

# The Rise of the Radical Right:

## Parties and electoral competition in postindustrial societies

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## Chapter 1

### Understanding the rise of the radical right

During the last two decades, radical right parties have been surging in popular support in many nations, gaining legislative seats, even enjoying the legitimacy endowed by ministerial office and entering the corridors of government power<sup>1</sup>. In established democracies, contemporary parties within this family which have enjoyed substantial success in recent elections include the Swiss *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (SVP), the Italian *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN) and *Lega Nord* (LN), the Austrian *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ), the Danish *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF), the Norwegian *Fremskrittspartiet* (FrP), the Flemish *Vlaams Blok* (VIB), the French *Front National* (FN), the Dutch *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, the Portuguese *Partido Popular*, New Zealand First, the Australian One Nation party, and the Canadian Reform Party. By contrast, other established democracies have seen radical right parties recording only erratic gains at local level, or else remaining marginalized at the periphery of power, including the German *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NDP), the British National Party (BNP), the Greek *Elinko Metopon* (EM), and the Swedish *Sverigedemokraterna* (SD).

The rise of the most successful of these parties is vividly illustrated in Figure 1.1. This documents the electoral performance for eight parliamentary parties which are conventionally regarded in the literature as part of the radical right family and which have contested a continuous series of national elections since 1980. Voting support for these parties surges strongly, almost tripling from mid-1980 to the late-1990s.

[Figure 1.1 about here]

Therefore, in recent years the radical right has established a clear presence in national parliaments in a diverse array of established democracies and entered coalition governments in Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands, and Italy. This development has occurred in both predominately Catholic and Protestant societies, in Nordic and Mediterranean Europe, as well as in liberal Norway and conservative Switzerland, in Western Europe and in Anglo-American democracies. The puzzle is deepened by the fact that these are all affluent post-industrial 'knowledge' societies and cradle-to-grave welfare states with some of the best-educated and most secure populations in the world, all characteristics which should generate social tolerance and liberal attitudes antithetical to xenophobic appeals. Simple path-dependent historical explanations also fail: the radical right has advanced in Austria and Italy scarred by memories of fascism, but in also Norway, at the forefront of Allied resistance. Another common explanation blames rates of unemployment in each society, yet the right has surged ahead where it is low (Switzerland and Austria) as well as high (Belgium). Nor can this rise be attributed in any straightforward and mono-causal fashion simply to cultural protectionism, triggered as a backlash directed against the growth of the 'borderless' European Union, surges in population migration, 'guest-workers', political refugees, and asylum-seekers, and growing multiculturalism. For example, as discussed later in detail, contemporary radical rightwing parties have failed to enter the German Bundestag, the Swedish Riksdag, or the British House of Commons despite the fact that these countries have absorbed some of the highest proportions of asylum-seekers in Western Europe, during the 1990s there were almost one million refugees and asylum seekers in Germany, 200,000 in the UK, and 175,000 in Sweden.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, Portugal hosted less than one thousand refugees and asylum-seekers during this decade, yet during the 2002 general elections the *Partido Popular* (PP- Popular Party) came third with the support of almost one in ten voters.

The rise of radical right parties is therefore a puzzle and understanding this phenomenon is important for several reasons. First, these parties are becoming increasingly powerful political actors in the countries where they have gained seats in local councils, the European Parliament, or national parliaments. Elected representatives can influence public policy process directly, through legislative

debates and motions, as well as indirectly, through shaping the policies adopted by either their coalition partners or the mainstream parties. Even in countries where radical right parties remain excluded from government office, any basic shift in the party system can have significant consequences for the workings of representative democracy and the public policy process. Under electoral pressure, political leaders in mainstream parties such as the British Conservatives and German Christian Social Union have co-opted the language of the radical right on issues such as crime, immigration, and welfare abuse<sup>3</sup>. The center-right parties in France, the RPR and UDF, adopted the Front National anti-immigrant rhetoric after 1986, in the attempt to preempt their support<sup>4</sup>. Along similar lines, Austria adopted more restrictive policies towards refugees after the FPÖ entered coalition government with the ÖVP<sup>5</sup>.

The broader implications of this study also provide insights into whether public support for radical right parties represents 'politics as usual', or whether it does reflect deeply undemocratic tendencies, intolerance of minorities, and racist sentiments, as many fear, which may have serious consequences for representative democracy. There are anxieties that the sudden rise of radical right parties may make it more difficult to establish durable coalition governments, exemplified by the collapse of the Dutch government coalition and the calling of new elections in January 2003, just seven months after *Lijst Pim Fortuyn's* first breakthrough. Even greater concern is generated by the success of the radical right in transitional and consolidating democracies, especially if their success exacerbates ethnic tensions. In Serbia, for example, a fragile electoral democracy in a deeply-divided plural society, well after conflict subsided, the *Serbia Radical Party* (SRS) became the largest party with over one quarter of the vote (28%) in the December 2003 legislative elections. At the time their leader, Vojislav Seselj, was a suspected war criminal behind bars in the International Court in The Hague. In this regard, the wider consequences of the rise of the radical right may prove critical, not just for party competition and elections, but also for the workings of representative democracy.

Moreover, understanding the emergence of this phenomenon promises to provide more general insights into long-standing theoretical puzzles about party competition, and in particular the facilitating structural conditions and the party strategies that could, in principle, allow any minor party to expand their base, whatever their ideological persuasion. The conventional wisdom during the 1960s and 1970s accepted Lipset and Rokkan's classic theory assuming that party systems were largely 'frozen' in Western Europe and other established democracies.<sup>6</sup> Given successful challenges mounted from the right, we need to analyze how these new parties manage to mobilize electoral support and break through to threaten established party systems. Similar theoretical issues are posed by the breakthrough of Green parties in Germany and Belgium, the rise of minor center-left parties such as the Liberal Democrats in Britain, or the growth of regional parties such as the *Bloc Quebecoise* in Canada, *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) in the Basque region, or the Scottish National Party in the UK. In short, understanding this phenomenon is important for both political and theoretical reasons.

### **Explaining the rise of the radical right**

Within this context, the aim of this book is to test competing explanations for the electoral success of contemporary radical right parties. The theory predicts that certain structural factors act as necessary but not sufficient conditions facilitating the political fortunes of minor parties in any electoral democracy, in particular the growth of new social cleavages, the existence of widespread protest politics, and the existence of low electoral thresholds. These factors are not distinctive to explaining the rise of the radical right per se; instead, they can potentially function to benefit any minor party across the political spectrum.

Within these structural constraints, the role of agency remains critical. Whether radical right parties remain marginalized at the periphery of the political system (such as the BNP), or whether they become significant political actors influencing the policy agenda, gaining elected office, and even entering government ministries (such as the FPÖ), depends upon how far their own strategic

ideological appeals work within the constraints set by the electoral system and the distribution of public opinion. Rather than a 'one-size fits all' approach, the argument developed at the heart of this book seeks to explain significant variations in the policy issues and ideological appeals adopted by parties within the radical right family, for example the contrasts evident between *Vlaams Blok* and the Canadian Reform party. The strategic agency theory at the heart of this book is evaluated against alternative explanations and competing counter-hypotheses offered in the literature, using multi-level models with aggregate and survey evidence drawn from 37 nations. The theory is developed in far greater depth throughout the book, along with the supporting evidence, but here we can just sketch out the main arguments and core propositions.

*(i) Party competition and the distribution of public opinion*

The theory advanced in this book starts from the conventional rational choice axiom that the distribution of public opinion can be imagined as located along a classic Downsian left-right single continuum which follows a normal curve (Figure 1.2). As we shall demonstrate in subsequent chapters, public opinion follows this classic pattern on most major issues, such as taxes, public spending, and social tolerance of immigrants. Assuming the proximity model of voting behavior, rational voters seek to maximize their utility by opting for the party closest to their issue preferences and against parties furthest away. Voting support for radical right parties is assumed to be explained by the same factors as support for any other party. Citizens vote positively for the party that is perceived as closest to their own preference position in this attitudinal space. And they also vote negatively against the party or parties which are perceived as distant from their own preference position.

[Figure 1.2 about here]

In the ideological space on issues, some policy options are located too far left for the public's acceptance, some are located too far right, and there is an asymmetrical zone of acquiescence between them with a range of policy choices that are acceptable to the public<sup>7</sup>. There is a broad public consensus about issues within this zone. Typically, these are exemplified by the desirability of bread-and-butter issues such as maintaining economic growth, basic standards of health-care, educational services, law and order, and national security, as well as broader issues such as social tolerance of ethnic minorities, the desirability of protecting human rights, and support for democratic processes. Mainstream center-left and center-right parties typically compete primarily on which party is more competent to manage these issues. The public acquiesces to policies in this central zone because the differences among the alternative policy options are relatively minor. In democratic societies with competitive party systems, elected representatives respond fairly sensitively to the distribution of public preferences. Rational politicians wish to maintain popular support (and hence office) by remaining safely within the 'zone of acquiescence' where the public is in accord with policy proposals, rather than moving too far across the ideological spectrum to either the extreme left or right, where they risk gaining some votes but also losing others. Most politicians therefore implement policy changes step-by-step broadly in terms of their perceptions of what the public wants. Successful parties shape their platforms, rhetorical appeals, and issue stances to maximize their popularity within the public's zone of acquiescence. Citizens converge in this zone and hence a center position generates the greatest electoral rewards and the least risks for parties.

*(ii) Policy cycles and public opinion change*

Yet the zone is not static. At a certain stage, the theory suggests, public preferences may shift towards either the right or left. These changes most commonly occur in response to (i) the 'shock' of external events (such as the sudden and dramatic impact of 9/11 on perceptions of threats to national security); (ii) the impact of major changes in government policies (such as in levels of public spending or taxation); or due to (iii) the gradual and cumulative influence of long-term cultural trends (typified by growing public concern about the environment, rising support for gender and racial equality, or

greater tolerance of homosexuality). A growing literature based on the analysis of long-term trends in opinion polls, including by Page and Shapiro, suggests that mass public opinion shifts fairly rationally and predictably in response to these sorts of social and political developments<sup>8</sup>. Government policies, however, often continue to overshoot the new public consensus, until policymakers become aware of the shift and move back into line with the zone of acquiescence. If politicians fail to perceive the change in public sentiment, or else fail to respond to the shift, they face the threat of electoral defeat. In the short-term the link between public preferences and electoral outcomes remains crude and imperfect, since parties may be returned to power on successive occasions for many reasons, such as distortions of the electoral system, the personal popularity of charismatic leaders, or the impact of media campaign coverage, even when the policy mood is moving against them. In the longer-term, however, the theory assumes that politicians remaining outside the zone of acquiescence will suffer electoral defeat.

The challenge facing rational office-seeking politicians is therefore to maintain their position close to the zone of acquiescence in public opinion where they can maximize their support among electors. Politicians may lag behind public opinion if they believe that certain policy options remain popular, such as programs promising tax cuts, even though the public has now shifted preferences towards public spending. Alternatively, policymakers may also run ahead of public opinion, for example if they are more liberal than the electorate on accepting political refugees. Perceptual and information barriers often hinder how far political leaders can identify public preferences with any degree of accuracy<sup>9</sup>. But when lagging or leading, politicians face an electoral penalty. Assuming the proximity model of voting behavior, where rational voters seek to maximize their utility by opting for the party closest to their issue preferences, and against parties furthest away, in the longer term any growing disjunction between public preferences and the actions of policymakers can be expected to produce an electoral response that ‘throws the rascals out’ in favor of others more in tune with the national sentiment.

*(iii) The new issue cleavage of cultural protectionism*

This study will demonstrate in subsequent chapters that one such major shift in public opinion, which can be best identified as growing ‘cultural protectionism’, has occurred during the last decade in response to the impact of globalization in all its multiple manifestations. Globalization is a complex phenomenon which is understood here to refer to the expansion in the scale and speed of flows of capital, goods, people, and ideas across borders with the effect of decreasing the effects of distance. Indicators commonly used to monitor this phenomenon include levels of international trade, communications, and migration<sup>10</sup>. Public opinion has reacted most strongly to some of the most visible manifestations of this phenomenon, especially to growing multiculturalism, ethnic diversity, and immigration arising from the greater permeability of national borders during recent decades.

One way to think about the cultural impact of globalization is to draw a broad distinction between cosmopolitans, nationalists, and parochials<sup>11</sup>. *Cosmopolitans* can be understood as essentially ‘citizens of the world’ with a broad internationalist outlook, for example equally comfortable living and working in different countries, familiar with travel well beyond their national and regional boundaries, and fluent in languages. Yet, rather than an inexorable secular trend, the spread of cosmopolitanism may experience internal tensions and periodic reverse waves<sup>12</sup>. *Nationalists* are understood as those who identify strongly with the nation-state, displaying pride in their country, emphasizing the importance of distinct ethno-nationalistic identities, and favoring economic protectionism. National identities are usually implicit and inert, and may only rise to the surface in response to an ‘other’, in which (rather like Simon de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*) we know what we are by virtue of what we are not. The idea of distinct national identities is common, although also complex and under-conceptualized<sup>13</sup>. Lastly, *parochials* are understood as those who celebrate the idiosyncrasies of diverse local and regional cultures, foods and traditions, who prefer all politics to be devolved to

sub-national levels, and who stress the importance of dense communities with clearly defined territorial and social boundaries demarcating who does and does not belong, based on particular neighborhoods, regions, or ethnic/religious identities.

Both nationalism and parochialism receive legitimacy from the belief that the apparently universal 'global' culture carries the risks of standardization and the impoverishment of local cultures, if today the global is actually a predominately American consumer culture. This belief justifies barriers to the free flow of goods (import taxes), people (immigrants), or culture (such as non-domestic films). Popular resistance to globalization is widely evident in terms of deep-rooted ethnic conflict and a resurgence of nationalist movements, as well as more peaceful decentralization to regional and local levels of governance. Manifestations of cultural protectionism include anti-globalization movements protesting against the major institutions of global governance, including the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and European Union, as well as against the penetration of multinational corporations, such as MacDonald's and Coke Cola. As we shall demonstrate later, cultural protectionism can be understood as a powerful force representing a new cleavage which cuts across the conventional socio-economic division in party politics between the pro-market rightwing from the pro-state leftwing. The radical right is far from the exclusive beneficiaries of the new cleavage, as certain beliefs are also advocated by diverse movements on the new left. Nevertheless, the more extreme and least tolerant aspects of cultural protectionism have become, in many ways, the signature issue of the radical right. The rising salience of cultural protectionism in recent decades, in reaction to growing globalization, has created challenges for the major parties in established democracies.

*(iv) The challenge for minor parties*

Within this context, the challenge facing minor parties of any persuasion is how to mobilize sufficient electoral support to carve out a niche section of the market which is not already occupied by the established parties on the center-left and center-right. They can do this in three ways.

First, they can try to compete with the established center-left or center-right parties on consensual left-right issues, by stressing their ability and competence to manage the economy, public services, or national security. Yet party competition remains fiercest on these issues. Without the experience, legitimacy, and authority that comes from an established record in government, or the resources that come from elected office, minor parties on the radical left and radical right face serious problems in establishing their credibility on these issues.

Second, rather than emphasizing their positive competence, minor parties can seek to undermine support for the major parties by negative attacks, especially directed against the performance and record of the main party or parties in government. Minor parties can thereby hope to gain support from any period of government unpopularity, although, of course, this is a risky strategy since they cannot be sure whether any voter dissatisfaction will benefit them or other alternative opposition parties.

Alternatively, rational minor parties may seek to appeal positively to the electorate on specific distinctive issues which are perceived to be outside of the zone of acquiescence, and therefore neglected by the mainstream parties in the center. Minor parties can seek to gain 'ownership' of these issues. Given the normal distribution of public opinion on issues to the extreme left or right, minor parties may thereby maximize support among the smaller sectors of the electorate located at these poles. During the last decade many radical right parties have therefore emphasized cultural protectionism to build support, typically around issues such as the repatriation of immigrants or the closure of borders to 'foreigners', although they have also proposed diverse forms of economic policies (such as flat-tax, anti-tax, anti-NAFTA free trade, or anti-welfare). These issues are usually regarded as too far away from the public's zone of acquiescence to be adopted by the mainstream center parties: by advocating these issues, any marginal gains they might make from the small proportion of extreme right voters carry serious risks of counterbalancing losses from the larger

number of moderate left. But minor parties building support on the radical right are less risk-averse since they face fewer electoral penalties. If minor parties demonstrate that they can succeed in gaining votes based on these issues, then rational mainstream parties are expected to move towards the left or right flanks in subsequent elections, adjusting their perceptions of the state of public opinion, to keep within the zone of acquiescence.

*(v) Institutions matter*

So far, we have sought to explain the behavior of rational voters and rational parties under conditions of perfect competition. The theory is simple and parsimonious. Far from being original, the main assumptions are those conventional in the literature on spatial models of voting behavior. The account generates potentially testable propositions open to examination against empirical evidence.

Yet we recognize that the pursuit of elected office is also constrained by political institutions. In particular, the theory assumes that the electoral system determines how the share of the popular vote translates into seats, and therefore patterns of party competition and whether just a few major parties are represented in national parliaments or whether multiple parties are included. If electoral systems were perfectly proportional then there would be no need to bring in this intervening condition: the party share of seats would reflect its share of the vote. But in practice, no electoral system is perfectly proportional. The most important features of electoral systems that affect party competition include the effective electoral threshold (the average percentage of votes needed to gain a seat) and also, to a lesser extent, the number of opportunities for second-order elections (such as contests held at local, district, regional, and multinational levels).

The assumption that the electoral system matters is also hardly contentious, let alone original; ever since the classic work of Maurice Duverger and Douglas W. Rae, an extensive literature has established that basic electoral rules shape the degree of party fragmentation, and thus influence voting support for minor parties of any political stripe and ideological persuasion<sup>14</sup>. The direct or 'mechanical' impact of rules is widely acknowledged, for example, how the legal threshold prevented the NDP from entering the Bundestag in 1969, or how the shift to PR in French legislative elections helped Le Pen's *Front National* in 1986. But the *indirect* impact of these rules on party ideological strategies is often overlooked, an especially common tendency in studies limited to comparing evidence of voting support for the radical right in Western European parliamentary elections, which includes few majoritarian electoral systems. Chapter 3 in this study discusses the reasons for this relationship and provides further confirmation of the proposition that the electoral system represents an important part of the explanation for cross-national variations in the emergence and consolidation of radical right parties, although these rules function as necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for their rise<sup>15</sup>.

*(vi) Effective party strategies work within the constraints of electoral rules*

Building upon these insights, the sixth assumption of this theory is that within the established system of electoral rules, constraining actors, the role of *party agency* becomes relevant, in particular, *the most effective ideological strategies that radical right parties can adopt to maximize their potential seat gains depends upon the type of electoral system*. In this regard, parties are not just prisoners of their environment, but rather can become masters of their electoral fate. Rational parties of the radical right are expected to differ systematically in the ideological appeals they adopt to maximize their support under different types of electoral systems.

In proportional representation electoral systems, with low effective thresholds, the theory predicts that radical right parties can gain seats by adopting 'bonding' strategies emphasizing the 'signature' ideological appeals which distinguish them most clearly from mainstream competitors on the center-right and center-left. In this institutional context, minor radical right parties can gain seats

by focusing their appeals almost exclusively upon cultural protectionism, emphasizing hard-line xenophobic rhetoric, proposing racist, anti-immigration, and anti-refugee policies, or by advocating radical economic and social policies, such as a 'flat tax' or the abolition of welfare. The extreme nature of these proposals means that they are rejected by the majority of the electorate in most democracies, but there remains some support for these ideas among the public located to the extreme right. Low effective electoral thresholds, common in PR elections, allow radical right parties to gain elected office through this strategy based on a relatively modest share of the popular vote. Party systems under proportional rules are therefore centrifugal, with competition dispersed throughout the ideological spectrum and issue space, rather than clustered closely around the center-point<sup>16</sup>.

Yet in contests with higher effective electoral thresholds to gain seats, common in majoritarian systems, by contrast, radical right parties will fail to gain office unless they also expand their policy platform and ideological appeals beyond cultural protectionism to encompass a broader range of issues on the social and economic agenda. An effective electoral strategy requires radical right parties to advocate more mainstream conservative social and economic policies, and to emphasize populist appeals, based on vague rhetoric and simple slogans largely devoid of any substantive policy content. Majoritarian electoral systems have higher electoral hurdles, since parties need a simple plurality or a majority of votes in each district to win. Under these rules, successful parties commonly adopt 'bridging' strategies designed to gather votes among diverse sectors of the electorate<sup>17</sup>. This proposition suggests many important consequences, not least that under majoritarian electoral rules, electorally-successful radical right parties have to appeal beyond single-issue anti-immigration or anti-tax policies, to expand their popular support. Of course, radical right parties, such as the BNP or the UK National Front, may decide to focus only on their core issues, emphasizing a xenophobic anti-foreigner cultural protectionism, prioritizing ideological purity over electoral popularity. But under majoritarian electoral rules, given the distribution of public opinion on these issues, such parties will repeatedly fail to surmount the hurdles to become elected and they will remain marginalized at the periphery of power.

(vii) *Facilitating conditions*

Within this context, support for the radical right is further assisted by the development of new social cleavages, such as groups most vulnerable to new social risks which are unrepresented by the major parties, and also attitudes conducive to protest politics, which facilitate the fragmentation of party systems. These factors are expected to weaken the habitual support for mainstream center-left and center-right parties, and so provide opportunities for newer challengers to attract votes, especially on a short-term or temporary basis in second-order elections. But, as discussed in depth in chapters 4 and 5, it would be a mistake to regard these conditions as sufficient in themselves for explaining the rise of radical right parties; any upsurge of protest could be directed equally into voting support for other minor parties providing 'a choice not an echo', whether green, regional, ethno-national, ethno-religious, or 'personalist', as well as into non-voting or 'exit'. Not surprisingly, as a result membership of 'new' social cleavages, and indicators of disaffection with the political system, in fact proves to be relatively weak predictors of voting support for radical right parties.

To summarize, the argument constructed in this book suggests that the development of new social cleavages and attitudes conducive to protest politics, encourage fragmentation of party systems, electoral volatility, and partisan dealignment, loosening voter loyalties among mainstream center-left and center-right parties. This process provides openings for entrepreneurial minor parties to attract electoral support, at least temporarily, as discussed in depth in subsequent chapters. But what explains the electoral success of radical right parties in many countries are less these structural conditions than how they respond to this context in constructing their strategic ideological appeals around cultural protectionism, within the constraints set by the broader electoral system and the distribution of public opinion in each country. In this regard, we build on ideas of 'political opportunity structure'. The core argument in this book therefore emphasizes the importance of the most appropriate strategies

adopted by successful radical right parties to maximize their electoral support within a broader set of constraints on their behavior<sup>18</sup>.

Of course, there is no shortage of alternative explanations for the rise of the radical right. For example, one recent summary of the literature by Rydgren developed the following 'shopping-list' of reasons which had been proposed in research to explain the emergence of radical right parties:

1. A post-industrial economy;
2. Dissolution of established identities, fragmentation of the culture, multiculturalization.
3. The emergence or growing salience of the sociocultural cleavage dimension.
4. Widespread political discontent and disenchantment.
5. Convergence between the established parties in political space.
6. Popular xenophobia and racism.
7. Economic crisis and unemployment.
8. Reaction against the emergence of New Left and/or Green parties and movements.
9. A proportional voting system.
10. Experience of a referendum that cuts across the old party cleavages."<sup>19</sup>

Yet it remains unclear how these ad hoc factors relate to each other theoretically. Nor is it clear how some of these factors, which are constants, can explain change (the rise of the right). Many of these propositions, such as the role of economic conditions, have found only limited or mixed support in the literature. The research remains divided in part because rather than systematic comparative analysis, it depends heavily upon specific national case studies, and factors emphasized as critical for the rise of the radical right in some particular contexts are reported as unimportant in others. Many of these explanations are discussed and considered further throughout this book but found to be less closely and consistently linked to the rise of the radical right in many countries than the account developed here.

*Evidence for this theory?*

Are the core propositions arising from these assumptions supported by good evidence? Ever since seminal work by Douglas Rae and Arend Lijphart, there is certainly an established literature in comparative politics demonstrating that the parliamentary fortunes of minor parties are directly determined by the type of electoral system<sup>20</sup>. What is less well understood is how the structural context interacts with party strategies and the distribution of public opinion to explain the fortunes of the radical right. The analysis of party strategies is a complex and difficult area of study. This book does not seek to analyze direct evidence for the campaign and electoral appeals, since it is problematic to gauge these reliably and consistently across the wide range of countries contained in this study. The Comparative Manifestos Project, coding party platforms published since 1945 dataset, allows comparison of left-right positions across many societies<sup>21</sup>. Unfortunately, the project excludes most of the newer radical right parties from the dataset, and the coding scheme also reflects the issues that were common when the project started to gather data in the early 1980s, and so does not gauge collect detailed and comprehensive information about signature radical right issues, such as cultural protectionism.

Party families can be defined, however, from 'expert surveys' which ask a sample of political scientists in each country to locate each party on a left-right 10-point ideological scale or an equivalent scale on specific issues. Building on previous studies, this book draws upon expert judgments for the location of parties contained within the CSES survey and also the most recent expert survey conducted in 2000 by Marcel Lubbers<sup>22</sup>. Chapter 2 uses these measures to define and classify which parties can be regarded as falling within the radical right family. Subsequent chapters then analyze and compare the attitudes, values, and social characteristics of supporters of these parties with other

voters in the mass electorate. Under PR systems, where radical right parties are predicted to focus on mobilizing core voters on their core 'signature' issues, including appeals to xenophobia, nationalism, and cultural protectionism, their supporters are expected to be fairly homogeneous in their ideological orientations and in their social background. Under majoritarian systems, by contrast, where radical right parties need to broaden their appeal to succeed in gaining office, their supporters are expected to prove more heterogeneous in their attitudes and values, and more diverse in their social characteristics. The theory predicts that the type of electoral rules will therefore have important results for the campaign strategies adopted by successful radical right parties. These appeals can be tested empirically by examining survey evidence as well as selected detailed case-studies.

This theory is tested in this book by multilevel models. The type of electoral institutions, and the socio-economic conditions in each country, can be classified and gauged at macro-level. This data can be combined with survey evidence monitoring voting behavior, political attitudes, and social characteristics, all measured at individual-level. This evidence can be compared across a wide range of thirty-seven nations, including established and newer democracies from many regions in the world, using the 32-nation Comparative Study of Electoral Systems 1996-2002 and the 22-nation European Social Survey-2002 as the primary survey datasets. In combination, as discussed in detail in the next chapter, these recent large-scale cross-national surveys allow us to compare electoral support for radical right parties at individual-level but within varying institutional contexts. The comparative framework contains established and newer democracies, as well as industrial and postindustrial societies, including countries in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, North and South America, and Asia-Pacific. Most importantly, the study allows comparison of those nations where the radical rise has, and has not, advanced into power. The selected case studies focus upon one of the most successful parties, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), which has advanced into government, as well as the French Front National which has been excluded from governing coalitions but which has sporadically exerted 'blackmail' influence over the policies adopted by the center-right, and the history of radical right parties and their failure to break through in the United States.

The strategic agency theory does not claim to be particularly novel in its components, as many have regarded either the direct impact of electoral systems or the breadth of the policy appeal of the radical right as important parts of the explanation for their success. The combination of these factors, however, has been insufficiently emphasized to explain exactly why electoral strategies work differently under different electoral contexts. Much research has also been limited to single-nation cases, even within multi-nation edited volumes, or restricted to the analysis of ecological data within Western Europe. Here we can build on earlier work to demonstrate the relative importance of structural and agency factors with multi-level cross-national models comparing systematic survey evidence from a far wider range of societies than ever before, as well as focusing in depth upon historical processes of how far parties do and do not progress from margin to mainstream in selected case studies in Austria, France, and the United States.

### *Plan of the Book*

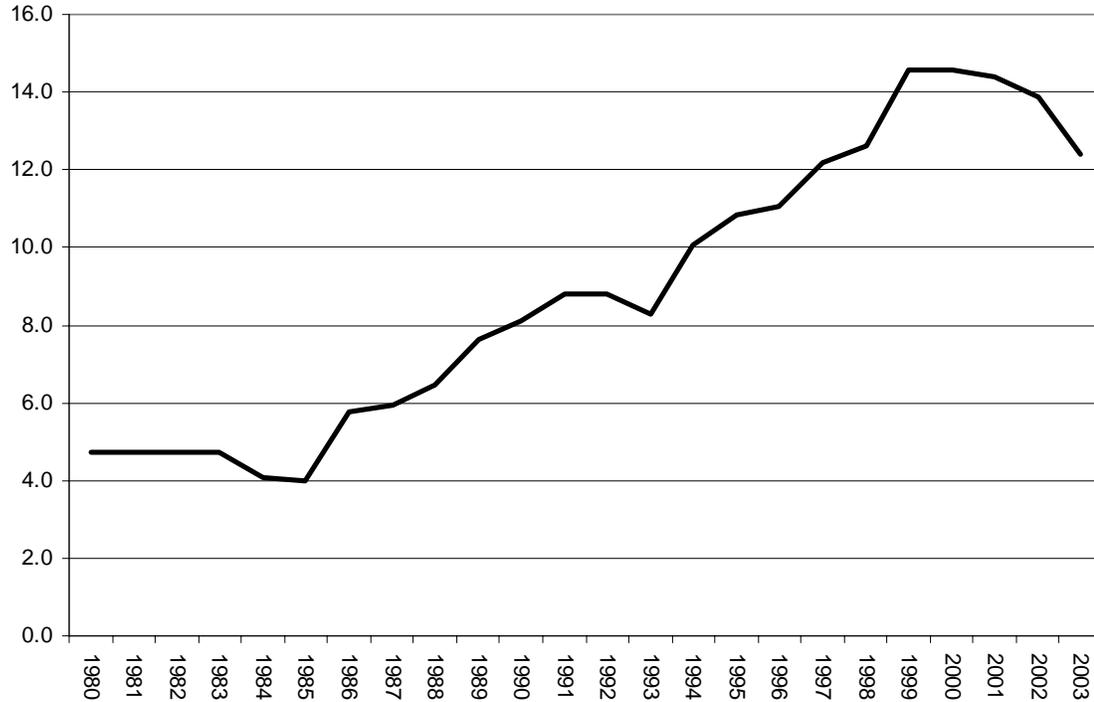
The challenge for this book is to explore the comparative evidence supporting the strategic agency theory compared with alternative accounts. **Chapter 2** clarifies the party typology, sources of expert and survey data, and the comparative framework used in this study. This is an important preliminary step in order to examine whether parties identified as located within the radical right family share common social and ideological characteristics, as commonly assumed. Building on this foundation, **Part II** then starts to test empirically the evidence for the theory. **Chapter 3** examines the underlying facilitating structural conditions leading towards the rise of the radical right in some affluent established democracies but not elsewhere. We focus upon how electoral systems generate different legal and effective electoral thresholds for minor parties. **Chapter 4** considers evidence for the 'new cleavage' thesis that rates of immigration, asylum-seekers and ethnic heterogeneity fuel support for the radical right, especially among an 'underclass' of the less affluent and educated strata

who feel resentment against new minorities, and that radical right support is concentrated within disadvantaged social sectors. **Chapter 5** focuses upon the 'protest politics' thesis that support for the radical right is essentially motivated by negative evaluations of the performance of the party in government, the lack of electoral choices due to closure of the gap between the center-left and center-right, or a more diffuse rejection of democracy.

**Part III** turns to the role of agency, representing the ideological and policy appeals that parties offer to the electorate. **Chapter 6** looks in more depth at attitudes towards immigration, multiculturalism, xenophobia, and cultural protectionism, and, in particular, how far electoral support for the radical right is linked to lack of tolerance towards ethnic minorities, asylum-seekers, and refugees. **Chapter 7** considers neo-liberal attitudes towards the market and state and whether these are more strongly associated with votes for radical right parties in countries with majoritarian rather than PR electoral systems, as predicted by the strategic agency theory. **Chapter 8** examines the importance of party organization, resources, leadership and media attention, all factors which are often believed to be critical for the success these parties. In particular, we analyze whether leadership popularity is more important for the voting support for the radical right than for the major parties.

Yet the analysis of cross-national survey evidence remains limited in its capacity to document causal processes of electoral change over time, and how radical right parties move from periphery to becoming minor partners in coalition governments. **Part IV** considers selected case studies illustrating these processes, selecting different contexts. **Chapter 9** examines how Jörg Haider moved the Austrian Freedom Party from the margins to coalition government with the Austrian People's Party and the consequences of this development for immigration policy in this country. **Chapter 10** considers the fluctuating fortunes of the French Front National under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen during the last three decades, with occasional success in 'second-order' elections, and support building in certain regions, then a return to the status quo ante in subsequent contests. We analyze the foundations of FN support and the impact of this party on mainstream parties and public policy. **Chapter 11** considers the case of radical right in the United States, and the particular reasons why third parties on the right have had so little success from Wallace to Buchanan.

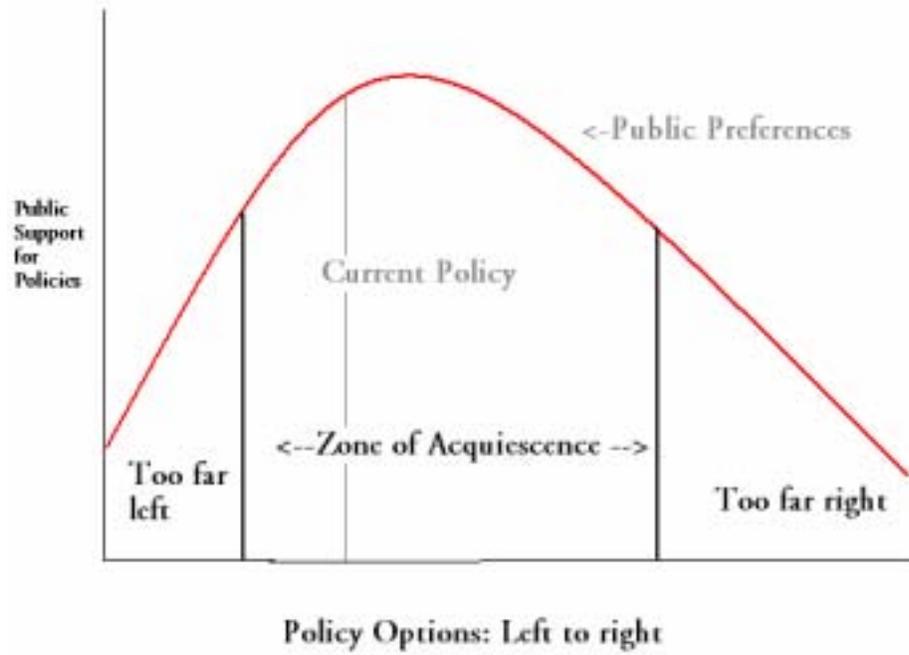
**Part V** then seeks to understand the broader consequences of this development. **Chapter 13** considers the impact of the rise of the radical right on government, public policy, and representative democracy. Many liberals are alarmed by the recent resurgence of the radical right, but are these concerns actually justified? The conclusion considers whether these parties represent a healthy outlet for the expression of genuine public concern about issues of multiculturalism, problems of ethnic conflict, and the underlying pace of social change, thereby contributing towards public debate and diffusing tensions, or whether the growing legitimacy and power of the radical right poses substantial threats to social tolerance, political stability, and therefore the fundamental health of representative democracies.

**Figure 1.1: Mean vote for eight radical right parties in Western Europe, 1980-2003**

**Note:** This summarizes the average share of the vote in the lower house from 1980-2003 for the following parties in Western Europe, all of which have contested a continuous series of national parliamentary elections since 1980: Italian MSI/AN, Austrian FPÖ, German NDP, Swiss SVP, Danish FP/PP, Norwegian FrP, Belgian VIB, French FN. All these parties can be defined as 'relevant' i.e. they have achieved over 3% of the vote in one or more national parliamentary elections during this period. In the Italian and Danish cases, splits occurred within parties but still there are recognizable continuities in renamed successor parties.

**Source:** Thomas T. Mackie and Richard Rose. 1991. *The International Almanac of Electoral History*. London: Macmillan; Thomas T. Mackie and Richard Rose. 1997. *A decade of election results: Updating the International Almanac*. Studies in Public Policy 295. Strathclyde: CSPP; recent elections from *Elections around the World*. [www.electionsworld.org](http://www.electionsworld.org).

Figure 1.2: The theoretical model of party competition



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<sup>1</sup> For comparative overviews see, for example, Paul Hainsworth. Editor. 1992. *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA*. New York: St Martin's Press; Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg. Eds. 1993. *Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right*. Boulder: Westview; Hans-Georg Betz. 1994. *Radical Rightwing Populism in Western Europe*. New York: St Martin's Press; Herbert Kitschelt, with Anthony J. McGann. 1995. *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan; Luciano Cheles, Ronnie Ferguson and Michalina Vaughan. 1995. *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*. New York: Longman; Peter H. Merkl and L. Weinberg, Editors. 1997. *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties*. London: Frank Cass; Hans-Georg Betz and S. Immerfall. Editors. 1998. *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*, St Martin's Press, New York; Paul Hainsworth. Editor. 2000. *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream*. London: Pinter; Rachel Gibson. 2002. *The Growth of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press; Martin Schain, Aristide Zolberg, and Patrick Hossay. Editors. 2002. *Shadows Over Europe: The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe*. Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan; Piero Ignazi. 2003. *Extreme right parties in Western Europe*. New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>2</sup> Statistical estimates of the flow of refugees is provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2002 *Statistics on asylum seekers, refugees and others of concern to UNHCR*. www.unhcr.ch. For more details see James Jupp. 'Immigration, asylum and extremist politics in Europe.'

<sup>3</sup> Tim Bale. 2003. 'Cinderella and her ugly sisters: The mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bi-polarising party systems.' *West European Politics* 26 (3): 67-90.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Schain, Martin. 1987. 'The National Front in France and the Construction of Political Legitimacy.' *West European Politics* 10(2):229-252.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas F. Pettigrew. 1998. 'Reactions Toward the New Minorities of Western Europe.' *Annual Review of Sociology* 24:77-103.

<sup>6</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan. 1967. *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*. New York: Free Press.

<sup>7</sup> The classic argument is presented in Anthony Downs. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row. The modified version of the theory presented here has been strongly influenced by the account developed by James A. Stimson. 1991. *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles and Swings*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro.

<sup>9</sup> Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski. 2004. 'Why parties fail to learn: Electoral defeat, selective perception and British party politics.' *Party Politics* 10(1) (forthcoming)

<sup>10</sup> David Held. 1999. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*.

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this distinction see Pippa Norris. 2001. 'Global Governance and Cosmopolitan Citizens.' In *Governance in a Globalizing World*. Eds. Joseph S. Nye and John Donahue. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press. Pp.155-177.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Smith. 1995. 'Towards a Global Culture?' In *Global Culture* edited by Michael Featherstone. London: Sage.

<sup>13</sup> There is a large literature on the concepts of nationalism and national identity. See, for example, B. Anderson. 1996. *Imagined Communities: reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso; Michael Billig. 1995. *Banal Nationalism*. London: Sage; Ernest Gellner. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>14</sup> Douglas W. Rae 1967. *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws*. New Haven: Yale University Press [1971 revised ed.]; William H. Riker. 1976. 'The number of political parties: A reexamination of Duverger's law.' *Comparative Politics* 9: 93-106; William H. Riker. 1982. 'The two-party system and Duverger's Law: an essay on the history of political science.' *American Political Science Review* 76: 753-766; William H. Riker. 1986. 'Duverger's Law Revisited.' In *Electoral Laws and Their Political Consequences*, ed. Bernard Grofman and Arend Lijphart. New

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York: Agathon Press, Inc; Arend Lijphart, 1994. *Electoral Systems and Party Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>15</sup> For a similar argument, see C.L. Carter. 2002. 'Proportional representation and the fortunes of right-wing extremist parties.' *West European Politics* 25 (3): 125-146.

<sup>16</sup> Gary Cox. 1990. 'Centripetal and centrifugal incentives in electoral systems.' *American Journal of Political Science*. 34: 903-35.

<sup>17</sup> The distinction between 'bridging' and 'bonding' parties is derived from the literature on social capital, as originally applied to social groups and associations. See Robert D. Putnam. *Democracies in Flux*. New York: Oxford University Press. P. 11. The term 'bridging party' is similar to the use of the term 'catch-all' developed by Kirchheimer, except that these concepts carry different normative baggage. See Otto Kirchheimer. 1966. 'The Transformation of Western European Party Systems.' In *Political Parties and Political Development*, Eds. J. La Palombara and M. Weiner Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

<sup>18</sup> This book builds upon previous work developed in Pippa Norris. 2004. *Electoral Engineering* New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>19</sup> Jens Rydgren. 2002. 'Radical right populism in Sweden: Still a failure, but for how long?' *Scandinavian Political Studies*. 25(1): 27-56.

<sup>20</sup> See the discussion in Arend Lijphart, 1994. *Electoral Systems and Party Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>21</sup> See Ian Budge, David Robertson and Derek Hearl. Eds. 1987. *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analysis of Postwar Election Programmes in 19 Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Ian Budge, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Andrew Volkens, Judith Bara and Eric Tanenbaum. 2001. *Mapping Policy Preferences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>22</sup> For previous expert surveys, see Francis G. Castles, and Peter Mair. 1984. 'Left-Right Political Scales: Some 'Expert' Judgments.' *European Journal of Political Research* 12 (1):73-88; John Huber and Ronald Inglehart. 1995. 'Expert Interpretations of Party Space and Party Locations in 42 Societies.' *Party Politics* 1 (January): 73-111. This book draws mainly upon the most recent survey conducted in 2000 by Marcel Lubbers, for which we are much indebted. Details of the data, methodology, and codebook are available from Marcel Lubbers. 2000. [principal investigator] *Expert Judgment Survey of Western-European Political Parties 2000* [machine readable data set]. Nijmegen, the Netherlands: NWO, Department of Sociology, University of Nijmegen. For a discussion of the pros and cons of this approach, see Myunghee Kim and Michael D. McDonald. 2002. 'Cross-national comparability of party left-right positions.' *Southern Political Science Association Annual Meeting*, November, Savannah, Georgia; Ian Budge. 2000. 'Expert judgments of party policy positions: Uses and limitations in political research.' *European Journal of Political Research* 37 (1): 103-113.