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**The Rise of Right Wing Parties to
Parliaments in the European Union:
A comparative Study of Austria, France, and the Netherlands**

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Dedication

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Abstract

The thesis looks into the rise of right wing parties to parliaments in the European Union through conducting a comparative study between France and its Front National, Austria and the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, and the Netherlands' Lijst Pim Fortuyn. These countries have seen a considerable rise in support to right wing parties that manifested itself in their ability to access the countries' parliaments in the 1990s, despite the different historical experiences since World War Two. France, which fell to the Nazis during WWII, presents itself as the country of liberty, equality and fraternity, whereas in 2002 the right wing candidate to the presidential elections Jean Marie Le Pen managed to come second place and to go directly into the second round of voting.

The Netherlands was also occupied by the Nazis, only to find that the Pim Fortuyn list has got the second place in the Dutch general elections in 2002, partially due to the assassination of the Lists leader.

Austria managed always to present itself as a victim of the Nazi regime and alienated itself from the Nazi legacy, but the success of Jurg Haider in the general elections and his party's entry into a coalition government brought past images to the surface.

The thesis defines right wing parties as the party that adopts rightist policies and racial convictions, believing that it talks in the name of the public that is not represented by interest groups, and also believes in a totalitarian form of government though not pressing for immediate change.

The thesis argues that the interaction between four factors impact the decision of the working class individuals that traditionally support right wing parties, and these are:

economic changes, attitudinal patterns, immigration, and systemic factors. During the seventies and the eighties of the past century, economic change swept over the European countries leading to the development of a post industrial society where competition between professionals reigned and the need for new skills to service the rising information technology society grew. This created a class of unskilled workers that found themselves in direct confrontation with immigrant workers for their livelihoods. These workers were not organised in pressure groups to impact government policies, and thus found refuge in right wing parties who spoke to them in their own language utilising their fear for their livelihoods and the lack of government intervention on all levels.

The thesis compares between the three parties in the three countries, focusing on party history, support groups analysis, and party leader and his impact. The comparison concludes that the parties share a history of fragmentation in its historical development till the arrival of a leader with charismatic traits to take control of things, reforming the party as an effective power on the political scene of the country.

The main conclusion presented by the thesis argues that despite the three different historical experiences of the three countries, we find that the interaction of the four factors lead to the same results where the three right wing parties were able to raise their levels of support in the society forming effective powers in their respective political scenes, and thus the European parliament. This indicates that the trend of support for right wing parties will increase after the Union's eastward expansion in 2004.

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**The Rise of Right Wing Parties to
Parliaments in the European Union:
Case Studies of Austria, France, and the Netherlands**

1. Introduction

Recent events around European countries show that there is a comeback for right wing parties beyond their rise in the 1990s. Elections to the European Parliament in July 2004 witnessed the rise of Euro-sceptics. In March 2004 we saw the comeback of Jörg Haider in provincial elections in Austria. November 2003 saw the Swiss people's party causing a coup in the affairs of the Swiss government. 2002 saw the whole of France rally together and take part in the presidential elections in order to make sure that President Jacques Chirac be elected. This was by no means a vote of confidence in the French president, but a successful attempt to stop the candidate of the French radical right from becoming the president of France.

As was evident in many European countries, radical right wing parties were gaining grounds fast. The experience with Austria two years prior to that, and other incidents all over Europe (West and East) where radical right wing parties have been elected or presented a real challenge to larger parties, have all indicated the presence of a genuine issue for study and consideration. The numbers alone show an emerging trend: the Swiss people's party received 23 percent of the popular vote in a 1999 election; the National Front in France received 17 percent in the first round of the nationwide presidential elections in 2002, as did the Norwegian Progress party. Jörg Haider's Austrian Freedom Party got to second place in 1999 elections, the Netherlands Lijst Pim Fortuyn received 17 percent of the vote in 2002, and the

Belgian Flemish Block received 13 percent of the vote in the Flanders region in Belgium.

Currently, the study of right wing parties and their rise is becoming more and more relevant. In the recent months through the end of 2003 and the first quarter of 2004, right wing parties have been succeeding all over Europe. These parties are calling for a change in European policies that would change Europe as we know it. It is therefore important to observe and study whatever collates these parties' powerbase. These parties are becoming more and more attractive to an ever increasing population. The results of studying these parties will allow European policy makers to adopt, change, and create new policies that would counter balance the effects and allure of these parties.

The revival of radical right wing parties in a variety of Western European countries in the 1980's caught many politicians and opinion leaders off guard (Jackman & Volpert, 1996). It came as a wide phenomenon as these parties have attracted sizeable portions of West European populations; their deputies and representatives sit in local, regional, national, and European parliaments (Betz, 1994).

The rise of radical right wing parties in West Europe has come after a period of prosperity. In the immediate decades after the Second World War, liberal European democracies enjoyed a remarkable degree of social and political stability, to which sustained economic growth, growing individual affluence and the expansion and perfection of the welfare state have contributed largely and sidelined extremist

solutions on both the right and the left (Betz, 1994, 1). Since that time, 'old' economic issues like unemployment have returned to centre stage (Jackman & Volpert, 1996, 502). This relates deterioration in economic standing and other aspects of life to the rise of right wing parties. Betz (1994, 1-2) sees these developments as intertwined and related:

The resurgence of ideological and political turbulence in the late 1960s, rising social conflicts in the 1970s and the spread of mass protest by new social movements and citizen initiatives in 1980s were symptoms of a profound transformation of West European politics.[...] What heightened and accentuated these developments were a number of factors: the decay of the grand ideologies of modernity, exemplified by the fall of the Soviet empire, and the ensuing destabilisation of a world to which the majority of West European countries had readily accustomed themselves; a new awareness of the finiteness of natural resources, the growing visibility of the economic and social consequences of environmental destruction and the population explosion in the developing world; and mounting uneasiness and ambiguity with regard to new technological projects.

The rise of right wing parties to parliaments in Europe has been characteristic of Western European countries at the end of the nineties. One could notice the rise of

these parties during the eighties of the twentieth century, but that rise was rather an unconsolidated effort that took place without any distinct features. The movement at the end of the nineties was rather spread over many West European countries, and had many items in common between the various countries. What joins these parties together is a time of political awareness to developments on the international arena, people's rejection to what was seen as imposed settlements and loss of national identity, and an appeal by leaders and parties to the segments of the people that feared notions of change. Authors have taken these issues alone or combined a number of them together to try to understand the emerging trend on the West European political scene, while at the same time trying to put down the importance of a number of factors and trying to point to the prominence of others. This resulted in an exulted series of studies that tackled the issue from different starting points, with which the results showed considerable variation. There are four main headings that are seen as the cause of the rise of right wing parties in a certain country: 1) economic change, 2) attitudinal patterns, 3) immigration, and 4) systemic factors. Economic changes in the past twenty years have lead to the creation of large unemployment as compared to previous years, and an increase in part-time employment. This in its own right does not explain the rise of right wing parties in one country as similar events in other countries did not lead to the same result; the British National Party was unable to garner support in elections despite of the various problems facing the British economy and the nature of the British elections system. In other European countries such as Germany and Sweden, people's choices

have made the rise of right wing parties unfavourable as they did not support the return of nationalism to the agenda and self-felt pride of an egalitarian social democratic system, respectively. In Spain, the right has not traditionally been a significant force in politics, especially since the death of its fascist leader, General Franco in 1975*. But nonetheless, economic change has created a suitable environment where these parties have found a listening ear. The second interrelated factor put to explain the rise of right wing parties is attitudinal patterns, where this factor focuses on the individual's response to the surrounding environment. Together with widespread uncertainties in various sectors of the population as result of change in economic policy, changes in electoral attitudes has affected results in elections at different levels, and underscored the mistrust people have in the welfare state. At the same time this was coupled with the failure of the left to catch up with events and to utilise them for its own benefit, much room was created for the rise of radical right wing parties who seized the opportunity and filled the vacuum (Schain, Zolberg, & Hossay 2002,10-11) (Betz, 1994, 2).

Immigration constitutes the third heading. It is seen as a cornerstone to the rise of right wing parties, with some discrepancies. Immigration and immigrants have consistently presented a clear political excuse for extremist parties to present racist policies and to manipulate sentiments to their favour (Schain *et al.* 2002, 11-12).

* The BBC coverage of the rise of the right in Europe shows different levels of support and lack of it in the various countries examined. See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/english/static/in_depth/europe/2000/far-right/default.stm

The fourth heading deals with innings of the political systems of West European countries. The success of radical right wing parties is seen as being the result of disappointed electorate that traditionally support either the left or the right in the political sense of the terms. In this context, radical right wing parties have developed their capacities accordingly and built rather complex organisational structures that were able to attract votes and contribute to the decline of major parties.¹ Kitschelt (2000, 2-3) relates the rise of right wing parties to a set of economical variables functioning within established dimensions of supply and demand for these parties. He argues with those that focus on social and political reasons as behind the phenomenon only study the behaviour of the electorate and the creation of right wing parties as a response to this behaviour, but they do not provide reasons for the actual presence of these parties from the supply side, i.e. that these parties appear regardless of the electorate and other social preconditions as a result of the “capabilities and choices of the incipient rightist entrepreneurs and parties themselves”. This argument is contested by Minkenberg (2001, 3-4) who sees that Kitschelt’s mixing of market liberalism and right-wing authoritarianism as flawed, since market liberalism has never been a component of right wing ideology, but rather a tool which was meant to attract voters and that was later abandoned.

¹ Schain *et al.* (2002) present the example where the French Communist party has continued losing votes to the French National Front as a result of concerted and successful efforts of the Front’s activists.

The question this research is trying to answer is: Are the reasons for the rise of right wing parties in the European Union similar or not? The four independent variables for this research are: Economic factors, attitudinal patterns, immigration, and systemic factors, all of which will be discussed in the following chapters as they constitute one complex variable. The dependent variables are support for the right wing parties, results for elections, and the rise of right wing parties.

The research will look at the development of debate around the rise of right wing parties. It will emphasise the interrelationships of the causes leading to right wing parties in Austria, France and the Netherlands to reach parliaments and governments. We will begin by describing the research methodology and present definitions for the terms used in this research. We will look at what is presented in existing literature on the factors that are behind or lead to the rise of right wing parties to parliaments, and subject these factors to analysis in light of the argumentation presented in support of each of the factors. We will also look at the parties in focus and we will review each of the parties rise to the parliament in its country and look at whether the causes are unique to that case or not. In conclusion we will establish that for the countries in focus the rise of right wing parties must be seen in light of the various causes that are presented in this research and that there is much concern for Europe.

2. Methodology

The availability of comparative case studies to this research is a crucial one. This research sets out to look at developments at the political scenes of three major European countries that saw the rise of right wing parties at the end of the twentieth century, with some even reaching the government.

Comparative studies have been used extensively and successfully to contrast and compare different variables in order to establish causal relations and to discard irrelevant variables from the comparison formulae. Schain *et al.* (2002) have used comparative studies in their attempt to study right wing parties in Europe “to identify and explain variations both between and within countries.” They see that comparative case studies allow them to correct the shortfalls of other approaches that deal with the issue in a generalised approach or from constricted study of cases without any attempt to link these cases together (Schain *et al.* 2002,4).

The comparative approach should also be seen as an approach that aims at explaining processes in a society by means of a (meta-) theoretical framework of reference and where explanations are validated by comparing other units of analysis or units of variation (Pennings, Keman, & Kleiinjehuis, 1999). It allows the researcher to reach general conclusions by looking at individual cases that share similar phenomena. Mackie and Marsh (1995, 174) see that comparative studies are essential for two reasons: “first, to avoid ethnocentrism in analysis; and second, to generate, test, and subsequently reformulate theories, and their related concepts and

hypothesis, about the relationship between political phenomena.” While Hague, Harrop and Breslin (1993, 23-27) also present similar justifications for the use of the comparative approach; they signal (27-30) together with Mackie and March (1995, 180-183) some problems that arise when comparison is used. They see that having too many variables to compare with too few cases (countries) as a major problem, as there are never two identical cases (countries) except for the factor whose effects are under study. Also, the extent of relations between countries means that no country is “independent” of each other. They also highlight the different contexts of events that have different connotations for different observers. Bias is identified as the fourth problem that arises from comparison “when looking at politics in contrasting countries.”

Cass Mudde (2000,5) sees that there is no problem in trans-national comparisons as long as we focus on the ideology of the parties where it functions as “the normative bases of the pursued policies of political parties and have the advantage of being more generally formulated than the more nationally centred policies that are pursued”.

For the purposes of this research, I am comparing between three different West European countries as case studies, each of which has its unique historical experience. Case studies have been found useful to elaborate on issues that are common to a certain number of cases, and if “they use and assess the utility of

concepts developed ...in another country..." (Mackie and March, 1995, 177). Austria had its history tied to that of Germany during the Second World War, and was associated with the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime. The government of Austria in the post war period was able to emancipate itself from being a partner to the Nazi regime and that; on the contrary, it was one of its victims. France has established its reputation as the country of freedom, brotherhood and equality, only to find that it has lots of rethinking to do where the rights of other people and minorities are concerned. The Netherlands did not host radical right wing ideology in its post war history though this kind of parties was always present. The sudden rise of Pim Fortuyn and the gains his party made in the elections of 2002 had to be related to something genuine within that country's population.

By looking at Austria, France and the Netherlands while comparing political and social events leading to the rise of right wing parties, we would be able to establish the relevance of specific issues that lead to the same result; and hope to establish the causation - that regardless of background- gave the similar result that is the rise of right wing parties in all of the three countries.

Many limits apply to this research, starting with the argument that each country enjoys a different elections system, which limits the study's comparative approach, as there are not many commonalities between the cases in that aspect. Another limitation to the study lies in the fact that the historical experiences of each nation

are quite different, which could be argued that it could effect the course of analysis of this study without the required in-depth societal analysis. All of these arguments are valid if we were to present each country's case on its own. As defined earlier, it is for the strict and narrow focus of this study that we overlooked the differences and focused on the end result which constituted the minimum common denominator between the three cases.

In this chapter we presented the methodology which we see most fits the purpose of this research. By using comparative case studies we will establish the commonalities and differences between the proposed cases, and validate our hypothesis. In the next chapter I will establish working definitions for the terms and concepts used in this research and show how these relate to the topic of the research.

3. Definition

3.1 Right wing parties

Attempts at reaching an accurate definition for Right Wing Parties have not been easy. The term is ambiguous and has been used by researchers for a long time to cover many aspects in party politics. Hainsworth (1992, 3), and Betz (2000, 3) indicate that the concept of the right is elusive, and is difficult to limit it to a certain set of parties having common aspects. Parties tend to alienate themselves from being labelled as 'right' or 'extreme', they rather prefer to operate under banners such as the National Party (United Kingdom), the Italian Social Movement, the Dutch Centre Party, and so on. Betz (2000, 3) also sees that these parties have been careful "to stress their commitment to representative democracy and the constitutional order".

Betz (2000, 3) introduces a working definition of right wing extremism. He sees this definition as restrictive, and would at least include a) the fundamental rejection of the democratic rules of the game, and b) accepting, if not propagating, violence as a necessary means of achieving political goals both at home and in foreign policy. The first criterion outlines the 'social' side where it denotes revoking individual liberty and the principle of individual equality and equal rights for all members of the political community and their "replacement by an authoritarian system in which rights are based on ascribed characteristics such as race, ethnicity, or religion". The second criterion upholds the process by which these parties achieve their goals.

But this definition is not convenient for the purpose of our research. It has been seen by Betz (2000, 3) himself as hardly “apt to capture the nature of the contemporary right in established Western democracies”, for this definition lacks the necessary elements that characterise modern right wing parties, such as the programmatic radicalism and the populist appeal. Minkenberg (2001, 3) considers Betz’s definition to be too wide and inclusive of diverse phenomena, and that Betz’s “radical right populist party family, the populist style serves as the only common denominator”. He introduces his own definition of right wing extremism that emanates from anti-thesis to the theories of modernisation. Where right wing-radicalism can be seen as undoing social change introduced by notions of modernisation, where the national identity is emphasised in contrast to social differentiation and a return to traditional roles is seen as opposing individualisation. The definition in his view takes up nationalism as centre point and thus, right wing radicalism is defined as (4):

a myth of a homogeneous nation which puts the nation before the individual and his/her civic rights and which therefore is directed against liberal and pluralist democracy (though not necessarily in favour of a fascist state), its underlying values of freedom and equality and the related categories of individualism and universalism. This definition focuses explicitly on the nation as the ultimate focal point, situated somewhere between the poles of *demos* and *ethnos*. The nationalistic myth is characterised by the effort to construct an idea of nation, and national belonging by

radicalising ethnic, religious, lingual, other cultural and political criteria of exclusion, to bring about a congruence between the state and the nation, and to condense the idea of nation into an image of extreme collective homogeneity. ...According to the definition used here, right wing radicalism is not the antithesis of democracy *per se*. instead, by focusing on ultra-nationalism instead of anti-democratic attitudes, the question of right wing radicals' relationship towards democracy remains open for empirical testing.

For this research, Ignazi's criteria to determine whether a party is right wing or not will be the basis of our definition for right wing parties. Ignazi (1992) uses a set of criteria that are widely quoted in literature as the main set of definitions describing right wing parties where he looks at the placement of parties in the political spectrum (spatial), the declared party ideology and its reference to fascism (historic-ideological), and the attitude towards the political system (attitudinal- systemic) (see also Taggart, 1995). This approach for party classification fits the purpose of this study. It allows reaching conclusions about a single party after looking at it from its own programme and position. This approach is not judgemental; rather it gives the above criteria as measuring tools against which we can identify the positioning of each party in focus according to its own presented positions and beliefs. Merkl (1997, 18) uses spatial placement to base his definition of right wing parties. He argues

using extreme right “means just that” when placing a party on the Right – Left scale of party politics.

Mudde (2000, 6-10) has noticed that the study of right wing parties has attracted lots of research which has enhanced the quality of studies into the field. He also notices that there have been three waves in the study of right wing parties, where the third – and latest one – studied the most successful period of right wing party history in both “electoral and ideological senses” (Mudde 2000, 6). Together with Eatwell (2000, 410-412) they designated the term party family based on ideology to lump right wing parties in a group for study and consideration and admit to the fact that it is difficult to uniformly define right wing extremism or reach an exact consensus on the term.

For the purposes of this research, we are considering parties that have succeeded in winning electoral votes that would allow them to get into their countries’ parliaments. This is the case for Austria and the Netherlands, as they are two parties that have managed to cross the voting minimum and to be represented in the parliaments and even reached the government. As for France, we are studying the National Front and its leader Jean Marie Le Pen, which was able to present serious challenges to the candidacy of Jacques Chirac in the presidential elections of 2002. Whereas the National Front did not succeed in parliamentary elections in France due to the election system in use in France, it managed to garner support and to get

elected to the European Parliament. The success of other right wing parties in other countries is not ignored, but it would be difficult to conduct a general survey of all right wing parties in all West European countries in this modest research. The study of the aforementioned parties would shed light on the commonalities and discrepancies of the rise of right wing parties in West European Countries.

I have sufficient conviction that we can look at the three cases from equal footing, as we are not interested in the dynamics of each countries election system, but rather with the result which is the rise of right wing parties. A further support to this approach is the rise of Swiss people's party in Switzerland. Over the last ten years the party's rise was really significant, yet it was unable to change the government make up simply because it did not have representation in the whole of country. This changed in 2003, where it managed to garner support in all the Swiss regions and thus was able to change the make up of the "magic formula". Switzerland's is not part of this study due to the political non alliance of this country which exempted it from going through the experiences of the countries in focus. The three countries are all members of the European Union and their policies would have an impact on the EU as a whole. The three cases provide substantive evidence for the rise of right wing parties, and induce an interrelated analysis framework with which we are able to conclude whether the rise of these parties was an outright result of societal dynamics and not a knee-jerk reaction to events in time.

3.2 Populism

All through their history, right wing parties have claimed to represent the voice of the ordinary man on the street, and not just strong interest groups. This relation with the ordinary man and the ability to come out and use his terminology has won these parties another description. Right wing parties are often described as “populistic”, another ambiguous term that is supposed to facilitate our understanding of the working concepts of right wing parties. The parties maintain they represent the people who have been alienated from the political process due to the elitism of main parties and the inadequate performance of politicians. This claim serves as an anchor in the right wing parties’ discussion, where they claim that they are the true democracy and that they speak freely to the people and to the lower classes, something that is not done by the main stream parties. Right wing parties also claim to take up issues of the general public and answer its concerns; hence these parties view themselves as populist and are often described as such. Yet again while we are trying to reach a clear definition for ‘populism’, we fall in the pitfalls of generalisation. Populism literally means “The claim to represent ordinary people²”, that is to say that a populist party or a party ascribing to populism sees itself as linked to ordinary people and alienates itself from the ruling elite. This is true for the parties in focus since they claim to take up positions and demands of the ordinary person on the street, but certainly is not the case as per the authoritarian simplistic mode of leadership that is common and characteristic of all the right wing parties

² As explained in the Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 2nd edition, edited by Della Thompson, (Oxford University Press, Oxford), 1993

concerned. Populism is defined as “a structure of argumentation, a political style and strategy, and an ideology” (Betz 2000, 4). Taggart (1995, 36) uses populism guardedly to stress two elements - negativity and breadth - that seem to run throughout the various meanings. For him, this puts populism to describe broad historical issues, and hence he sees the need to differentiate between populism as such, and new populism. He sees that ideologically speaking, “new populism is on the right, against the system, and yet defines itself as in the ‘mainstream’” (36).

Mény and Surel (2002) raise the issue of populism in contrast to democratic values. They see that populism is a general term that holds many variations in usage, but the main connotation related to it, that it is retaining to the people is rather controversial. For them, what would be acceptable for the populace to undertake with the constraints of ‘accepted values’, will inevitably clash with populist choices that are ‘unacceptable’. They raise the changing meanings of democratic principles as evidence to changing ‘accepted values’ (3), and argue that there is a need for relativistic approach to the question “Can we assume that only peaceful and politically correct forms of participation are democratic? Or should we be more inclusive and accept that other forms of involvement can contribute to the democratic process?” (4)

The above argumentation underscores the need for a proper definition for populism. Whereas we might find ourselves using a term to denote a set of definitions that are

accepted to us, the term itself might not mean the same thing to others. Populism is currently identified with right wing parties. Mény and Surel underscore the issue of labelling right wing parties as populist and warn against using a “classification which is nearer to an ad hoc, and at times misleading, conceptualisation than to a formally formulated definition”.

Kitschelt (2000, 160) defines populism as signifying “the effort to destroy established institutions of interest intermediation and elite control and to put in their place some kind of ‘direct’ voice of the people, embodied in the leader of the populist party”.

Eatwell (2000, 412) sees that describing these parties as ‘populist’ was a trend to divert from using the dying term ‘radical’, and it denotes a “particular political style, including charismatic leadership and anti establishment rhetoric. It can also refer to voter driven politics, where parties offer the electorate what is popular”. But for him using the term raises two major problems: First, some of the attributes denoted to populism can also be found in other parties that are not necessarily populist, like Silvio Berlusconi’s conservative Forza Italia, or Tony Blair’s New Labour. Second, focusing on style and voter-oriented approaches “divert attention from the fact that the extreme right family of parties does have a common core doctrine”, and that is nationalism.

Together with Betz (2000) and Taggart (1995), Kitschelt does not see the problems with using populism as the case with Mény and Surel. The term is used with the

view of reflecting public attitudes and their manifestations into policies by the populace itself, although they all admit to the difficulties that arise with generalisation.

Populism must not be considered on its own. We will use it in the context of our definition of right wing parties and as an integral part of that definition, since it is largely attributed to the right wing parties that are the focus of our study. Thus the definition of populism in the context of this research will denote a term which pertains to the public and communicates and addresses its problems in simple terms and principles.

The resulting definition for right wing parties which would be used in this research is: a party that aligns itself to the right of the political system in policies and views, which adopts views of racist character, believes in the fact that it represents the voice of the man of the street that is not represented by interest groups, and believes in an authoritarian mode of government but not necessarily calling for an immediate and obvious change.

The FPÖ, the FN, and LPF all have the characteristics that define them as right wing parties. The aforementioned criteria all apply to the three parties, and by studying their structure and function we can identify that all three parties have adopted policies that identify them clearly as right wing parties.

This chapter held the definition of the main topics of this research. We opted to use the term right wing parties rather than “extreme” or “radical” so as to placate between the parties vision of themselves and the way these are viewed and perceived from the outside. It does not defeat the purpose of the research but strengthens it since we will not be plunged into making “moral” judgements, which is not the reason behind working on this paper. In the next chapter, we will take a deeper look into the debate surrounding the rise of right wing parties and how different writers and researchers in the field tried to coin the main reasons leading to their success.

4. Debate: the rise of Right Wing Parties

Since the issue of right wing parties came to the fore, many researchers that studied these parties started developing concepts to explain the rise and success of these parties. These concepts looked into the socio-political aspects, economy, political attitudes, fear for national identity, xenophobia, and the appeal of right wing parties to the ordinary people.

Schain, Zolberg, and Hossay (2002) have lumped the causes for the rise of right wing parties under four headings: 1) Economic change; 2) Attitudinal patterns, 3) Immigration; and 4) Systemic factors. This categorisation is a practical expression of the major hypothetical arguments that are often laid by researchers as the underlying causes for the rise of right wing parties in Western Europe. This also reinforces the argument presented earlier that the reasons are often intertwined and connecting, whereby the four headings describe societal change due to economic developments, which lead eventually to changes of voting behaviour. The fourth component is rather the element which is not directly related to the electorate as a manner of free choice, but is a manifestation of current ruling political systems.

These four hypothetical causes are unanimous amongst the different writers (see table 1, see also Betz 2000, Taggart 1995, Kitschelt 2000, Schain et al 2002), though each tries to focus on one aspect and its relation to the other three. Writers generally begin their analysis with looking at the changes in economy as a result of European

integration and the effect that had had on European society. These economic and societal changes converge on the issue of class dynamics, and the creation of an unskilled and low educated working class that is unable to accommodate changes occurring in the economical and social spheres. The inability to adapt oneself to such changes ultimately pushes the individual into defending oneself by returning to issues that are secure, known, and familiar. While this is explained as behavioural change that is a result of economic change, the view towards immigration and rise of xenophobia and violence towards foreigners is the expressive form of this change. Right wing parties have been able to promote anti-immigration policies to their constituents by constantly portraying foreigners and those from a foreign origin as a threat to the indigenous population. Since the competition for the labour market – especially the unskilled one, is fierce, manipulating people's fears for their source of income and livelihoods was manifest in lobbying for votes of the people. Immigration is considered one of the issues preoccupying right wing party campaigners, and has never been contested by left parties through statistics showing the real impact of foreigners on the economy and on the labour market. The fourth component in this matrix of relations underlines the failure of the political system to take up the fears of the individual and answer them. Left wing parties, centre parties, and right centre parties have kept quiet on issues they deem as the unique monopoly of the ruling class, and did not answer or propagate their views on the issues that concern the individual on the public level. Right wing parties – claiming to represent the public, have filled in this vacuum with their own

rhetoric, and promoted notions about corruption in the ruling governments, their inability to answer concerns of the common individual, and the fact that they are far from the public and taking decisions that would impact it negatively. Calling for referenda on every issue has been a tool with which right wing parties were able to gain votes, and ultimately enhance their position as representatives of the general public. Kühnhardt³ (2003) sees external immigration as part of the package that Europe will have to deal with in light of developments of the European notions of identity and citizenship. He identifies this as a challenge for European integration in view of the options that were regarded as would be strengthening notions of European identity and belonging in light of globalism and the process of developing the single market and the definitive impact this had had on the development of the European character(6-7). He argues that, in light of the process of globalisation, Europe has to “find answers to the development of multi-ethnic and multi-religious realities within the EU, not the least as a consequence of Muslim migration to Europe.”(29)

Looking at depth into each one of the proposed lines of analysis, one could identify an interrelated pattern of cohesive correlations. The case studies are different and whether these concepts have similar weight in formulating the results, i.e. the rise of

³ Kühnhardt provides an extensive discussion on globalism, globalisation, and their impact on development of the notion of European identity and the process of European integration. For further details on the issue of globalism and immigration, read Joseph Nye on <http://www.theglobalist.com/DBWeb/printStoryId.aspx?StoryId=2392>, and Ludger Kühnhardt on <http://www.arena.uio.no/>, Working Paper 02/37

right wing parties to Parliaments will be established. There is no distinct line differentiating and separating each theory from the remaining ones, thus differences are disregarded and the outcome considered as the major unifying factor that connects between the three case studies.

In fact, the researchers do agree to the tendency of the concepts to be intertwined into each other. This is evident from writings of Betz, Kitschelt, Eatwell, and others. On one hand, some researchers try to promote one line of analysis at the expense of others. This is evident from the work of Kitschelt, who presents an entirely new line of analysis looking at the development and rise of right wing parties as a mechanism of its own right where these parties “supply” themselves to the political arena. On the other hand, as evident by the work of Betz and Taggart, the multiple level of causation is considered, and theories are not discredited to promote other ones. From the causation presented by Betz (1994, 1-4), there are several factors that were behind the stability in Western Europe, contributing to the erosion of support to radical right wing groups. By the absence of these factors, right wing parties began to rise. These factors are closely associated with economical and social factors and the rise of these parties was largely seen as a reaction to economic policies and social developments, compounded with party politics and a sense of alienation from the political arena. But all is conditional upon the societies’ development beyond the industrial era, where people woke up to new realities and changes to their system.

Taggart (1995, 47) looks at the rise of these parties in light of the changes in the nature of West European societies and politics, therefore requiring us to look at it within the context of the wider contemporary politics. Merkl (1997, 26) attributes the rise of right wing parties to new social problems and tensions, amongst these is the “communications revolution” of the 1980s and the creation of huge sector of unskilled people in the society. Compounding this with a low level of education generated the pull towards the right. Merkl continues with studying social changes leading up to behavioural changes, and notes (36) that the majority of the new recruits to the various right wing groups in Europe is “male, lower class, and very young”. This remark is made in the shadow of analysis of the change of primary relations in the family, where he notes that it was difficult for the male right wing party members to cope with the new assertive roles of women. Merkl (38) also notes that right wing society perceives itself as the saviour of the nation, with all of the related mythology.

Ignazi (1992, 18-21) saw that social changes have lead to effects on the political stage. He describes the rise of right wing parties in the context of the success of left wing ideologies, and as a reaction to them. This is illustrated neoconservative parties being created as a “reaction against the post-war consensus on Keynesian political economy and the ‘collectivist age’, and the rapid growth and cost of the Welfare system”. This lead to a higher polarisation of the society, complete with major value changes in relation to issues like, family, patriotism, and traditional moral values were re-emphasised and were evident by the rise of conservative parties to

governments in Europe in the 1980s. Another factor leading to the rise of right wing parties was the identification of specific issues that were on the extreme, the case with which conservative parties did not identify with; leaving the space for right wing parties to take a stand. Right wing parties have claimed to represent those positions as no one was ready to represent them, so they called for the abolition of the welfare state, an aggressive nationalism, a form of social Darwinism, the restoring of moral traditionalism, an authoritarian state, and xenophobic policies towards foreigners. For Ignazi (21), the distinctiveness of right wing parties stems from the way they “endanger the legitimacy of the system”. In a later work, Ignazi (2002, 29) sums up the reasons under the following headings: 1) the affirmation of neo-conservatism; 2) the increasing radicalisation and polarisation of politics; 3) the breakthrough of new issues; and 4) the growing system legitimacy deficit. The fourth component for Ignazi constitutes the new addition he views to the hypothetical causes underlying the rise of right wing parties, were his explanation analyses the “structure of opportunity along different dynamics”, and on the other side introduces “the ‘crisis of confidence’ in Western democracies as a crucial explanatory element.

Kitschelt (2000, 43) has proposed that “the NRR [New Radical Right] is the offspring of the post industrialisation of advanced capitalist economies, of changes within the patterns of competition within democratic party system and of political entrepreneurs finding new electoral ‘market niches’ they are able to exploit with racist, authoritarian and pro-capitalist slogans”.

From the latter we can deduce that the intricate relations between the system – as in the parties, government, and policies, and the populace – as in the electorate, have developed a rather adverse set of dynamics. The appeal of the policies of a particular government is judged by the manner with which it responds to public demands, and wherever it fails to do so, a gap is created which is then filled by right wing parties. Mainstream parties would find it difficult to alienate themselves so much from the demands of the public, especially when issues of economics and welfare are concerned, yet they are unable to forgo with demands that are strictly against the parties' charters. This allows right wing parties to shore up in with the demands of the people, and present mainstream parties as unable to comply with the demands of the general public.

Table 1 Reasons for the rise of right wing parties

Reason	Economic change	Attitudinal Patterns	Immigration	Systemic factors
Manifestation	creation of an unskilled and low educated working class that is unable to accommodate changes occurring in the economical and social spheres	Fear from foreigners, fear for livelihoods, developing racist attitudes	portraying foreigners and those from a foreign origin as a threat to the indigenous population	Inability of government and left parties to countenance claims of right wing parties.

These four reasons interact amongst them in a form of circle (Fig. 1), where each of them feeds into the other. This cyclic pattern indicates that each of one reason has a role to play in the manifestation of right wing parties' rise. Each of these components exists on its own but as such does not adequately explain the rise of right wing parties. The most important of them is immigration and economic change, as they constitute to a certain degree the precursors to the other two components. The area created in the centre is the area of interaction between all the four components, and which results in the rise of right wing parties. The impact of the relation of these four components is twofold as they are used by the party to convince voters on one hand, and on the other they are present there by their sheer weight to affect the voters' decisions.

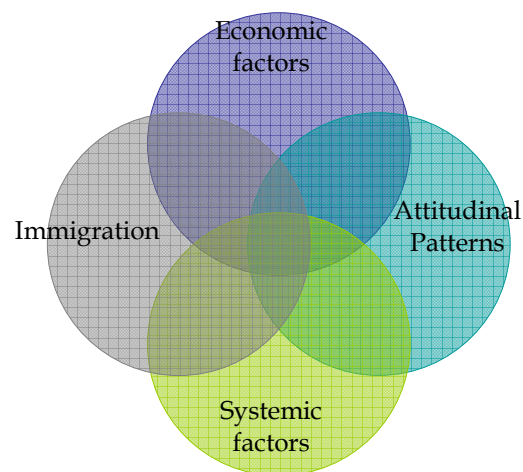


Fig. 1
Interaction of reasons for rise of right wing parties

This chapter introduced the main cornerstones of debate around the rise of right wing parties. From what was presented we can see that there was a set of connected reasons that added and contributed to each other in a way that lead to the effect, i.e. the rise of right wing parties. If we couple all of these factors to Kitschelt's "supply and demand" aspect, we further find that right wing parties were definitely the beneficiaries from a wave of economic, societal, individual, and political changes. Another point to emphasise is that despite the relatively different historical experiences of the countries under study, the result was astonishingly the same, and right wing parties did gain a foothold in the countries' political lives.

The following chapter looks at each of the case studies individually. By presenting each one of the parties' history, electorate, and leadership; we want to identify the common issues that group them together and make them deserve their title as right wing parties, and to look at what might be identified as differences between them. Focusing on the parties' history aims to establish the relevant experiences of these parties. This will enable us to conclusively establish the uniqueness of each of the experiences. Studying the electorate will shed light on the population that gives the parties the mandate and defines the characteristics of this population that lead to making them vote the way they did. The final aspect under consideration is leadership, where the effect of the leaders' decision and styles on the parties is studied. The characteristics of the parties' leaders have definitely had an impact on the parties and the fact they were able to perform as they did in elections.

5. Party Rise to Parliament

5.1 *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (The Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ)*

The rise of the FPÖ to government in Austria is indicative of the success of right wing parties in the 1990s. From being on the margins of the Austrian political system in the 1970s to winning a considerable majority in national elections in the 1990s, the FPÖ managed to assert its presence on the Austrian political scene. On October 3, 1999, the FPÖ won 27 percent of the vote after having “run an election campaign based on blatant and explicit ethnicist and racist slogans against foreigners” (Wodak and Pelinka, 2002, xii-xiii). The FPÖ played a significant role in Austrian politics throughout the post-war period. Founded in 1955, the FPÖ succeeded the League of Independents (*Verband der Unabhängigen, VdU*), which had been formed in 1949. Betz (1994) recounts that the main intention for the establishment of the party was to build a "Third Force" in form of a "centrist, reform party" between the socialist Left and the Catholic Right and thus to offer a political alternative to the considerable number of Austrians without firm commitment to either of the two large parties⁴.

Betz (2002, 63) remarks that the Austrian society had gone through a process of broad socioeconomic and socio-cultural change transforming the country from a predominantly industrial to an increasingly post-industrial society and presents statistical evidence supporting his claim. He also argues that by joining the

⁴ for further information regarding the history of the FPÖ see Betz, 1994 *Radical Right Wing Populism in Western Europe*, (St. Martin's Press, New York)

European Union and the opening of the eastern borders, Austria's industrial sector became exposed to the low-wage producers in central Europe, which led to forcing Austria to invest in high-technology manufactures and value-added services. In addition, the pressures arising from the imposed structural change as a result of joining the EU, led to "a significant rise in unemployment" (63). In the late 1980s, the government induced measures to curb the rise in unemployment, and succeeded significantly in increasing the GDP two years in a row. But for Betz economics simply were not behind the rise of the FPÖ to the parliaments and subsequently to executive positions, but rather it was the frustration the Austrian public exhibited against the existing mainstream parties, and the policies they enacted in Austria leading to the corruption scandals of the late 1980s (63-65). For Betz, it is "primarily a reflection of what in German has come to be known as the *Parteien* and *Politikverdrossenheit* – that is, disenchantment with the established political parties and politics in general" (65).

The breakthrough for the FPÖ came in the 1989 elections in the region of Kärnten where it won 29 % of the vote nearly doubling its results for 1984, and in the parties' negotiations that followed; Jörg Haider was elected as the *Landeshauptmann* or governor with the support of the Catholic party (Betz 2002, 67). Table 2 presents the results for the FPÖ in elections to the *NATIONALRAT* (National Assembly or Parliament) over the years.

Table 2 election Results for the FPÖ, 1983 - 2002

Result\year	1983	1986	1990	1994	1995	1999	2002
%	5.0	9.7	16.6	22.5	21.9	26.9	10.0
Seats	12	18	33	42	40	52	18

Source: Parties and elections in Europe website, <http://www.parties-and-elections.de>

Müller (2000, 191-200) sees the FPÖ as the real winner of the Austrian elections of 1999. While the Social Democratic Party was the winner in the elections ten times in a row, the party lost 5% percent of the vote falling to an all-time low (191). In his summation for the Austrian elections of 1999, Müller describes the developments that preceded the elections and does not identify any reason that might explain the result. On the contrary he points out the Rosenstingl affair that rocked the FPÖ and exposed gross incompetence in the handling of the party's finances⁵. The FPÖ's elections campaign benefited largely from the winning in the governorates elections, where Haider became the governor of Kärnten. They utilised similar campaign topics that had wide audiences, and targeted specific sections of the Austrian society (Müller 2000, 194-195). In his analysis of the results of the elections, Müller sees that the votes that went to the FPÖ were not simply supporting the party's Nazism, but there was support for the party's policies on immigration and the criticism of the political class whereas the party's voters chose to overlook the Rosenstingl affair and

⁵ Peter Rosenstingl was a Freedom Party MP and became an absconding debtor who had also 'borrowed' considerable sums from his own party. With great Media attention the police searched for him and eventually found him in Brazil. He was forced to return to Austria shortly before the elections. Many observers thought the affair would be a blow to the FPÖ since it showed that the self styled party of the 'hard-working and capable' people also has crooks among its representatives, and that it had shown gross incompetence in handling its own financial affairs (Müller 2000, p. 192)

other issues (198). This line of explanation is also supported by Betz (2002), who sees that the steady erosion of legitimacy of the post-war political and institutional structure in Austria as one of the main causes for the FPÖ's rise in the early nineties, where the party not only cultivated the image of honesty, trustworthiness, and responsiveness to the citizen and the voter, but also promoted itself as a radical departure from *Parteienwirtschaft* and as an advocate for the interests of the productive forces in society (69). In addition, the FPÖ also used immigration to garner results in the elections. Immigration was not an issue for Austria in the eighties, but with influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe after the fall of the iron curtain, the FPÖ launched an anti foreigner campaign focused in the capital which lead finally to the party becoming second in the local elections of Vienna in 1991 (69-70).

Kitschelt (2000, 185-187) sees that voters for the FPÖ regard the party as a populist-anti-statist party rather than a right-authoritarian radical right party. The surveys that tested voter preferences in Austria did not establish a great difference between the voters of the FPÖ and the remainder Austrian population, and any differences were only marginal to indicate a unique trend of its own. Further, Kitschelt sees the rhetoric used by the party against immigrants as a tool to rally supporters and to contribute - in a subtle way- to the party's antiestablishment message (187).

The party underwent some transformations in the nineties so as to appeal more to voters. The major transformation was abandoning the pro-German line that was

typical of the party in previous years. It also softened its views on the issue of immigrants, taking what could be considered as a reconciliatory approach towards the widening electorate. The party, represented by its leader Jörg Haider, had alienated itself from the previous anti-Semitic rhetoric, and in a clear departure from previous history it stopped sidelining itself with Nazi propaganda (Betz, 2002, 74-75).

5.1.1 The electorate of the FPÖ

Looking at the above, we can trace the success of the party to its appeal to the electorate and the presentation of policies that marked a clear diversion from current policies adopted by the government. The all encompassing campaign of the FPÖ to persuade the public, together with adopting a line of anti-government anti-corruption policy was successful in reaching for and attracting sectors of the society that were never identified with the FPÖ before. Riedlsperger (2000, 34) sees that the electoral support for the FPÖ is mainly from “dissatisfied, protest oriented members of the middle class and anti-clerical farmers”, with women “being underrepresented and higher levels of education overrepresented”. The FPÖ has exploited people’s anxiety about immigration, antipathy for multiculturalism, and the increase in crime rates as components for its parliamentary campaign in 1990; confirming analysts position on the FPÖ being radical right wing party (34-35).

Table 3 shows the social composition of the FPÖ electorate, and we can infer from that generally there was an increase of support for the party from the various sectors

of the society. The breakthrough in support was in the 1990s where electoral support doubled, and then it continued to increase but rather on smaller scales.

Table 3 Social composition of the FPÖ vote, 1986 – 1995 (in percent)

	1986	1990	1994	1995
FPÖ vote in Federal elections	9.7	16.6	22.5	21.89

Structural Profile of FPÖ

Gender

Male	12	20	28	27
Female	7	12	17	16

Age

19-29	12	18	25	29
30-44	11	15	22	24
45-59	6	15	22	13
60 and over	8	16	22	15

Education

Obligatory school only	6	14	21	18
Trade/practical/technical	11	19	26	27
Gymnasium/college/ university	11	13	19	16

Occupation

Farmers	5	9	15	14
Self-employed, professionals	15	21	30	28
Blue-collar workers	10	21	29	34
White-collar workers	13	16	22	22
Civil servants	8	14	14	17
Housewives	8	11	17	12
Pensioners	8	16	24	16
In training	9	8	18	15

Sources: Plasser and Ulram 1995, 358; Plasser, Ulram, Neuwirth, and Sommer 1995, 41 as quoted in Riedlesperger 2000, 35

The statistics show that there was an increase in the support for the FPÖ amongst all the categories of the Austrian society. What is worth noting is that the FPÖ has managed to gain support in the educated sectors of the community. Yet the major

increase in that sector was amongst those with obligatory school education, and those who received trade and technical education. From our discussions above we were able to identify support for right wing parties in the bastions of the less educated and those who received little education. Thus the findings with regard to the FPÖ do not deviate from that, since the increase in support for the party in that sector was largest in those with the minimal levels of education. The more than double increase in support amongst those who received trade and technical training can be explained in the light of economic competition. These people are bound to join the labour market and could have definitely seen immigrants and foreign workers as posing a threat to their livelihoods.

5.1.2 FPÖ leader

John Bunzl (2002, 61-66) describes the charismatic leader of the FPÖ as one of the components contributing to the success of the party. Haider was able to sense people's attitudes and to adopt wherever there was benefit for the party. Bunzl sees that the FPÖ under Haider was successful because Haider was able to "bundle together all kinds of grievances and resentments resulting from modernisation, globalisation, and alienation from political parties and institutions" (64). Bunzl (65) also sees that Haider was also able to accommodate new views out of tactical and electoral considerations, where he downplayed and downgraded what he called '*Deuschtümelei*' the (Germanism) of his policies where he stopped stressing the Germanic nature of the party and the exhibition of German nationalistic sentiments,

being that German nationalism was not very popular in Austria. Haider was also applying the same calculations on the issue of the European Union, where he blamed EU-membership for many of Austria's [...] troubles, playing on "widespread feelings, such as the fear of competition, immigration, centralisation [...], and pose as a defender of Austrian interests (65). Bunzl (2002, 65) and Riedlsperger (2000, 27) do not yet consider the FPÖ as a neo-Nazi party, and Haider as a neo-Nazi person. Rather they see Haider as a man with personal goals in the realm of power and the formation of a government that allows more room for popular participation.

5.2 Le Front National (The National Front, FN)

In the first turn of elections to the French National Assembly in March 1993 the Front National received nearly 12.5 percent of the vote, quite a bit more than pre-election surveys had indicated. These results were evidence that the party had consolidated its electoral basis and established itself as a lasting element of the French party system. But they also showed that after a decade of steady electoral growth, the party had reached its limits, beyond which it could hardly expect to grow in the future. This marked a setback for Jean-Marie Le Pen, in the late 1980s the undisputed leader of the West European nationalist Right, who had dedicated most of his political career to bringing together the diffuse ideological and organizational elements of right-wing French radicalism and extremism in a party that he hoped would attract mass support.

Mayer (2000), Hainsworth (1992), and Betz (1994) trace the rise of the FN to the early 1970s when the party was originally formed from the coming together of right wing parties and individuals under the leadership of Jean-Marie Le Pen. They see the FN as the inheritor of the extreme right legacy in France, where it had into it all the components of the previous right wing parties that were formed after the Second World War and the ensuing struggle of the French colonies for freedom especially in Algeria. The party did not gain considerable electorate appeal up until the political turmoil that swept France in the 1980s and the failure of successive socialist and

rightist governments to solve the countries woes and alleviate the hard economic situation the country was thrown into. The 1980 saw the alienation of the middle class from the government and the rise of apathy to government policies and mistrust in the politicians (Betz, 1994, 52) (Mayer 2000, 11). The failure of the French socialists in pioneering the building of a French model of democratic socialism, coupled with weak French international competitiveness lead to severe economic crisis, high unemployment and the adoption if austerity plans (Betz, 1994, 52-53).

The breakthrough of the FN came after a long period of economic recession and high unemployment, and failed policies of the government. The party did not have any significant presence on the French elections scene, and it did not garner any significant votes, in the 1981 presidential elections, the FN presidential candidate failed even collecting the five hundred votes required to run for the presidency. The seventies period was hard for the FN and it saw the party being marginalised by internal dissent and the rise of a competitor party - Parti des Forces Nouvelles under the leadership of Pascal Gouchon (Betz, 1994) (Mayer, 2000). It was in the by-election of the small village of *Dreux*, that in September 1983 the FN's secretary general received 16.3 percent of the votes, and the centre-right joint list won the elections in the second round with 55 percent of the vote. The subsequent weeks saw the FN win more by-elections, and in 1984 the party headed by Le Pen achieved 10 seats in the European Parliament (Mayer 2000, 13). The movement of the FN continued to harbour successes as it advanced. In the 1985 cantonal elections, the FN was able to

secure 10.4 percent of the votes and to perform impressively in the south-east of France. This was important as Hainsworth (1992, 42) sees these elections to be the litmus test of the true strength of the party, especially since the FN was a new comer and that it would be difficult for it to enlist the required support especially that these elections depend heavily on garnering the well established local roots and support structures. In 1986, the elections system changed from the traditional two-ballot majority vote system to proportional representation, and the party benefited and entered the French National Assembly for the first time with 9.9 percent of the vote (35 seats), and a similar percent in the several regions (Hainsworth, 1992). In the presidential elections of 1988, Le Pen managed to secure 14.4 percent of the vote, marking the pinnacle of the FN's success. In 1998, the FN suffered from internal divisions that led to the break-up of the party and the formation of the *Mouvement National* under the leadership of Bruno Megrèt. The break-up was not a result of ideological disputes but rather that of a long power struggle inside the party (Swyngedouw and Ivaldi, 2001, 3). But this break-up will not affect our study as the support for the new movement is marginal and did not affect the standing of the FN. The FN continued to succeed in the various elections that took place since, making the elections of 2002 the most successful as they managed to overthrow the socialist candidate in the first round of elections Lionel Jospin, with Le Pen coming second behind the current serving president Jacques Chirac with a result of 16.9 to 19.9 for Chirac (Miguet, 2002).

5.2.1 The electorate of the FN

The electorate of the FN comes mainly from all social classes, regions and social groups. The best achievements of Le Pen were in large or medium-sized cities, where the issues of immigration and law and order or of primary importance. The FN also was able to attract more votes from the working class. The appeal of the FN to these groups stem from party's position on immigration and law and order. (Hainsworth, 1992, 44-48), and (Mayer, 2000, 17-20). Hainsworth (1992, 44) quotes Plenel and Rollat who assessed the FN constituency:

1. "a masculine and urban vote;
2. support from predominantly right wing voters; three in five FN voters had backed a right-wing candidate in April 1981, one in five had voted left.
3. the party successfully mobilised abstentionists and first-time voters: one in five voted FN;
4. compared with the right, the extreme right voter was younger more working class, less feminine and less inclined to practice religion regularly."

Table 4 shows that the support for the FN tends to be higher amongst the underprivileged and the working classes. The support for the FN was ten percentage points higher than average among small shopkeepers, craftsmen, and blue-collar workers, and among voters who saw themselves as underprivileged or expected the economic situation of the country to get worse in the near future. Mayer and Perrineau (1992, 134-137) see the FN voters as divided between a loyal hardcore and an array of supporters that cross the divide between the various parties. The

hardcore voters are “older, predominantly male, more educated, with more often a secondary school qualification or even a higher education degree; they also have more income and property” (134). These supporters are loyal to the party leader and are willing to vote for the FN again in parliamentary elections. A later study by Ivaldi (1996) focused on the FN sympathisers’ ideological profiles, and found out that the summation of all cultural attitudes of this group transcribes into three major areas: “the denial of the whole of the ‘political class’, the questions linked to immigration, and all the insecurity concerns with a call for a more energetic repression of delinquency” (339). In line with the above, Fysh and Wolfreys (1998, 72) identified four levels of attachment of the periphery to the core in the FN: On the outer edge one can find the ‘protest voter’ who is socially integrated but politically fragile that does not identify with the FN or its goal, but has voted for it as a sign of discontent and protest. The second internal layer is that of the ‘malaise voter’, who are driven by a sense of despair and are socially very isolated individuals and feel trapped, and are unable to progress and whose choice is motivated by feelings of social humiliation and failure not by ideological attachment to the FN. The third internal layer includes the right-wing (but not extreme) voters who were won by the FN in 1988. These identify with the FN’s ‘nationalism’, its ‘outsider’ status, and its stand on law and order, but remain critical of the FN and do not see it as a party of government. These voters are politicized, socially integrated, professionally satisfied and enjoy a good standard of living. The hardcore of the FN voters see themselves at the extreme right of the political spectrum and have a very

Table 4 Social composition of the FN vote, 1986 – 1995 (in percent)

	Parl. 1986	Parl. 1988	Parl. 1993	Parl. 1997	Pres. 1988	Pres. 1995
Total	10	10	13	15	14.5	15.5
Gender						
Male	11	12	14	19	18	18
Female	9	7	13	12	11	12
Age						
18-24	14	15	18	16	16	18
25-34	10	9	10	19	17	18
35-49	11	8	13	15	17	15
50-64	9	10	13	15	11	17
65 and over	6	10	13	12	12	9
Respondent's occupations						
Farmers	17	3	13	2	13	16
Shopkeepers, craftsmen	16	6	15	20	27	14
Higher management, professionals	6	6	6	10	19	7
Middle management	9	8	8	12	12	14
Clerical workers	12	18	18	17	13	18
Blue-collar workers	11	18	18	24	19	30
Activity						
Self-employed	13	12	12	12	21	11
Public sector	8	12	12	13	11	15
Private sector	14	16	16	17	17	21
Educational level						
Elementary	8	13	13	17	15	14
Secondary	15	16	16	14	13	17
Vocational	12	14	14	19	18	21
University	7	8	8	10	12	9
Religion						
Catholic regular churchgoer	7	7	12	7	7	10
Irregular	8	13	12	13	16	12
Non-practicing	12	19	13	19	17	18
No religion	7	17	15	17	9	14

as quoted in Mayer 2000, 19

strong sense of belonging based on either on class or race. They are “overtly racist, identify wholeheartedly with Le Pen and express their support for the FN without hesitation or shame” (72).

5.2.2 FN leader

The political arena in France gives prominence to party leaders where an attractive candidate to the presidential elections and an effective party machine are much needed to secure victory (Marcus, 1995, 27). The FN found its own presidential candidate in Jean Marie Le Pen. Jean Marie Le Pen is seen as the charismatic leader that was able to unify parties of the right in 1972 into forming the FN. Le Pen has portrayed himself as the undisputed leader of French nationalism and defender of France. He has built for him a history of an independent man who had to work hard for his living. He was the youngest parliamentarian to get into the National Assembly in 1956 at 27 years of age. He built for himself a history of patriotism and fighting for the homeland, where he claimed to have played a part in the French resistance to the Germans during the Second World War, and to later have joined the notorious ‘paras’ troops that quelled the *Front de Liberation National's* revolution in Algeria. That period of Le Pen’s history came at a price as he was frequently accused of having tortured Algerians and he finds himself having to defend his involvement and innocence (Marcus, 1995. 29-33).

The establishment of the FN was a personal achievement for Le Pen, who saw it as a highly personalised political vehicle. But this was not a smooth thing to manage, as many disputes and internal strife and dissent came to the fore since the FN's establishment⁶. Assuming responsibility in the FN, coupled with a desire to change his image, Le Pen began to present himself as a statesman and went through a period of transformation where he changed his appearance and was better groomed. He portrayed himself as a family man with his daughters after his first wife left him and launched an attack on him. The FN remains a highly centralised party where a lot depends on the leader. Decision making processes are controlled by the *Bureau Politique*, which is formed by nominations made by Le Pen himself to FN's Central Committee, which has never rejected any of Le Pen's nominations (46). In some cases Le Pen intervened in the internal selection processes of the party when he saw a danger to his position in form of competition from other names. Such was the case with Bruno Mégret, who saw many of his supporters being elected to the FN's central committee.

The FN is a highly centralised machine with power being held at the top by Le Pen. Le Pen made sure that no other power centres would be established in the course of the party's development. Le Pen has ruled the party with "a rod of iron, and it is this discipline, together with a widespread perception that political success depends

⁶ For further information see Marcus, J. *National Front and French Politics: the resistible rise of Jean Marie Le Pen* New York university Press, New York) 33-35

upon at least the appearance of unity, that keeps the intolerant components of the party together" (Marcus, 1995. 50). To summarise Le Pen's role in the FN, Marcus produces the following account (51):

The personal role of Le Pen in the rise of the National Front cannot be overestimated. He has been the Far Right's equivalent of de Gaulle; at one and the same time federator, saviour and Presidential hopeful. He is certainly no new comer to the French political scene, having a long, and not always glorious, political career behind him. But he and the Front's propagandists have been able to draw on this record to create an almost idealised *curriculum vitae*. In the process they have succeeded in re-packaging Le Pen, enabling him to pose as the leader of a new force in French politics. Le Pen's strategy was also skilfully adapted to the Presidential system of the Fifth Republic. Le Pen cast himself as a future occupant of the *Elysée*, though he has clearly never had any chance of winning a Presidential election. Nonetheless, this 'pseudo-Presidential' approach played to his strengths; le Pen was a highly effective political operator and he had at his disposal a highly personalised party machine. But his 'pseudo-Presidentialism' also afforded the National Front perhaps its only chance of political influence. It could not win the

Presidency, but if it did well enough at elections, it could hope to bring pressure to bear on the parties of mainstream right.

5.3 Right wing parties in the Netherlands

Generally speaking right-wing parties did not have any significant support within the population in the Netherlands. The country's history during the Second World War, being occupied by the Nazis, did not allow much sympathy to right-wing parties. Thus what we have is marginal attempts at consolidating right-wing parties on an agenda opposing immigration and intolerant of multi-culturalism.

Tracing the history of the development of right-wing parties in the Netherlands after the Second World War leads us to an array of sporadic party development attempts, with moving electorates and internal conflicts. The three main title holders for right-wing populism during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s are the *Nederlands Volksunie -NVU* (The Netherlands People's Union), the *Centrumpartij -CP* (The Centre Party), and the *Centrumdemocraten -CD* (The Centre Democrats). These three parties have a long relation on interchangeable leaders and electorates, coupled with the inability to overcome internal differences or to adopt programmes that will appeal the Dutch population and attract more votes.

Hainsworth (1992), Lucardie (2000), and Voerman and Lucardie (1992) present an intriguing account of internal rivalry, corruption, and an ever diminishing electorate with sudden surges of support. They all agree on the invalidity of these parties to the political scene in the Netherlands, as they were faced with popular refusal and

condemnation. Voerman and Laucardie (1992, 26-37) describe the transition of right wing parties from religious-based ideology, to one that is based on ethnic discrimination, passing through national-socialism and an anti-statist stance.

Thus, right-wing parties in the Netherlands were not united on a single topic, or even enjoyed a devolved mature leadership that would guide them through the difficult times they were facing. The parties themselves usually turned inwards after the initial furore of their establishment, hardening their rhetoric and taking a more racist line. Generally this resulted in the alienation of party members and supporters, leading to the development of a new right-wing party with the all-too- familiar names and faces.

The CD inherited the legacy of the right-wing parties although the 1980s and 1990s. Its party membership increased from 30 in 1985 to 2000 in 1995, and its ideology could be summed up as largely xenophobic, ethnocentric, and populist nationalistic mixed with conservative tendencies in the socio-economic and social realm (Lucardie, 2000, 119).

The right-wing supporters in the Netherlands are usually coming from an urban origin, where most support for these parties are found in large cities with high percentages of immigrants. The majority of these supporters also indicate that they feel insecure when it comes to their socio-economic position, they had little education and a low income and where also more often unemployed, which means

that they had to compete for jobs, housing, and welfare with immigrants. In addition, they are highly distrustful in the established parties, where they feel alienated from the system. (Vroeman and Lucardie, 1992, 46-51). (Lucardie, 2000, 119-121)

5.3.1 Lijst Pim Fortuyn (Pim Fortuyn List, LPF)

The LPF is a new comer to the Netherlands political scene. It was established in February 2002 in order to take part in the general elections taking place in May of the same year. The party is thus rather extremely new with many questions being made about its viability and ability to stay in the Netherlands political scene. This fact has also made it difficult to collect references and information about the party other than what is available on the party's website or the news clipping and contemporary analysis attempts by leading journalists. Nonetheless, the party has been the focus of media since it was established as it succeeded in taking over the right-wing of the Dutch political scene from established right-wing parties, and by far outperform their most remarkable achievements in a very short period of time. This is why the party is the focus of this study.

The party gained support since its establishment. Its electoral performance in the Netherlands' general elections is thought to have been improved in the wake of the assassination of its founder Pim Fortuyn on the 7th of May 2002, just nine days before the elections. On its first participation, the LPF managed to become the second

largest party in the Netherlands with 17 percent of the vote securing 26 out of the 150 seats in the parliament. In the following elections the LPF did not perform well, where it only managed to gain 5.7 percent of the vote and secure 8 seats in the parliament. Nonetheless, this result still remains remarkable given the poor performance of right-wing parties in prior elections and their failure to perform as well as the LPF did in the elections of 2002 and 2003.

The LPF is not a right-wing party in the traditional sense. The party holds strong views on immigration and absorption of immigrants into the Dutch society, yet it is not racist and the party had non-white members. The positions of the party still put it in the right of the political spectrum in that it opposes migration, calls for a stricter application of law and order in the sense that the crime waves are mainly the result of immigrants' activities, and in declaring that the party is making the truth heard and that it is speaking on behalf of the people (Ascherson, 2002).

5.3.2 LPF Leader

Pim Fortuyn was a character of his own. He had the charismatic personality to take over right-wing parties in the Netherlands and rally support behind him. A proud homosexual, Fortuyn took to the defence of what he considered as the Dutch character of the Netherlands against the invasion of immigrants and foreign cultures. Fortuyn focused his attack on Islam and how it contradicted the core principles of Dutch culture. He made his views clear in many of his writings and

televised or published interviews. He considered Islam 'backward', and was quoted as saying "Christianity and Judaism have gone through the Laundromat of humanism and enlightenment, but that is not the case with Islam. Modern society places an emphasis on individual responsibility, whereas Islam places an emphasis on collective responsibility and the family. We have a separation of state and church. The laws of the country are not subject to the Koran. We have equality of men and women in western society, whereas in Islamic culture women are inferior to men" (Hooper, 2002).

Fortuyn was able to construct the LPF after he was forced to leave the "*Leefbaar Nederland* (Liveable Netherlands)" party due to his extreme views, when in an interview in the *De Volkskrant* he said: "I think that 16 million Dutchmen are about enough". But on many issues the party did not take an outward rightist attitude. Instead its standing was mixed populist policies. Fortuyn wanted a zero Muslim immigration, a cut in the annual number of immigrants from 40,000 to 10,000; better integration of the 2 million immigrants already in the Netherlands, and financial aid to would be refugees to get them to stay in their own countries. He also called for a drastic reduction in bureaucracy, a massive boost to public sector services, clampdown on crime, slashing the disability and sickness benefits, freezing the spending on health and education, and the return of much of Netherlands' contribution to the European Union, which is proportionately the largest of any member state. But despite all of the commotion he generated, Fortuyn stunned the

Dutch political scene when he won 17 seats of Rotterdam's 45 seats council in a local election, and his party became the city's largest with 35 percent of the vote (Hooper, 2002).

The voters for the LPF are believed to have been largely impressed by Fortuyn character. Van Holsteyn and Irwin (2003, Abstract) argue that when it comes to voting for LPF, the usual arguments about voting based on religion, social class, ideology, and social-economic issues simply do not apply. They see that "the success of the LPF is accounted for by the popularity of [its Leader] Fortuyn and his appeal among those who had cynical attitudes towards government or who were dissatisfied with the performance of the incumbent government. They also show that the popularity of the LPF is related to political issues, in particular those relating to asylum seekers and the integration of foreigners in the country (Abstract).

Table 5 Summary of findings for each country

	FPÖ	FN	LPF
Party history	Continuous rise in Parliament, divisions in early stages, breakthrough in the 1980s Maintains radical policies although accommodates different views	Falling and rising in Parliament, divisions, change in electoral system allowed it to get to Parliament in 1986. Maintains radical policies.	Relatively new (Est. 2002) successful in first attempt in Parliament. Maintains radical policies against one group. Varied views on different issues
Electorate	Less educated, blue collar young (19-29 ys.) Distrustful of established parties. Alienated from the system	Less educated, blue collar young (18-29 ys.) Distrustful of established parties. Alienated from the system	Less educated, blue collar Often unemployed Distrustful of established parties. Alienated from the system
Leader	Charismatic leader Strict control of the party Was element of change in party Appealed to electorate	Charismatic leader Strict control of party Was element of change in party Posed serious challenge in Presidential elections Appealed to electorate	Charismatic leader Was element of change in Party Appealed to electorate
Differences	Relation to Nazi tradition History of party differences Corruption cases against party	Party under one leader since establishment Resulted from division in rightist movement Centrally controlled	Newly established anti-Muslim character Legacy of weak rightist parties' heritage

In chapter four we presented the four headings which contributed to the rise of right wing parties to parliaments - immigration, economic change, attitudinal patterns, and systemic factors - and how these headings are interrelated and utilised to lobby support for the parties. The basis for comparison between the three parties as presented earlier in this chapter focuses on three intrinsic factors that describe the party, the leader and the constituency. The relation between these headings and the basis for the comparison is a direct one. First, the four headings are the basic argumentation stones around which the parties have produced their programmes. The four headings are the means the parties' have used to reach their constituency and achieve required results to access national and European parliaments. The impact of the economic situation and government policies have affected the population, and beyond the hardcore of supporters for the parties in question, the party's programme has found a hearing ear within sectors that are now concerned with their livelihoods. Second, as merely being present in the parties' programmes was not enough to convince the voters, the four headings needed to be "talked" through by the charismatic leader that had the powers to convince the population. The party leader's appeal to the ordinary man on the street and the claim that he is speaking the commoners language contributed to the convincing process. The personality of the leader played an important role in presenting the situation to the general population and portraying it as dangerous. Demonstrating the impact of immigration on the economy, and showing that government policies only exacerbate the problem had the desired effect on the population. Third, as a main concern for

the constituency, these four headings put the population in a situation of fear and worrying for their livelihoods. Immigration has affected the economy; the jobs are continuously being vigorously competed for in between the unskilled population and the cheaper labour of the immigrants. Government policies and plans to remedy the economic situation come at the expense of the unskilled class who continuously see their pensions shrinking and their benefits reduced. These real worries are a direct reason why the right wing parties in question are finding support among the population.

Table 5 presents the basic findings of this chapter. Looking across the findings establishes the lines of the historical development of the party, the nature of its electorate, and the characteristics of its leader. The following chapter will focus on these parties and how they compare to each other.

6. Three parties in perspective

Considering the parties from the points of classification put forward by Ignazi (1992), we can see that all three parties are identifiable on the right of the Left-Right political scale. Ignazi proposed looking at the party's spatial position, historic-ideological position, and attitudinal-systemic position, in order to establish the party's location on the scale. Looking at the three parties in light of what was presented allows us to establish some facts that cross across the three parties in the three countries under consideration (see table 6). First, these parties had country specific programmes that were much alike. The stance on immigration, anti-statism, loath of multi-culturalism and being suspicious of the European Union are common across the three parties. For them, the plight of the nation stems mainly from immigrants and asylum seekers. These are blamed for unemployment, crime, allocation and distribution of much needed funds, and the fact that they are having their affect on the cultural character of the nation. The parties are also adamant in their attack on the government and its bureaucracy. The government is not tackling issues that concern the average citizen; it is on the contrary engaging in widespread corrupt activities and is portraying its involvement in various topics as successes and ad hoc policies that would please the citizens.

The parties see great importance in cultural preservation against being dissolved in the developing common culture of Europe or absorbing various other cultures of the incoming waves of immigrants. They are proud of their national cultures and work

fully to maintain that culture in face of what they see as the onslaught of a global culture. The European Union for them is not the place they want to see themselves in, rather they would prefer having the European Union as a mother organisation of nation states in which policies and decisions are made on the nation level or even on a regional one. Following Ignazi's criteria, the parties are clearly on the right of the political spectrum, and they share that amongst themselves and with other parties from other West European countries.

Second, although the parties have significantly different histories, they share the same constituencies in the sense that the characteristics of the voters in the three countries are the same. In the three countries the population of right-wing supporters are mainly urban, less educated, and in a socio-economic position that is not secure. The parties also had support from hardcore supporters that were economically well-off, that had high levels of education, and held right-wing views from the start. The electorate for the three parties saw the necessity of closing the borders against immigrants and asylum seekers, in addition to restrictive measures against the European Union in an attempt to preserve national identity.

Third, the three parties claim to speak in the name of the ordinary citizen whose voice is ignored and not even heard by the established parties. Making the "truth" heard is one of the parties' claims against established government parties. They claim to actually talk of the real issues that concern the citizens in a totally candid

manner, hence their label as 'populist'. They take up the cases and issues the established parties seem to veer away from, and thus garner more support and eventually affect the policies of the government. For government parties, they usually take up rightist positions to counter rightist parties' claims and thus becoming more and more centrist and centre-right on the political scale.

Fourth, the parties' position on economics and democracy was rather in unison with the accepted values of the society. None of the parties called for a clear disengagement from the democratic process, nor did they call for the establishment of a totalitarian regime. The control of the state was much desired in places where they deemed to be most effective, that is in the control of security and the provision of law and order services. The parties supported a free market economy, with less government control on the countries' economy.

Fifth, the three parties had distinctive relation with the leader of the party, who is a charismatic person and who was able to lead. The leader of the party was also able to show leadership and take things into control when the party needed it most in moments of crisis and internal strife. In the case of the LPF, the charismatic personality of the leader attracted many voters and was practically part of the party's popular appeal. The three leaders took over their parties and organised them in a way to secure most support. They also changed positions in line with realities on the ground and what they felt was more appealing to their voters. The three leaders

were also pretty much vocal in voicing their positions which, astonishingly for all three, has put them in troubles.

Sixth, the parties have now a preserved quota of each country's electorate. This quota is guaranteed by the presence of a core of supporters for the parties and a wave of elections drifters that add to the parties' strength. In subsequent elections we have seen the parties support achieving impressive results, and then in the following elections the parties support declines, but this decline is never to a very low threshold, but to the distinctive quota for each party.

Table 6 Similarities between the parties

1. **Country specific programmes that were much alike:** Similar stance on immigration, anti-statism, loath of multi-culturalism and being suspicious of the European Union are common across the three parties
2. **Similar constituencies:** mainly urban, less educated, and in a socio-economic position that is not secure. The parties also had support from hardcore supporters that were economically well-off, that had high levels of education, and held right-wing views from the start.
3. **Similar approach to electorate:** the three parties claim to speak in the name of the ordinary citizen whose voice is ignored and not even heard by the established parties.
4. **Same stand on democracy and economics:** the parties' position on economics and democracy was rather in unison with the accepted values of the society, and they did not challenge that.
5. **Similar leadership style:** The leader of the party was also able to show leadership and take things into control when the party needed it most.
6. **Reserve Quota:** the parties have now a preserved quota of each country's electorate. This quota is guaranteed by the presence of a core of supporters for the parties and a wave of elections drifters that add to the parties' strength.

The parties' differences could be found if we look deeper into the parties' programmes and ideologies. While both the FPÖ and the FN advocate for a racist agenda against all foreigners even if they were country nationals, the LPF has not taken such a position and had a black person as the second on the party's list for the 2002 elections. In addition, the parties differ on the way they should handle immigrants, the FN sees the necessity for their repatriation or total inclusion, whereas the LPF asks for financial aid to be sent overseas to stem the problem from its origins, and the FPÖ sees the necessity of taking up stricter views on immigration and the numbers allowed in the country.

The findings presented above corroborate the main four headings that explain the rise of right wing parties to parliaments. These findings show that when looking at right wing parties and their success in reaching parliament, one needs to consider a large number of factors and see how they relate to each other. For our study, the original line proposed earlier to explain the success of these parties gives a framework of analysis that allows us to look at a certain country and to understand the dynamics leading to a certain electoral result.

7. Conclusion

We have set out in this paper to look at the rise of right -wing parties in three countries, Austria, France and the Netherlands. The choice was made mainly to investigate the common factors that lead to the rise of these parties in those countries and their success in getting into the parliaments. We wanted to establish that despite the different history of the countries in question, the factors are common amongst the three parties and to a certain degree, there was some resemblance when it came to their rise to the parliament.

What we have found out was that when looking at the parties under the same light, we find that there was a high degree of common factors between them to corroborate our hypothesis. The hypothesis was that regardless of the history of each country, there have been developments in each country that gave similar results when it came to right-wing parties. Each party had its own history and different context in which it developed, but during the nineties support for these parties has been manifest in elections at different levels of society leading to their success in reaching the parliaments or providing an alternative to the established parties and system. We also found out that they appealed, to the same level, to certain people who supported these parties, whether that support was occasional or ideological.

Another factor to be considered was the parties need for a charismatic leader to take over the transformation into a modern party that is concerned in achieving results and having impact.

The main reasons behind the rise of right wing parties to parliaments have been categorised under four headings: economic change, attitudinal patterns, immigration, and systemic factors. These, as presented in chapters five and six, have a direct impact on the constituency's support for right wing parties.

We studied the history, the constituency, and leader of each party so as to identify commonalities between the three parties that would help establish their success in getting to parliaments. As a result we found out that the parties are similar in many aspects although their countries had different historical experiences.

As for the parties themselves we found that they were able to garner support in their target societies by presenting immigration with its inherent risks to the economy and welfare system as directly and negatively impacting their lives.

From the above, we reach the conclusion that the right wing parties managed to achieve their desired results mainly due to an effective leadership that was able to provide leadership for the party and to present the masses with an idol. The leadership was able to garner both the internal dynamics of the party and the appetites of the public that was yearning for someone that would talk in its language

and present solutions for the problems they are facing. Thus the parties capitalised on the “four headings” of the research in order to achieve political gains.

Nonetheless, this endeavour was a highly challenging one since it needed internal reconstruction and well laid out plans so as to guarantee the desired outcomes, something that could not have happened were it not for the leadership styles and impact of the parties’ leaders.

7.1 Prospects for Europe

The rise of these parties to parliaments and taking part in the formation of governments has signified a directional change for their countries. They influenced policies relating to the welfare of individuals in those countries and had a very big impact on their policies regarding immigration and asylum seekers.

For Europe, this endorses a closed society that would be living against values of multi-culturalism and the values of an open society that cherishes every individual for its own right. No one is claiming that these parties will re-establish totalitarian regimes, but sure they will change the face of Europe as we know it.

It is a matter of concern for Europe, since by expanding eastwards the Union will include new states that have their own rightist movements that are also influential in their communities. Europe needs to tackle this issue by countering arguments and claims put forward by right-wing parties. Statistics should be produced to show the real impact of immigrants on the labour market in Europe. The countries of the

European Union need to stand firm against white racist propaganda and celebrate the multi-culturalism and diversity each country enjoys.

The success of these parties in single countries could give support and endorsement for similar parties in other countries, where policies on country level could now become continental policies that would have global effects. It is true that these parties enjoyed success for short times only, but they took part in governments and had their say in how countries are run and how policies are drafted. The fact that shows that they lost their support in ensuing elections could be misleading, since these parties have now the support of a solid core that they did not enjoy to some extent before. Their strength is gaining momentum, if they are not faced with proper ideological arguments and data to offset their footholds, they are sure to expand rapidly and form an enviable electoral block in the future.

2004 is a year that would witness many elections across Europe. The results of this research will either be validated or annulled by these elections. Up to the addition of the final comments, this research was proven to have focused on a hot issue that is attracting much attention.

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