



4-23-2001

Politics for the People: The Significance of Austrian National Identity in the Rise of the FPO

Laura A. Jeltema

Western Michigan University, laurajeltema@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses



Part of the Political Science Commons

Recommended Citation

Jeltema, Laura A., "Politics for the People: The Significance of Austrian National Identity in the Rise of the FPO" (2001). *Honors Theses*. 910.

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/honors_theses/910

This Honors Thesis-Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Lee Honors College at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.





THE CARL AND WINIFRED LEE HONORS COLLEGE

CERTIFICATE OF ORAL EXAMINATION

Laura A. Jeltema, having been admitted to the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College in Fall 1997 successfully presented the Lee Honors College Thesis on April 23, 2001.

The title of the paper is:

Politics for the People: The Significance of Austrian National Identity in the Rise of the FPÖ

Steven Benfell

Dr. Steven Benfell, Political Science

Liesl Haas

Dr. Liesl Haas, Political Science

Kevin Corder

Dr. Kevin Corder, Political Science

Contents

Introduction	1
The Birth of the Third Force	3
The FPÖ	5
An Overview of Explanations	7
Culture and Socialization	8
Protest.....	10
The Haider Effekt	12
National Identity.....	14
Definition of Concepts	15
The Crisis of National Identity in Austria	15
The Austrian National Identity	19
The EU as a Threat to Sovereignty	21
Immigration Dilutes the Austrian National Identity	26
Haider's Appeal for Austrian Nationalism	31
Conclusion.....	35
References	

Introduction

His picture hangs beside those of Jean-Marie Le Pen and David Duke in the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Museum of Tolerance in L.A. as a representative of a "right-wing demagogue." However, because pictures of figures such as Pol Pot and Saddam Hussein are also in the proximity, Jörg Haider, the democratically elected politician, feels this action directly questions Austrian democracy (Anti-Defamation League, 2000). Haider, recognized worldwide for his controversial anti-foreigner and seemingly pro-Nazi statements, is the former head of the FPÖ (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*-Freedom Party), a far-right political party in Austria. In 1999 the FPÖ joined a much disputed coalition government with the conservative People's Party, the ÖVP, after winning 27% of the vote in that election (Plasser, 1999). When Haider became leader of the FPÖ in 1986, the party was garnering just 5% of the vote; yet by 1999, the percentage leaped to 27. Despite several incidents of what appear to be blatant references to the efficiency of the Nazi party under Hitler in the 1930s and 40s, support had risen. Many fear a return to right-wing political dictatorship in Austria, perhaps most notably the Israeli government, which, upon the establishment of the government involving the FPÖ, banned Haider from their country and promised to withdraw their ambassador to Austria if Haider were granted a Cabinet post (Pomerantz, 2000, p. 3). Others, however, feel Haider offers no real threat besides his nativist attitude and racist remarks, while Haider and the FPÖ declare they are only "*Machen Politik für die Menschen*" (making politics for the people-the FPÖ's 1999 campaign slogan).

Significant is the fact that the FPÖ, commonly viewed as a xenophobic, nationalist party, received more than a quarter of the votes in Austria in an age and region where right-wing ideology is considered reminiscent of Hitler's Nazi party. Several aspects of the FPÖ's rise to power stand out. For example, the majority of the support for the FPÖ came from those under 44 years of age, and about 23% of FPÖ voters were college students. Both of these groups are contrary to the normal support for right-wing parties (often older, less educated citizens) (Plasser, 1999). Also interesting is the fact that this strongly conservative, even xenophobic, party gained acceptance in an age when the world is generally witnessing a strong and steady agreement that democracy and the liberal ideas of acceptance and capitalism are best. It is common knowledge that Austria was implicated with the Nazi party prior to and throughout WWII. With what is known about the effects of this horrendous period and party, it seems highly unlikely that a party whose leader blatantly commends former SS officers and applauds the practices of the Nazi party could gain support in Austria today. Significant also is the quickness with which the FPÖ became increasingly popular. Perceived by many to be a dangerous, anti-democratic, neo-nazi party, the FPÖ's entrance into a coalition government in 1999 was followed by EU sanctions, the withdrawal of the Israeli ambassador, and worldwide media coverage (usually negative). Following the October 3, 1999, election and after the creation of the coalition government between the Christian Democrats and the Freedom Party, scholars of Austrian politics and culture have tried to answer a new question: What accounts for the surge in popularity and power of the FPÖ?

Before answering this question, however, it is important to understand the foundations, platform, and significance of this controversial Austrian party.

The birth of the third force

Three political *Lager*, or camps, have historically existed in Austria: the Christian Democrats (conservative), the Socialists, and the National-Liberals (German nationalists). In 1945, the four allied powers controlling the restoration of the Austrian Republic allowed conservatives and socialists to form parties such as the SPÖ (Social Democrats) and the ÖVP (People's party), yet refused organization of a third movement that contained sentiments viewed as sympathetic to the "*liberal-freiheitlich*" ideology (the roots of Nazism) (Federal Press Service, 1998, p. 53). This occupation period, which lasted ten years, influenced the Austrian government to begin a massive de-nazification of Austrian society in order to encourage the allies to return sovereignty to Austria. The strongest claim was that Austria had been forced into union with Germany in 1938; they had resisted as much as possible and "had been a mere victim of National Socialist Germany" (Thaler, 2000, p. 280). The elite sought to create a new Austrian identity, separate from their formerly popular German national identity and absolutely disconnected from National Socialism. In seeking to make Austria "a counter concept to Nazi Germany," the government of the Second Republic passed a series of *Verbot* laws that denied former German nationalists and members of the National Socialist party the right to organize or participate in politics (Hurdes in Bluhm, 1973, p. 133). In effect, the law also "imposed a collective guilt on all former Nazi party members" (Parkinson, 1989, p. 259). The de-nazification spread through all areas of life, for example, the criminalizing of all former Nazis (regardless of whether they participated in war crimes), the censorship of press with Nazi sentiment, and the forbidding of any party resembling

the Nazi party (Riedlsperger, 1978). Affecting more than twenty percent of the Austrian population, this incrimination created a deeply bitter and politically powerless 'second-class' citizenry. (Riedlsperger, 1978).

The leaders soon realized that if Austria wanted to overcome its past and become a unified people, reintegration, rather than persecution, was mandatory. Thus, by 1949 a significant number of former Nazis had acquired the right to vote. In most cases, members of this group joined with the "un-incriminated, but nevertheless bitterly dissatisfied, middle-class voters" and created the third party movement with the goal of exerting a "third force" in direct contrast to the strict two-party coalition between the SPÖ and the ÖVP (Riedlsperger, 1978, intro p. x).

1949 saw the birth of the *Verband der Unabhängigen* (VdU- League of Independents) by two Salzburg Journalists, Herbert Kraus and Viktor Reiman, as a "third force" to stand for the alienated and dissatisfied of Austria's population (Parkinson, 1989). The importance of the VdU was that this party became the foundation of the "third political force" in Austria, which has increased in popularity in the past decade (Federal Press Service, 1998). Comprised of people disappointed by the socialists and conservatives, the VdU extolled an ideology of anti-Marxism, and thus, was anti-class warfare (Federal Press Service, 1998). The early platform elaborated on the necessity of a free-market and the condemnation of coalitions, nationalization policies, excessive bureaucracy, and the inefficiency and inflation caused by the two ruling parties (Parkinson, 1989). While this third party political movement has been largely associated with a strong German nationalism, at this time, there was little mention of Austria as part of a wider German nation.

The FPÖ

The coalition government of the SPÖ and the ÖVP consistently denied political participation and responsibility to the VdU. As a result, the VdU began to disintegrate, and in 1955, Anton Reinthaller, a former Nazi Minister of Agriculture, created the new *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ), which adopted the VdU's political ideas, united the party organization, and established a more distinct ideology. However, the party began taking new directions. Claiming the FPÖ was trying to “create a new political platform for the once tumbled greats of the National Socialist Regime,” Herbert Kraus, one of the original founders of the VdU, resigned following the formation of the FPÖ (Parkinson, 1989, p. 260). In 1955, the FPÖ found its support in a traditional, middle class structure that included people from self-employed professions, craftsmen, independent shopkeepers, tradesmen, officials, former Nazis and German nationalists (Parkinson, 1989, p. 261). In 1956, the FPÖ began vigorously campaigning on the ideology of strong German nationalism; the party acknowledged Austrian independence and perpetual neutrality but was committed to the “preservation of the German character of society” (Parkinson, 1989, p. 261). The party program characterized the FPÖ as a “national party” with the “responsibility for protecting the German *Volk* and cultural community” (Parkinson 1989, p. 261). Initially, the FPÖ strongly supported the idea of a United Europe (the future European Union) composed of different nationalities. In 1964, Chairman Peter committed the FPÖ to the struggle against absolutism of the existing coalition governments, to the attraction of more women, young voters, and Catholic supporters of the party and to become the party of “constructive” opposition (Parkinson, 1989, p. 262). In response to this more liberal trend, the strongest German nationalists of

the party defected to form the National Democratic Party (NDP). Towards the end of the 1960s, a new platform was introduced which included the creation of the European Federal States, a concern for the environment and the protection of the quality of life for the Austrian citizens. Thus, the FPÖ was initially in favor of the European Community as long as it did not infringe on the sovereignty of the member states.

This party was becoming a force, evident by the fact that between 1955 and 1966, the FPÖ was the only parliamentary opposition to the SPÖ/ÖVP coalition, and when the coalition broke, the FPÖ took on a considerable political role. Both parties (the SPÖ and the ÖVP) treated the FPÖ as a resurgent Nazi party and endeavored to discredit and curtail the effectiveness of the FPÖ, but upon realization that their attempts were generally unsuccessful, in 1970 the SPÖ (who was ruling as a minority) asked the FPÖ to act as a negotiating partner independent of either party (Federal Press Service, 1998). In 1983, the SPÖ formed a coalition government with the FPÖ (then, with only 5.4% of the total vote); this partnership was a historical first that lasted until 1987 (Parkinson, 1989, p. 249, Riedlsperger, 1992).

During this period, the FPÖ's rightwing became restless, and Jörg Haider began campaigning for Party leader, a position he achieved in 1986. From this time until the late 1990s, Haider had transformed the FPÖ "from a tiny German-national *Lager*-party" into "a modern, radical, right-populist party" with numbers equivalent to the traditional parties dominating Austria since the end of WWII (Riedlsperger, 1999). Haider created a "Contract with Austria" modeled after US Republican Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America" and has studied the anti-immigration measures of former Governor Wilson in California (Riedlsperger, 1999). Following the 1999 elections, Haider stepped down as

Party leader, but is still considered the FPÖ's chief strategist and unofficial leader. Major campaign issues of the 1999 election, in which the FPÖ acquired 27% of the total Austrian vote, included unemployment, the eastern expansion of the EU, rising crime rates, tax reform, and the favoritism characteristic of the SPÖ and ÖVP (Riedlsperger, 1999). The FPÖ campaigned for the expulsion of foreigners unemployed for more than three months. The party depicted the EU as a danger to sovereignty and as an agent responsible for intensifying the problem of cheap labor. The FPÖ platform also proposed a flat-tax and placed blame on illegal immigrants for rising crime and the abuse of social welfare. Lastly, the FPÖ criticized the ÖVP and SPÖ for their "patronage, corruption, inefficiency and waste of tax-money" (Riedlsperger, 1999). With this stance the FPÖ emerged as a major electoral force for the first time in Austrian politics. What explains this achievement?

An overview of explanations

Several explanations have been proposed to account for the Austrian FPÖ's rise in popularity. I will consider a number of these (Austrian culture, protest votes, and Jörg Haider) before my introduction of a less discussed, but equally helpful, hypothesis. Instead of looking only at the Austrian political system and history or characteristics of the FPÖ, I will more closely examine the role national identity plays in politics. No single theory or explanation can account for the sudden rise in popularity of the party. I propose that three theories, combined with the explanation I discuss, offer understanding of this interesting and significant occurrence.

Culture and socialization

As the FPÖ was founded mainly by former Nazi party members, major parties have essentially despised this party and attributed it with German-nationalist, right-radical sentiment to such an extent that many (domestic and foreign) “can only see the sky-blue of its banner through a fifty-year old brown reform haze” (the ‘color’ of the FPÖ is blue, but the party is often associated with the color brown of the Nazi party) (Riedlsperger, 1992). Therefore, some have dismissed what occurred in Austria by blaming the ever-existing Nazi sentiment and labeling the Austrian people fascists. This assumption may be too general, but some insight can be taken from examining the Austrian people and their history of development. Modernization theory holds that Protestant peoples with early nation-state and industry development have greater chances for democratic success. Perhaps several aspects of Austrian cultural history have made establishing democracy difficult. Austria constituted a core component of the Catholic world and had early state formation and a late nation building process. Absolutism was also characteristic during social modernization (Sonerson, 1997). Modernization theory tends to associate these characteristics with lower work ethic, acceptance of hierarchy and strong authority, and irrationality. A culture explanation agrees with the historical absence of democracy and recurring existence of authoritarian rule in Austria.

Some ascribe the FPÖ’s rise to the real beliefs, namely xenophobia and fascism, ‘characteristic’ of the Austrian people. That is, the motivation for voting FPÖ was Austrian culture, or the “socially transmitted patterns for behavior characteristic of a particular social group” (Keesing, 1981, p. 68). The original cultural theory of the 1930s, 40s, and 50s assumed that adult behavior was determined principally by culture (Keesing,

1981). This means that an infant growing up in a particular society is socialized, or molded, by the specific cultural experiences. Cultural patterns in childhood foster a certain “personality orientation” and distinctive “world view” (Keesing, 1981). Austrian history indicates her people have mainly lived under authoritative rule; thus, her people were socialized to accept this dominant form of government. Applying this theory to Austria during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, and noting the intense German nationalism and blatant anti-Semitism prevalent in Austria prior to WWII, a world view similar to these earlier perceptions becomes understandable. As the era following the war was witness to extreme condemnation of those involved with Hitler and the Nazi party, it is possible the younger voting generation is torn between allegiance to parents or grandparents (who may have been Nazi party supporters) and the contemporary view that former supporters of the Nazi party are criminals. The commonly accepted idea that ‘Austria never apologized for the Holocaust’ because they claim to be National Socialist Germany’s first victims only causes this confusion to be internalized.

Those that believe Austrians voted FPÖ because Austrian culture, in general, is strongly conservative and racist, point to the 1993 FPÖ initiation of a referendum to reduce the rights of non-Austrians, which attracted four hundred thousand votes (Baumgartl, 2000b). The fact that with this stance the Austrian support for the FPÖ has risen dramatically may reinforce the hypothesis that an authoritarian and racist ideology is descriptive of Austrians.

What is often forgotten, however, is the reality that only 27% of the population actually voted for the FPÖ. Thus, even if this stereotype were true, it would only (according to election results) apply to a little over one-fourth of Austrians. That the

FPÖ's success since 1986 is not to be ascribed to cultural tendencies for racist and extremist sentiment is verified by the reality that "Haider's popularity plunged following his remark about the employment policies of the Third Reich while sympathy for the FPÖ remained stable" (Riedlsperger, 1992, p. 36). There are other reasons this explanation falls short. It is tautological, that is, this explanation insists 'Austrians vote for an Austrian nationalist party because they are Austrian.' This is too simple of a conclusion to propose and is ill fitting in today's liberal and globalized climate. Also, this explanation offers no reason for the sudden jump in support from the 1980s to today. If Austrians are by nature sympathetic to the authoritarian right, why hasn't this ideology always been popular in government? The fact that voter support for the FPÖ fell dramatically in the 2000 local elections also contradicts this culture-based theory.

Protest

A second explanation is that Austrian voters selected this party as part of a rebellion against the former ruling party, the SPÖ (Social Democrats). This party has held power for many years, and this stance proposes that people were disillusioned by what they considered to be unchanging policies, corruption, and stagnation after thirty years of a Socialist chancellor. The 1999 exit polls, provided by the sociological institute IMAS, seem to reinforce this explanation by indicating Austrians voted FPÖ because the party helped uncover scandals (65%), bring about change (63%) and punish the two major parties (36%) (Plasser, 1999, Baumgartl, 2000b, p. 1).

Since WWII, Austria has utilized a form of "social partnership," or a corporatist government of division and cooperation which, according to Elisabeth Gehrler, Federal Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs, "can take credit for a great deal of progress:

reconstruction, prosperity, social security and stability” (quoted in Baumgartl, 2000b, p. 3). However, Robert Menasse describes social partnership as “an undemocratic system, which deprives Parliament of its powers, whose responsible leaders exert a governmental power for which they have not been elected, and from which they can therefore not be voted out...” (cited in Baumgartl, 2000b, p. 3). This “divide-and-rule” practice has resulted in much criticism, especially from Jörg Haider and the FPÖ who have led the crusade for more transparency and integrity in Austrian policy-making, even to the extent voters viewed the FPÖ as the only party “‘in line’ with these protests” (Baumgartl, 2000b, p. 3).

This rationalization appears to be supported and extolled by the FPÖ and its leaders who claim the Austrian electorate is tired of the rising unemployment and economic crises in Austria caused by the lack of leadership and wisdom of the two major (former) ruling parties. The ideas put forth in this proposal are valid and appropriate, yet the mismanagement by the former ruling parties and the consequent economic crises do not seem to be quite as dire as the FPÖ claims. For example, although unemployment is a real problem, in relatively wealthy Austria, the unemployment rates are much lower than most EU countries. However, the FPÖ has been extremely successful in provoking a negative perception of the former government. This explanation is supported by the local elections that followed in 2000, in which the FPÖ didn’t achieve the same support as the previous year. This indicates that perhaps the voters felt the message they had sent to the SPÖ and ÖVP had been received.

Although strong, this hypothesis does have its weaknesses. It does not attempt to explain why voters selected the FPÖ rather than any other party as their ‘protest’ party.

For example, why was the Green party (another strong ‘third’ party in Austria) not used by the voters to protest the SPÖ/ÖVP? Also, it seems if protesting had been the real objective, support for the SPÖ would have declined dramatically from the 1995 elections (when the SPÖ was the strongest party) to the 1999 elections. The reality, however, is that the SPÖ voter support dropped from 38.1% to 33.4%, but continued to be the strongest party by at least 6% (Plasser, 1999). Finally, as indicated earlier, only 36% of the FPÖ supporters voted for the party because they wanted to punish the SPÖ and ÖVP or give them a reminder (*um den beiden Koalitionsparteien einen Denkzettel zu geben*) (Plasser, 1999).

The Haider *Effekt*

The FPÖ has been and is viewed by many as a dangerous, anti-democratic political party, and this opinion is only encouraged due to the actions and public statements of Jörg Haider. Roger Cohen (2000) describes how Haider has driven the FPÖ’s rise with “a sprinkling of revisionist remarks praising the Waffen SS and Nazi labor policy, zealous physical fitness, an American-style political machine, a trash-the-politically-correct style of straight talk and a reworking of Robin Hood in mildly xenophobic guise” (p. 54). Jörg Haider has a charismatic and aggressive style that is “well-suited to win the votes of many who otherwise might have cast blank ballots or stayed at home” (Riedlsperger, 1992, p. 36). Haider has brought international attention to the “third force” in Austrian politics.

Anton Pelinka identifies Jörg Haider as the main motivation for the increase in support of the Austrian FPÖ. This opinion is reinforced by the *Austrian Weekly Profil*’s data, which suggests that forty percent of those under the age of thirty voted for the FPÖ

based on style and appearance rather than political platform or content (Baumgartl, 2000b, p. 1). Haider is the son of former Nazis, himself a former member and leader of German nationalist clubs in Austria. Up until recently, Haider was the outspoken head of the FPÖ. He willingly resigned from his post amidst EU imposed sanctions against Austria as a result of the FPÖ's electoral success. Haider's declared reason for stepping down was to take away some of the heat caused by the party, but there is belief that he did it in preparation for his larger goal to become chancellor of Austria (Cohen, 2000). Pelinka claims that the ideology of Haider is able to absorb the neo-Nazi parties in Austria. He credits Haider for the 'new' issues the FPÖ has raised that draw support for the party, such as solving foreigner problems, fighting corruption and mismanagement by the former parties in power and eliminating waste in public spending. Haider has created a party, Pelinka argues, that combines two very important stances: anti-foreigner sentiment and political protest against *Proporz* (the practice of awarding advancement and benefits for party membership) and the SPÖ/ ÖVP coalition. Says Pelinka (1998), "It takes an integrative leader to combine two aspects that theoretically have nothing in common. This integrative role is being played by Jörg Haider" (p. 198). Haider has been able to send signals in both directions, while depicting the Austrian Second Republic as "a semi-Communist system that manipulates Austrian society in a pre-democratic way" (Pelinka, 1998, p. 198). Haider continues the claim that foreigners are the cause of unemployment, political violence and the crime rate.

The hypothesis supported by Pelinka is very important to understanding the rise to power of the FPÖ. The fact that the rise correlates with the appearance of Haider as party leader offers strong evidence for this explanation. However, this explanation, too, is

incomplete. It does not account for the recent decline in support of the party. Although Haider is no longer party head, it is understood that he remains the figure that pulls the party strings. Although one man alone could influence a population dramatically, in all likelihood other factors also contributed to the phenomena. For example, Hitler received much help from the dismal conditions surrounding his rise. Most likely, then, Haider and the FPÖ have benefited greatly from the present Austrian political, economic and social climate. Still, this hypothesis, combined with the previous explanations, presents much insight into the FPÖ's remarkable leap.

National identity

The explanation that complements those formerly proposed, and will be the focus of this thesis, involves national identity and sovereignty in Austria. Although a great deal is said about the historical struggle for a common national identity in Austria, not a large amount of work has been produced using this basis as an explanation for the ascension of the FPÖ. After significant concepts are defined, namely 'nation,' 'nationalism' and 'national identity,' the 'crisis' of Austrian national identity will be examined. While exploring the current condition of the Austrian national identity, it becomes apparent that Austrians are once again faced with the question as to what constitutes their 'Austrian' identity. This crisis of identity is connected with the rise of the FPÖ. There are three main components to the argument presented in this thesis. First, this thesis will discuss how the EU is perceived as a threat to the sovereignty of Austrians, a people who have historically witnessed their sovereignty (a major aspect of nation building, and thus national identification) threatened on numerous occasions. The second point is that some Austrians view immigration as currently and potentially dangerous to the Austrian

national identity, as foreignization ‘dilutes’ national identity. The third idea discussed will be the appeals to Austrian nationalism and identity that Haider and the FPÖ make. Each of these components supports the hypothesis that the FPÖ has become especially attractive to the Austrian voters who feel their sovereignty and national identity threatened.

Definition of concepts

The term ‘nation’ describes an “imagined political community” of people, which distinguishes itself from others based on a perceived sameness and state sovereignty (taken partly from Anderson’s definition of nation, 1991). This ‘nation’ may surmount such attributes as gender, class, and sometimes race. Nationalism is the loyalty felt towards a specific nation, and “a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty” (Hutchinson, 1994, p. 4). National identity is defined as the perception of belonging to a certain nation based upon common characteristics, which are viewed as components of the nation. Sovereignty is simply the ability and power to govern without external control.

The crisis of national identity in Austria

As Kurt Steiner (1972) insists, “the identification with a nation was considered the only valid basis of legitimacy of a state; the lack of such a basis seemed a vital flaw” (p. 7). The creation of national identity is vital to nation-states, as identification by a citizen with a nation is, perhaps, the strongest commitment the governing leadership can arouse. The French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut correctly stated, “Nationalism is able to destroy democracy, but at the same time, democracy cannot function without the basis of the nation” (Anne Frank Museum, 1999). The breaking down of sovereignty often

leads to stronger assertions of cultural and national identity, a phenomenon quite visible in Austrian history.

The Austrians have struggled with pinpointing the true “Austrian” identity. Throughout history, Austrians have been forced to adapt to an imperial Austria, a truncated, powerless “rump” Austria, a German-Austria, an annexed region of greater Germany, occupied Austria, neutral Austria, and today, an Austria actively involved in the UN, EU, and several other organizations. During all of these transitions, the citizens were given a different nation to identify with. Throughout the Hapsburg Empire, the identity was multi-national, multi-racial, and multi-lingual. However, following the demise of the sovereign empire, the once expansive and powerful Austrian people were left with what they perceived as tiny, insignificant ‘rump’ Austria. In the last days of WWI, German-Austrian parliamentary representatives reacted to the demise of the empire with blatant appeals for unity with the German Republic. There were questions and fears of the economic and political sustainability of the new Austrian Republic, and many Austrians could not psychologically accept the change from expansive empire to a small, powerless, entirely German speaking nation-state.

On November 12, 1918, the Provisional National Assembly announced the Republic of ‘German-Austria’ (Thaler, 2000, p. 291). Any new sovereignty was checked with the Allied power’s Treaty of St. Germain, which forbade the Austrians unification with Germany and insisted on the elimination of the modifier *German* from their official name (Thaler, 2000, p. 292). Still, the 1920s until the end of WWII saw a German national identification in most of Austria. This identification was based upon the Hederian conception of a nation, that is, one defined by language and race (from 1918,

the fact that “all Austrians spoke German was enough for them to define themselves as Germans”) (Pelinka, 1998, p. 12). Many Austrians eagerly and patriotically adopted this German Austrian identity, which had become the “national consensus of the First Republic” (Pelinka, 1998, p. 11). Despite contrary arguments, most welcomed the *Anschluss* in 1938.

With the *Anschluss*, Austria officially became “a province of the German Reich,” which signaled the beginning of, what one émigré Austrian explained, “one of the most curious, complex and abrupt turnabouts of public opinion in modern European history” (Dempsey, 1988). The complete eradication of Austrian sovereignty did not rest well with all of the former German nationalist supporters. Immediately following WWII, the government and many Austrians did their utmost to rid themselves of any identification with the German nation. It appears the major reason for Austria’s persistent rigorous denial of being part of Germany is derived from the country’s participation in Nazism and the Holocaust, years considered “the most catastrophic in Austria’s history” (Pelinka, 1998, p. 13). Suddenly the non-German character of the Austrian ‘remnants’ of the empire, such as Slavic and Magyar surnames and cities, took on significance, as did the consensus that “the greatest difference between Austrians and Germans” is “their language” (Bluhm, 1973, p. 152). Even today, there seems to be an acceptance of the national exchange that insists, “Beethoven was Austrian, Hitler was German,” which has been called the heart of the “Austrian *Kultur* nation ideal” beginning in the 1950s (Kovacs, 1998, p. 225).

The elite began forming another Austrian identity based upon the historical greatness of the Austrian Empire, the scenic natural landscape, and the new institutions.

Yet, in the ten years following the end of the war, Austria's sovereignty remained absent as it was restricted by foreign control; it was difficult for the Austrian leaders to convince the people to identify with a state controlled by foreign forces. In 1955, the Austrians signed the State Treaty promising perpetual neutrality. Along with sovereignty, this status of neutrality, based heavily upon that characterizing Switzerland, shaped the new Austria. Humiliated by war (WWI and WWII), a main source of pride in post-war Austria has been its neutrality.

For forty years following the war, Austria more or less practiced involved neutrality, most notably taking credit as a "buffer state" between the Cold War fronts. During this period, Austria did become an active participant in the UN but for a while refused to send forces on peacekeeping missions. The end of the Cold War meant the end of Austria's identity as a "buffer state," yet technically, the nation-state remained neutral. However, in 1995 Austria became a member of the European Union. Although some continue to insist Austria is still neutral, based on several factors (such as certain required common opinions, the use of the EURO, and involvement in talks for a common security policy) and participation in numerous other organizations, Austria calling herself "neutral" is not as convincing as it used to be.

Prior to joining the EU, most Austrians understood and accepted the sovereignty and national identity of their nation. Austria was not Germany, yet Austria was characterized by a 'German-ness' prevalent among most of her people. Austria was sovereign and neutral. Austria was reemerging as a significant player in Europe by acting as home to several international organizations and by being the buffer state between the East and West. Yet, after the Cold War ended and Austria began

contemplating EU involvement, Austrians were forced to again question their national identity.

The Austrian national identity

In other words, the EU has called this former Austrian identity into question; thus, it is relevant to look at perceptions of the current Austrian national identity. The standard Austrian identity is constructed more by institutions and history than ethnicity and ideally argues the possibility of a national identity not strictly determined by culture. The Austrian national identity imagined by the post-war government is said to be vastly different from that of pre-WWII. Again, it may be helpful to apply the theory that threatened sovereignty (no matter how weak the self-rule may be) invites stronger nationalism. The *Anschluss* and eradication of any remaining sovereignty Austria possessed could be an explanation for the sudden shift to anti-German nationalism. Most contemporary Austrians view themselves in democratic, institutional and legal terms. Of course, many continue to acknowledge *Geisteskultur*, or the “shared community of culture and values between Germany and Austria.” Yet, this sentiment is not overriding, indicated by the fact that more than two-thirds of Austrians believe they are an independent nation (Sonersen, 1997, p. 88). To sense how much identity in Austria has changed, F. Parkinson (1989) asserts, “In the early postwar period the majority still professed to adhere to the German nation, in 1965 that majority had shrunk to 52%, and in 1979, 68% professed themselves to be part of a distinctly Austrian nation” (p. 314).

While presently German is considered the ‘national’ language, there appears to be a collective consciousness that Austria is indeed a distinct nation. It is interesting to note that upon entry into the EU:

Austria accepted German as one of the official languages of the Union only on the condition that it would be supplemented with Austrian words...*Erdapfel* instead of *Kartoffel* (potato), *Faschiertes* instead of *Hackfleisch* (meatloaf)...*Marille* instead of *Aprikose* (apricot)...(Kovacs, 1998, p. 257).

The ideal Austrian identity continues to herald the historical memories of greatness but at the same time accepts the territorial smallness and less powerful authority of Austria in the international community. Many Austrians are just as proud of their political culture of social peace and political stability as their culture of language, music, natural beauty, and former greatness. Do Austrians still identify with the German nation? Surveys taken from 1970 to 1990 indicate 60-70% of polled Austrians consider Germany the country most similar to their own (Thaler, 2000, p. 298). Still, this fact does not indicate a return or continuation of German nationalism in Austria, rather recognition of similar characteristics, such as language or culture, between people.

The shadow of German nationalism still lingers, though. This ‘shadow’ has taken on a new form—“Austrian nationalism” as proposed by the FPÖ. This is most likely in response to immigration and involvement in the EU (viewed by some as a threat to sovereignty), which is contested by the traditionally German nationalist party in Austria, the FPÖ. Immigration and the EU have raised old questions regarding national identity in Austria. The FPÖ has offered one possible answer that many Austrians have found persuasive, as evidenced by the 1999 national elections. The most interesting aspect of this idea is the possibility that the FPÖ has created an opposing ‘Austrian identity’ based more on exclusion. That is, although the FPÖ no longer blatantly expresses its strong German cultural nationalist foundations, it does indeed praise Austrian cultural nationalism. This “new” Austrian nationalism doesn’t rely solely on the past glory of the

empire, rather it offers what it opposes: further integration of the EU, further control by the EU, further 'foreignization.'

The EU as a threat to sovereignty

The beginning of nationalism saw the demand for popular freedom and sovereignty. This meant the emancipation of people from any external constraint, the right to decide their own destiny, control their own resources and be masters of their own households (Hutchinson, 1994, intro p. 4). The idea of sovereignty is central in almost any discussion of national identity. This sovereignty is "one, indivisible, inalienable, and imprescriptible: it belongs to the nation" (Cobban, 1969, p. 248). With regards to sovereignty, there seems to be a similarity between the intense attraction of German nationalism in Austria during the 1920s and 30s and the recent rise in support of the FPÖ. The identification with the German nation most strongly occurred following the demise of the Empire (a former identity) and the loss of sovereignty (due to defeat in war and the forbidden connection to Germany). Today, Austria is dealing with the loss of 'neutrality' (a former identity) and a perceived loss of sovereignty (due to involvement in the EU).

Participation in the EU means, to some, that a key aspect of the Austrian nation's identity (neutrality) is now not as permanent and realistic as in the past. It has been said that the involvement in the EU has made the neutral Austrian national identity obsolete because when Austria said 'yes' to the EU, it also said 'yes' to the Common Foreign and Security Policy. The much larger consequence of EU involvement is the requirement that nation-states hand over some of their sovereignty. It was originally hypothesized that promoting greater European unity was a means to prevent the revival of the authoritarian extreme right regimes. The justification was that a European community could guarantee

economic and social gains and join national governments into a larger structure of law to support democracy and human rights. These policies were pursued based upon “the long-standing belief that economic depression, social marginalisation and political weakness (combined with national humiliation in Germany’s case) had been the determining factors in the success of the ‘traditional’ far right in the 1930s” (Hall, 2000, p. 2).

However events such as the rise in power of extreme right parties in European Union members indicate that the intentions may have had the opposite effects. An example of this opinion is found while examining the Eastern and Central European candidates for admission into the EU. One study explains how

The Haider case has been interpreted by far-right leaders in Central Europe as evidence that EU membership might be somewhat akin to membership in the Soviet Bloc (or Yugoslavia, for the Slovenes) and limit their sovereignty, as small and often newly-independent states (Hall, 2000, p. 9).

Perhaps, then, this attempt by the EU to eliminate the possibility of rightist resurgences in Europe through the establishment of institutions has the ‘unintended consequences’ of provoking nationalist backlashes. In February 2000, following the election of 1999, the 14 members of the EU approved freezing all bilateral contacts with Austria’s government in response to Chancellor Schüssel’s allowance of Haider’s FPÖ to serve in the government. Says Anna Malikova, the new “moderate” Slovak National Party leader, “The reaction of Western Europe against Austria reminded me of the doctrine of limited sovereignty that we knew from 1968; The Russians then taught us that the choice of the electors could be put into question. We have just obtained our independence. We do not want to lose it again” (cited in Hall, 2000, p. 9). The introduction of sanctions as punishment for the 1999 election may have only solidified the reality that involvement in the EU means a nation’s sovereignty is limited. This occurrence was also useful to verify

the FPÖ's painting of the EU as a threat to democracy in Austria because it represents "a quantum leap in the union's intrusion in the affairs of a member state" (Cohen, 2000, p. 59). This backlash in the form of stronger nationalism has arisen as a means to preserve sovereignty and the national identity of a people.

As the FPÖ resists most EU policies and decisions that create a more federal, centralized Europe, this party provides an instrument of protest for those who feel their "Austrian-ness" in danger. Etienne Balibar claims the present European state is not national or supranational, and also the classical use of centralized power has vanished: "all the conditions are therefore present for a sense of identity panic to be produced and maintained. For individuals fear the state—particularly the most deprived and the most remote from power—but they fear still more its disappearance and decomposition" (Schlesinger, 1992, p. 318). The formation of the EU is an effort to create a political structure with the political classes of nation-states with the end result of a state. Key aspects of this new 'state' include political unity and a common economy and defense agreement, two goals only possible through the surrender of some national sovereignty. The multi-ethnic qualities of this emerging formation combined with the diverse history and culture of the member nation-states also indicate a dilemma of common identity construction.

The EU has taken several steps, understandably, to promote the idea of a common European identity that is intended to supercede individual nation identification (flag, song, events, programs, subsidization, Schengen visa, etc). While the 1990s have seen trends towards the opinion that European citizenship may in fact enhance, rather than hinder, national citizenship, there are still some who see the EU as a threat to their

national identities (Jones, 1996, p. 226). Different languages, traditions, history, cuisine and holidays distinguish every country in the European Union. European integration is possible only with compromise, but to some, the end result of peace and economic advantages are unjustified if national identity is risked. Although it is unlikely that the EU will force every nation to declare English as national language or forbid certain traditions from being practiced, many still insist their own nationality is threatened and continue to see themselves solely as national. The 'United States of Europe' it is not, but despite immense efforts by the EU to encourage this European identity, the adoption of this perspective is moving slowly. A 1998 poll in which respondents were questioned how they would view themselves "in the near future," showed that forty-four percent perceive nationality only, forty-one percent nationality and European, six percent, European and nationality, and five percent believe they will consider themselves European (EB #49, 1998, p. 41). This is evidence of the widespread European sentiments to maintain distinct nationalities, an important building block of nationalist political parties.

It is understandable that the pressure from the EU to adopt a common European identity might be viewed as a threat to the finally realized Austrian national identity. In fact, nationalists throughout Europe have accused the EU of being a real threat to national identity. Specifically Austria is home to a greater proportion of feelings of animosity towards the EU, as it is frequently referred to as "they" who rule from Brussels (Baumgartl 2000, 4). Nationalist groups are becoming stronger than ever in the face of the EU's reach for the new European identity to replace individual state identity. This reality is especially plausible for the Austrians who have historically struggled with

national identity and sovereignty. To a people who have surrendered their neutrality (and identity) in the name of the common European good (a continent which has historically been a stage for clashing states), and for whom the rewards of a common Europe are in reality yet to be reaped, currently a stronger nationalism is easier to grasp.

The reason why this justification is being offered is that it provides an explanation for the sudden increase in popularity of the FPÖ during the late 1980s and 90s. Austria had considered joining the European Community earlier, yet because of her precarious position as 'buffer state' between the Cold War blocs decided against participation. However, after the end of the Cold War, Austrian politicians perceived the significant disadvantages to not being a member. Although Austria joined in 1995, discussion over EU involvement had begun much earlier. Austrians were hesitant to join. It became clear that European integration demanded some assimilation and sacrificing of sovereignty. To those especially concerned with keeping the Austrian national identity intact, the ideal union would ensure this interest. European integration, however, required more. Public opinion of the EU hit its lowest level with the inclusion of three new states- Austria, Sweden, and Finland- who had before been reluctant and were seen as being "Euroskeptic" (EB #49, 1998, p. 18).

As there is a growing awareness that common problems can and should be managed together, decisions made by the EU that affect all member states are a growing occurrence. Citizens are reluctant to hand over their sovereignty to be controlled by a European government whose minimal obvious success (such as the declining EURO) has left EU citizens frustrated with a perception of an 'incompetent' Brussels. The continued decline in support of the EU is evident in Austria, in which 67% of the population voted

for EU membership in 1995, yet by 1997, the support had dropped to a little over 50% (Boyes, 2000). Uncertainty over the EURO and eastward enlargement combined with obvious intrusion on sovereignty were factors affecting this mood. The spreading of “Euromyths“ may have also bolstered this fear. Examples include a new “EU law will force UK motorists to drive on the right side of the road,” or that “feeding stale bread to swans is illegal under community law” (Jones, 1996, p. 224). These are obviously false but to the Euroskeptic, provide more evidence as to why the EU should not be trusted with the people’s welfare. Sentiments found in the FPÖ are comparable to other nationalist parties throughout the EU member states. The National Front, a ‘right-wing’ nationalist party in France, claims in its manifesto, “In many fields nowadays, the French people no longer have a say...The Europe that is being constructed in Brussels” is the creation of “Eurocrats who dream of a European super-state in charge of everything, destroying nations and opening Europe to third-world immigrants” (quoted in “Haider one player,” 2000). Thus, not only does EU involvement threaten sovereignty; it also invites numbers of foreigners to move freely around the member states. This influx of foreigners into Austria and other west and central European nation-states has been a core component of rightist political party attraction.

Immigration dilutes the Austrian national identity

“Our phone book in Vienna looks like New York’s!” claims Thomas Prinzhorn, a Freedom Party member and close friend of Haider (Cohen, 2000, p. 59). Haider’s FPÖ is blatantly anti-foreigner. My argument hypothesizes that Austrians are not explicitly racist; rather the fears of foreign dilution of their finally achieved national identity and economic threats due to foreign labor are realized and dealt with in the FPÖ. Journalists

in an article found in the United Press International highlight one view that “A sense that immigrants are overrunning Europe is helping turn the political tide for Haider and other rightists” (“Haider one player,” 2000). The FPÖ cautions of *Überfremdung* (over-foreignization, a word used extensively by Göbbels) as a main concern in Austria today. This fear of “others” that threatens to taint the *perceived* historical and cultural traditions (read, German) of Austria is a significant reason Austrians may have voted FPÖ. In fact, voters have indicated there is a “need to differentiate Austrians from neighbours in Central and Eastern Europe” and this opinion may have motivated voters to select FPÖ candidates (Baumgartl, 2000b, p. 4). This fear of losing the Austrian identity, that is, the fear of being “diluted,” is qualified by Austria’s hesitation to open EU expansion east (an issue of late). A recent study explained that merely 35 percent of Austrians supported EU enlargement (European Commission as cited in Baumgartl, 2000b, p. 4).

The FPÖ uses anti-immigration rhetoric and programs to attract voters and to produce nationalist sentiments, thus the party benefits from the fact that today foreigners make up 14% of Austria’s population of eight million (Cohen, 2000, 59). Following WWII, Austria’s place in Central Europe as a neutral state with 46% of her borders with communist states made Austria one of Europe’s most significant countries of immigration, transmigration, and refugee asylum. Records indicate that about 650,000 people settled permanently in Austria, with a majority becoming citizens, half of whom were not ethnic Germans or native German speakers. During this period, Austrians tended to see their country as a “neutral land of transit and political asylum” but did not view Austria as comparable to the US or Canada, that is, as a land of immigration (Library of Congress, 1993). Most immigrants to Austria have come from European

countries: Hungarians during the 1956 revolution, Czechs and Slovaks following the “Prague Spring,” Poles after the banning of Solidarity in 1981, and former East Germans. Austria has also admitted asylum seekers from countries such as Chile, Argentina, Uganda, Iran and Afghanistan and was the home of transit for over 250,000 Jewish emigrants out of the Soviet Union from 1976 until immigration to Israel was allowed in 1990 (Library of Congress, 1993). Initially, the granting of political asylum was generally liberal prior to the fall of the Iron Curtain. However, with the founding of democratic governments and the opening of borders, Austria became more restrictive, with a distinction made between political refugees and economic refugees. Even with the restrictions, by 1992 over 100,000 illegal immigrants were in Austria, and Austria was continuing to accept over 50,000 refugees from the former Yugoslavia. As in Germany, a great number of foreign workers were brought in during the 1960s and 70s to offset the huge demands for labor in an expanding economy. Most of the labor was unskilled Yugoslavs or Turks who were placed in “menial jobs with low salaries” (Library of Congress, 1993).

These “guest workers” and their families are a permanent facet of the population in Austria. This fact comes with the reality of a shrinking Austrian population due to lower birth rates among Austria’s indigenous German-speaking population during the 1970s and 80s. Many Austrians find a real concern in the continually increasing number of foreigners. Haider recognizes the fears and asserts that, “an Austrian’s right to his homeland is stronger than the foreigner’s right to live with his family” (Haiderwatch, 2000). This tends to be a major issue in countries where the unemployment rate is high. In these same countries, the existence of right-wing parties is prominent. The FPÖ is

indeed rightwing, but Austria is not a country with massive unemployment. In fact, the unemployment rate stays below five percent (according to the standard EU measurement) (Kuhn, 2000, p. 6). Still, there exists a generally negative perception of immigration that is only strengthened by the FPÖ.

The non-policies of Austria regarding immigration have clearly contributed to the appearance of stronger nationalism. Austria continues to be troubled by cleavages of ethnic conflict and resentment. By remaining generally lax on immigration policies and citizenship in the past, the 'no-policy' policy commits a large minority of the population to be considered 'non-Austrian.' The consequences have become a hurdle in developing a 'common' Austrian identity. The FPÖ, however, seeks to overcome this inconsistency and currently has a party program concentrating on free markets, strong national defense, and "an immigration and cultural policy to keep Austria Austrian" (Pomerantz, 2000, p. 2). Austrians may fear their newfound Austrian identity will be diluted by the continued onslaught of foreigners. Blaming these foreigners for stealing employment and for high crime rates is one way to protest their residence in Austria. Dissatisfaction with domestic issues may result in people projecting their negative feelings on other objects, and in Austria's case, this includes non-German immigrants. Haider and the FPÖ clearly blame immigrants for unemployment and for acting as a roadblock in building strong Austrian nationalism. In 1996, Haider was quoted as saying, "There are 300,000 unemployed people in Austria and 300,000 foreigners" (Haiderwatch, 2000). Haider insists immigration presents no benefits to the Austrian people; rather it results in crime and stolen opportunities. Haider's stance on immigration also includes claiming that "The Africans who come here are drug dealers and they seduce our youth," that "We've got the

Poles who concentrate on car theft,” and that “we’ve got the Russians who are experts in blackmail and mugging” (Anti-Defamation League, 2000). This fight against “foreign penetration” has been advantageous to Haider in drawing support from disgruntled Austrian voters.

Haider and the FPÖ reframe the immigration issue in patriotic and nationalistic fervor. Haider and the FPÖ spread the catchphrase, “Vienna must not become Chicago,” (that is, a city of a diverse ethnic and cultural population) matching the fears of Austrians in regions where the “eastern European invasion” is especially visible (Riedlsperger, 1992, p. 32). Due to the social (immigration), economic (the EURO and unemployment), and political (EU involvement) conditions, Austrians have had to question whether they have a distinct identity and if this Austrian identity is challenged by globalization, EU participation, and further immigration.

A study by the European University Institute on xenophobia in Europe came to the conclusion that Haider and the FPÖ have “instrumentalised the foreigners theme for [their] own power interests and used the latent xenophobia for [their] own political ends” (Baumgartl, 2000b, p. 1-2). Thus, immigration is significant to the explanation that Austrian voters seeking to protect their national identity from “foreign dilution” supported the FPÖ in its rise. Throughout the world, far-right parties tend to surface where unemployment percentages are high. For example, Belgium, France, and Italy are countries with unemployment rates of more than 10% and home to popular (receiving over ten percent of the popular vote) rightist parties. In Austria, though, where the actual unemployment problem is not as large as certain citizens perceive it to be, the FPÖ was able to acquire enough votes to join the government. This is where the connection

between perceived economic threats and immigration comes in. When unemployed people notice foreigners working (even at jobs or wages that would be refused by most citizens of the country), they may choose to link immigration and foreignerization as the root of the problem. In Austria, the immigrants represent not only an economic hindrance but also a threat to Austrian national identity. The FPÖ effectively produces the image of foreigners as economically and culturally dangerous while promoting itself as the protection for the “true Austrian.” This is evident by the campaign posters presenting Haider and Thomas Prinzhorn, his candidate for prime minister, as “Two real Austrians” (Anti-Defamation League, 2000).

Haider’s appeal for Austrian nationalism

There indeed exists a myth of homogeneity in the FPÖ’s depiction of the true Austrian. As indicated earlier with the overview of immigration, the country is the crossroads of the European population, and a check of today’s phonebooks “reveals the ever-heterogeneous background of Austria” (Baumgartl, 2000a, p. 2). Yet a distinct fear of others results in a large attraction for a party and ideology that extol a uniquely “Austrian” (German) national identity. During the period in question (1986-1999), Haider created an image of himself as “Jörg, the true Austrian” (Baumgartl, 2000b, p. 2). This personification offers Austrian citizens an object of identification, facilitating their rise above the fear of “being without orientation and without ethnicity in a European or globalised society” (Baumgartl 2000b, p. 2). This reshaping of identity, once again, appears to be constructed in opposition to “other.” The FPÖ is considered the most nationalistic party in Austria and, at that, has several ties to the German Austrian nationalism. However, although most media has the standpoint that the FPÖ is a

dangerous *German* nationalist party, in reality the FPÖ appears now to be an Austrian (ethnic German, that is) nationalist party. It seems Benedict Anderson's proposal that states transform themselves into nations based on "imagined communities" applies here. The FPÖ puts forth the idea of preserving the culture of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, which is really the German Austrian community. This community that the FPÖ builds excludes foreigners inside and outside Austria. It is widely understood that the FPÖ considers itself to be the most patriotic and nationalistic party in Austria. The ideology and platform of Haider and the FPÖ offer guidelines for identification; that is, the FPÖ proposes and promotes a new Austrian national identity in the face of yet another alteration of national identity.

The FPÖ promotes Austrian nationalism with tactics characteristic of most nationalistic groups. First of all, the FPÖ has created an "ideal" image of the Austrian in opposition to the out-dated, mainstream, elite party politicians that have been ruling Austria since WWII. Supporters of Haider, known as "Haiderfans," are attracted to his "designer labels, mountain-climbing, bungee-jumping, chin-jutting, Porsche-driving rock-star air and provincial Hollywood glitz" (Cohen, 2000, p. 58). At the same time, however, Haider shows great sympathy for the *Kriegsgeneration* (war generation) and calls for "a return to the nation" as the founding principle of the "Third Republic" (Cohen, 2000, p. 59). The section of the population that voted for the FPÖ is a diverse lot that includes many groups not normally associated with right-wing ideology. Haider appeals to the new Austrian identity by describing how, because of the FPÖ, the "pillars have come together in a political alliance that has dissolved all the old contradictions between workers and entrepreneurs because they are all united by hard work, willingness

to take risks, modesty and a sense of responsibility” (State, 1999). This new group of Austrians who “walk with the FPÖ” include voters under 30, entrepreneurial businessmen and women, members of the ‘educated’ middle class, and some of the typically left leaning working class. Haider, in his State of the Republic speech in 1999, insisted, “My friends and I are not obsessed with power. We have something that matters to us. And that is Austria!” (State, 1999).

The FPÖ appeals to Austrians who feel their country has lost her place in the world. No longer one of the central neutral players in international politics, many Austrians view their tiny country as even tinier. In response, says Rainer Baubock (2000), Haider’s FPÖ, “appeals to the resulting sentiments of narcissistic insult by interpreting any critique of his own politics as an attack by the outside world against Austria” (p. 26). The party also turns the SPÖ and ÖVP politicians against the Austrian citizens by claiming

Our policies were therefore recklessly and contemptuously denounced as populist. But no matter. Populism is nothing but policies that are close to the people. Very different to those of the ruling elite in their ivory towers who like to talk about ‘the people out there’ in order to express their distance to the people (State, 1999).

The rhetoric used by the FPÖ causes one to believe that where their political existence is concerned, the red (SPÖ) and black (ÖVP) have no interest in the people of Austria. This feeling is then used to create a “them,” in Vienna, and an “us,” the true democratic Austrian people.

Another significant aspect to building nationalism is the consistent use of the “Janus-faced view” of the nation, that is, the act of simultaneously looking backward and forward. The nation is forward looking as it realizes its full potential in the future and backward looking because its goals and origins are derived from the past. The primary,

and encouraged, understanding is that the nation joins the past to the present; the nation is a connection between the national people of today and their ancestors of yesteryear.

Nationalists seek to convince people the glory, customs, endeavors, etc. of the past are still alive. No matter the current conditions, nationalists attempt to assure people they strive for a restoration of the glory of the nation tomorrow. To prove that the ancestors shared the “glorious heritage and regrets” and the people of the present possess “in the future, a shared programme to put into effect” is perhaps the greatest case nationalists can make (Renan, 1882, p. 52). Due to the obvious participation of Austria in the Nazi party and the Holocaust, the past continues to be a delicate subject. Unlike Germany, Austria never implemented a policy of acknowledging the past; rather, for a long time Austria strongly contended they were the victims of National Socialism. That the FPÖ, or more specifically Haider, deliberately resurrects images of the past has been quite a switch from the general attitude of the Austrian government with the SPÖ and ÖVP. The FPÖ is also taking advantage of Austria’s imperial, powerful past by insisting Austria can once again achieve a place of power in Europe. This “Austria first” sentiment is comforting to people who are aware of Austria’s former power in Europe but also very conscious about Austria’s minimal position since the end of WWII. Haider pointed out

And I am pleased that today I can work together with other people in our party, even though our forefathers were maybe divided by hatred and political fanaticism. But it is precisely the differing pasts of our families that create a link, because we have a common goal for the future of our Austrian homeland—a life in freedom and a sound democracy for everybody (State, 1999).

Haider continues this Janus-faced rhetoric with the statement that

The Austrian ship of state must be made seaworthy again to defy the storms of the times and to hold course to sail into a bright future with its passengers. And if necessary we are willing to step into position on the bridge (State, 1999).

The Austrian national identity that the FPÖ proposes is exclusionary, but currently it also involves a rejection of the strong German nationalism apparent in the earlier “third force.” In fact, Haider explicitly denied the influence of his and his family’s Nazi past by vowing, “with every fibre of my being I am such an enthusiastic Austrian democrat that I cannot and will not accept any brown shadows” (brown shadows refers to the color of the Nazi uniform) (State, 1999). According to the FPÖ, Austrians today are democratic and humanitarian with the promise to take the “concerns of their own people seriously and protect their homeland” (State, 1999). The nationalism that the FPÖ advocates grants the Austrian nation a moral significance superior even to class. The FPÖ is fortunate for the political and economic climate, which fosters an emotional connection to Austria combined with a protection of national interests.

Conclusion

The FPÖ did not win the same voter support in the local elections of 2000 as in the 1999 national elections. Instead of securing 27% of the popular vote, the FPÖ received only 20% (Haider popularity, 2000). Haider and the FPÖ are also facing investigations into the claim that the FPÖ “used information obtained illegally from a police computer to damage its political opponents,” a scandal the Austrian press is clearly convinced is substantive and true (Haider popularity, 2000). The decline in voter support for the FPÖ may be attributed to the scandal, but the descent is associated with national identity as well.

There have been multiple reactions to the rise of the FPÖ. Responses have varied from complete amazement to feelings of no surprise at all. Obviously some were very excited about the FPÖ’s climb. Conversely, participation by the FPÖ in the national

government has led to “doubts about Austria’s liberal democratic credentials” (Baubock, 2000, p. 23). Worldwide, the most visible reactions were (and continue to be) negative perceptions of the party and, by association, Austrians in general. This negativity is apparent in the several consequences of the rise of the FPÖ: Austria has experienced EU sanctions, the government no longer has diplomatic relations with Israel, tourism to Austria has declined, and “Austrians, themselves, traveling abroad, are being greeted with a cold shoulder” (Grant, 2000). The connection between the international perceptions and national identity in Austria is significant. As discussed earlier, Austrians have historically struggled with establishing a common national identity. The FPÖ offered a version of the Austrian identity that appealed to many in times of perceived threats to sovereignty and the national identity of Austria. However, the widespread shunning of this popular party has led Austrians to question the identity proposed by the FPÖ. Do Austrians want to be associated with a party understood by the world as xenophobic, exclusionary, and reminiscent of the Nazi party? The outspoken and controversial leadership of Haider continues to provide the media with shocking sound bites regarding immigrants, Jews, and the EU. Most likely, Austrians prefer not to be viewed by the international community as the media depicts Haider--racist and fascist. The decline in voter support for the FPÖ in the 2000 elections is consistent with the explanation that Austrian national identity has much significance in the popularity of the FPÖ. In conclusion, the Austrian national identity is not yet settled but is once again open to debate.

I have suggested that the social, political, and economic conditions in Austria have forced Austrians to once again examine their national identity. One of the major

hurdles to the formation of a common Austrian national identity in the past has been the frequent displacement and replacement of sovereignty. In this thesis I have presented an explanation for the Austrian people's attraction to the FPÖ based on perceived threats of sovereignty by the EU, fear of "dilution" by Eastern immigration and the strong appeal for *Austrian* nationalism by the FPÖ. As there is rarely ever one single condition or justification for a phenomenon, my proposed explanation complements the already existing explanations. The fact that voter support has declined since the famous 1999 election in Austria defends my understanding that national identity played a large role in the rise to power of the FPÖ.

Most contemporary societies are currently faced with a similar issue of having to cultivate a differentiated image of themselves, one that must take into consideration multiculturalism. This notion appears in opposition to the recent stronger calls for nationalism and a solidified national identity throughout Europe. The EU, at first considered a barrier to the resurgence of right-wing parties and governments, is now widely perceived as a threat to national sovereignty and identity, resulting in nationalist backlashes. Meanwhile, the overwhelming increase of immigrants, both due to EU expansion and the end of communism, has left many with fears of economic disadvantage or, more importantly, a diluted national image. Finally, certain leaders have risen to confront the worries of this uneasy populous and provide them with a means of dissent and a national image with which to identify. This trend is prevalent in Europe and has gained worldwide attention due to the recent elections in which one of these right-wing nationalist movements achieved full participation in government (the FPÖ in the 1999 Austrian elections). Perhaps the solution to this disturbing trend is indeed the

development of stronger, more realistic (non-exclusive) national identities that are designed to withstand the pressures of external influence by being more accepting of the place of the people in-- and the relation of the people to--the *world*. Austrians, for example, cannot continue to deny the reality that “Catholic Austria is clearly a lot less Catholic than it was,” evidenced by the sixth-grade class in the Selzergasse school, located in Vienna’s 15th district: “Four nationalities are represented, only three children have parents born in Austria, and ten of twenty pupils are Muslim” (Cohen, 2001). Clearly, contemporary national identities must take into consideration the reality of diversity and cultural mixing. The development of this new national identity is imperative, for until people can accept themselves they cannot truly accept others.

References

- Anderson, B. (1991). Imagined communities. London: Verso.
- Anne Frank Museum. (1999). Amsterdam, Netherlands. Visited October 1999.
- Anti-Defamation League. (2000, March 24). Jörg Haider: The rise of an Austrian extreme rightist. [Online]. Available: www.adl.org/backgrounders/joerg_haider.html.
- Austria: Past present. (1993 January 16). Economist. Vol. 326. no. 7794.
- Bailer-Galanda, B. & Neugebauer, W. (1996) Right-wing extremism: History, organizations, ideology. <http://www.doew.at/english/right/endlre.html>.
- Baubock, R. (2000). Austria: Jörg Haider's grasp for power. Dissent. 23-26 47, no. 2 (Spring 2000). Dissent Publishing Co. p. 23-26.
- Baumgartl, B. (2000a). Austrian identity and the rise of the FPÖ. Kritischer diskurs: Die wissenschaft und die aktuelle politische situation. [Online]. Available: <http://www.tuwien.ac.at/diskurs/stellungnahmen/baumgartl1.html>.
- Baumgartl, B. (2000b, June 5). Not just racism. Central Europe Review. Vol 2, no 22. [Online]. Available: www.ce-review.org.
- Bluhm, W. T. (1973). Building an Austrian nation: The political integration of a western state. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Boyes, R. (2000). Leader who caught the popular mood. (2000, February 2). The Times (London).
- Cobban, A. (1969). The rise of the nation-state system. In Hutchinson, J. & Smith, A.D. (Eds.). (1994). Nationalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, R. (2000, April 30). A Haider in their future. The New York Times Magazine. Pp 54-59.
- Cohen, R. (2001, March 21). Crescent and cross: Culture clash in Austria. International Herald Tribune. P. 1.
- Dempsey, J. (1988 March 9) Anschluss ghosts stir Austria's guilt-laden memory of conflict. The Financial Times (London). Sec. 1, p. 3.
- Eurobarometer #49. (1998, Spring).
- Federal Press Service (BPD). (1998). Austria: Facts and Figures. Vienna.

- Grant, L. (2000 August 26). Whose Europe is it anyway? The Guardian (London). Weekend pages, p. 11.
- Haider one player in far-right's rise in Europe. (2000, February 2). United Press International.
- Haider popularity suffers after his party's conservative alliance. (2000, November 21). The Irish Times. Lexus Nexus.
- Haiderwatch. (2000, March 24). [Online]. Available: www.futurelinkds.at/haiderwatch/bioen.html.
- Hall, I. & Perrault, M. (2000, March 30). The re-Austrianisation of central Europe? Assessing the potential of the "new" far right after Haider. Central Europe Review.
- Hutchinson, J. & Smith, A.D. (Eds.). (1994). Nationalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Immigration in Austria. *Library of Congress*. Retrieved 19 February 2001. [Online]. Available: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov>.
- Jones, R. A. (1996). The politics and economics of the European Union. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Keesing, R.M. (1981). Cultural anthropology: A contemporary perspective. 2nd Edition. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace & Co.
- Kovacs, J. M. (1998). Images of sovereignty: Austria's changing identity. In Gombar, C., Hankiss, C., Lengyel, L. & Varnai, G. (Eds.). The appeal of sovereignty: Hungary, Austria and Russia. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Kuhn, R. (2000 June). The threat of fascism in Austria. Monthly Review. [Online]. Available: http://www.findarticles.com/cf_1/m1132/2_52/64566594/print.jhtml.
- Mangasarian, L. & Walker, Q. (2000, October 4). Austria angry over German snub of Vienna at unity celebration. Deutsche Presse-Agentur. Lexus Nexus.
- Parkinson, F., (Ed.). (1989). Conquering the past: Austrian Nazism yesterday and today. Detroit, Mi: Wayne State University.
- Pelinka, A. (1998). Austria: Out of the shadow of the past. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Plasser, F., Ulram, P.A. & Sommer, F. (1999, October 4). Analyse der Nationalratswahl 1999. Vienna.
- Pomerantz, Rabbi Dr. M. H. (2000, February 7). Hypocrisy over Haider: The brouhaha over

- Austria. Pp. 1-4. [Online]. Available: www.newsmax.com/articles/?a=2000/2/7/51335.
- Prinz, R. (2001, January 21). Haider assails Jewish compensation agreement. The Associated Press. Lexus Nexus. Vienna, Austria.
- Renan, E. (1882). What is a nation? In Eley, G. & Suny, R. G. (Eds.). (1996). Becoming National. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rex, J. (1996). National identity in the democratic multi-cultural state. [Online]. Available: www.bsos.umd.edu/css97/papers/asencre.html.
- Riedlsperger, M. E. (1978). The lingering shadow of Nazism: The Austrian independent party movement since 1945. New York: East European Quarterly.
- Riedlsperger, M. (1992, summer). Heil Haider! The revitalization of the Austrian Freedom Party since 1986. Politics and Society in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Vol. 4, no. 3. pp. 18-47.
- Riedlsperger, M. E. (1999). Haider's reach for power. Prepared for the 1999 meeting of the German Studies Association, Atlanta, Ga. 8 October 1999. [Online]. Available: <http://www.multimedia.calpoly.edu/libarts/mriedlsp/Publications/GSA99/GSA99.html>.
- Schlesinger, P. (1992). Europeanness: A new cultural battlefield? In Hutchinson, J. & Smith, A.D. (Eds.). (1994). Nationalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Seward, D. (2000 February 27). Immigration fears spark rise of Europe's far right. The Grand Rapids Press. A16.
- Sonersen, L.B. & Elian, L.B. (Eds.). (1997). Forward to the past. Denmark: AARHUS University Press.
- The state of the republic and the situation of the FPÖ. (2000 March 24). [Online]. Available: www.fpoe.at/englisch/welcome.html.
- Steiner, K.. (1972). Politics in Austria. Boston: Little, Brown and Co. Inc.
- Sully, M. A. (1990). A contemporary history of Austria. New York: Routledge.
- Thaler, P. (2000) National history—national imagery: The role of history in postwar Austrian nation-building. Central European History. Vol. 32. no. 3, 277-309.