THE CHANGING FACES OF POPULISM

SYSTEMIC CHALLENGERS
IN EUROPE AND THE U.S.

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AUSTRIA

AUSTRIAN POPULISM AFTER THE VICTORY OF THE FPÖ (AUSTRIAN FREEDOM PARTY) IN 1999: THE POLITICAL SUCCESS OF THE DISCURSIVE STRATEGY OF EXCLUSION

Roberta Pasquarè

The electoral success of a populist party is a symptom of political and cultural malaise in every democratic system. Austrian populism of the last decade is not an exception; its analysis requires turning one's attention not only specifically to the FPÖ[1], a party characterised by international political studies as populist[2], but rather to the Austrian political and cultural context as a whole, in the light of this party's success.

In order to reconstruct the general framework, the facts are thematically analysed below, including the political and social "consociationalism" that has characterised the Austrian

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[1] Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, Austrian Freedom Party.

[2] S. Reinfeldt, *Nicht-wir und Die-da. Studien zum rechten Populismus*, Braumüller, Wien, 2000; P. Ignazi, *Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Western Europe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003; *Die neuen Verführer. Rechtspopulismus und Rechtsextremismus in den Medien*, edited by C. Cippitelli, A. Schwanebeck, Fischer Verlag, München, 2004; *Populisten an der Macht. Populistische Regierungsparteien in West und Osteuropa*, edited by S. Frölich-Steffen, L. Rensmann, Braumüller, Wien, 2005; F. Decker, *Populismus. Gefahr für die Demokratie oder nützliches Korrektiv?* VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden, 2006.

system since 1945, as well as the breakdown of the classical balance among parties due to globalisation in Austria and elsewhere.

In order to understand the cultural and media success of the FPÖ – evidence of the readiness of both the media and the public to accept and endorse this party's political discourse – attention should be paid not only to FPÖ's repository of talking points and strategies, but also to counterpoint dynamics between this repository and the reaction of the nonpartisan press.

1. The end of the consociational system and formation of the electorate of the excluded

The economic, social and political process, which offered the FPÖ the decisive chance to establish itself, began to develop in Austria at the end of the 1980s. During this time, the consociational mechanisms, active in the country since the end of WWII, began to collapse due to a combination of complex national and international causes.

From 1945 until 1966 governments were composed of stable cross-party coalitions, made up of the two major parties, the SPÖ (Austrian Social-Democratic Party) and the ÖVP (Austrian Peoples' Party), and from 1966 till 1986 by unstable majorities with the participation of the FPÖ. On the one hand, starting from the mid-1980s, the Greens (GA)[3] entered the Austrian party system, followed in 1993 by the Liberals (FIL)[4]. On the other hand, the FPÖ, led by Jörg Haider since 1986, began to acquire an ever increasing number of followers. This

[3] Grüne Alternative (Green Alternative) a party founded in 1987 by the union of two environmental parties and civil society movements.
[4] Liberales Forum (Liberal Forum) a free-trade liberal party founded in 1993.

shift in the Austrian party system was caused by several specific events, such as the end of the Cold War and Austria's entry into the European Union (1995), as well as by long-term socio-economic dynamics, such as globalisation and the spread of so-called post-materialist values[5]. The latter were first endorsed by a great number of citizens' associations and environmental parties, which, starting from 1987, were then channelled into the GA. As of 1993, however, the free-market paradigm, which became hegemonic after the end of the East-West conflict, was represented by the first truly liberal Austrian party, the FIL, who also advocated for civil liberties and a more secular society. At the same time, the FPÖ attracted voters who were dissatisfied with the economic policies enacted by the SPÖ and ÖVP to enable the country to become part of the Single European Market. These voters were distrustful of the European Union's expansion to countries from the former communist bloc. Other factors contributing to the formation of this new electoral landscape were the changes in the labour market caused by globalisation and the crisis of the welfare system. In this complicated political, economic and social environment, the FPÖ has managed to undermine the traditional parties in the eyes of a growing number of citizens, denouncing them as responsible – because of incompetence and opportunism – for all the national woes. They thereby succeeded in regrouping the voters who left both the SPÖ and ÖVP around a flexible, multifaceted and fundamentally xenophobic nucleus.

As the Austrian political scientist Anton Pelinka explains, starting from the 1990s, the FPÖ managed to surge ahead as a wholly new, anti-system and anti-party party by virtue of its marginal role in the national government up to that time, de-

[5] R. Ingelhart, *The Silent Revolution. Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977.

spite the fact that it was the oldest populist party in Europe (it was founded in 1956). Indeed, Austrian consociational democracy had not been built by the FPÖ, but by other political actors. The so-called "State of the Parties" (*Parteinstaat*), that is, the control by the state of vast sectors of the economy and society was put in place by the by the SPÖ and ÖVP at the behest of the Soviet Union; the FPÖ had not taken part in the phenomenon of consociationalism, which was expressed at the political level in the form of across-the-aisle parliamentary majorities (ironically dubbed by the media as the SPÖVP); at the economic level as the "organised capitalism" of the unions, industrialists and the government, and, at the social level, in the typical form of multiple membership[6]. In other words, at the time when the two major parties were losing consensus, the FPÖ could claim that it had had no part in the so-called practice of "hyper stabilisation"[7] of the Austrian system. When postmodernism made its way into Austria through globalisation, admission into the EU, growing immigration and the crisis of the welfare state, the FPÖ was viewed as the party of the "losers of globalisation"[8], the "disillusioned and tired of politics"[9]. Not unlike other European populist parties, the Austrian populist party was able to present itself as a "vicarious identity"[10] for the losers of globalisation and a substitute for the traditional parties in crisis, so that it still maintains a crucial electoral success, even though its policy proposals are

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[6] Cf. A. Pelinka, "Die FPÖ im internationalen Vergleich. Zwischen Rechtspopulismus, Deutschnationalismus und Österreich-Patriotismus", *Conflict & Communication online*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Irena Regener, Berlin, 2002, table p. 6.
[7] Ibidem, pp. 1, 4, 5, 10.
[8] W. T. Bauer, *Rechtsextreme und rechtspopulistische Parteien in Europa*, Österreichische Gesellschaft für Politikberatung und Politikentwicklung – ÖGPP, Wien, 2010, p. 3.
[9] Ibidem, pp. 11 and 18 on European populism and pp. 54 and 56 on Austrian populism.
[10] Ibidem, p. 3.

often considered "an ideology without a *Weltanschauung*"[11] and its leaders "devoid of their enchanting charm"[12].

As a matter of fact, the FPÖ picked away not only the most conservative and xenophobic voters of the ÖVP[13], but also, and above all, the labour voters of the SPÖ[14]. In a study of 2000, confirmed in the years thereafter by other political scientists, Plasser and Ulram identified the typical FPÖ voter as a young male worker, not associated with a union, not belonging to a church or civic associations and having a low level of education[15]. In light of these data, by comparing the analysis of the voters from the other parties, both at the local and the national levels, the two researchers found a further element and drew a conclusion. On the one hand, the labour world, instead of looking for representation within the left-wing party, the SPÖ, migrated towards the FPÖ where it became overrepresented. On the other hand, this very fact demonstrates the possibility of identifying a new line of conflict previously unknown in the Austrian system: a conflict defined by one's

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[11] F. Decker, *Populismus. Gefahr für die Demokratie oder nützliches Korrektiv?*, cit., p. 11.

[12] W. T. Bauer, *Rechtsextreme und rechtspopulistische Parteien in Europa,* cit., p. 29.

[13] R. Picker, B. Salfinger, E. Zeglovits, "Aufstieg und Fall der FPÖ aus der Perspektive der Empirischen Wahlforschung: Eine Langzeitanalyse (1986-2004)", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* (ÖZP), 33 (2004) 3, 263-279, p. 64; on how the FPÖ regrouped the scattered electorate of the SPÖ and ÖVP, on xenophobia and racism, see H. Czernin, editor, *Wofür ich mich meinetwegen entschuldige. Haider, beim Wort genommen*, Wien, 2000.

[14] The increase in workers' votes of the FPÖ affected its total electorate: 1986: 10%; 1990: 21%; 1994: 29%; 1995: 34%; 1999: 47%. A. Pelinka, "Die FPÖ in der vergleichenden Parteienforschung. Zur typologischen Einordnung der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* (ÖZP), 31 (2002) 3, pp. 281-290, p. 285. J. Flecker and S. Kirschenhofer, *Die populistische Lücke. Umbrüche in der Arbeitswelt und Aufstieg des Rechtspopulismus am Beispiel Österreichs*, Sigma, Berlin, 2007.

[15] *Das österreichische Wahlverhalten*, edited by F. Plasser, P. A. Ulram, F. Sommer, Signum, Wien, 2000, p. 231-233.

greater or lesser capacity to adapt to (post)modernity. In order to attract and consolidate voters, the Austrian Liberal Party, the party of the "losers of globalisation", made use of a practical communications device that may be summarised as the "strategy of exclusion". This, according to the political scientist Hans-Georg Betz, characterises the FPÖ to such a degree that one can define it as the party of *exclusivist populism*[16].

The aggressiveness of Austrian populism, not an isolated case in Europe in this respect, consists of referring to an original, harmonious community of hard-working citizens who are clearly different from other individuals, not so much in terms of specific and objective differences (language, religion, social composition, work activities, etc.), as in terms of superiority. In other words, the existence of an original, harmonious community must be protected from any contact, contagion or invasiveness by people who do not belong to the community and would thus be detrimental to it.

The FPÖ places boundaries around the happy citadel of the "original" population on the basis of three lines of demarcation which must be constantly guarded. The first boundary line is vertical: it separates the community of honest, hard-working citizens, capable of recognising and peacefully pursuing their collective and individual interests from scheming and good-for-nothing politicians. In this specific case, FPÖ attacks are directed at the chummy politicking of the SPÖ and ÖVP as well as the "regulatory madness" of the EU. The second boundary line is horizontal and separates a linguistic, cultural and ethical community, perfect in itself and self-sufficient, from extraneous and perverting elements, such as the immigrants from Eastern Europe, Slovenians from Carinthia and, above all, Muslims, who are attributed with all kinds

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[16] H.-G. Betz, "Exclusionary Populism in Austria, Italy and Switzerland", *International Journal*, 56 (3), 2001; also http://www.renner-institut.at/download/texte/betz2.pdf.

of fundamentalist generalisations. The third boundary line (which will be discussed at greater length in the next paragraph and which doesn't only involve the FPÖ) is less easy to define. It is the invisible boundary, which the media – not only those close to the FPÖ – is always trying to make more visible, between "us" and the "others": the infiltrators, the ungrateful, the spies the backstabbers. More specifically, they are the do-gooders and intellectuals, always defending women's rights, homosexuals, transgender people, immigrants and minorities, including the Jews who constantly plot from Washington to damage a country – Austria – which once received and saved them. In light of the aggressiveness of the political positions of the FPÖ and its press, and of the official and unofficial activities of the youth organisations linked to it, it would be quite an understatement to define the FPÖ simply as a populist party. Indeed, considering the ideological and personal continuity with Austro-German National Socialism one can agree with Pelinka and Neugebauer in going further and describe it as an extreme-right party.

There are a number of features that the FPÖ shares with other European populist parties (racism, xenophobia, homophobia, reference to the harmonious unity of the original community, will to replace the oppressive systems of parliamentary democracy with those of "authentic" democracy, such as referendums and the choice of the leader by acclamation, etc.). The FPÖ however presents two distinct aspects: age and success. Unlike other European populist parties, which in general have been founded recently, the FPÖ has been in existence since 1956[17] and, also unlike its counterparts, for at least the last fifteen years it has been one of the three major parties at the national level. Its capacity to iden-

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[17] A. Pelinka, *Die FPÖ im internationalen Vergleich. Zwischen Rechtspopulismus, Deutschnationalismus und Österreich-Patriotismus*, cit., pp. 3 and 11; and id., *Die FPÖ in der vergleichenden Parteienforschung. Zur typologischen Einordnung der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs*, cit., pp. 285 ff.

tify itself as the anti-party party during the years of the break-down of the consociational system, as well as the cultural success of its exclusionary positions, have played a significant role in the longevity and success of the FPÖ.

2. Populist communication: the discourse of exclusion and the metadiscourse of exposure

The FPÖ and its media outlets have occupied a central position in creating an atmosphere of permanent scandal and crisis across the continent[18]. As Werner A. Perger pointed out, Austrian populism has had a great influence in Europe, by setting a political agenda (xenophobia, equation of immigration with crime, placing the blame on the intellectuals, Brussels paternalism, etc.) and by embracing a method of action (intimidation of non-compliant journalists, heroic self-victimisation)[19] at the centre of which is the break with the politically correct.

a) The break with the politically correct: the metadiscourse of exposure

In order to understand the cultural success of FPÖ communication and, in light of it, the position populism was able to occupy in the Austrian media, a 2002 study on political correctness by the historian and political scientist Katrin Auer[20] is especially enlightening. By analysing the expression "politically correct" as a concept, as a discourse and as a metadiscourse,

[18] W. A. Perger, "Haiders Schatten auf Europa", *Die Zeit*, 26/2002, defines this phenomenon as the "Haiderization of Europe".
[19] Werner T. Bauer, *Rechtsextreme und rechtspopulistische Parteien in Europa*, cit. p. 12 ff.
[20] K. Auer, "Political Correctness' – Ideologischer Code, Feindbild und Stigmawort der Rechten", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft* (ÖZP), 31 (2002) 3, pp. 291-303.

Auer exposes its quality as a stigma word, a tool for identifying the enemy and, in the last analysis, a means for the assertion of antidemocratic values. The concept of political correctness, that is, its meaning as derived from the various contexts in which it is used, is called into question by critics who define it as the refusal to tell things as they are. It is even portrayed as a deliberate lie, or as showing a lack of sense of humour and the courage of one's own true convictions. In this sense, Auer continues, political correctness is a stigmatised phrase, or rather a term used to negatively connote the person or object to whom it is being attributed. In Austria in the mid-1990s, the magazine *Wiener* took it upon itself to define political correctness as "the intimidating tyranny of those who only have half-knowledge and are devoid of sense of humour"[21]. The same magazine then spared no efforts to ignite a discussion on political correctness, that is, both its contents and its proponents. The objective of this discussion was to "inflame these kinds of people... these good people, the politically correct", by "telling jokes about homosexuals, black people and other such vulgarities […]. Stand up for freedom of all opinions, even those from the right. […] Affirm that there are differences of intelligence among the races"[22].

In the discourse in political journalism about political correctness, the affirmation of principles typical of democracy – the rights of women, homosexuals and transgender, common-law couples, both hetero and gay, immigrants and non-Christian believers – was drained of democratic value and stigmatised, starting from the mid-1990s, with increasing force and frequency, as: "Dogma, inquisition, censure, incitement, residue of the Third Reich, linguistic etiquette […], apartheid of discourse, Balkanisation of thought, rhetorical-discursive wish for

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[21] Excerpt from *Wiener* Nr. 191, April 1996, referred to by K. Auer, cit., p. 5.
[22] Ibidem, p. 5.

annihilation, thought police or terrorism of intentions"[23]. Contrary to this, FPÖ sympathisers and readers of its press were presented as the real victims of tormentors who claim ownership of the victimhood narrative. FPÖ supporters were called to a manly resistance against the lies of the politically correct, to describe reality as it truly is, and to fight to reaffirm truth and freedom of opinion.

More specifically, FPÖ discourse was intended to produce a split (the third line of the boundary mentioned above) between "the people", individuals who know and experience the truth in their daily lives, and the *Gutmensch*, a term more or less akin to do-gooder. The *Gutmensch*, a neologism that only recently entered Austrian parlance, is he who can flaunt "a foreign friend", he for whom "foreigners are all good people".[24] By accusing those who tell it like it is of fascism and racism, he turns the victims into tormentors and the tormentors into victims. The term quickly acquired an anti-Semitic connotation, starting from negationist circles, as a result of which the reversal in the roles of victim and tormentor acquired a particularly effective ideological twist: Austria – a country that cheered the annexation by Nazi Germany and which, with a population of only 6.5% of the overall Third Reich population, contributed 33% of its ruling class and 75% of the commanding officers of its concentration and extermination camps[25] – is replaced by the Austrians – a population innocent of all guilt, but nevertheless forced to pay morally and financially dubious compensation to self-proclaimed victims and their descendents[26]. This victimisation then assumed the features

[23] K. Auer, cit., p. 6.
[24] Ibidem, p. 10 ff.
[25] W. Kempf, "Die Konstruktion nationaler Identität in der österreichischen Presse seit 45", *Conflict & Communication online*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Irena Regener, Berlin, 2002, p. 7n.
[26] On how and to what extent antisemitism in Austria is a deeply-rooted phenomenon in the population and used deliberately by the FPÖ, one can see the overview in the press over the last 15 years offered by Heribert

of a veritable syndrome of encirclement synthesised into the expression "East Coast".[27] This alludes to the economic, political and cultural machinations concocted by Israel and implemented by Washington with the collaboration of the ungrateful Austrian Jewry – those same Jews who in Austria once took refuge and were protected. It also encompasses the intellectuals, who are seen as truly responsible for the discontent of the population. In order to identify and defend themselves against these persons and their views – elements clearly less recognisable than those making up the vertical and horizontal boundaries mentioned above – the FPÖ media (but also the magazine *Wiener*) drafted and distributed practical guides or handbooks on the topics they may have to discuss in order to recognise with whom they are dealing and learn how to respond.

b) Austria before all: the turning point in Austrian Patriotism

When one speaks of Austrian nationalism, a distinction must be made between the earlier nationalism, of which Austria was the *theatre*, and a more recent nationalism, of which Austria was the *object*. In fact, in Austrian history, there have been many forms of nationalism and patriotism, radically different in aims and stance from one another.[28] During the

Schiedel, *Die FPÖ und der Antisemitismus - Ein lange verdrängter Aspekt*, site of the Documentary Archives of the Austrian Resistance, http://www. doew.at/thema/fpoe/schiedel.html, and some statistics reported by Werner T. Bauer, cit., p. 56 (e.g.: "14% of Austrians, but 30% of the voters of the FPÖ agree with the statement 'it would be better not to have Jews in Austria'").
[27] As, for example, in 2001 Haider placed Austrians in front of a choice: "the East Coast or the Heart of Vienna"; ibid.
[28] See, specifically W. Kempf, "Die Konstruktion nationaler Identität in der österreichischen Presse seit '45", cit. and S. Frölich-Steffen, "Die Identitätspolitik der FPÖ: Vom Deutschnationalismus zum Österreich-Patriotismus", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft (ÖZP)*, 33 (2004) 3, p. 281-295.

Habsburg era, for example, patriotism expressed ethnic or dynastic loyalty. After the Congress of Vienna it took the form of political assertion of Catholicism and adherence to the Restoration and, from the second half of the nineteenth century and for over a century, of an ideological dependence on Germany. It was this dependence on Germany that, starting from the 1990s, Haider's FPÖ managed to sever, giving rise to the unprecedented phenomenon of a nationalism aimed at Austria as an autonomous, ideological subject.

Starting from the years of the unification of Germany (1870) and the foundation of the Austrian Empire and Hungarian Monarchy (1871) – a geopolitical structure masterfully portrayed by the novelist Robert Musil in *The Man Without Qualities* as Kakania – Austrian patriotism was conceived as Germanic nationalism and as a reflection of the German nation. So, during the years of the First Republic (1918-1938), Austria was not considered a nation either by its own inhabitants or the political class. An indication of this was the fact that the new nation was defined as German Austria (*Deutschösterreich*) in the founding act of 12 November 1918 and the same founders of the republican government saw the annexation by the German state as the fulfilment of the newborn republic.[29] Following this mood, the *Anschluss*, that is, the annexation in 1938 to Nazi Germany, was welcomed enthusiastically by the Austrian population and considered a healing of the fracture opened by the *Kleindeutschland* (small-Germany) option asserted by Bismarck. For the first fifty years of its existence, the Second Austrian Republic (founded in 1945) would be the theatre of two types of nationalism: the national-German patriotism of the FPÖ and the so-called *chic populism*[30]. The latter, defined by Wilhelm Kempf as the "symbiotic

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[29] W. Kempf, cit., p. 7.
[30] W. Kempf, cit., p. 3.

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alienation of the population from the nation"[31], is expressed as a celebration of the glories of past centuries. It draws on the history of Vienna as the capital of the Holy Roman Empire, Austria as the bulwark of Christianity, successfully stopping the attacks of the Ottoman Empire, and on *Austria Felix,* the sole European power not torn by wars of succession, among other things. One sees in it the frivolity of the Viennese *fin de siècle* (Vienna of the Waltz, Sacher-Torte, the architectural splendours of the Habsburgs, etc.). Yet it does not lead to true patriotism or, for that matter, to historic, political and cultural criticism.

However, until the coming of Haider in the mid-1990s, the patriotism of the FPÖ was a sort of nationalism that was set up in ideological and personal continuity with Austro-German National Socialism[32]. Its representatives – including Haider himself during the early years – resumed both themes and language of the National Socialism of the *Anschluss.* They adopted the term and the ideology of "abortion" used by Hitler when referring to Austria, a country that was originally German and, thus, had to be annexed again to Germany[33].

In the mid-1990s, Haider stuck to the language and stylistic aspects of the classical nationalism of the FPÖ, and therefore of German National Socialism (blood ties, racism, expulsion of foreign elements, etc.). However, taking the opportunity represented by the European elections of 1999, he launched an ideology that placed Austria at the centre of the new nationalism of the FPÖ. The success of this ideological message took concrete form in the assertion of the separation between the nation and the state, in which the nation would be the "com-

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[31] Ibidem, p. 1 and 13.
[32] A. Pelinka, "Die FPÖ im internationalen Vergleich. Zwischen Rechtspopulismus, Deutschnationalismus und Österreich-Patriotismus", *Conflict & Communication online*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Irena Regener, Berlin, 2002, p. 3 and W. T. Bauer, cit., pp. 53 ff.
[33] W. Kempf, cit., p. 7 and S. Fröhlich-Steffen, cit., p. 5.

munity of blood", neglected and exploited by the Austrian political class, and put down and oppressed by the European political class. The internal enemies of this new nationalism, which purports to defend the "Austrian blood" and to put an end to the "excess of foreign elements"[34], are drawn from a very wide range: Slovenians from Carinthia, immigrants, Jews of faith or origin[35], homosexuals and – over the last ten years – immigrants of the Muslim faith, the dreaded wave of immigrants coming from the new member-states of the EU, and Turkey, whose entrance into Europe was strongly opposed by Heinz-Christian Strache, President of the FPÖ since 2005.

3. The electoral message of Strache's FPÖ: personalisation, identification and creation of the enemy

Heinz-Christian Strache, President of the FPÖ since 2005[36], was no less inclined than his better known predecessor, Jörg Haider, to use the standard images and language of the extreme right, and was equally close to the neo- and pro-Nazi circles.

Born in Vienna in 1961 to parents from the Sudetenland, Strache grew up and was educated, both professionally and politically, in the Austrian capital. In 2000, he quit his profession as a dental technician to dedicate himself full-time to a political career, which he began in the position of district councillor from 1991 to 1996. From the beginning Strache presented himself as the defender of Viennese culture and

[34] W. Kempf, cit., p. 7 and S. Fröhlich-Steffen, cit., p. 5.
[35] On the antisemitism of the FPÖ, see H. Schiedel, *Die FPÖ und der Antisemitismus - Ein lange verdrängter Aspekt*, cit.
[36] N. Horaczek and C. Reiterer, *HC Strache: sein Aufstieg, seine Hintermänner, seine Feinde,* Ueberreuter, Wien, 2009; H. Schiedel, *Der rechte Rand. Extremistische Gesinnungen in unserer Gesellschaft*, Edition Steinbauer, Wien, 2007.

later on of all Austria against the dangers emanating from non-Germanic cultures. From 1998, he served simultaneously as President of the third district (*Landstraße*) of Vienna and President of the youth association of the FPÖ *Ring Freiheitlicher Jugend* (Youth Freedom Ring), considered by Wolfgang Neugebauer, the Director of the Archives of the Austrian Resistance (DÖW), as an extreme-right organisation. His first political success, which he obtained in alliance with the ÖVP in 2001 in his capacity as president of the FPÖ group in the Municipality of Vienna, was to legislate on the unconstitutionality of municipal citizenship for non-EU residents, which had been promoted by the Greens and SPÖ. After becoming President of the FPÖ for Vienna in 2004, he promoted a popular referendum against the entrance of Turkey into the European Union, an issue which in the ensuing months would provoke a break with Jörg Haider. After a xenophobic electoral campaign, dominated by the Turkish threat (*Vienna cannot become Istanbul*), prior to the Viennese state elections of 2005, Strache's FPÖ obtained 14.8% of the vote, which, although 5% less than the previous round of voting, was an impressive result in light of the split of Haider and his faction from the FPÖ. In 2006, following an electoral campaign in which the aversion to Turkey was accompanied by more general xenophobic messages (presented in rap form by Strache himself) and homophobic messages, the FPÖ obtained 11% of the votes at the general elections, thus becoming the third party in parliament. The following year Strache contributed to the formation of the European faction "Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty" which was dissolved a few months after. In 2008 he told the Serbian daily newspaper *Vesti* that he was a "friend of the Serbs" and was against the newborn State of Kosovo, in evident contradiction with the principle of self-determination of the population he had endorsed just the year before when supporting the cause of more freedom for Alto Adige - Südtirol. Yet again, in 2008, the FPÖ obtained 17.5% at the general

elections and 27% at the elections for the Viennese state in October 2010 (it was another chance to compose a new rap song) confirming its position as the second party of the capital city, after the SPÖ with its 49%.

The electoral posters of Strache's FPÖ campaigns[37] reveal, with great clarity and repetitiveness, a number of constants which summarise his strategy of personalisation of the party, identification of the people with its leader, and creation of the enemy.

a) The creation of the enemy

Whatever the composition of persons who make up the "us" and "them", the "them" is always represented as an enemy, and the presentation of the political platform of the FPÖ is never detached from the figure of the enemy. The reference may be direct, as in the case of electoral posters that explicitly name what is to be feared (Islam, the current Mayor of Vienna, Turkey in Europe, the SPÖ, etc.), or indirect, as in the case of posters in which a slogan or a catchword alludes to what had been said or done in other situations (slogans such as "let's finally give our youth a chance" or "our land for our children" allude to the failure of others' policies, and makes Austrian youth, and not immigrants, the beneficiary of FPÖ policies).

The enemies Strache promises to defend the population against are mainly the European Union, non-Germanic cultures and the duo SPÖ-ÖVP; they are attacked individually or sometimes grouped into a single entity, a single enterprise of destructive complicity. Thus, for example, the campaign against the financial rescue of Greece became an occasion to remind people of the dangers of the Euro, which the FPÖ had warned

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[37] The electoral posters at issue are available on the internet site http://www.strache.at/2010/.

against. Austria, the narrative goes, would now be exposed due to the inept and ill-advised policies of the Greens, SPÖ and ÖVP and to the political ineffectiveness and corruption of the Greek government.

On the other hand, during the European electoral campaign of 2009, which was fought as "a final settling of the scores", the need for a strong FPÖ representation in Europe was not described as the attempt to make a local project into a transnational one. Rather it was said that this "is the only way of making those dumbheads understand", that the objective is to "get in well in order to get out better" by electing "representatives of the people and not eurotraitors". Another typical example is offered by one of the electoral posters of the campaign for the Municipality of Vienna of 2010[38], which read "We protect free women. The SPÖ forces them to wear a veil". The slogan is followed by five lines of print, in which fear is expressed of the colonisation of Vienna by Muslims, who want to erect minarets and who "trample on human rights", all as a consequence of the "misguided interpretation of tolerance by the SPÖ".

b) Personalisation of the party and identification of the population with its leader

In FPÖ propaganda during the 1990s, Haider was the leader who "knows what you want", but the emotional height was

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[38] The typical format of electoral posters for the Vienna 2010 campaign is as follows: at the top, on the left side, in printed upper-case letters, there is a slogan which promotes the "us" of the FPÖ; just below that, in printed lower-case letters, smaller and enclosed in a rectangle, the damage that the SPÖ (party of the mayor in office) had caused and would continue to cause. After this, in 4-6 lines, a bleak summary of the status quo and the impending threat. Below this, announced by the expression "FPÖ-HC Strache brings about:" are the concrete measures the FPÖ pledges to take. In the bottom right, a shiny red circle on the lower border (a guarantee stamp) contains the words "Say yes to Strache".

reached during Strache's presidency of the party, when he was portrayed as the leader who "wants what you want". With Haider the link between the people and its leader consisted in the leader's capacity to interpret the will of the people. Under Strache the link becomes immanent and the will of the people identical to the will of the leader, despite a strongly hierarchical party structure modelled on a party of insiders[39].

The leader's appeal to the people (never the object of a rational construct and based on emotional suggestions), often follows the linguistic clichés and metaphors of German and Austrian National Socialism. Thus, on the one hand you have the "Viennese blood" and on the other "the excess of foreign elements"[40]. "Austria before all" is contrasted with social policies of income distribution which also benefit the immigrant population. "The crucifix in the classroom" and "Santa Claus in kindergarten playgrounds" are juxtaposed with "the incomprehensible German spoken by the jobless guest worker". In general, there is a constant appeal to the people not to be fooled by the deceptions of multiculturalism, passed off by the SPÖ as peaceful coexistence. People are exhorted to have "more courage in the defence of our Viennese blood" and to listen to what we – FPÖ leaders – mean when we say that "too many foreigners are not good for anybody".

There was one electoral poster used in the Vienna Council

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[39] H.-G. Betz, "Rechtspopulismus in Westeuropa: Aktuelle Entwicklungen und politische Bedeutung", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaften*, 32 (3), pp. 251-264 and "Radikaler Rechtspopulismus im Spannungsfeld zwischen neoliberalistischen Wirtschaftskonzeptionen und antiliberaler autoritärer Ideologie", in D. Loch and W. Heitmeyer, editors, *Schattenseiten der Globalisierung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 2001, pp. 167-185.
[40] *Überfremdung*, a term that can be translated as "excessive presence (or introduction) of foreign elements", was the term used by Hitler and national-socialist journalism, then revived by Haider to indicate non-Arian cultures on German soil.

electoral campaign of October 2010 which best exemplifies the way in which emotional appeal is combined with rational reasoning. On the right-hand side of the poster is Strache, who occupies one third of the space – white shirt, on a white background, sleeves rolled up to the elbows, a striped tie in a blue darker than the light blue of the FPÖ symbol – smiling and drawing the attention of the observer with his index finger pointed. Dominating the left-hand side, in red and black, is the main slogan: "We want integration rather than fake tolerance". On the lower edge of this inscription, in smaller, slanted black letters, highlighted in red, is the notice "The ÖVP places itself at the service of Häupl's policies"[41]. Immediately below is a summary of the recent actions by Strache's political opponents: "In Vienna, SPÖ-Häupl stubbornly ignores the massive problems of integration and even wants Turkish schools. The ÖVP is making no resistance to the SPÖ. On the contrary: Marek[42] and Co. are selling out in order to get into a coalition with the SPÖ". After a blank line, working as a counterpoint, is the description of FPÖ's position: the "SPÖ and ÖVP criticise FPÖ and H.C. Strache for their attempts at true integration. But, in reality, we are just expressing what eminent conservative politicians are saying in other countries". At this point the poster's argument is based on German authority, that is, on the statements made by German politicians whose policies are respected by the international community, policies which are said to be quite similar to the ones held by the FPÖ. "Read it yourselves": "The principle must be affirmed, says Angela Merkel, that children and young people of Turkish origin are to attend German schools". Edmund Stoiber (CSU): "Politics must finally be prepared to state even awkward truths. Better integration is among them and, above all, it is a standing duty

[41] Michael Häupl, a member of the SPÖ and Mayor of Vienna starting from 1995.
[42] Christine Marek, Chairman of the ÖVP of Vienna and leading candidate in the elections of 2010.

of our fellow foreign citizens residing here". Joachim Hermann (also CSU) concludes: "A further wave of immigration would put a strain on the integration capacity of our country". At the bottom, the poster closes with the guarantee "Because I believe in YOU", the symbol of the FPÖ and the indication of the internet site that Strache launched as "Viennese blood".

There are two fundamental omissions in the content of the poster. First, the integration policies that the FPÖ would implement, if elected, are not mentioned. A comparison with the party's statements on the issue of immigration on other occasions reveals quite a different message. It is quite clear that the FPÖ's political discourse on this subject is not about integration, but rather exclusion. The second missing point is the lack of context in the statements quoted as "German authority", none of which supports FPÖ's typical position of the "excess of foreign elements". Apart from the conceptual inaccuracy of Stoiber, who uses the terms "citizen" and "foreigners" with reference to the same person, immigrants are called fellow citizens, and not "advocates of Islamist hate, who get away with stirring up conflicts on the pretext of freedom of religion". The principle stated by Chancellor Merkel is accompanied in Germany by a number of practical political measures: intensive language courses and civic initiatives, such as the opening of multicultural centres which the German majority parties do not portray as places of "dubious activity".

Other examples of how the will of the people is made to coincide with the will of the leader are found in a number of posters in which Strache meets with various groups: factory workers ("justice"), young people ("future"), elderly people in distress ("finally some respect"), and – in the most representative poster, in which Strache assumes the role of a father figure – a mother and child ("future at last"). In other posters, the purpose of which is to indicate the difference between the socialism of the SPÖ and the concept of society as propounded by the FPÖ, the message is clearly that it is the SPÖ

who has deprived the elderly of respect, the workers of justice and young of their future.

In general, the analysis of the contents of the political communication of Strache's FPÖ (electoral posters, the party's internet site[43], discursive and metadiscoursive strategies) reveals a strategy of identifying persons and practices that sets an "us", benevolent and salvific, against a "them", malevolent and dangerous, without degrees or logical coherence. On the one hand you have the criminalising discourse, and on the other the metadiscourse about the priggishness of its adversaries. There is an absence of a real critical analysis of topics and principles, beyond the slogans "We are for you", "They are against HIM, because HE is with YOU". There is no third modality for comparing adversaries or communicating with the voters. For example, in the FPÖ's propaganda, the issue of the welfare state, which not only requires technical know-how, but also a stance based on principle, is either reduced to an unspecified concept of "justice", or is resolved by attacking the non-qualified and parasitic immigration for which the SPÖ is responsible. It would therefore appear that the crisis of the welfare state was caused by unchecked immigration, so that the only policy that needs to be enacted is to stop it.

To sum up, the people, that harmonious unity of a hard-working, moral, native community – which is assumed as an axiom – is contrasted with the inept and deceitful political parties (SPÖ and ÖVP), with a fraudulent and oppressive European Union, with slimy and hypocritical intellectuals (the defenders of the politically correct); and finally with dangerous interlopers (immigrants, particularly Muslims). The discursive strategy on this includes the irreconcilable conflict between "us" and "them" and the suppression of "them". Thus, this strategy seeks to construct networks of guilty complicity among all those who do not belong to "Viennese blood" as represented by the will of the leader.

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[43] http://www.fpoe.at/