of representative democracy in general. Concomitantly, in Australia right-wing populist appeal is increasingly tied to opposition to political correctness and 'new class values,'[14] which are often transnationally shared, have a universalist claim (for example, multiculturalism) and are part of larger processes of cultural internationalization and globalization. This suggests that exclusionary populism represents a new social movement that gives voice to the diffuse sense of scepticism and 'incredulity' that characterizes the 'postmodern turn.' This is reflected

11 Vincent Cable, 'The diminishing nation-state: a study in the loss of economic power,' *Daedalus* 124(spring 1995), 23.

12 Antonio, 'After postmodernism,' 55.

13 See Hans-Georg Betz, 'Entre success et échec: l'extrême droite à la fin des années quatre-vingt-dix,' in Pascal Perrineau, ed, *Les croisés de la société fermée* (Paris: Éditions de l'aube 2001), 413-18.

14 Murray Goot and Ian Watson, 'One nation's electoral support: where does it come from, what makes it different, and how does it fit?' *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (forthcoming 2000).

in increasing suspicion about representation and growing support for notions of individual initiative, entrepreneurship, and responsibility, especially on the part of the younger, highly educated, and technologically savvy new middle class - notions that have been eagerly adopted by the populist right. These notions, however, often have a strong anti-(welfare)statist bias and are in clear conflict with the protectionist, quasi-social democratic inclinations of exclusionary populist politics, designed to appeal to working-class voters.[15]

As the following analysis of the populist right in Austria, northern Italy, and Switzerland shows, in the 1990s right-wing populist parties were generally able to reconcile the often contradictory dimensions of a new post–cold war political agenda. Appealing to a range of resentments, they package themselves as catchall parties of protest against the political establishment and established politics. However, as the results of recent local and national elections in Austria and Italy strongly suggest, this strategy may already have exhausted much of its popular attraction, leaving the populist right in a quandary over how to revive its sagging appeal.

ELECTORAL PROGRESS IN THE 1990S

In the early 1990s, Austria, Switzerland, and northern Italy became home to three of Western Europe's politically most successful exclusionary populist parties, the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ), the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP), and the Northern League (Lega Nord, LN).[16]

15 See Hans-Georg Betz, 'Radikaler Rechtspopulismus im Spannungsfeld zwischen neoliberalistischen Wirtschaftskonzepten und antiliberaler autoritärer Ideologie,' in Dietmar Loch and Wilhelm Heitmeyer, eds, *Schattenseiten der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 2001), 167-85.

16 In Switzerland, of the several parties on the radical right the most interesting is the Lega dei ticinesi, which has done exceedingly well. In the 1999 election it won both national mandates in the Ticino. The Lega formed a parliamentary group with the Schweizer Demokraten, Switzerland's oldest far-right party. A third party, the Freiheitspartei (formerly Autopartei), lost most of its supporters to the SVP and has ceased to be a significant political factor. See Christopher T. Husbands, 'Switzerland: right-wing and xenophobic parties, from margin to mainstream?' *Parliamentary Affairs* 53(July 2000), 501-16. In Italy, there is clearly one right-wing extremist party, the Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore, which wants to preserve the legacy of Italy's postwar fascist tradition. Its support has been minimal except in a few select areas where it has seriously damaged the right's chances to win seats. Then there is the Alleanza Nazionale. I tend to agree with those who see it as a post-fascist conservative party that tries to refashion itself along the lines of French Gaullism. For different views see Piero IgNazi, *Postfascisti? Dal Movimento sociale*

Austria

In 1986, the FPÖ's popular support was the lowest it had been since its foundation in 1956. Opinion polls suggested that it would face elimination from parliament in the national election later that year. Then Jörg Haider became the party chair. Within only a few months he managed to bring about a dramatic reversal of the party's fortunes. Under his leadership, the FPÖ won 9.7 per cent of the vote, its best result since the early 1950s. Four years later, it garnered 16.6 per cent of the vote; and by 1994, the percentage had more than doubled from the 1986 result to 22.5 per cent. The FPÖ suffered a temporary setback in the 1995 election (21.9 per cent) but recovered in the 1999 election when it took 26.9 per cent of the vote and became the second largest party in Austria. The number of FPÖ seats in parliament also reflects the party's dramatic rise during the 1990s. In 1986, it held 18 seats in the Nationalrat; by 1999, that number had risen to 52.

Switzerland

The story is similar in Switzerland. Until the early 1990s, the SVP, whose origins go back to the early part of the century, was the smallest of the four major parties in the Swiss party system. Its percentage of the vote in national elections remained relatively stable at about ten per cent. This changed after the 1991 election, in which the SVP won 11.9 per cent of the vote. Four years later, when the party gained 14.9 per cent of the vote, it was seen as a minor political earthquake in Swiss politics. However, this was only the beginning of an even more dramatic development; in the 1999 election, the party gained 23.5 per cent of the vote and became the largest party in Switzerland. The SVP's rise in the polls was closely associated with the growing prominence of Christoph Blocher, the head of the Zurich section of the SVP, who introduced a populist style of politics and significantly refocused and sharpened the SVP's profile. As a result of its electoral success, the SVP increased its seats in the Bundesrat (Federal Council) from 25 in 1991 to 44 in 1999. At the same time, it made dramatic gains in elections to cantonal parliaments, increasing its seats from 297 in 1991 to 400 in

Italiano ad Alleanza Nazionale (Bologna: Mulino 1994); Marco Tarchi, *Dal Msi ad An* (Bologna: Mulino 1997); Roger Griffin, 'The post-fascism of the Alleanza Nazionale: a case-study in ideological morphology,' *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1(no. 2, 1996), 123-46.

1999. And between 1999 and 2001 (after the 5 March elections in Aargau, Solothurn, and Wallis) it picked up another 96 seats. As a result of the SVP's dramatic rise in the polls, the country's 'magic formula' has come under increasing pressure. Since 1959, the formula, a pillar of the country's consociational (Konkordanz) system, has determined the composition of the government according to a fixed scheme that allots one seat on the Federal Council to the SVP and two seats to each of the other three parties.[17]

Northern Italy

Compared to the FPÖ and the SVP, the Lega Nord's rise to prominence has been less spectacular and rather shorter-lived, in part because it is a regional party. Not only has it campaigned almost exclusively in the northern part of the country but also its electoral strongholds are concentrated in a rather small area in the northernmost part of northern Italy at the foot of the Alps (which Ilvo Diamanti has called the *profondo Nord*).[18] For this reason, LN's results in the two national elections of 1994 and 1996, in which it ran as a united movement, might appear less than impressive. In 1994, under its charismatic leader, Umberto Bossi, it gained 8.4 per cent of the vote; in 1996, it won 10.1 per cent. To complicate things, the intricacies of the new Italian electoral laws and the coalition strategies pursued by the major parties resulted in a significant distortion of the party's representation in parliament. In 1994, when it made a deal with Silvio Berlusconi and his Forza Italia party, the LN held 118 seats, making it the largest group in the lower house of parliament (although the number quickly declined as a result of various defections); in 1996, when it refused to join an electoral alliance, it gained only 59 seats. Pre-election surveys in early 2001 suggested that party support had dropped to less than five per cent, roughly the level of support it attained in the 1999 election to the European Parliament. Thus, the LN joined Berlusconi's electoral alliance in an attempt to secure safe seats in the north. However, the election results were disastrous. As part of the alliance, the Lega won 31 seats, but,

17 See Arnold Koller, 'Zauberformel und politische Konkordanz,' *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (online version), 20 November 2000.

18 Ilvo Diamanti, *Il male del Nord* (Rome: Donzelli 1996), 18; see also John Agnew, 'The rhetoric of regionalism: the North League in Italian politics, 1983-94,' *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers New Series* 20(no. 2, 1995), 156-72.

with only 3.9 per cent of the vote, it failed to overcome Italy's four-percent hurdle, which would have given it additional seats.

Besides their electoral success, what most distinguishes the FPÖ, LN, and SVP from other exclusionary populist parties in Western Europe is that each party has been a member of government. Indeed, the SVP has held one seat in the Swiss Bundesrat since the late 1920s, when its predecessor, the BGB, which represented farmers, artisans, and commercial interests, was invited to join the government.

The FPÖ first gained government experience in Chancellor Bruno Kreisky's 'small coalition' government between 1983 and 1986, when Haider took over the party's leadership from the somewhat hapless Norbert Steger. Haider made no secret of his ambition to gain the chancellorship. However, by transforming the FPÖ into a radical right-wing populist party, he managed to increase dramatically his party's popular appeal at the same time as he alienated it from its two major competitors, the SPÖ (social democrats) and the ÖVP (people's party), and forced them to adopt a policy of marginalization and exclusion. This consensus held until after the 1999 Nationalrat election, when the ÖVP formed a coalition government with the FPÖ. The coalition, however, excluded Haider, who within a few weeks resigned the party leadership and retreated to Carinthia, a FPÖ stronghold where he had been governor. The formation of the government provoked the member states of the EU to adopt a number of bilateral sanctions against the new government, which were lifted only after an expert commission, appointed by the EU, issued a relatively mild report on the Austrian situation.

The LN's government experience is brief. It was part of the short-lived Berlusconi government that came to power after the 1994 national election. This 'marriage of convenience' quickly fell apart, and the government collapsed when Bossi introduced a motion of no confidence against Berlusconi. For the next few years, Bossi pursued an increasingly radical, anti-Berlusconi strategy that resulted in initial gains in the polls but increasingly eroded the party's electoral support. Thus, in 2000, Bossi sought a rapprochment with Berlusconi. After extracting considerable concessions from Berlusconi, the Lega joined his electoral alliance (Casa delle Libertà) for the May elections. This guaranteed the LN a presence - albeit severely reduced - in the newly elected parliament, as well as some influence in the new Italian government.

AGAINST THE SYSTEM

What explains the remarkable gains of these parties in the 1990s? Herbert Kitschelt has defined the FPÖ and the LN as exemplary cases of 'populist, antistatist parties' whose appeal derives primarily from their 'antipartitocratic' stance, that is, their strong opposition to systems that have been dominated for decades by a cartel of parties that shared power among themselves virtually unchecked by an institutionally grounded opposition.[19]

The 'antipartitocratic stance' was particularly pronounced in Haider's FPÖ, which explicitly marketed itself as 'the driving force behind the political renewal of Austria.' It pursued 'a strategy of system change' intended to liberate the ordinary citizen from the political parties and bring about 'a new politics' based 'on the self-limitation of the power of the state and on greater freedom of opinion.' Its self-proclaimed goal was to solve what it saw as one of Austria's most urgent political problems, namely citizens' growing alienation from the state, by engineering Austria's transition from a 'party state' to a 'citizens' democracy.'[20] What the FPÖ envisioned was nothing less than a radical and fundamental transformation of the core institutional settings of the Austrian postwar system of Proporz, which the party saw as the main impediment to genuine democracy. In this sense, it is certainly no exaggeration to characterize the FPÖ as an anti-system party.

Like the FPÖ, the Lega Nord promoted itself in the early 1990s as a catalyst for the fundamental transformation of the Italian sociopolitical and socioeconomic system. Umberto Bossi defined his task in a book with the suggestive title, *La rivoluzione*: 'the first integral revolution in Italian history' encompassing a revolution of the institutional structure of the state, an economic and social revolution, and, most importantly, a 'revolution of the governing hierarchy (*gerarchia di governo*).' What he meant was the 'replacement of the whole political class with new men [*sic*] recruited from among ex-subjects (*dal popolo degli ex sudditi*).'[21] Like the FPÖ, the Lega Nord defined itself as an anti-sys-

19 Herbert Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1995), 160.

20 *The Nationalrat Election in Austria: Information on 9 October 1994* (Vienna: Federal Press Service 1994), 19; *Freiheitliche Thesen zur politischen Erneuerung Österreichs* (Vienna: Freiheitliches Bildungswerk 1994), 4; 'Entretien avec Jörg Haider: Une autre voix pour l'Autriche?' *Politique Internationale* 66(winter 1994-5), 134.

21 Umberto Bossi and Daniele Vimercati, *La rivoluzione. La Lega: storia e idee* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer 1993), 14.

tem party and the only genuine opponent to the traditional socioeconomic system, that is, *partitocrazia*, state centralism, and state intervention in the economy and society.[22] And, like its Austrian counterpart, it believed the best way to deprive the political establishment of its power was to deconstruct the centralist state and replace it with a minimalist state, whose only function was one of control, safeguarding economic competition against potential monopolists (such as Berlusconi).[23]

Whereas both the FPÖ and the Lega Nord were quite explicit about their fundamental opposition to the existing system, for a number of reasons the SVP has been considerably more subdued and subtle. As a member of government for more than fifty year, the party is in a fundamentally different position from its counterparts in Austria and northern Italy. And Christoph Blocher's influence in the SVP is considerably weaker than that of Haider and Bossi. In fact, Blocher, who really controls only the - albeit very important - Zurich wing of the party, faces significant resistance from the Berne wing, which represents the more traditional, conservative positions in the party. Thus, although Blocher has, on occasion, lashed out against the 'classe politique,' presenting himself as the spokesperson of the common people, his interventions are more subdued in tone. At the same time, however, he has tried to change the fundamental nature of the party and its position in the Swiss political system. Under his leadership, the SVP, still formally a member of the Bundesrat, has increasingly acted as an opposition to the system inside the government - a role similar to that played by the Lega Nord in the short-lived Berlusconi government. And, like Bossi, Blocher seems to have adopted a strategy designed to delegitimize his formal allies - not only those on the left, but especially those on the center-right, charging them with abandoning their bourgeois roots.[24] At the same time, he introduced a more confrontational and strident

22 See Roberto Biorcio, *La Padania promessa* (Milano: il Saggiatore 1997), 59-62.

23 Umberto Bossi, *Tutta la verità* (Milan: Kupfer & Sperling 1994), 165.

24 Ilvo Diamanti, 'The Northern League: from regional party to party of government,' in Stephen Gundle and Simon Parker, eds, *The New Italian Republic* (New York: Routledge 1996), 126; on the SVP's growing intransigence see 'Vom Mythos und Mangel bürgerlicher Politik,' *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 27 January 2001, 45; for a particularly telling example see Christoph Blocher, 'Gesundet der Freisinn mit der Swissair?' *Tagesanzeiger*, 15 March 2001, in which he launched a frontal assault on the Freisinnige Partei (FDP), charging them with *Vetternwirtschaft* (nepotism) and *Verfilzung* (a kind of corruption).

tone into Swiss politics, consciously promoting himself as the 'Nay-sayer of the nation,' a stance adopted by other prominent members of his entourage.[25] All of these moves suggest that under Blocher's leadership, a significant segment of the SVP has started to position itself in opposition to the established consociational system, even as it formally retains its loyalty to a system that has come under substantial pressure, not least because of Blocker's success at the polls.

RESENTMENTS AMID PLENTY

The 'antipartitocratic' stance of all three parties goes a long way to explain the electoral success of exclusionary populism in Austria, Switzerland, and northern Italy in the 1990s. As has often been pointed out, this stance both expresses and appeals to the 'resentment of the common people toward the political class' and a 'generalized disaffection with the established channels of patronage-driven and clientelistic interest intermediation.'[26] However, this is only half of the story. Populist parties derive much of their success from their ability to articulate and mobilize latent resentments and to exploit them politically. A few examples might suffice to illustrate the range of issues used by the populist right in an attempt to gain support. In Denmark and Norway, in the 1970s, the populist right declared themselves as anti-tax parties. In Germany, in the late 1980s, the radical right voiced diffuse demands for the 'normalization' of the country by insisting on the 'decriminalization' of German history. In Flanders, the appeal was to long-standing Flemish resentments against the Walloons, especially against the transfer of funds from the increasingly affluent north to the struggling south. In Australia and, albeit to a lesser degree, in Canada, the populist right voiced widespread resentment about the allegedly preferential treatment of indigenous people. (In Canada, the populist right also appealed to latent western animosities toward the east, Ottawa, and particularly Quebec.)

The power of a politics that mobilizes resentments was also demonstrated by the SVP. It is hardly coincidental that Blocher's rise to promi-

25 'Von der Bauernpartei zur Blocher-Dominanz:Geschichte nd Gesicht der SVP,' *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 22 March 2000; see also the interview with Christoph Mörgeli, national councilor from Zurich and one of Blocher's closest advisors: 'Ja, ich bin ein Freund des Neinsagens,' *Tagesanzeiger*, 26 November 1999.

26 Biorcio, *La Padania promessa*, 59; Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, 160.

nence occurred as Switzerland came under increasing pressure to confront its controversial role in the Second World War. In two speeches Blocher used strong words to defend his country, expressing sympathy and understanding for the 'innumerable citizens' whose feelings 'for our native land are being repeatedly offended,' especially the 'elder among them' who 'are being hurt with respect to their lifelong efforts and achievements for this country.' Defiantly noting that 'we are not ashamed of our history,' he charged that the Swiss people 'cannot be blackmailed.' Lashing out against Switzerland's critics, both abroad and at home, he went so far as to single out the World Jewish Congress as 'the leader of the campaign against Switzerland of the past and the present' and other Jewish organizations for 'demanding money' while denying 'that they are interested in money.' Intensifying his rhetoric, he went so far as to suggest that there was a strong resemblance between the threats of these Jewish organizations to boycott Swiss goods and the Nazi boycott of 'Jewish business in Germany that initiated the atrocious extermination of the Jewish people.'[27] Both speeches were made available in German, French, Italian, and English on the website of the Campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland (AUNS), an influential organization of which Blocher was the president. In addition, Blocher distributed his heavily footnoted speech on 'Switzerland and the Second World War' to hundreds of thousands of Swiss households, which generated for him 'a great deal of lasting sympathies among the World War generation.'[28]

Blocher received even more sympathy after the publication of a letter he had sent to Jürgen Graf, the author of a pamphlet entitled 'Vom Untergang der schweizerischen Freiheit' (About the demise of Swiss freedom) in which Graf lays out how 'political correctness, Holocaust

27 Christoph Blocher, 'Switzerland and the Eizenstat Report,' Berne, 1997, www.cins.ch/eiz.htm; 'Switzerland and the Second World War: A clarification,' Zurich, 1997, www.cins.ch/second.htm. Blocher reiterated his position on several occasions, charging that 'the so-called compensation payment from Swiss banks to the World Jewish Congress was nothing short of blackmail. Threatening a boycott in the United States against Swiss banks or other businesses is not unlike Hitler telling the Germans not to buy anything from Jews.' Robert Kroon, 'Swiss politician rejects racist label,' *International Herald Tribune*, 2 November 1999, 6; see also the interview in which Blocher referred to 'certain groups of people in New York [who] want to take money from Switzerland.' 'I think that is blackmail,' *Businessweek*, 14 July 1997.

28 'Von der Bauernpartei zur Blocher-Dominanz.'

ideology, Jewish Terror, a corrupt justice system, left wing politics, a close connection to the EU and Maastricht can and will ruin a country.'[29] In the letter Blocher thanked the author for having sent him the pamphlet and briefly expressed his agreement with Graf's premise (*Wie recht er doch hat*). Unfortunately, Graf was Switzerland's best-known Holocaust negator, who fled to Iran in late 2000 to escape a 15-month prison sentence for Holocaust denial. The letter was published in the newspaper *Sonntags-Blick* one week before the 1999 national election in a rather blatant attempt to discredit Blocher as a right-wing extremist. (He claimed he had not read the pamphlet, only the title.) Blocher immediately rejected the charge and attacked the media for allegedly conspiring against him and for mudslinging, thereby diverting attention from the fact that he had not always been careful to distance himself from the extreme right. He presented himself as a victim of a campaign of intimidation designed to destroy his reputation and, implicitly, as a fighter against media bias, political correctness, and its proponents.[30] This seems to have encouraged a considerable number of Blocher supporters to turn out and vote for the SVP, if only to express their protest,[31] and Blocher emerged from the election in a much stronger position.

The mobilization of resentments also played a major role in the Lega Nord's rise to national prominence in the early 1990s. Similar to the Vlaams Blok in Flemish Belgium, the LN appealed to widespread resentment in large parts of northern Italian of the transfer of resources from the 'productive part of the country' (that is, the industrious and affluent north, especially the northeast) to the 'non-productive' south, which lived off the north's hard-earned money.[32] However, the LN's regional populism was motivated less by political or economic dis-

29 Graf's own words from his website: www.ostara.org/graf.

30 Blocher did not hesitate to include among material on his personal website an interview in *Nation & Europa* (Germany's most prominent far-right journal) in October 1996. See www.blocher.ch/d/themen/991218ne.htm.

31 See 'Unfreiwillige Wahlhelfer: Ein Brief, die "Briefaffäre" und der Erfolg der SVP,' *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 10 October 1999, 13; on Graf's role in SVP circles see also 'Vom "Asylexperten" zum "Auschwitz-Leugner": Wie die Schweizerzeit Jürgen Graf Beachtung schenkte,' *ibid*, 30 December 1999, 13.

32 Giulio Savelli, *Che cosa vuole la Lega?* (Milan: Longanesi 1992), 10-11; Umberto Bossi with Daniele Vimercati, *Vento dal nord* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer 1992), ch. 14.

crimination than by the desire to escape the larger national context 'to further improve an already favourable economic position.'[33] At least initially, the Lega sought to mobilize widespread resentment of southern Italians in general (denounced as *terroni*) and southerners who had moved to the north. Although the party quickly adopted a more sophisticated analysis, which saw underdevelopment and poverty in the south in direct correlation to its dependence on the central government and the political class, Bossi continued to evoke a more stereotypical, and perhaps politically more effective, image that associated the south with 'the mafia and with fascism.'[34] The Lega's anti-southern position derived legitimacy from an idiosyncratic reading of northern identity, based less on language and culture (although the party made an effort to promote regional dialects) than on entrepreneurial spirit and a distinct 'productivity ethos' that supposedly set northern Italy apart from the rest of the country. This suggests that the Lega's politics of resentment reflected both a vague desire for the north to be taken seriously as one of Europe's most productive and prosperous regions and anxiety about a fragile prosperity under constant threat from the instability and incompetence of the Italian state.[35]

There was particular concern during the period when it seemed that Italy might not be among the first candidates for membership in the proposed European Monetary Union (EMU). In response, the party became significantly more radical. In September 1996 in Venice, after a three-day march along the Po river, Bossi called for northern secession and an independent Padania. The Lega officially changed its name to Lega Nord per l'Independenza della Padania, and Bossi began to end his speeches in the Italian parliament with the words 'Viva la Padania independente, viva i popoli Italiani!' According to Bossi, the acceleration of European integration made it absolutely essential to divide the country in two and create two independent economic and institutional entities, each with its own currency (a hard currency in the north, a weak one in the south). This would allow Padania to enter the EMU

33 Michael Zürn, 'Politische Fragmentierung als Folge der gesellschaftlichen Fragmentierung?' in Dietmar Loch and Wilhelm Heitmeyer, eds, *Schattenseiten der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 2001), 118.

34 'Sud, mafia e fascismo' is the title of a chapter in Bossi's *Tutta la verità*.

35 See Ilvo Diamanti, *Il male del Nord* (Rome: Donzelli 1996); Gian Antonio Stella, *Schei: Dall boom alla rivolta: il mitico Nordest* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi 1996).

without risking 'the annihilation of its productive system' at the same time as it gave the south a chance to create 'the low-wage conditions that attract investments and enterprises.' Anything else would be disastrous for the north; if Italy should fail to be admitted into the EMU, it would be reduced 'to the position of a Third World country.'[36] Radicalization and a conscious attempt to mobilize anti-southern resentments, however, did not halt the decline in popular support for the LN. In the end, the party was reduced to those areas in the northern part of northern 'Padania' where popular resentment against the south, Rome, and the political establishment remained strongest and where the ideas of secession and independence were seen as a real, if not particularly realistic, option.[37]

Among the leaders of the European radical right, none has been more skilled in evoking diffuse resentments and giving them concrete form than Jörg Haider, the leader of the FPÖ. One of his most successful campaign slogans, 'He says what you think,' is a prefect rendition of his strategy to be seen as the advocate of the common people and as a people's tribune, who dares to say out loud what others dare only to think.[38] Haider's success has largely been the result of a relentless assault on the Austrian version of political correctness. As Rudolf Burger noted: 'Haider is the personified antithesis to political correctness, and therefore represents for many a symbolic liberation. He formulates the uneasiness with hypocrisy (*Er formuliert das Unbehagen in der Heuchelei*).'[39] One of the secrets of Haider's success is that he 'persistently breaks out of the Second Republic's [that is, postwar Austria's] language code [*Sprachkodex*] by challenging its taboos.'[40] Among the most prominent examples are his provocative statements on the Nazi

36 Bossi speech, Chamber of Deputies, 17 July 1996, www.leganord.org/documenti/discorsi/170796.htm; and 'Nord contro sud: La rivolta del lavoro padano,' III Congress of the Lega Nord Padania, Milan, 14-16 February 1997, www.leganord.org/federale/tesi/lavoro.htm. See also Umberto Bossi, *Il mio progretto* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer 1996), 153-64.

37 Giuseppe Turani, 'La ribellione dei ricchi,' *La Repubblica*, 8 March 1996.

38 See Hans-Georg Betz, 'Haider's revolution or the future has just begun,' *Contemporary Austrian Studies* 9(forthcoming).

39 Rudolf Burger, 'Romantisches Österreich,' *Leviathan* 28(no. 1, 2000), 8.

40 Rudolf Burger, 'Austromanie oder der antifaschistische Karneval,' *Merkur* 54(no. 5, 2000), 391.

period, on the older generation's role in Hitler's dictatorship, and on the atrocities committed during the war.[41]

To be sure, his motivation for going to such lengths to exonerate the older generation was, at least in part, loyalty to his parents and their generation. At the same time, however, his references to the Nazi period were also a conscious assault on both the hypocrisy of the official version of Austrian postwar identity, grounded in a victimology (that is, Austria as Hitler's first victim) that has little to do with historical reality, and the traditional political parties, which had allowed once prominent Nazis to recycle themselves and become 'prominent postwar Austrian politicians.'[42] This strategy garnered sympathy not only among the older generation but potentially also among those parts of the younger generation who had grown tired of the discourses promoted by their parents' (1968) generation.

Haider was one of the first populist politicians to understand that in a media-dominated society it is paramount for a politician to be talked about. Thus, his provocations were probably carefully timed to provide material that would guarantee media attention and give him and his party free publicity. The controversy over Haider's attack on Ariel Muzikant, the president of the Israelitische Kultusgemeine in Vienna, which erupted in March 2001, is a case in point. In a speech at the party's traditional Ash Wednesday meeting, Haider claimed not to understand 'how somebody whose name is Ariel [the name of a popular detergent] can have such dirty hands (*so viel Dreck am Stecken haben kann*).'[43] It was no coincidence that the remark was made two weeks before an important state election in Vienna in which the party anticipated a significant setback.

Haider's 'joke' provoked the expected charges of anti-Semitism, and indignation and protest, in Austria and abroad, dominated the Austrian media during the following weeks and put Haider back on

41 Nonetheless, Haider was one of the first Austrian politicians to reject the notion of Austria as Hitler's first victim. In the mid-1990s, he made it clear on a number of occasions that he considered the Third Reich 'the most horrible criminal regime' (*Verbrecherregime*), responsible for 'mass extermination' (*Massenvernichtung*), and that there is no justification for these crimes. See Michael Wolffsohn's interview with Haider, '...Und morgen Haider?' *Bunte*, 14 December 1995, 114.

42 Roger Cohen, 'A Haider in their future,' *New York Times Magazine*, 30 April 2000, 57.

43 On the Muzikant affair see Christian David and Renate Graber, 'Im braunen Zwielicht Europas,' *Format*, 17 March 2001.

centre stage. The storm of protest, in turn, gave him an opportunity to appeal to a range of resentments against the '1968 generation' (dismissed as *Gutmenschen*), political correctness, and hypocrisy. Rejecting the charge of anti-Semitism, Haider asked who decided what was acceptable criticism 'of a member of the Jewish religious community' and what was not. Charging that Muzikant had been one of the most vocal opponents of the new coalition government and had tried to discredit it at home and abroad, Haider stated bluntly that he would not allow anyone to stop him from criticizing 'a representative of a religious community who had declared war on a democratically elected government.' He concluded that: 'From an Austrian citizen one can expect patriotism and decency when his country is being slandered from abroad. For Mr Muzikant, the applause of Austria's enemies was more important.'[44]

In both tone and content, Haider's reply revealed the intensity of the politics of resentment in Austria, heightened by the fact that there was an important election at stake. Undoubtedly, Haider's initial provocation was calculated to evoke a strong response that would give him the opportunity to vent his personal animosity against the head of the Austrian Jewish community in a form that was likely to appeal to latent resentment against Austria's Jewish community and the intellectual circles that determined what was permissible in Austria and what was not. It reaffirmed Haider's image as the one who 'says what you think' and thus was clearly in line with his general style of political marketing. However, despite Haider's intervention in the Viennese election campaign, the FPÖ's results were disastrous. In some of Vienna's 23 districts, the party was more than ten per cent below its vote in 1996; in most districts its votes fell below its 1991 result - a débâcle that led some observers to predict the 'end of the Haider show.'[45] Even in Austria, resentment-based politics appear to have reached their limits.

EXCLUSIONARY POPULISM

Contemporary radical right-wing populist parties are anti-foreigner or, perhaps more precisely, anti-'foreignization.'[46] At the centre of their

44 Jörg Haider, 'Der Aufstand der "Gutmenschen,"' *Die Presse*, 17 March 2001.

45 Klaus Dutzler and Simon Kravagna, 'Das Ende der Haider Show?' *Format*, 26 March 2001.

46 See Neindert Fennema, 'Some conceptual issues and problems in the comparison of anti-immigration parties in Western Europe,' *Party Politics* 3(no. 4, 1997), 473-92.

doctrine is an exclusionary agenda. However, although all of the parties are opposed to the continued influx of immigrants, their exclusionary agendas cannot be reduced to a question of immigration alone. Indeed, the views of the parties on immigration vary from zero immigration and the progressive expulsion and repatriation of the foreign population to a halt to immigration plus strong state-sponsored efforts to integrate resident foreigners into society to a cap on the percentage of resident foreigners.

The drive toward an exclusionary politics of identity is most pronounced in the Lega Nord, although immigration and multiculturalism played little part in the party's rise to national prominence in the early 1990s. The Lega's position developed gradually. Initially, it made a strong distinction between those immigrants who adopted the northern work ethic and those who came for the social benefits. It was careful to couch its opposition in terms that could not be construed as having racist overtones. Thus, in 1993, Bossi wrote that his party opposed 'mass immigration' to Italy and Europe, not because of 'racial prejudice' but because it wanted to avoid 'uprooting (*lo sradicamento*) people (*popoli*) from their lands and the traditions of their ancestors, a result that can only be obtained through balanced economic development in every area.'[47]

When the Lega broke with Berlusconi and began its secessionist course, its position on immigration took on the post-racist rhetoric of difference and a right to preserve cultural identity, both threatened by 'uncontrolled immigration,' the result of which would be 'a society where man is anonymous, without ethical substance, that is, without belonging (*appartenenza*).' According to Bossi: 'We Padani want to remain Padani as all other peoples want to remain themselves. The immigration policy does not resolve the problems of the great poverty of the Third World, it only aggravates our own situation.'[48] At the same time, the party launched a campaign against illegal immigrants (and attempts by the government to relax the immigration laws) that focused particularly on the impact of rising crime, which it blamed directly on clandestine immigration in northern cities. In 1999, *La Padania*, the party's official daily newspaper, ran a series of articles with

47 Bossi, *La rivoluzione*, 196.

48 Umberto Bossi, speech to the Extraordinary Congress of the Lega Nord, Brescia, 1998; http://www.leganord.org/documenti/discorsi/240tt1998.htm.

alarmist titles ranging from 'Una città senza difese' (Savona), 'C'era una volta la "bella addormentata"' (Mantua), to 'Torino sempre più nera' (Turin).[49]

Curiously, a strident anti-Americanism increasingly dominated Bossi's discourse.[50] Early in 1998, he charged that 'behind the phenomenon of the invasion from outside Western Europe there is the American ideology of *mondialismo*, an ideology that wants to impose in all of Europe the "multiracial society" in order to weaken the Old Continent and subordinate it even more to the American superpower.'[51] The content and diction of the party's lengthy anti-immigration manifesto, posted on its official website, was compared by one commentator, somewhat hyperbolically, to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.[52] For the authors, immigration was a form of 'demographic imperialism' that threatened to transform the European nations 'demographically, culturally, and politically into an appendix of countries that don't belong to the European continent.' Immigration and a 'multiracial society' promoted social alienation and thus weakened the internal cohesion of European societies. The United States actively promoted this 'mondialist' strategy 'via a global commercial subculture aimed at building an anglophone and totalitarian "Global Village" on the ruins of the people.' As defence against the threat of global American hegemony, the Lega promoted a vision of the world based on the acceptance of differences as well as a preference for 'the next of kin to the members of other ethnic groups.'[53]

Bossi reiterated the position at the party's annual meeting in Pontida in 2000. Noting that in the West, cultural differences were becoming more and more 'necessary for the preservation of individual identity,' he declared that the Lega would continue to fight 'for the diversity of the peoples, starting from our own peoples, and from their right to freedom' against those who were opposed to 'this new project: the

49 *La Pandania*, 12, 4, and 5 February 1999.

50 See Paolo Rumiz, 'L'Europa profonda che odia l'America,' *La Repubblica*, 11 April 1999.

51 Guido Colombo, 'In difesa dell'Europa,' *La Padania*, 31 January 1998.

52 See Roberto Escobar, 'Discutibile documento del movimento leghista contro la società multirazziale "Conspirazione del mondialismo,"' *Il sole 24 ore*, 10 March 1999.

53 Enti Locali Padani Federali, Padania, identità e società multirazziali at www.leganord.org/frames/politica/htm.

absolutism of racism, which today is based ... not on direct violence but on a indirect one that denies any difference (*della negazione die ogni differenza*).'[54] And the party had found a new target for its politics of identity - the growing presence of Islam in Italy. At the time of NATO's intervention in Kosovo - which the Lega vehemently opposed - Bossi had defined the situation in terms of a fundamental conflict between Christian Serbs and 'Albanian immigrants' who 'are Muslims.' Not surprisingly, the party stood with Slobodan Milošević and the Serbs, if only because it saw Kosovo as part of a much larger confrontation between occident and orient. Again, the Lega used the crisis to attack the United States, charging it with using Islam to undermine and weaken Europe. This somewhat idiosyncratic thesis originated with the French writer Alexandre del Valle, whose ideas strongly influcenced Bossi's view of Islam. *La Padania* provided del Valle with a forum in which to warn that Islam was a 'sword of Damocles hanging over Europe' that threatened 'our fundamental values and our democracy.'[55] To establish itself firmly as a defender of Western values and identity, the party organized a number of anti-Muslim demonstrations, which gained media attention but brought few concrete results. Most notable was a demonstration against the construction of a mosque in Lodi. But slogans such as 'Padania Christian, never Muslim' failed to have much impact on the local government that had issued a permit for the construction of the mosque.[56]

The disastrous results for the LN in the most recent election seem to suggest that its shift to a radical politics of identity and exclusion is no longer enough to attract even the party's core electorate. As Ilvo Diamanti has shown, the north Italian population is much more concerned about the connection between immigrants and rising crime and insecurity than about the rise in the number of Muslims, which remains rather small.[57] Concern about crime in the late 1960s was particularly pronounced in the Lega Nord's stronghold in the northeast,

54 Umberto Bossi, speech, Pontida, 4 June 2000.

55 Alexandre del Valle, 'Una spada di Democle incombe sull'Europa,' *La Padania*, 23 July 1999. On his role in the Lega Nord's crusade against Islam see Renzo Guolo, 'I nuovi crociati: la Lega e l'Islam,' *Il Mulino* 49(no. 5, 2000), 890-901.

56 'Lodi, la Lega alla Guerra santa,' *La Repubblica*, 15 October 2000.

57 See Ilvo Diamanti, 'Allarme senza solide basi. La Chiesa e la Lega anti-Islam,' *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 5 November 2000, 1.

which, given the Lega's hard line on illegal immigrants and crime, particularly at the local level, might explain why the party remained a viable political force there despite growing competitive pressure from Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale.

Unlike the Lega Nord, neither the FPÖ nor the SVP based their fundamentally negative stance on immigration, refugees, and multiculturalism on a comprehensive and explicitly ideological framework. In a chapter devoted to these questions in *Die Freiheit, die ich meine*, Haider argued that there was a 'fundamental right to Heimat, but none whatsoever to immigration'; that the 'experiment of multicultural society' had not 'worked anywhere'; and, with specific reference to the cultural challenge posed by Islam, that society was particularly threatened when 'incompatible norms clashed with each other in too narrow a space.' For this reason, 'the utopia of multicultural society' for many citizens, who wanted 'to live in peace in their Heimat,' had become 'a nightmare.'[58] However, in his 1997 manifesto, he referred only in passing to immigration: 'in the coming century/millennium, the greatest threats emanate from the migration streams and an emerging fundamentalism, which has the potential to turn into a full-blown war of cultures.'[59] And he used immigration to attack the political left, which took 'the votes of the little people in order to help fulfil the ideological dreams of the grand Multikultis.' At the same time, he made it clear that 'responsible' politics took care of the interest of 'the own people.'[60]

The FPÖ thus tried to project a positive image as the advocate of Austrians' fundamental right to preserve their culture and Heimat rather than as xenophobic opponents to immigration and multiculturalism. To a large degree, this was a by-product of the party's shift from traditional German nationalism to Austrian patriotism, which Haider had undertaken in the early 1990s. At the same time, in an attempt to create a more reasonable and respectable image, the party began to qualify its positions on immigration. Thus, in the 1996 election, it

58 Haider, *Die Freiheit, die ich meine* (Frankfurt: Ullstein 1993), 89-94.

59 Jörg Haider, *Befreite Zukunft von links und rechts* (Vienna: Ibera & Molden 1997), 13.

60 'Rede von Bundesparteiobmann LH. Dr. Jörg Haider am 24. ordentlichen Bundesparteitag in Linz, 28. und 29. Mai 1999.' http://www.fpoe-ltklub-ooe.at/standpunkte/rede_haider_24bpd.html.

added to its call for a zero immigration policy the phrase 'as long as there are Austrians who are without work and home.'[61] And in 1998, the party explained its official position by pointing out that Austria's population density, topography, and limited resources did not lend themselves to immigration. It reiterated its opposition to 'multicultural experiments' and promoted active integration of the resident foreign population. Finally, in language reminiscent of ethnopluralist rhetoric, it emphasized that the 'special character of the own people' (*der besonderen Wesensart des eigenen Volkes*) had to be 'intricately connected to the readiness to respect what is special in every other people too' (*das Besondere auch in jedem anderen Volk zu achten*).[62]

Programmes and official pronouncements, however, tell only half the story. The more important half is found in the distinct way the party promoted its position on immigration 'on the street' during election campaigns. Here the appeal was to popular aversions, fears, and resentments. Thus, during the 1999 campaign, the FPÖ distributed leaflets in Vienna that asked, among other things, whether the population knew ('Did you know that ...') that in Vienna 'black-African asylum seekers can pursue their drug deals in designer suits and with luxury mobile phones without being disturbed'; that the Greens thought that indigenous families did not need to be helped 'since there are thousands of foreign families with their children waiting at our borders'; and that Chinese restaurants in Vienna were subsidized by the state, while a growing number of Austrian pubs had been forced to close.[63] The party again made 'foreigners' the central issue of the 2001 campaign for the Viennese election. Helene Partik-Pablé, the party's top candidate in the election, had said during a parliamentary debate in 1999 that 'black-African drug dealers are particularly aggressive, which obviously lies in the nature of these people.' She openly admitted in 2001 that the party's objective was 'to appeal to the sentiments of the people.'[64] It is hardly surprising that the party's electoral pro-

61 'Wofür wir stehen,' leaflet, 1996.

62 Das Programm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs, 1998, 11.

63 Leaflet, 'Wußten Sie, daß...' Vienna, 1999; http://johannes.herbst.com/folder_vorne.html.

64 Norbert Rief, 'Partik-Pablé zu Ausländer-Wahlkampf in Wien: "Man muß Gefühl der Bevölkerung ansprechen,"' *Die Presse*, 23 January 2001.

gramme focused on the alleged connection between foreigners and such growing problems as rising crime, particularly drug trafficking and addiction. The chapter on 'foreigners in Vienna' consisted almost exclusively of negative statements, ranging from a stop to all immigration to a halt to family reunification to the expulsion of illegal immigrants and the introduction of a special identity card for foreigners. At the same time, the party reiterated its rejection of multiculturalism as a 'failed immigration experiment' and demanded instead that foreigners adapt to 'the indigenous value catalogue' (*einheimische Wertekatalog*).[65] But even this aggressive 'anti-foreignization' programme could not prevent a massive defection from the party by those parts of its constituency that had in the past been attracted to its stance on immigration.

Like the FPÖ, the SVP presents itself as a defender of indigenous culture and national identity against the danger of 'foreignization.' Just as Haider did, the Zurich branch of the SVP argues in its official party platform that Switzerland does not have the resources 'to accept all who are politically persecuted or who are in a precarious economic position.' It appeals to anxieties about loss of cultural identity by arguing that 'it would be fatal for our society if we did not preserve the roots of our Western-occidental culture.' As a result, the Zurich SVP explicitly demands that Switzerland use a restrictive immigration policy to make itself 'unattractive as an immigration country.'[66] Despite the fact that Switzerland is often held up as a model of multiculturalism, the Zurich SVP has strong reservations.[67] An article in *Schweizerzeit*, a leading right-wing newspaper, claimed that multiculturalism was a 'dangerous experiment, which is doomed to failure.' The author, a leading exponent of the Zurich SVP, repeatedly referred to the 'cultural intolerance of immigrant groups' such as

65 FPÖ, Programm für Wien 2001, 8-13.

66 'Die Politik der SVP'; http://www.svp-zuerich.ch/Programm.htm.

67 A SVP deputy suggested in early 2001, shortly before the EU referendum, that the French-speaking part of the country might want to consider leaving the confederation, given the growing gap between a 'freedom-loving German-speaking Switzerland and an increasingly state-dependent (*staatshörige*) French-speaking Switzerland.' Maximilian Reimann, 'Passen Deutsch und Welsch überhaupt noch zusammen?' SVP Pressedienst, 26 February 2001.

Muslims and warned that in 'the end, multiculturalism means the demise of culture.'[68]

In the late 1990s, the SVP devoted significant effort to the question of immigration and especially asylum. A lengthy position paper on 'migration policy' in 1998 was followed in 2001 by a highly detailed paper on integration. Both papers put heavy emphasis on reducing the flow of migration and assuring that foreigners made an effort to integrate into Swiss society, although it acknowledged that complete assimilation would mean abandoning all cultural specificities.[69] As a concrete measure, the party launched a petition against 'the abuse of the right to asylum'; by the end of 2000 more than 100,000 Swiss citizens had signed it. The party's position on a second initiative, launched by right-wing splinter parties determined to reduce Switzerland's proportion of foreign residents from 25 to 18 per cent, was considerably more ambiguous. Blocher and most of the party leadership opposed the initiative, primarily for economic reasons. However, at a dramatic meeting in August 2000, the grassroots delegates overrode their leadership and voted overwhelmingly to support the initiative.[70]

THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The evidence presented here suggests that the electoral surge of right-wing populist parties in Austria, Switzerland, and northern Italy in the 1990s was fed primarily by political factors, above all by popular disaffection with the governing parties and disenchantment with the political and intellectual élite and the policies they advocated. At a time of growing general popular resentment, the radical populist right appealed to those segments of the electorate 'whose crucial common denominator is the alienation from the incumbent political elites in parties and public administration, and a generalized disaffection with the established channels of patronage-driven and clientelistic interest intermediation' typical of the Austrian and Italian postwar models.[71]

68 Thomas Meier, 'Irrweg "multikulturelle Gesellschaft,"' *Schweizerzeit*, 3 March 2000.

69 See SVP, Migrationspolitik glaubwürdig und zukunftsorientiert, March 1998, esp 16; 'Geld allein garantiert keine Integration,' January 2001.

70 'Die Geister, die man rief ...' *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, 25 August 2000, 15.

71 Kitschelt, *The Radical Right*, 160.

This interpretation also goes a long way to account for the dramatic gains of the SVP. As Damir Skenderovic has argued, the SVP's success can be partly interpreted as a reflection of growing popular disenchantment with the country's consensual system, where electoral outcomes are foregone conclusions (given the country's institutional arrangement, which distributes seats in the government according to a fixed formula among the four major parties) and where politics has been reduced to procedural questions.[72] (In Switzerland major decisions are reached among major interest groups in a pre-parliamentary process called *Vernehmlassung*; the decisions are then ratified by parliament.)

The fight against immigration and multiculturalism, which is the central common feature of contemporary exclusionary populism, is only one (increasingly important) aspect of a more general assault on the values espoused and promoted by the political establishment. None of the three parties is interested in the (re)creation of cultural and ethnic homogeneity as a political goal in itself; rather they use the anti-foreigner card to challenge and delegitimize the established 'political class' and its values. In the process, however, all three parties have become increasingly associated with xenophobia and the postracist politics of ethnopluralism and exclusion. At the same time, they market themselves as champions of a new politics of identity, aimed at defending Western culture and values, particularly against the growing presence and increasing assertiveness of Islam in Western Europe. In this sense, exclusionary populism can indeed be said to challenge, and to be in revolt against, developments and processes that are intricately connected to globalization.

This point, however, should not be taken too far. The contemporary radical populist right has generally displayed a rather ambiguous attitude toward globalization. The LN in particular, but also the FPÖ, generally favours privatization, deregulation, and decentralization to increase economic competitiveness, which is quite compatible with the economics of globalization. Haider himself, at least in the 1990s, sought a fundamental liberalization of the Austrian corporatist model, ironically enough firmly along American lines. Similarly, the

72 Damir Skenderovic, 'The Swiss case revisited: the "normalization of the radical right in Switzerland,"' New York University, Center for European Studies, 2000.

LN promoted itself as the expression and advocate of the northern Italian entrepreneurial virtues of self-reliance, initiative, and innovation - virtues hardly at odds with the economic spirit of globalization. At the same time, however, exclusionary populism is deeply hostile to globalization's sociocultural consequences, such as greater transnational migration and multiculturalism, which it considers a fundamental threat to national integrity and cultural distinctiveness and identity.

In the 1990s, the populist right was remarkably successful in translating popular resentments into votes. However, the recent electoral setbacks of the FPÖ and LN indicate that this might no longer be the case. It has been suggested that voting for right-wing populist parties is 'largely motivated by ideological and pragmatic considerations, just like voting for other parties.'[73] In other words, voters expect to see concrete results in line with party platforms. These have often not been forthcoming. And the established political parties have been eagre to adopt the strident anti-foreigner rhetoric and stringent anti-immigration measures propagated by the populist right. The rejection of multiculturalism, the defence of Western Europe's Christian identity, and the promotion of integration over new immigration have increasingly become the staple of both centre-right and centre-left throughout Western Europe.[74] As a result, the populist right has been robbed of much of its most important appeal.

In Austria and Italy, the populist right has paid a price for its participation in government. Before it entered into a coalition government with the Austrian People's Party, the FPÖ claimed to represent and to be an advocate for ordinary people and their concerns and interests. Once in power, however, a series of measures designed to consolidate the budget, introduced by the FPÖ finance minister, Karl-Heinz Grasser, had a negative impact on many FPÖ voters. Thus the results of the 2001 Vienna election can be seen to some extent as a protest against the

73 Wouter van der Brug, Meindert Fennema, and Jean Tillie, 'Anti-immigrant parties in Europe: ideological or protest vote?' *European Journal of Political Research* 37(no. 1, 2000), 77.

74 For recent examples see Roger Cohen, 'From Germany's east to west, conservative tries to span the gulf,' *New York Times*, 1 June 2001; Sarah Lyall, 'Britain's race problem,' *ibid*, 3 June 2001.

FPÖ.[75] As one observer put it, frustration over the government's consolidation measures weighed more heavily with the 'ordinary man in the street' than did any anti-foreigner slogans.[76] It is hardly a coincidence that immediately after the election, Haider launched a full attack on the government, and particularly Grasser, and called for a new 'politics with heart.'[77]

Even though the Lega Nord held the ministry of the interior, it was largely ineffective during its short tenure as a member of the first Berlusconi government. Thereafter much radical sloganeering and political passion translated into little progress toward greater regional autonomy. By the end of the 1990s, northern Italians appeared increasingly disillusioned with the Lega's empty rhetoric; and at the time of the recent national election many former Lega voters seem to have been in agreement with the anonymous citizen of Belluno in Veneto who said that what the northern Italians wanted after ten years of sending to Rome 'people who screamed' was 'people who bring something home.'[78] As in Austria, the LN's heavy losses could be seen as a massive protest against the party.

It is too early to tell whether the same fate awaits the SVP. It is conceivable that Blocher's party might fare better because of the institutional weakness of the Swiss parliament and government, which allows the SVP to act as the opposition in government. Thus it can continue to promote itself as the only genuine opposition in the country without fear of being called upon to lead the country. In Switzerland, only a fundamental transformation of the institutional system of representative government would change these dynamics - a prospect that is rather unlikely.

The losses incurred by the radical right in Austria and Italy in recent elections suggest that populist parties have lost a good part of their earlier appeal and are now treated by the voters little differently from 'ordinary' parties. This, however, does not necessarily mean that their

75 According to one analysis, more than a quarter of those who voted for the FPÖ in 1999 stayed home in 2001. SORA analysis, results published in *Der Standard*, 26 March 2001.

76 Eva Linsinger, 'Ressentiment zog nicht,' *ibid.*

77 'Haiders Kampf gegen Haiders Regierung,' *Profil*, 2 April 2000.

78 Paolo Rumiz, 'Nordest, fine del sogno autonomista, per la Lega suona l'ora della ritirata,' *La Repubblica*, 23 May 2001.

days are numbered. With the increasing urgency behind official attempts to transform Western Europe into a region of immigration - if only to safeguard its competitive position in the global market - the contradictions in official immigration policy will once again become apparent. As the same time, questions of cultural identity, values, ethnicity, and, above all, citizenship are bound to dominate the political agenda for years to come. Under these circumstances, the radical right might soon again be in a position to carve out a larger niche in the political market.