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The resurgence of the far-right in European politics: analysis of the French, Italian, Austrian, and Belgian cases

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THE RESURGENCE OF THE FAR-RIGHT IN
EUROPEAN POLITICS:
ANALYSIS OF THE FRENCH, ITALIAN,
AUSTRIAN, AND BELGIAN CASES

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
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in

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by
Nathan Price
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ABSTRACT

The resurgence of the far-right in European politics has been cause for alarm on a continent which so recently suffered the consequences of the rise of fascism in the early twentieth century. Political observers have looked on anxiously while far-right parties in Austria and Italy have participated in the governing coalitions of those countries. In 2002, Jean Marie Le Pen stunned the world with his advancement into the second round of the French Presidential election. Why is the radical-right so strong right now? Why do voters cast their ballots in support of far-right parties? In this thesis, I have examined these questions and offered some insight into how far-right parties rose to prominence in France, Italy, Austria, and Belgium. I hypothesize that voters who supported far-right parties in the last parliamentary elections have less trust in both domestic and supranational political institutions, follow politics less closely, are more likely to feel alienated, and are more likely to feel that immigrants take away jobs than their counterparts who supported mainstream parties. My findings reveal that these hypotheses were particularly accurate in France and Belgium, but did not correctly depict the sentiments of Italian far-right voters. This finding suggests that far-right parties are perhaps not as similar as some people believe, but are characterized by different goals and platforms that appeal to different bases cross-nationally.

I. INTRODUCTION

The movement to unite Europe politically and economically has been the dominant trend in European politics in the post-war era. What began as an effort to permanently prevent war from breaking out on the continent (European Coal and Steel Community 1951) has become an unprecedented level of political and economic cooperation which has also coincided with a cultural movement to unite Europe's disparate peoples. However, a considerable backlash has emerged to the idea of a united Europe, and many far-right parties have taken advantage of widespread apprehension regarding the immigration and loss of sovereignty that coincides with European Union membership. These far-right parties have had electoral success which culminated in their collaboration in the governments in Italy and Austria, and participation in the second-round of the presidential elections in France. In January of 2007, with the addition of Romania and Bulgaria into the European Union, far-right members of the European Parliament now have satisfied a threshold that allows their caucus named *Identity, Tradition, and Sovereignty* to be officially recognized and funded. What are the implications of the resurgent far-right for European politics? Why is the far-right so strong right now?

Extreme right movements have emerged in several European countries in the last 20 years. As immigration and the signs of greater interdependence with united Europe have increased, so too has the demand for far-right parties. In the contemporary European Union, several member states have relevant far-right parties that play a large role in their domestic politics; these countries include France, Norway, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, Bulgaria, and Romania. In addition, countries such as Sweden, Spain, the UK, Germany, and Greece have extreme right parties that are currently just fringe movements in their respective

domestic political systems.¹ The viability of far-right parties is largely attributed to an array of institutional characteristics and unique features of the domestic political landscape. However, each instance of dramatic success for a far-right party is met with considerable apprehension throughout Europe as critics of these extreme parties fear success abroad could translate to legitimacy and success at home.

¹ Norris, page 194

II. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF FAR-RIGHT PARTIES

Before one can engage in a discussion of far-right parties, it is necessary to establish exactly what a far-right party is, as many scholars indicate there is a lack of consensus about the characteristics of far-right parties. Notable examples of labels that are not synonymous with far right are New Right and Neoconservative. New Right is a label appropriate for subscribers of Reaganism and Thatcherism which emphasize pro-market economic ideas, privatization, and decreasing the role of the state in the economy. Neoconservative is a term used for interventionist foreign policy like that of the Bush Administration which opted for a preemptive invasion of Iraq in 2003.

In contrast, far-right parties are agreed by many scholars to be influenced primarily by the ideology of fascism.² Fascist ideology focuses upon an idea of creating a new revolutionary order or new society that has nothing to do with the rotten or decadent former regime.³ Fascists typically believe that these goals cannot be accomplished by one man, but rather it takes the mobilization of the masses and all of the state's energy to pursue these reforms. Typically, fascist movements are coalesced around one charismatic figure who seeks to create a cult of personality. Usually this charismatic leader evokes rhetoric such as the nation emerging from a dark period, but with the promise of brighter days ahead.⁴

Piero Ignazi offers what he believes are the key concepts of fascist ideology.⁵

- Belief in the authority of the state over the individual
- An emphasis on natural community
- Distrust for individual representation and parliamentary arrangements

² Merkl, page 46

³ Merkl, page 48 It should be noted here that Ignazi does not group all far-right parties into the family of neo-fascism. He maintains that Italy's AN fits this description, but he views France's Front Nationale, Austria's Freedom Party, and Belgium's Vlaam's Blok to be post-industrial far-right parties with issue positions not reminiscent of fascism and appeals to different demographics.

⁴ Merkl, page 49

⁵ Merkl, page 49

- Limitations on personal and collective freedoms
- Collective identification in a great national destiny
- An acceptance of the hierarchical principle for social organization.

Not all scholars agree that the contemporary far right has an ideology that is reminiscent of fascism. Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony McGann argue that the new radical right does not espouse the characteristics of traditional fascists and is supported by a different base. “The fascist rhetoric was authoritarian, communitarian, and anti-capitalist, a different blend of appeals than the new radical right.”⁶ In addition, Kitschelt and McGann point out that parties such as the Austrian FPO and the French FN deny any link to fascism. Of course, these parties have incentives to do this, as many countries ban fascist parties that subscribe to the beliefs of Hitler and Mussolini. Furthermore, far-right parties typically incorporate terms such as “democratic” and “progressive” into their names, when in reality they support neither of these things.⁷

James Gregor also believes that the term neo-fascism is commonly used recklessly by social scientists to classify parties or movements on the right. “By the mid-1990’s, the entry criteria for admission into the class of neo-fascists had become increasingly slack. Any opposition to free immigration from anywhere and under any circumstances afforded immediate entry-as a ‘racist’ into the class of neo-fascists.”⁸ Gregor believes that social scientists and politicians are too quick to pronounce certain groups or individuals to be neo-fascists and that doing this has dramatic implications for international relations when that party gets into the government.

Matt Golder splits far-right parties into two classifications: neo-fascist parties and populist parties. Golder classifies parties such as the French National Front and Freedom Party of Austria as populist because of their emphasis on materialist issues such as the connection of

⁶ Kitschelt, page 34

⁷ Norris, page 44

⁸ Gregor, page 26

immigration and unemployment. He uses the 1984 slogan of Jean-Marie Le Pen to emphasize this point; “Two million immigrants is the cause of two million Frenchmen out of work.”⁹ Golder argues that in contrast, neo-fascist parties are more ideational in nature and are characterized by an ideology that closely resembles traditional fascism across the board. Golder maintains that it is important to make this distinction because it is the populist parties that have enjoyed recent notable electoral successes while the neo-fascist parties have declined or have had stable support for the last 30 years.¹⁰

Herbert Kitschelt (1997) further distinguishes between parties generally considered to be on the far-right. Kitschelt argues extreme right parties can be classified into four different groups: fascist parties, welfare chauvinist parties, right-authoritarian parties, and populist anti-state parties. Kitschelt’s definition of fascist parties is generally the same as the other scholars’ I have discussed. Kitschelt’s right-authoritarian group is a blend of authoritarianism with pro-market appeals, notably different than the fascist parties of the early to mid-twentieth century.¹¹ Kitschelt’s third class of welfare chauvinism typically is characterized by attempts to blame economic problems on foreigners and immigrants. In practice, this brand of far-right politics produces leaders who “emphasize racist or authoritarian slogans but studiously stay away from admiration of liberal market capitalism.”¹² The final party family Kitschelt discusses is the populist anti-state parties that rail against the elite political class and big government. Kitschelt argues that these parties are in reality libertarian in nature, and should not be grouped in with radical- right parties.

⁹ Golder, page 438

¹⁰ Golder, page 443 *It is important to note that Golder classifies the MSI as a neo-fascist party, but fails to note its successor Alleanza Nazionale (AN) made dramatic electoral gains in Italian politics throughout the 1990’s (See Appendix A)

¹¹ Kitschelt, page 20

¹² Kitschelt, page 22

It is generally agreed upon that far-right parties are quite disparate in policy preferences and goals, and work together rather inchoately in the context of European politics. As Pippa Norris states, “(even) parties seen as exemplifying the radical right, such as Lega Nord, the Freiheitliche Partei Osterreichs (Freedom Party of Austria or FPO), and the Dansk Folkeparti, can also be regarded as highly diverse in their ideological appeals, organizational structures, and leadership rhetoric.”¹³ Nevertheless, certain commonalities and features can be observed cross-nationally that justify the classification of some parties into a family of parties considered to be on the far-right.

“Given a particular issue that is important to them, for example immigration or the rights of asylum, a radical- right position is likely to be more hostile or punitive than those advanced by other parties, movements, or persons.”¹⁴ Peter Merkl elaborates upon this statement by adding that radical- right parties are prone to threaten extreme or cruel measures aimed at immigrants or foreign-born nationals. In addition, Leonard Weinberg indicates that far-right parties typically adopt a rhetoric that is hostile towards what they refer to as people who seek complicated solutions to simple problems. Merkl adds that far-right parties and individuals reject the notion of a marketplace where valid ideas are debated, instead opting to believe that there is one truth, that which they believe.¹⁵

Far-right parties are different than traditional conservative parties in both their aims and their practices. Far-right parties in some countries are known for using subversion tactics or dirty tricks to achieve their goals.¹⁶ In addition, far-right movements are typically more prone to resort to violence and other extreme manifestations of political views. Of course, violent

¹³ Norris, page 43

¹⁴ Merkl, page 18

¹⁵ Merkl, page 20

¹⁶ Merkl, page 20

behavior is not limited to just radical- right parties, and there are instances where the use of excessive force has been authorized by mainstream parties, including brutal police force which was approved and covered up by French Interior minister Charles Pasqua from the conservative Gaullist (RPR) Party in France.¹⁷

Despite the difficulties in classifying parties as radical right and pinpointing exactly what the ideological basis is for their collective movement, recent notable endeavors have sought to build an academic consensus as to which parties fit into this extreme- right family. In 2000, Marcel Lubbers sent a questionnaire to 290 political scientists in all fifteen of the EU member states at the time as well as Norway and Switzerland. (150 of the questionnaires were successfully completed or 52%) The political scientists were asked to place European parties on an ideological scale of 0-10 with furthest left being “0” and furthest right being “10”. In addition, they were asked to place parties on an immigration scale (0 being not very restrictive to 10 very restrictive) and the parties’ past positions on immigration in 1990. There was a high degree of inter-coder reliability, and the results were compared with a similar 1995 effort by Hubert and Inglehart to alleviate external validity concerns. The scores of the two scales were highly correlated ($R=.99$).¹⁸

When placed on a scatter gram with ideological placement on the vertical axis with immigration attitudes on the horizontal axis, far-right parties were consistently located in the top-right region. In contrast, European Green and Communist Parties typically fell into the lower-left region. The results indicated a remarkable level of similarity between the far-right parties in all of these countries except for Norway.¹⁹

¹⁷ Merkl, page 19

¹⁸ Norris, page 47

¹⁹ Norris, page 47

III. EUROPE'S EXTREME RIGHT PARTIES AND THEIR ELECTORAL FORTUNES

My study focuses on four similar countries that have experienced a resurgence of far-right politics recently. France, Italy, Austria, and Belgium are all member states of the European Union, and all have per capita gross domestic products that group them with the richest countries in the world. Thus, as Ronald Inglehart would argue, each country has a substantial voting population that is influenced by post-material concerns when deciding which party to support in elections. Simply stated, this means that these voters have their material needs met, and thus devote considerable attention to matters such as the environment or matters of equality.

Alexandra Cole (2005) and Paul Taggart (1996) have argued that while the left initially benefited from this post-materialist trend most notably in regard to the advent of the Green movement, the extreme right perhaps is the beneficiary of a backlash against this movement. While Greens view their organization as one that supersedes state boundaries and many of their supporters view themselves as a citizen of Europe, far-right parties and their supporters typically evoke a spirit of nationalism. Thus, young far-right voters do not view themselves to be part of the “E-generation” (a generational movement which identifies its members as citizens of Europe, not nation-states) like many of their contemporaries, but rather view themselves to be French, Italian, etc.

Each of these countries also faced a communist threat in the post-war era, especially in Italy where the Communists could draw nearly 40% of the vote. For all of these countries, perhaps with the exception of Belgium, the end of the Cold War began a period of political change in the country which coincided with a period of de-alignment from the traditional political parties. Corruption scandals in Austria and Italy may have acted as catalysts to accelerate this de-alignment trend, and even strengthen far-right party support due to the fact that

these parties were not implicated in the scandals. In France, it was not widespread corruption, but perhaps the dramatic failure and subsequent reversal of the Socialists' economic policy under President Francois Mitterrand that sparked a de-alignment trend in French politics.

France

France's Front National (FN) has generally been one of Europe's leading far-right parties since its creation in 1972. Front National was created by the leaders of Ordre nouveau, a nationalist movement that was created in 1969 to overcome the fragmentation of France's political right. The FN has based its policies primarily around the issues of immigration, security, and unemployment.²⁰ Led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, Front National sought to appeal to Catholics, authoritarians, conservatives, imperialists, and racists.²¹

Le Pen had been the campaign manager of far-right presidential candidate Tixier-Vignancourt in 1965. A veteran of the Algerian war, Le Pen is a charismatic figure with a proven ability to appeal to those who are frustrated with the French government. Le Pen rejects the idea of human equality, and blames immigrants and leftists for France's deteriorating cultural, political, and economic clout.²² Le Pen and Front National have attempted to appeal to the nationalist tradition of the French Revolution and thousands of years of history.

The FN was politically marginal for the first decade of its existence, but performed well in the 1983 and 1984 local and European elections. It is important to note that the 1983 elections took place in an atmosphere of widespread apprehension regarding the French economy which was suffering extremely high rates of inflation as a result of the 1981-83 Keynesian spending of the Socialist government led by President Francois Mitterrand. In response to the deleterious effects of this fiscal policy, the French Socialists had to undertake a dramatic reversal of the

²⁰ Hainsworth, page 24

²¹ Merkl, page 165

²² Merkl, page 166

nationalization and government spending that had characterized their first two years in power. The fallout from this important event has been a notable de-alignment trend in French politics as the convergence in fiscal policies advocated by center-right and center-left has softened the cleavages that had characterized French politics in the post-war era.

Since the early 1980's, the National Front has polled between 10-15 percent of the vote in presidential, parliamentary, regional, and European elections.²³ The FN has survived several high-profile defections in the late 1980's and early 1990's which are largely attributed to Le Pen's controversial remarks regarding Jews, extreme stances, and views on the Gulf War.²⁴ Nevertheless, the party has garnered a consistently strong vote share and Le Pen's status of head of the party is unquestioned.

The pinnacle of Front National's success to date was the second-round participation of Jean Marie Le Pen in the 2002 presidential elections. Crippled by the vote splitting of the left, Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin shockingly failed to advance to the second round of the election with incumbent President Jacques Chirac. Thus French voters in 2002 were subsequently faced with a decision between the center-right and far-right, and international observers were quick to condemn the election and Le Pen's participation. Ultimately, Jacques Chirac was re-elected with roughly 82% of the vote.²⁵

Jean Marie Le Pen is running for the French presidency again this year, and is currently polling around 15% of the vote again. Political observers are generally doubtful that he will advance to the second round again, but it is important to note that Le Pen, like most politicians

²³ Hainsworth, page 18

²⁴ Hainsworth, page 29

²⁵ 2002 French Presidential election results

on the far right, typically perform better in elections than polls reflect on account that some voters are ashamed to admit they support him.²⁶

Italy

The Italian far-right has also risen to prominence recently and boasts the first far-right party to participate in the government of a Western European democracy since 1945.²⁷ The contemporary Italian far-right dates back all the way to 1946, just two years after fascist dictator Benito Mussolini was overthrown. However, the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) garnered paltry electoral success for the first 45 years of its existence.

The Italian electoral system in the Cold War era was dominated by three parties: the Christian Democrats (DC), the Socialists (PSI), and the Communists (PCI). Backed by the United States politically and financially, the Christian Democrats participated in every government from 1946-1994. The Italian Communists typically received between 25-40 percent of the vote (mostly from Central Italy) but were always excluded from the governing coalition. Given the relatively large threat from the Communist Party, Italian voters typically backed the Christian Democrats or Socialists solely to keep the Communists out of power.

In the 1980's, Italy experienced a rapid period of economic growth and prosperity that later would be dubbed "the Italian Miracle". The period of economic growth even impacted the southern region of Italy typically referred to as the Mezzogiorno, which has long lagged behind the rest of the country in terms of modernization and economic infrastructure. As a result of this economic growth, Italian voters may have undergone a period of de-alignment from the major three parties that had dominated Italian politics throughout the post-war era.²⁸ The end of the Cold War brought on by the breakup of the Soviet Union further accelerated the de-alignment

²⁶ Norris, page 13

²⁷ Norris, page 64

²⁸ Hainsworth, page 64

trend and Italian politics underwent a period of rapid transformation. The PCI abandoned Marxism and reinvented itself as the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS). However, the most important catalyst for the shakeup of the Italian political system was the series of political scandals that came to light in the mid 1990s’.

In 1982, Banco Ambrosiano collapsed spectacularly and suddenly largely in part to its chairman Alberto Calvi who was involved in an illegal masonic lodge called Propaganda Due (P2). Banco Abrosiano was established in 1896 by Giuseppe Tovini to be a Catholic-affiliated bank that would serve moral purposes such as acquiescing charitable efforts. The Vatican indeed has a well-documented collaboration with Banco Ambrosiano (which was often referred to as “Priests’ Bank”) that lasted for decades, even though the former’s financial affairs are routinely kept highly discrete.²⁹ In the 1960’s and 1970’s, Banco Ambrosiano began to expand its scope and it opened a holding company in Luxembourg (known for its tolerance of discrete banking practices) in 1964. In addition, the Banco Ambrosiano, under the leadership of Calvi, created a number of offshore companies in the Bahamas and South America. Banco Ambrosiano was believed to be integral in funding the Contras in Nicaragua and Solidarity in Poland (which was largely believed to be funded primarily by the Vatican Bank).

Aforementioned, Calvi was involved in the illegal masonic lodge Propaganda Due (P2). P2, which was composed of journalists, parliamentarians, industrialists, and military leaders, was such a prominent player in Italian politics since the 1960’s, that it was often regarded as a state within a state. P2 was involved in every aspect of Italian politics until the 1982 collapse of Banco Ambrosiano. In fact, many people believe that P2 was responsible for the death of Pope John Paul I, who mysteriously died just 33 days into his Papal term after he had expressed interest in reforming the Vatican’s finances. According to CIA agent Richard Brenneke, P2 was

²⁹ Lewin, page 1

funded by the United States largely due to the prominent notion that P2 would stage a coup in event of the Communist Party's takeover of the government.

After the spectacular collapse of Banco Ambrosiano, an investigation by magistrates revealed that hundreds of politicians had been diverting state funds to their own accounts for personal and political use. In 1992, Socialist politician Mario Chiesa was caught red-handed taking a bribe. Subsequently, Judge Antonio Di Pietro ordered the arrest of Chiesa, and the ensuing trial brought to light many other instances of corruption. The magnitude and the depth of the corruption led many to believe that the problems were systemic in nature, and the Italian political system was mocked by millions of Italians who dubbed it Tangentopoli (Bribeville). As a result of the ensuing Mani pulite (clean hands) campaign, the Christian Democrats' electoral fortunes were dramatically hampered, and the party suffered substantial losses in the 1992 elections and ultimately was ousted from the government in the 1994 elections.³⁰

Excluded from the government since its creation in 1946, MSI was untouched by the scandal and its surrounding upheaval. The proportional nature of the Italian electoral system ensured that the MSI members would always account for roughly 5% of the Italian Parliament. However the MSI (running under the name Alleanza Nazionale) dramatically improved its electoral fortunes in the 1994 elections, when it was rewarded by an Italian electorate which had become distrustful of the predominant political parties with 13.5% of the vote, which ultimately became enough for inclusion in the government led by Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia. This was the first instance of a far-right party being included in the government of any Western European country.³¹

³⁰ Hainsworth, page 64

³¹ Hainsworth, page 65

Many scholars believe that the AN's success in the early 1990's was in part due to Silvio Berlusconi who legitimized some of the AN's concerns. The main goal of Italian political parties in the early 1990's was to attract voters from the center-left Socialists and center-right Christian Democrats who were leaving their parties rapidly in response to the corruption revealed by the Mani Pulite campaign. Berlusconi's Forza Italia (FI) was in many respects an effort to prevent these centrist voters from joining ranks with the far-left Communists. Forza Italia evoked national sentiment and pride (its English translation is "Go Italy") in a similar manner to Berlusconi's soccer franchise AC Milan. In founding Forza Italia, Berlusconi hoped to create the first ever Italian party on the right that was sympathetic to business and bourgeois interests.

Berlusconi and AN leader Gianfranco Fini agreed to run on a common platform in the 1994 elections called the Pole of Good Government.³² The Pole of Good Government produced a common slate of FI and AN candidates in southern and central Italy. In addition, Berlusconi struck a similar deal in northern Italy with Umberto Bossi, the head of the separatist Northern League.³³ Alleanza Nazionale is an interesting far-right party in the sense that it is relatively sympathetic to Italians who rely on the state for financial assistance. In the 1994 election, Fini routinely advocated big government and commitment to Italy's relatively poor Mezzogiorno. In contrast, Forza Italia advocated Reagan/Thatcher economics which included tax cuts, privatization, and a reduction of the state's role.³⁴ The AN is a far-right party for its emphasis on Italian nationalism and platform against immigration and multiculturalism.³⁵ Whatever the

³² Hainsworth, page 73

³³ Hainsworth, page 73

³⁴ Hainsworth, page 74

³⁵ Norris, page 64

differences are between Forza Italian and Alleanza Nazionale, their Pole of Good Government was united in the notion that the left was unsuitable to govern Italy.

The AN inherited roughly 20% of the vote share of the PSI and DC, the bulk of which joined Forza Italia. The majority of the AN's new-found support came from new voters. In the 1994 elections, Alleanza Nazionale (AN) performed very well amongst young voters who are far removed from Italy's fascist past. Even in Northern Italy, support for AN was quite impressive. However, the young base of the AN was not able to help to help the party in the Senate elections (voters must be at least 25 to vote for Senators) and the AN performed considerably worse in those contests. Nevertheless, the 1994 elections were a dramatic success for the AN, which had tripled its vote share in central and southern Italy (going from 6.9% and 7.2% to 19.4% and 21.8% respectively). In addition, the AN doubled its vote share in Northern Italy and Tuscany and emerged as the largest party (21.8%) in Lazio the area which includes Rome.³⁶

The AN's inclusion in the government immediately became a controversial subject in Italian and European politics. While Berlusconi reassured Europe that all the members of his coalition were committed to democracy, 200 NAZI -saluting neo-fascist skinheads took to the streets in Vicenza to celebrate the AN's inclusion into the government. In addition, Fini made comments praising fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, further irritating critics of his inclusion in the Italian government. Even more disturbing, the soon to be head of foreign affairs, Mirko Tremaglia, demanded that Italy disown the Treaty of Osimo which defined Italy's borders with Yugoslavia.

The other far-right party that would ultimately participate in the government led by Silvio Berlusconi was the Northern League (LN). Led by fiery Umberto Bossi, the Northern League is a collection of separatist movements in Northern Italy. The industrial northern region of Italy

³⁶ Hainsworth, page 74

has experienced rapid economic growth throughout the post-war era, and sympathizers of northern secession believe that the poorer, less-developed south is an archaic burden. Bossi and many of his supporters hope that northern Italy will someday become a sovereign state called Padania.

Like the AN, the Northern League is somewhat of an oddity amongst far-right parties. According to the Lubbers expert scale, the LN is located at 7.55 on the 10-point ideological scale (1 being Communist, 10 being Nationalist) which is less extreme than Alleanza Nazionale and many other prominent far-right parties. However, the LN's placement of 9 on a 10-pt immigrant scale places them well within the far-right context.³⁷

Unlike his AN counterpart Gianfranco Fini, Umberto Bossi is viewed to be crude and unrefined. His politics are often compared to Austrian far-right leader Jorg Haider, who is also very unpopular throughout Europe. Bossi has embarrassed himself several times including instances where he claimed that the party "had a boner" and his instruction to a critic who waved an Italian flag to protest his demonstration that she should hang that flag in a toilet. Fini and Berlusconi worked together seamlessly in the 1994 election and subsequently Fini maintained his support for Berlusconi's government. In contrast, Bossi proved difficult to work with throughout much of the 1994 campaign, and had even discredited his AN coalition partners. Scholars such as Tom Gallagher believe the only reason Bossi's LN begrudgingly cooperated with Berlusconi's Forza Italia was to avoid marginalization in a time period of rapid change and realignment.

The Northern League immediately benefited from Italy's structural adjustments following the collapse of the First Republic in 1994. Hoping to stabilize domestic politics, the Italians scrapped their proportional system for awarding seats in the Parliament in lieu of a system in which 75% of the seats were awarded in first-passed-the-post elections in single-

³⁷ Norris, page 65

member districts. Prior research of political scientists such as Giovanni Sartori, Matthew Soberg Shugart, and John Carey indicates that parties whose support is densely concentrated into a particular region can benefit from single-member district elections because they are virtually guaranteed to win seats in the districts in that region. Indeed the Northern League did perform very well in Northern Italy in the 1994 elections and was able to win enough seats to participate in the government, despite the fact that the party did not even run candidates in most of Italy's districts.

In December 1994, just five months after the coalition government under Berlusconi was sworn in, the LN left the coalition and turned over power to the center-left led by Romano Prodi. However, the Freedom Pole maintained solidarity while mitigated to the back benches, and polls in 1995 revealed Fini to be Italy's most popular politician.³⁸ The center-left Prodi government lasted until 1996, becoming the second longest lasting Italian government in the post-war era. In the 1996 elections, the AN improved its showing (from 13.5% in 1994 to 15.7%) and their success ensured the return to power of the Freedom Pole coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi.

The AN has seemingly established itself as a major party in Italian politics, even as the LN's viability has diminished. While offering some policies that are generally deemed to be acceptable, the AN is still considered by many to be an unacceptable governing party. Italy has not been punished by the EU due to the AN's participation in the government, but officials from Germany, Spain, Greece, and Portugal were all concerned that the AN's inclusion in Berlusconi's government could legitimize far-right parties in their respective countries. In addition, Danish and Belgian ministers in the past have refused to shake hands with their counterparts in the AN.

³⁸ Hainsworth, page 80

Austria

The success of Austria's far-right party, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPO), has created panic in Austria and throughout Europe about the commitment to democracy in that country. Unlike countries such as France, Austria had not developed a liberal democratic political culture prior to the end of World War II in 1945. In fact, the Austrians were quite skeptical of Western European powers and other foreigners, and believed that Austria must protect its Germanic heritage from inferior foreign people. However, in the aftermath of World War II, the Austrians quickly recognized that they needed to cooperate with Western powers to stave off the threat of Communism from Moscow. Included in the Marshall Plan, Austria begrudgingly accepted its fate as being somewhat dependent upon the Western democracies.

Nevertheless, the threat of 536,000 Austrians who were members of the NAZI party was immediately felt by the fledgling democratic regime. The Austrians were faced with a dilemma of having to both appear eager to rapidly democratize while not permanently alienating this large protest vote from the political establishment. Created in 1955 to integrate these former NAZIS into mainstream politics, the FPO remained politically marginal at roughly 5% of the vote until the 1980's.³⁹ In addition, the FPO adopted more moderate policy positions and ejected extremist elements. This transformation paid off in 1983 when the FPO joined the governing coalition led by the Austrian Socialists.⁴⁰

Despite an initially tough political landscape, the Austrians were remarkably successful at cultivating democratic institutions and managing a growing economy. "Elite co-operation could be held to have changed Austria from a violently divided society to a model consociational

³⁹ Hainsworth, page 33

⁴⁰ Norris, 62

state.”⁴¹ Indeed, the Austrians had developed a welfare state modeled after the most generous countries in Scandinavia, which Duncan Morrow credits for achieving social peace in Austria. This coincided with a prominent period of consumerism and a trend of secularization in Austrian politics.⁴²

In the 1970’s there were signs of a de-alignment trend in Austrian politics. The Roman Catholic Church and the Austrian Socialists mended ties, after a generation of feud following World War II. In addition, the media environment began to rapidly change, and Austria’s party-dominated press declined in its hegemony. In 1978, the entire Austrian political establishment was defeated shockingly in a referendum on nuclear energy, the first sign of the Austrian electorate’s rebellion.⁴³

In the 1980’s many of Europe’s economies, including Austria’s, entered a period of recession. Unemployment increased (but was still lower than Austria’s European counterparts) and the economic landscape proved favorable to flexible labor markets and larger farms. Exacerbating the economic difficulties, the governing Austrian Socialists suffered political setbacks brought on by a series of scandals in 1983. Austrians across the ideological spectrum were unhappy with their leading political parties in the 1980’s. The Austrian Socialists faced a revolt from disenchanted student groups and ecologists who were sympathetic to the left. The Austrian Christian Democratic center-right encountered anger from a fractionalized conservative electorate including the relatively rich and educated new right, and the less skilled workers who were vulnerable to the tumultuous economic situation.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Lijphart (1975)

⁴² Hainsworth, page 45

⁴³ Hainsworth, page 45

⁴⁴ Hainsworth, page 46

In 1986, political upheaval ensued after revelations that Christian Democratic Presidential candidate and former Secretary-General of the United Nations Kurt Waldheim had lied about his war record. The matter was investigated by the World Jewish Congress in New York, and immediately a taboo in Austrian politics emerged to the surface. Austria's war record became a prominent topic of discussion, and the Austrian Christian Democrats debated fiercely with the World Jewish Congress. The rhetoric of the election was such that a vote for Waldheim was a vote for Austria and the press was saturated with anti-Semitic sentiment.

In this political climate, Jorg Haider saw his opportunity to enter the forefront of Austrian politics. In an intra-party coup staged at the party congress in Innsbruck, Haider seized power of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPO) who at the time had been aligned with the Socialists. Amidst overt displays of neo-Nazi celebration that shocked the mainstream political establishment, the Austrian Socialists began to construct the policy of *Ausgrenzung* meaning exclusion or putting beyond the pale.⁴⁵

Haider adopted an unbridled political campaign style very similar to the Northern League's Umberto Bossi. Having absolutely no responsibility in governing Austria, the FPO was free to rail against the establishment, and their campaign themes included corruption, too much foreign influence, the alleged arrogance of the EU, and the romantic values of the "little man".⁴⁶ Their vote-maximizing strategy was primarily aimed at people who were losers in the modernization Austria had undergone since the Second World War. In addition, Haider sought to appeal to segments in the other parties that were frustrated with the general nature of partisan

⁴⁵ Hainsworth, page 47

⁴⁶ Merkl, page 97

politics. In the national elections of 1986, the FPO doubled its vote share to 9.6%, despite the defection of the entire liberal wing of the party.⁴⁷

The dramatic split between the FPO and Socialists initially benefited both parties, and their rhetoric became increasingly hostile to mobilize their respective bases. Haider however was not content to be mitigated to a fiery opposition, and embarked upon measures to increase his party's notability in Austrian politics. His FPO party lacked the organizational structure of Austria's other prominent parties, but that allowed Haider significant freedom to politically maneuver how he wanted to. "Analysis of the FPO electorate in 1986 established that Haider's personality was the greatest single factor in the party's appeal. Voters apparently identified Austria's FPO as a breath of fresh air in Austria's frozen political landscape."⁴⁸

Haider's FPO was able to replace the liberals who left the party in droves with Austria's new rich and the disillusioned. To accentuate his support amongst the latter, Haider would articulate any sort of popular resentment Austrians had towards their government. The initial increase in support for the FPO came at the expense of Austria's Christian Democrats. The subsequent elections continued this trend and the FPO reached 15% in 1990 and had a vote share equal to that of the Christian Democrats in 1994.⁴⁹ In addition, the FPO had dramatic successes in the 1988 and 1989 provincial elections, and most surprisingly performed very well in provinces which had long been dominated by the Socialists such as Carinthia. In the 1989 provincial elections, the FPO emerged as the second-largest party in that province and with that showing put the Austrian policy of excluding the FPO into crisis. Anti-socialists and right-wing Catholics who supported the Christian Democrats (who placed third in the Carinthian 1989 elections) argued that to further exclude Haider's FPO only created more opportunities for him to

⁴⁷ Hainsworth, page 47

⁴⁸ Hainsworth, page 48

⁴⁹ Hainsworth, page 50

exploit the government's failures. Despite the fact that the Christian Democrat's national policy was to exclude the FPO, the local Christian Democrats entered into a coalition with the FPO, making Haider the governor of Carinthia.⁵⁰

Haider proved to be controversial from the onset of his inclusion into political office. He attended services for German veterans and lavished praise upon Carinthians who had resisted Slovene encroachments in 1920. However it was his remark made in a heated economic argument that ultimately broke the Carinthian deal with the Christian Democrats. "In the Third Reich they had a proper employment policy, which your government in Vienna can't even manage."⁵¹

Haider quickly was saved from his own political misfire. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall had coincided with a spike in Eastern European immigration into Austria. In the early 1990's, Haider began to adopt rhetoric that was particularly hostile to this wave of immigrants. With slogans such as "Vienna for the Viennese", Haider and his radical FPO were now appealing to working-class Socialists who feared having to compete with these immigrants for jobs. In the 1991 elections, the FPO garnered 22.5% of the vote in Vienna, and threatened the Socialists who had dominated that city since 1945.⁵²

Haider's success was accompanied by a disturbing movement amongst the Austrian people. In the early 1990's there were instances of vandalism to the graves of Jewish people and Viennese police had raided the headquarters of a far-right splinter group to find powerful explosive weapons. Haider's rhetoric became increasingly emboldened as well, and he even questioned the legitimacy of Austria's Second Republic, a position that even Jean Marie Le Pen does not advocate in France. In addition, Haider argued that Austria was not truly a free country,

⁵⁰ Hainsworth, page 50

⁵¹ Hainsworth, page 51

⁵² Hainsworth, page 51

but rather a state that was dominated by a group of parties that were suitable to the victorious Allies. Haider advocated a Third Republic that abolished compulsory membership in Austria's political institutions and ended Austria's permanent neutrality.⁵³

By 1994, Haider's FPO had such a large block in the Austrian Parliament that it was impossible for the Socialists and Christian Democrats to pass constitutional amendments without them.⁵⁴ The FPO continued to rail against the European Union, and had built a large and diverse vote base. The FPO in the mid 1990's did best amongst unskilled workers (its vote share of unskilled labor was roughly equal to that of the Socialists) and new rich. However, the FPO was shunned by intellectuals and the university-educated middle class.

Haider's political successes culminated in the FPO's participation in the Austrian government with the right-wing People's Party in 2000. This was met with widespread condemnation in Austria and the European Union. In 2000, the other 14 EU member states ceased normal relations with Austria, but quickly reversed that decision a few months later when cooler heads prevailed. Haider was ultimately forced to resign in 2002, and has since split from the FPO and formed another party which so far has garnered little success.⁵⁵

Belgium

Belgium also has significant far-right parties, but their success has been rather limited compared to France, Italy, or Austria's radical right movements. The French-speaking region of Belgium has a sister party of France's National Front. Although the Belgian FN models their slogans and campaigns after those of Le Pen, the party's peak success to date is 2.9% of vote in the 1994 Belgian elections to the European Parliament.⁵⁶

⁵³ Hainsworth, page 55

⁵⁴ Hainsworth, page 55

⁵⁵ Norris, page 62

⁵⁶ Norris, page 62

The notable radical- right party in Belgium is solely an Antwerp (located in Flanders) phenomenon. The Vlaams Blok (VB) is a xenophobic party that was created in 1978 in a split from the moderate People's Union. Vlaams Blok initially was a conglomeration of Flemish nationalists who were devoted to the idea of Flemish succession from Belgium's French-speaking half. However, the initial success of the party seemed to have little to do with this cause, and could largely be attributed to Vlaams Blok's radical anti-immigration stances.⁵⁷

In 1988, Filip Dewinter, a member of the Belgian Parliament, became the leader of the VB faction in Antwerp. He reorganized the party into what Marc Swyngedouw calls a Stalinist structure in which small, active groups in different neighborhoods became different specialized branches of the party structure. By 1989, he had shifted VB's income sources from dues-paying party members to state public financing.⁵⁸

Dewinter adopted a flourish of rhetoric that was fiercely anti-immigrant in nature. He argued that immigrants received special treatment from the government and that the mainstream parties in Belgium did nothing to combat this. Given the party structure, supporters of the VB were present whenever significant events concerning immigrants were occurring including openings of mosques and Muslim prayer houses. Dewinter blamed problems such as crime and decline of urban areas in Belgium on these immigrant groups and argued that they could not be addressed until these people were deported. Vlaams Bloc essentially believes that people are not equal, and that a hierarchy of races characterizes society. According to their hierarchy, the Flemish are at the top of this vertically- integrated-vision of society with Dutch and Afrikaners behind, followed by assimilated French-speaking Belgians, and in last non-European immigrants

⁵⁷ Hainsworth, page 134

⁵⁸ Hainsworth, page 135

who don't speak Flemish. Analysis of the 1985 and 1987 elections revealed that Vlaams Blok did best amongst underprivileged, urban areas in Belgium's Flanders region.⁵⁹

However, in the 1988 municipal elections, Vlaams Blok had noticeably extended its reach into prosperous sections of Antwerp which traditionally supported Belgium's Liberal Party. This was largely attributed to an increase in urban crime, which began to be associated with immigrants. In addition, the media began to run stories about the disheartened Antwerp police force, many of whom were believed to be sympathetic to VB or other extreme right movements.⁶⁰

By the 1991 national elections, VB's proportion of the vote had risen to over 10% in Flanders. However, the pinnacle of success for Vlaams Blok came in the 1994 municipal elections in Antwerp where the VB drew support from all other parties to an astounding 28.5% of the vote and 18 of the 55 seats on Antwerp's city council. In addition to drawing voters from virtually every other party in Belgium, Vlaams Blok received roughly equal support from men and women in the 1994 elections. However, the VB's base was overwhelmingly composed of individuals representing the lowest level of educational attainment in Belgian society.⁶¹

Subsequent to this dramatic local success, Vlaams Blok supporters began to widen their scope from a one-issue party focused on immigration. VB party activists railed against legalized abortion and integration with Europe, and voiced their positions on a number of other issues as well as their vision for society. However, the party had to maneuver carefully in order to comply with a 1981 Belgian law that outlawed xenophobia and racism in Belgian politics. As the party experienced electoral success, VB partisans became increasingly emboldened to speak their minds on controversial issues. In 2002, then Vice President of the VB Roeland Raes gave an

⁵⁹ Hainsworth, page 137

⁶⁰ Hainsworth, page 134

⁶¹ Hainsworth, pages 138+139

interview on Dutch television in which he cast doubt on the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust and the authenticity of Anne Frank's Diary.⁶² In 2004, the Belgian Supreme Court ruled that Vlaams Blok behaved in a matter inconsistent with the 1981 law, and ordered the party to renounce its racism and pay a fine of 40,000 Euros. The leaders of Vlaams Blok decided to renovate the party, and in 2004 disbanded Vlaams Blok and started Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest).⁶³

The revival of far-right parties is by no means confined to the four cases I have discussed. A recent wave of Muslim immigration to the Netherlands has prompted a movement within Dutch society to protect Dutch culture from this influx of foreign customs. The presence of Muslims in the Netherlands is so profound that one Dutch student I spoke with while in Amsterdam expressed to me his argument that the Netherlands is practically a Muslim country due to the combination of secularization amongst the native Dutch and the influx of actively-practicing Muslims. While this student in particular had no qualms about this, many other Dutch confront this issue with a considerable amount of apprehension. In the 1970's the Dutch People's Union (NVU) expressed these concerns and presented a platform that was very hostile to immigrants (including placing asylum seekers into labor camps).⁶⁴ However, this party was far too radical for the Netherlands, and quickly faded into obscurity. Recently, the Center Party (CP) and the Center Democrats (CD) have enjoyed some success in injecting far-right viewpoints into the political discourse in the Netherlands, but have not enjoyed the successes of some other far-right Western European parties.

The Scandinavian countries, which have extremely high tax rates and high GDP per capita, also have a significant far-right presence. Denmark's Danish Progress Party stunned

⁶² Wikipedia

⁶³ Wikipedia

⁶⁴ Hainsworth, page 151

political observers with an impressive 15.9% of the vote in the 1973 Danish elections.⁶⁵

Norway's Fremskrittpartiet received between 3.7-13% of the votes in that country throughout the 1990's and had a considerable amount of influence on the mainstream parties primarily on immigration matters due to a blackmail influence.⁶⁶ Even Sweden's far-right New Democracy party has broken 6% of the vote and participated in the parliament before losing all their seats in the 1994 election. Far-right parties in Scandinavia primarily focus their attention on reducing the tax rate and minimizing the state's influence in the economy.⁶⁷

Studies that are characterized by focus upon differences in far-right parties will likely include discussion of Switzerland's extreme right led by the Swiss People's Party (SVP). Led by the charismatic and outspoken Christoph Blocher, the SVP enjoyed a considerable amount of success by capitalizing on anti-immigration and anti-EU sentiments in Swiss society. The SVP, like the Scandinavian far-right, survives despite operating in a country with a stable democratic tradition and affluent electorate.

The far-right's success disturbingly is making its way into former-Communist states in Eastern and Central Europe. In 2007, the far-right's caucus in the European Parliament known as *Identity, Sovereignty, and Tradition* satisfied a threshold for recognition and funding thanks to the accession of Romania and Bulgaria into the European Union.

Michael Shafir argues that Romania's far-right tradition dates back to the inter-war period and was heavily influenced by far-right movements on the Western half of the continent. He argues that these values combined with Communism in the aftermath of World War II would provide the basis for the Romanian version of national Communism.⁶⁸ However, due to the

⁶⁵ Norris, page 66

⁶⁶ Norris, page 67

⁶⁷ Norris, page 66

⁶⁸ Hainsworth, page 247

dramatic difference in political development in the post-war era, it is difficult to classify Eastern European radical right parties with their counterparts in the West. In Romania, Shafir argues there needs to be a distinction between radical continuity parties and radical return parties. Radical continuity parties are the inheritors of national communism, but they typically avoid adjectives such as “socialist” in lieu of terms like “workers” or “progress”.⁶⁹ Shafir argues that these parties actively engage in efforts to deflect the blame of mistakes or problems of the past onto other groups in the society. In Romania, these groups typically are Jews, Roma, and Hungarians. Specifically with regard to the Jews, Romanian far-right extremists construct a vision of Jews trying to take over the world by means of supranational institutions such as the European Union or World Bank.⁷⁰ A prominent concern in Romanian politics is that international finance organizations will turn Romanian citizens into their slaves.⁷¹ Radical return parties can be distinguished from the radical continuity parties primarily due to their intent to return the political discourse to what it was in the inter-war period. Heavily influenced by the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini, radical return parties in Romania are viewed with a considerable degree of apprehension by political observers.

Levels of trust in political institutions in Romania are considerably lower than those in the Western European countries in my study. The institutions that are most trusted in Romania are the Church and the Army, both which typically espouse conservative values.

Considerable far-right movements have also formed in Poland, Bulgaria, Belarus, the Ukraine, and Russia. In addition, Latin America, the Middle East, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, and the United States have all experienced movements that could be classified into the radical right family. Pippa Norris argues that data has to be collected in all of

⁶⁹ Hainsworth, page 250

⁷⁰ Hainsworth, page 251

⁷¹ Hainsworth, page 257

these countries and scholars need to include them into their studies in order to enhance our understanding of the similarities and differences of radical right parties throughout the world.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

The recent successes of radical right parties have coincided with a plethora of scholarly literature devoted to understanding this phenomenon. As I previously mentioned, before we can study radical right parties, we must first have a general consensus as to what far-right parties are.

The Politics of the Extreme Right (1997) edited by Paul Hainsworth is a comprehensive state by state analysis of far- right movements by area studies scholars who each examine one country. The result is an informative overview of the unique political climate in each country that either is conducive to success for radical- right parties or occlusive of their efforts to become viable. Hainsworth's book offers one of the most detailed accounts of each radical right party in Europe. The overall work is ultimately successful at dealing with each radical- right party's individual success as a result of unique domestic and external factors, but does not focus its attention on thinking of the radical right as a supranational movement.

Peter Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (1997, 2003) evoke a similar strategy of grouping together area studies scholars' work regarding individual radical- right movements. Examining the successes of the extreme right in both the 1990's and re-visiting the topic in the early twenty-first century, Merkl and Weinberg offer valuable insight into the evolution of far-right movements and the varying degrees of electoral success. Merkl and Weinberg additionally offer a rich theoretical basis for the far-right's resurgence in contemporary European politics. Merkl and Weinberg include recent waves of immigration, changing family structures, and altered gender roles in society as possible reasons for a European political climate that is generating support for far-right movements.

Some studies seek to trace the origins of the far-right parties that have emerged as challengers to the mainstream parties in several prominent Western European countries in the

last two decades. Alexandra Cole (2005) examines whether prominent radical right parties belong in the category of new or old right. Cole's work is an excellent discussion of the different meanings of left and right since the French Revolution in 1789. Cole argues that the old left advocated notions such as liberty and equality, and the old right was a reaction against this movement. However, Cole argues that a trend of postmodernism, as defined by Ronald Inglehart, transformed the left into focusing on matters such as environmental movement and eradicating racism. Thus, Cole argues that the new-right is a response to this new-left, and many of the far-right parties such as France's National Front, Austria's FPO, and Germany's Republikaner party fit the description of new-right.⁷²

Cole's work was heavily influenced by a study conducted by Paul Taggart (1996).

Taggart writes:

“The wave of crisis that hit Western Europe in the 1970's provided the momentum for the tides of protest that have characterized the 1980's and 1990's. This protest came first from the left with the Green parties, the alternative politics and what was to crystallize into the New Politics. We are only now witnessing the equivalent protest on the right. Mending together issues of taxation, immigration and radical regionalism, across western European parties of the right are protesting not only the policies but the politics of the old parties. This New Populism, in many respects, the mirror image of the New Politics (and derives) from the same deep wellsprings of the change that have come to the crises of the postwar settlement.”⁷³

Pia Nigge (1998) tests three popular explanations for radical right success: economic conditions such as unemployment and inflation, dissatisfaction with the regime, and rising levels of immigration.⁷⁴ A somewhat counter-intuitive and unexpected result, Nigge found that a declining national economy actually decreases the electoral appeal of far-right parties.

Bernt Hagtvet (1994) reaches a different conclusion in his study of right-wing extremism in Europe. Hagtvet found that the interaction between a feeble middle class combined with

⁷² Cole, page 203

⁷³ Taggart, pages 17+18

⁷⁴ Knigge, pg 249

fragmentation of parties on the traditional right promotes a political landscape that is vulnerable to the emergence of a credible radical- right party. Hagtvet also emphasizes the severity of this situation, as far-right politics are often associated with a variety of extremist, violent political behavior that may target immigrants, asylum-seekers, and even the homeless or disabled.⁷⁵

Aforementioned, studies such as Ignazi (1992), Kitschelt (1997), and Golder (2003) have devoted significant attention to the question of how to classify far-right parties. Ignazi maintains there is a difference between traditional far-right parties whose ideology is reminiscent of fascism and contemporary far-right parties that have risen to prominence in post-industrial societies. Ignazi includes Alleanza Nazionale into this former category, noting that from its inception in the late 1940's (as the MSI) it has been characterized by nostalgia for the inter-war fascist period. Ignazi states that these fascist parties “express anti-democratic values, are hostile to foreigners, and search for harmony (amongst the native-born population within a given state), and an exaltation of natural community.”⁷⁶ These parties seek a rigid hierarchical structure for society into which groups are vertically integrated. In contrast, Ignazi groups the National Front, Freedom Party of Austria, and Vlaams Bloc into a post-industrial far-right family that espouses an ideology that is different than inter-war fascism. He attributes this re-invented far-right to a society where rigid class barriers no longer exist, and thus cleavages in the contemporary society are cross-cutting making the supporters of these radical parties much more diverse than the traditional fascist base.

Kitschelt's far-right parties are split into four groups: fascist, welfare chauvinist, right-authoritarian, and populist anti-statist. Kitschelt believes contemporary fascist parties rely heavily upon charismatic, highly-visible leaders that appeal to frustrated elements in a society.

⁷⁵ Hagtvet, 241

⁷⁶ Merkl, page 52

These fascist parties rarely have an organizational structure that resembles mainstream parties, especially given the relatively limited number of party activists.⁷⁷ Kitschelt's welfare chauvinist parties are characterized by support for the welfare state, as long as it is helping native-born citizens in need, and not "free-loading foreigners". Welfare-chauvinist parties are somewhat hostile to free-markets and typically espouse a desire to help the "little people". The right-authoritarian parties are a synthesis of liberal pro-market sentiment and authoritarian ideology. Finally, Kitschelt's populist anti-statist parties are movements which rail against the established government and elite class, but are not to be grouped in with other far-right parties.⁷⁸

Golder classifies far-right parties into two categories: neo-fascist and populist. Golder maintains that these two types of radical right parties behave differently, and have had different degrees of success. "The problem is that populist party elites and voters may be instrumental, whereas neo-fascist elites and voters may be expressive. It may also be the case that populist voters are materialist, whereas neo-fascist supporters are ideational."⁷⁹ Golder argues that neo-fascist parties have not enjoyed a surge in recent support, while populist parties have seen dramatic electoral gains in the last twenty years.

Van Der Brug et al. (2005) also look into this question of why some anti-immigrant parties succeed while others fail. The 2005 study is remarkable in the sense that the author's model explains 83% of the variance in support for far-right parties. Van Der Brug et al. maintain that in order for anti-immigrant parties to be successful, citizens must evaluate their position and generally agree with it. The implications of this finding are that parties whose vote share is largely attributed to a protest vote phenomenon, will not sustain electoral success in the long-term. Merkl (2003) calls these protest parties' rapid success followed by a rapid implosion a

⁷⁷ Kitschelt, page 32

⁷⁸ Kitschelt, page 33

⁷⁹ Golder, page 443

flash phenomenon that is often characteristic of far-right party success. For Van Der Brug et al, in addition to voters agreeing with the party's anti-immigration stances, there must be a relatively weak threat posed by the parties on of the mainstream right. This is very reminiscent of France in the early 1980's (the National Front's political breakthrough) when mainstream Gaullist Prime Minister Jacques Chirac began to distance himself and his party from the extreme anti-immigration stances of Le Pen's National Front. Van Der Brug's study also finds that the more proportional the electoral system is, the greater the chance of a viable radical anti-immigrant party.⁸⁰

Other scholars have devoted attention to the question of why the radical right is currently so strong. Robert Jackman and Karin Volpert (1996) believe that contemporary issues such as immigration and unemployment combined with electoral systems that foster multiple viable parties interact to create a political environment that is conducive to radical-right successes. Jackman and Volpert also find that policies can be implemented to reduce the threat of far-right parties such as raising threshold requirements for representation in parliament.

Matt Golder (2003) responds to the findings of Jackman and Volpert and refutes their arguments that proportional systems foster far-right parties and that by raising threshold requirements governments can reduce the vote share of parties on the radical right. Golder questions the validity of Jackman and Volpert's measures noting that less than 10% of their observations fall into their category of plurality elections in single-member districts. Furthermore, Golder's analysis reveals that electoral thresholds have no effect at all on the extreme right when the effective number of parties ranges between 1.6 and 3.3 and notes that almost 50% of the observations fall within this range.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Van Der Brug, page 563

⁸¹ Golder, page 531

Pippa Norris' (2005) Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market is rich in theories regarding the far-right's recent success. Norris's book offers analysis of a variety of institutional features, political trends, and unique party environment which all could influence the level of electoral success far-right parties enjoy in their respective countries. Norris' important work separates theories of the radical right into supply-side and demand-side arguments. An example of a supply-side argument is the one that is prominently argued by political scientists such as Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony McGann (1995). Kitschelt and McGann have enhanced the literature with their argument that when political parties in a particular country undergo a period of platform convergence, a party on the far-right can experience a period of success as a reaction to this trend. According to this theory, conservatives unhappy with their mainstream party's drift towards the political center will rebel at the polls and support a far-right party closer to their proximity on the ideological continuum. This is what Norris deems a supply-side argument in which the supply of far-right voters awaits a far-right political party to enter the market to satisfy their political needs. Supply-side arguments in general focus their analysis on how radical-right parties reach voters with their message. Supply-side theories examine the leadership and programs of far-right parties and compare them with those of the mainstream parties.⁸²

In contrast, demand-side arguments are focused upon reactions or shocks to domestic or external events. For example the events of September 11th, 2001 would certainly qualify as a significant milestone that was accompanied by a dramatic shift in public opinion on foreign policy matters in the United States. Notable scholarly work that evokes demand-side explanations for changes in public opinion include that of Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro (1992) in which they offer reasons for the changing public opinion throughout the post-war era

⁸² Merkl, page 48

in the United States. In regards to resurgence of far-right parties, demand-side arguments are often focused upon prominent socioeconomic issues such as immigration and dramatic change in policy (such as a period of greater deference to the supranational EU by the individual member-states). In sum, demand-side accounts feature dramatic changes that are accompanied by a period of demand for new parties to confront the impending crisis.

Other scholars focus their work on institutional features that cultivate or occlude the rise of far-right parties to prominence in the political landscape. These works are heavily influenced by a few classic studies that greatly enhanced our understanding of the enormous impact democratic institutions have upon the political environment. Maurice Duverger's (1954) seminal work focused upon the electoral system's impact on the number of viable parties a democratic country would have. What subsequently has been dubbed "Duverger's Law" states that majoritarian systems will be conducive to a two-party system where proportional systems will result in multi viable parties. Thus, scholars such as Pippa Norris, Kai Arzheimer, and Elisabeth Carter (2006) have investigated whether majoritarian electoral systems (characterized by first-past-the-post elections in single-member districts) can depress support for far-right parties given the difficulties small parties have winning seats in this electoral system. Both studies respectively found little support for the notion that majoritarian systems dissuade voters from voting for far-right parties. Arzheimer and Carter presume perhaps that far-right voters are impervious to the structural obstacles smaller parties face in majoritarian electoral systems. However, another theory the authors present is that perhaps far-right voters are fundamentally different than other voters in the sense that they do not believe in casting a compromise or insincere vote for mainstream conservative parties just because they have a better chance of winning.

Recent studies have found advantages in majoritarian systems for smaller parties winning seats in the parliament. Giovanni Sartori (1994) found that vote share that is highly concentrated can generate victories in a number of single-member districts that have plurality elections. Indeed, the Northern League's success supports this claim, winning a number of districts in Northern Italy during their plurality voting period that was disproportionate to their total national vote share. In fact, the Northern League did not even run candidates in most of the districts in Central and Southern Italy.

The role federalism plays in the fortunes of radical right parties remains unclear. Arzheimer and Carter find evidence to support their conflicting hypotheses regarding this variable. On the one hand, federalism may benefit radical right parties as voters may be willing to give them a chance to run a region or municipality. However, conversely voters may see voting for a radical right party in local elections is an adequate display of a protest vote, and this could mitigate far-right parties to influential players in local and regional politics while having little influence as a national party.⁸³

The role of the welfare state in determining the viability of radical right parties is also discussed in the literature. Arend Lijphart (1968) (1984) famously argues that proportional representation results in governments that are kinder and gentler than their majoritarian counterparts. Lijphart contends that these governments cultivate welfare states that alleviate many of social tensions that result in a society characterized by competing cleavages. Lijphart also asserts that citizens who live in these countries are more satisfied with their governments than citizens in majoritarian systems.

Dwayne Swank and Hans-George Betz (2002) examine globalization and the welfare state's impact upon the success of right-wing populist parties in Western Europe. Swank and

⁸³ Arzheimer, page 424

Betz find strong correlation between decreasing amounts of factory jobs in post-industrialist societies and an increase in support for far-right parties. However, their study cautions that it is this shortage of factory jobs interacting with immigration that ultimately accounts for much of the success of far-right parties. Nevertheless, the authors find that the presence of a universal welfare state suppresses support for parties on the radical right. In addition, they find that traditional right parties adopting some of the more mainstream positions of the radical right can also hamper the latter's electoral fortunes.

Another body of literature regarding the resurgence of far-right movements focuses their studies upon the citizens that cast their ballots for radical- right parties. A number of studies focus their attention on whether the support for radical right parties is an ideological or protest vote. Wouter Van Der Brug et al. (2000) find that voters who support far-right parties generally do so for the same reasons that other voters support mainstream parties.⁸⁴ However, the study finds that in some instances, there is a considerable distance on the ideological continuum between far-right parties and their voters, leading the authors to conclude that perhaps the French National Front, Italy's Northern League, and German Republikaner Party receive a large number of protest votes from citizens who are frustrated with the mainstream political parties.

Betz believes that the electoral success of the radical populist right can largely be attributed to psychological factors: notably the presence of large-scale socio-economic and structural changes. However, Betz remains somewhat quiet in the debate over whether a vote for a radical- right party is an ideological or protest vote.

A number of studies (Norris 2005, Merkl 1997, 2003, Hainsworth 2000, Arzheimer 2006) examine support for radical- right parties by demographics. There is a considerable degree of consensus in the scholarly community that far-right parties receive a disproportionate amount of

⁸⁴ Van Der Brug, page 58

support from the petit bourgeoisie and unskilled manual labor classes. Self-employed and white-collar professionals are particularly attracted to Kitschelt's radical authoritarian class of right-wing parties which emphasize pro-market solutions to problems. Kitschelt's work (1995) on this issue suggest that perhaps these people who enjoy a considerable amount of autonomy in their professions begin to develop preferences for authoritarian styles of leadership which are commonly associated with the working class.⁸⁵ Unskilled labor is attracted to anti-immigrant parties, especially in a climate of high unemployment coupled with an influx of immigrants. This demographic is sensitive to leaders such as Le Pen who typically point out that their jobs are increasingly going to immigrants.

Arzheimer and Carter find a U-shaped distribution of support for radical right parties by age, with both older and younger voters being more likely to cast their ballots for extreme right parties than their middle-aged counterparts. In addition, their study along with many others, finds that males exhibit a greater propensity to vote for radical right parties than females. Arzheimer and Carter attribute their U-shaped distribution in age to weaker social integration amongst the oldest and youngest citizens in a society. In addition, their study suggests that the oldest and youngest citizens are more likely to be on welfare than their counterparts, and thus may view immigrants as a threat to their state assistance.⁸⁶

The social integration argument Arzheimer and Carter make resembles a prominent body of literature initiated by Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba's seminal 1965 study of civic culture. Robert Putnam (1993) revisited this topic with a groundbreaking study of modern Italy which revealed dramatic differences in social capital and trust of political institutions throughout Italy. Putnam found that citizens living in Southern Italy, Sicily, or Sardinia (a region commonly

⁸⁵ Kitschelt, page 25

⁸⁶ Arzheimer, page 422

referred to as the Mezzogiorno) were less likely to belong to civic organizations such as church groups or civil societies and more likely to distrust political institutions than their counterparts in Northern or Central Italy. In support of Alzheimer and Carter's argument, Southern Italy is a stronghold for Italy's neo-fascist AN.

Another study on civic culture I examined was that of Warde et al. (2003) in which they found that women were twice as likely as males to be involved in civic groups in Great Britain. With men being more likely than women to vote for radical right parties, there is an interesting correlation between social integration and support for radical right parties like Alzheimer and Carter suggest.

The final body of literature I examined identifies which countries might be next to experience success of radical right parties. Kitschelt believes that Greece, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and Ireland all have economic and social conditions which could correspond with electoral gains for the far-right in the future.⁸⁷ Michael O'Connell (2003) conducted a study about the threat of radical right politics in Ireland. O'Connell's book asserts that Ireland, a traditionally homogenous country, has experienced a wave of immigration that had coincided with an anti-immigrant backlash amongst some groups in Irish society. Disturbingly, O'Connor finds that the Irish people answered four questions about immigrants differently in 1997 and 2002 Eurobarometer and ISPAS surveys. Almost 60% of Irish citizens in 2002 believed that immigrants were given preferential treatment in housing, a proportion which more than doubled since the 1997 Eurobarometer. In addition, 70% (up from 50%) of Irish people believed that minorities in society abused social welfare and majorities of people answered that minorities increase unemployment and inhibit public education in 2002.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Kitschelt, page 35

⁸⁸ O'Connell, page 32

Nevertheless, some reports suggest that racism in Ireland may not be so rampant. In 2007, journalists lavished praise upon Dublin for acknowledging its diversity with a multi-cultural parade to celebrate St Patrick's Day. In addition, following a ban on homosexual groups marching in New York City's annual parade, an openly-gay member of that city's council opted to march in the Dublin parade while boycotting the festivities in his hometown.⁸⁹

Germany, of course, has a history of far-right political support which culminated in World War II. Thus, when the Republikaner Party which was formed largely by disgruntled members of Bavaria's Christian Social Union (the sister party of Germany's Christian Democratic Party) scholars immediately took notice. In 1989, the Republikaner Party had taken over 7% of the vote in local Bavarian elections and almost 8% of the vote for the European Parliament.⁹⁰ Hans-George Betz (1990) investigated this development and found that it can be attributed to rapid social and economic change in then West Germany. This rapid modernization threatened a number of groups within the society and they responded by breaking away from the traditional parties to support the far-right Republikaners.⁹¹

The literature devoted to the recent successes of radical right parties in Europe is rich in theory and explanations for this current trend. However, as is the case with any relatively new topic, there are still a number of holes in the literature and factors to be explained. Particularly lacking in the literature are studies that examine differences in far-right parties throughout Western Europe. Most of the prior work attempts to either deal with this issue as European phenomenon or confine the focus to just one country that has experienced radical right success. In this study, I will focus on far-right voters in four countries: France, Italy, Austria, and

⁸⁹ http://www.eagletribune.com/punews/local_story_071115656?page=1

⁹⁰ Betz, page 45

⁹¹ Betz, page 56

Belgium and discuss what supporters of these radical right movements have in common and what their differences are.

V. THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

The contemporary literature regarding radical right parties is rich in theories that attempt to explain this phenomenon. In this section, I will discuss several of the theories that are prominently advanced by previous studies and supported by empirical evidence.

A similar trend of de-alignment in many of the countries that have experienced resurgent radical-right parties seems to have helped facilitate their rise. These de-alignment periods were ushered in by some type of shock which reinvigorated politics in systems that were largely deemed to be frozen. In Italy and Austria, this was certainly the end of the Cold War, which had curtailed certain political options in those countries. In Italy, the Christian Democrats had led every government in the post-war era, and formed coalitions with anybody they could to keep the Communist Party (PCI) out of the government. Thus when the Italian political system almost simultaneously reels from an enormous scandal which implicated many Christian Democrats and a sudden and dramatic end to communism in Europe, it is not surprising to see Italian voters undergo a period of de-alignment and new parties emerging onto the scene. A similar situation was the case in Austria, which found itself literally in between the democratic West and the communist East after World War II. Like the Italian case, Austria's dominant Socialist Party was implicated in a series of scandals in the early 1980's, and voters began to become disenchanted with the status quo.

Italy and Austria both also experienced rapid modernization and economic gains in the late 1970's and early 1980's. Previous work (Hainsworth, Merkl, Weinberg) suggests that these periods of modernization weaken traditional economic cleavages resulting in what Ronald Inglehart refers to as a post-materialization trend in society. While the left in Europe struck first

with the advent of the Greens, the right was quick to respond with an equal and opposite movement of its own which may be the recent successes of these radical- right parties.

In France, the weakening of socio-economic cleavages likely had a different impetus. When Francois Mitterrand was elected to the French Presidency in 1981, he and his Socialist allies in the French National Assembly embarked upon a campaign of nationalization, raising the minimum wage, and providing more benefits to French workers. However, other prominent governments (notably Thatcher's in the UK and Reagan's in the US) were reigning in government spending at the same time, and Mitterrand's France soon found itself experiencing rampant inflation as a result of the government's fiscal policies. In 1983, the Gaullists seized power in the National Assembly and the French had to embark upon measures to undo the policies of the previous government in an effort to curtail the deleterious effects of immigration. In the wake of this, there was a perceived convergence of the mainstream left and right parties in French politics; a condition that Pippa Norris argues is favorable to the success of far-right parties.⁹²

There are several prominent demand-side theories in the literature for the success of far-right parties. The single-issue theory suggests that far-right parties take extreme stances on one issue, immigration, in hopes of striking a chord with voters who are frustrated about the mainstream parties' handling of that particular issue. The single-issue theory states that these radical right parties will do their best in periods that are characterized by increasing levels of immigration. The single-issue theory is perhaps best demonstrated in Austria, which saw a dramatic increase in immigration from Eastern Europe in the waning years of the Cold War.

⁹² Norris, page 66

However, the single-issue theory faces problems when confronted with the French case, as Front National focuses on a wide-variety of issues in French politics.⁹³

The notion that recent successes of far-right parties are largely a result of voters casting a protest vote against the mainstream parties is another prevalent demand-side theory held by many scholars. These theories suggest that radical-right parties have no actual ideology, but are merely organized negative attacks against the political establishment.⁹⁴

There is a fair amount of evidence that a considerable amount of the vote share radical-right parties receive is a protest vote. Recall the discussion of Austria, where local members of the conservative Austrian OVP (Christian Democrats) in Carinthia were struggling what to do with the growing success of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPO). Many of the local OVP members who advocated including the FPO in the regional government did so by suggesting failure to give them some power might actually increase their future electoral success. Simply put, if far-right parties continue to have no say in how the country is led, they can continue to blame all of the government and society's shortcomings on the failures of the mainstream parties.

Protest theories also suggest that far-right parties are “socially unstructured or transient.”⁹⁵ This means that they are prone to exhibit what is known as flash characteristics where they quickly emerge to prominence and subsequently experience a period of rapid decline. Italy's Northern League seems to fit this description, as it quickly is consolidated, participates in the Italian government, and is mitigated to obscurity.

Some scholars suggest that a period of social breakdown is occurring and facilitating the rise of far-right politics. These theories assert that traditional social structures such as class and

⁹³ Merkl, page 49

⁹⁴ Merkl, page 51

⁹⁵ Merkl, page 52

religion have become less important and thus have left many individuals without a sense of belonging in their societies. Roger Eatwell believes that young people in particular are vulnerable in this regard while Arzheimer and Carter believe both younger and older citizens may be prone to this type of thinking. The latter study suggests this could explain the U-shaped distribution of support for far-right parties across the different age groups. Eatwell suggests that these voters respond to the nationalist calls of far-right party who evoke a sense of pride in these young people's heritage. Older citizens may be somewhat impervious to this nationalist tone because many have lived through times that were characterized by unbridled nationalism already. Warde et al. (2003) did find that both younger citizens and men were involved in less civic organizations than older voters and females. Thus I would expect to see an inverse relationship between participation in civic organizations and support for far-right parties.

Another prominent demand side argument for support of far-right parties is that it is a reaction against post-materialism. The Greens in Europe rose to prominence in the 1970's espousing support for protection of the environment and equality before the law. Inglehart attributes this voting behavior to citizens living in a society where their material concerns were met, but what about those for which this is not the case? Younger males, especially the ones with low education and skill levels, likely do not enjoy a great degree of economic security. When parties make the argument that globalization and immigration exacerbate economic problems, it is not surprising that young male voters who are nervous about their financial situation would be attracted to that party. These voters likely do not see parties such as the Greens as being sensitive to their concerns, and will support parties that focus on the materialist problems such as unemployment.

This focus on economic concerns likely has accompanied the broadening of the bases that support far-right parties. Recall my discussion of Austria in which I stated that Haider's commitment to seeing jobs go to native Austrians coincided with his Freedom Party's success amongst blue-collar workers in Vienna who had typically supported the Austrian socialists. Similarly in France when Le Pen makes statements that "2 million immigrants take the jobs that belong to 2 million Frenchmen" he is appealing to French citizens with unemployment concerns across the ideological left-right continuum.

The most prominent supply-side theory for the success of far-right parties is an encompassing political opportunity structure thesis.⁹⁶ Pippa Norris devotes a considerable amount of attention to one supply-side theory that focuses upon platform convergence between the mainstream parties on the left and the right. Norris and Kitschelt believe that when these right parties move towards the center on economic issues, they leave a void on the right which far-right parties can capitalize on to gain support. France's National Front indeed had its breakthrough in the early 1980's when the French public became frustrated by a wave of immigration that the mainstream parties all ignored.

In other circumstances, the mainstream parties provide legitimacy to the far-right parties. This was particularly the case in Italy where Silvio Berlusconi and his Forza Italia Party entered into a coalition with the National Alliance and the Northern League despite widespread concerns that the latter parties were not committed to the notion of representative democracy. In addition, the Austrian OVP in Carinthia also broke with their national party's stance that the Freedom Party was beyond the pale when they entered into a coalition agreement with them.

In addition, some political opportunity structure arguments focus upon the institutional features such as electoral systems' role in aiding or occluding the success of radical right parties.

⁹⁶ Merkl, page 58

Conventional wisdom suggests that radical- right parties should have more success in countries that use proportional representation (PR) because citizens in these countries do not have the disincentives that majoritarian voters have to forego a vote for a minor party. In PR systems, seats in the parliament are generally allocated to reflect the national popular vote. In contrast, majoritarian systems designed on the Westminster Model are characterized by plurality elections in single-member districts. In the latter system, not only is there an incentive to vote for the largest party that closely resembles the voter's ideology, there is also an incentive for parties to adopt a centrist platform to attract the median voter. Thus, we should expect proportional representation systems to have viable parties that can run on a relatively extreme platform and voters who will support the parties that closely resemble their ideology.

Another common difference between proportional representation and majoritarian systems is that the former typically is characterized by multi-party systems while the latter is characterized by two-party systems.⁹⁷ In multi-party systems, it is much more difficult for a single-party to garner the seats necessary to form the government, and thus parties in those systems are forced to enter into coalitions with other parties to achieve this task.⁹⁸ Given that parties in PR systems have less incentives to adopt centrist positions and voters have more incentives to "vote their heart" we should expect far-right parties to do best in PR systems where vote share is spread amongst many different parties and thus these parties have to enter coalitions to form the government.

In Table 1, one can see that countries with higher percentages of governments that were composed of two or more parties in the post-war era were indeed more likely to have a far-right party with a significant level of support. This makes the policies of the mainstream conservative

⁹⁷ Duverger (1954)

⁹⁸ Lijphart, (1984)

parties that concern cooperation with radical right parties even more important, as their willingness to collaborate could lead to the participation of far-right parties in the government which we have already seen has been the case in Italy and Austria.

Table 1: Coalition and Single-Party Governments in Western Europe (1945-2000)⁹⁹

<u>Country</u>	<u>% Coalition Governments</u>	<u>Type of Radical Right Party</u>
Netherlands	100	Relevant
Luxembourg	100	None
Germany	95	Fringe
Belgium	90	Relevant
Finland	86	Fringe
France	81	Relevant
Italy	80	Relevant
Austria	66	Relevant
Denmark	57	Relevant
Ireland	44	None
Portugal	28	None
Sweden	25	Fringe
Norway	21	Relevant
Greece	1	Fringe
Spain	0	Fringe
Great Britain	0	Fringe

Another burgeoning supply-side theory on the successes of the extreme right suggests that the media is often complicit in helping their fortunes. While the media often rails against radical-right parties, it sometimes aids their success by positive stereotyping the native population and issuing blame on illegal immigrants.¹⁰⁰ The media's coverage of crimes committed by illegal immigrants typically is framed in a manner in which the problem exceeds just one isolated case, but rather belongs in a series or pattern of crimes that are cause for alarm.

⁹⁹ Muller, page 2, Norris, pages 54-88 *I combined Muller's % coalition chart with Norris' breakdown of the viability of far-right parties.

¹⁰⁰ Merkl, page 60

In the countries I have examined, there are specific circumstances in which media coverage aided far-right parties in a manner that goes beyond this more subtle trend.

In Austria, revelations that led to questions about the conservative presidential candidate Kurt Waldheim's war record ignited an investigation by the World Jewish Congress. In response to this scrutiny, the media in Austria took a decidedly defensive position and much of their coverage of the incident was characterized by blatant anti-Semitism. In Italy, far-right parties had an even more sympathetic ally in the media, largely as a result of Silvio Berlusconi's media empire that was certainly loyal to their owner and his Forza Italia party, and his political allies Alleanza Nazionale and Lega Nord.

However, France's Front National and its leader Jean Marie Le Pen have not fared as well in the French media. Newspapers and magazines in France and around the world largely condemned Le Pen's participation in the second round of the 2002 presidential elections. Amidst the political fallout the first round generated, "The Economist" placed Le Pen on the cover of the reputable periodical with a heading that read "France's shame." Le Pen has often complained about what he refers to as the media's effort to demonize him and his supporters. In his 2007 campaign, Le Pen has embarked upon a series of measures such as toning down his rhetoric and placing pictures of Le Pen supporters from different races on his website in hopes of expanding his base.

The national tradition theory is another supply-side explanation of far-right party successes. Scholars who evoke these arguments for resurgent far-right parties argue that parties that succeed in characterizing their movement as part of their country's tradition will have a considerable amount of success at the polls. This theory is often advanced by political scholars whose studies focus upon cultural variables to explain political trends. The national tradition

theory also can explain the dramatic differences in support for far-right parties across similar Western European countries. For example, a radical-right party in Germany would likely have a difficult time experiencing success due to the country's history of fascism and subsequent devastation. In the UK, a far-right party would have an even more difficult time, because their country's tradition is proud for its resistance of fascist Germany to which many others capitulated. However, in Italy, there is a tradition of fascism and a charismatic leader (Gianfranco Fini) who proudly boasts about its proud tradition there. In contrast to Germany's case in which many citizens there suffered for 45 years as a result of their country's defeat in the Second World War, many Italians view their country's brand of fascism in a positive light that is reminiscent of Italy's glorious history. In addition, historians in Italy have been more likely to normalize rather than demonize the fascist era in that country.¹⁰¹

The programmatic theory suggests that radical-right parties are not simply one-issue in nature, but are often characterized by a platform that deals with a variety of domestic and foreign-policy issues. Implicit in the argument is that citizens who cast their ballots in favor of these parties do so not with the intent of casting a protest vote, but rather to reward the party that best represents their ideology and policy preferences. Realizing this, radical-right parties are increasingly focusing their campaign on issues, not rhetoric, according to scholars who advance this programmatic theory.

A second aspect of this argument is that radical-right parties are increasingly employing a successful formula which combines authoritarian leadership with free-market policies.¹⁰²

Scholars are typically referring to these parties as populist, suggesting they are merely responding to prominent concerns in the electorate that other parties seem to be ignoring. In the

¹⁰¹ Merkl, page 62

¹⁰² Kitschelt, page 33

Western European context, this can mean anything from an overbearing welfare state that far-right parties believe the rest of the parties have all bought into, to skepticism about supranational government.¹⁰³

Finally, with regard to the programmatic theory, far-right parties often adopt rhetoric that suggests they are neither a rightist nor a leftist party. Critics of far-right parties also suggest that radical parties typically include terms such as “progressive” or “democratic” in their names, while being neither of these things. Whether this is true or not, far-right parties that have a full platform are likely to combine extreme right positions on immigration with a variety of reasonable positions on a number of other issues in an attempt to expand their base.

The charismatic leader thesis is another prominent supply-side theory that seems to explain radical-right success when one examines a number of different cases. This theory is predicated on the notion that far-right parties often lack the organizational structure of the mainstream parties, and instead have a charismatic leader who makes all the major decisions. In every case I examined, there was a charismatic leader who seemingly single-handedly delivered their radical-right party from political marginalization. These leaders must possess both a considerable degree of internal charisma, which means appealing to the party loyalists, and external charisma which means attracting new supporters.¹⁰⁴

Roger Eatwell believes that charismatic theories, while easy to support, are difficult to examine empirically. For starters, it is difficult to operationalize a variable such as charisma. In addition, leaders like Umberto Bossi (Italy’s Lega Nord) are often classified as charismatic despite his unkempt appearance and sharp tongue, which typically do not fit most people’s conception of charismatic. Furthermore, leaders like Jean Marie Le Pen have experienced not

¹⁰³ Merkl, page 64

¹⁰⁴ Merkl, page 66

only a considerable amount of high-level defections from the party (a lack of internal charisma) but also face a relatively hostile majority who are put off by gaffes regarding the Holocaust (a lack of external charisma).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Merkl, page 67

VI. VARIABLES AND HYPOTHESES

The study I am undertaking examines voters in four countries: France, Italy, Austria, and Belgium. My study focuses upon the relationship between several independent variables and the dependent variable of which party did each of the respondents vote for. For each country, I will examine the relationship between trust in both domestic and supranational political institutions and support for political parties. Building on previous literature, I hypothesize that citizens who voted for far-right parties are less likely to trust both their country's parliament and the European Parliament. I believe this will be the case as radical-right voters are often thought of as casting a protest vote against the political establishment that they feel does not have their interests in mind. In addition, prior research suggests that far-right voters are often relatively vulnerable economically, and are more likely to believe both that they have to compete with immigrants for jobs and that their country's economic progress has left them behind. Their frustration is often compounded by their belief that many of the mainstream parties ignore their concerns. For these reasons, I believe that radical-right voters will be less likely to trust their respective parliament. Previous studies also suggest that far-right voters (or all extreme voters) are more likely to be Euroskeptic than mainstream voters, believing that increased European integration does not have their best interests in mind. Thus, I expect to find that in addition to not trusting their own Parliament, far-right voters will also be less likely to trust the only democratically elected institution of the European Union, the European Parliament.

In addition to the having less trust in the domestic and European political institutions, I expect to find that far-right voters will be less likely to be interested in politics than voters of their countries' other major parties. These variables may be related in the sense that if these citizens do not trust the political institutions, they may be less likely to care about the political

run to elect officers to them. However, the flip side of this could be that voters who distrust these institutions may be very responsive to a candidate who expresses similar concerns, making radical-right voters more likely to be engaged in political affairs.

Included in my theory section of this paper is discussion about the political opportunity for radical-right parties to breakthrough into domestic politics. Typically present in this scenario is a sense that the platforms of the major parties have converged leaving many voters on the ideological continuum without a party that resembles their ideology or policy preferences. This being said, I expect to find that voters who cast their ballots in favor of far right parties will be less likely than their counterparts to think that politicians in general care about what people like them think.

Finally, I will test a prominent theory which attempts to explain far-right support, the role of immigrants in society. I expect to find that citizens who support far-right parties are more likely to think immigrants take away jobs than those who cast votes for other parties.

VII. DATA AND METHODS

My data source for this study is the 2002 European Social Survey which asks European citizens a variety of societal, political, and economic questions. The relatively large scope of the dataset is indeed an asset, and it asked respondents who they voted for in the last parliamentary elections, which is my study's dependent variable. One drawback of the data source was that I could not obtain a copy of the dataset and thus was forced to conduct my analysis on the ESS website, which was problematic for two reasons. To begin with, I was unable to isolate far-right voters by turning my dependent variable into a dichotomous dependent of whether or not the respondent supported a radical-right party. Additionally, the ESS does not list the parties in an ordered manner left to right manner, thus regression analysis could not be conducted. In lieu of this, I have conducted Crosstab analyses to offer some insight into why voters cast their ballots in favor of radical-right parties.

VIII. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The first independent variables I will discuss is the trust in Parliament across the four countries my study examines. In Table 2, is the level of trust citizens have in their Parliament by political party in France. The ESS measures trust on an 11-point scale which ranges from “no trust at all” or “0” to “complete trust” or “10”. I have condensed the 11-point scale into 3 categories: No Trust at all-3, Moderate Trust (4-6), and 7-Complete Trust. The parties included in the table from left-right ideologically are the French Communists (PC), the French Socialists (PS), the centrist Union for French Democracy (UDF), the right-wing Union for the Popular Majority (UMP), and the radical-right National Front (FN).

Table 2: Trust in French Parliament by Party Vote¹⁰⁶

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7- Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
PC	36.2%	52.6%	11.2%
PS	29.6%	49.7%	20.6%
UDF	9.5%	53.9%	36.5%
UMP	11.4%	57.1%	31.5%
FN	56.2%	29.2%	14.6%

¹⁰⁶ N= 36 PC, 272PS, 52 UDF, 191 UMP, and 48 FN (Vote on First Ballot)

Table 3: Trust in European Parliament in France by Party Vote¹⁰⁷

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7-Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
PC	41.6%	47.2%	11.2%
PS	29.3%	53.0%	17.0%
UDF	23.5%	49.0%	27.4%
UMP	25.9%	55.2%	18.9%
FN	53.4%	37.8%	8.8%

As the reader can see, citizens who cast their ballot in favor of the radical-right Front National (FN) were much more likely to distrust both the French National Assembly and the European Parliament. Over 50% of voters who supported Front National answered that they had almost no trust in either of these political institutions, which was a double-digit difference from any other major French party and almost twice the rate of the centrist UDF. In France, what these results reveal is there is a parabolic distribution for trust across the left-right ideological continuum with both the far-left Communists and the far-right Front National voters being less likely to trust the domestic and EU institutions than voters in the center, center-left, and center-right respectively.

The same test was performed for the Italian case with the parties being ordered from left-right starting with the Italian Communists (PCI), Italian Socialists (PSI)*¹⁰⁸, the right-wing Forza

¹⁰⁷ N= 36 PC, 270 PS, 51 UDF, 185 UMP, and 45 FN (Vote on First Ballot)

¹⁰⁸ * The PSI was the former Italian Socialist party which has essentially been replaced by a coalition of Italian Parties on the center-left that are often referred to as the Olive Tree alliance.

Italia (FI), and two ultra-right parties Lega Nord (LN), and Alleanza Nazionale (AN).¹⁰⁹ The results did not conform to my hypothesis like the French case did. As is borne out by the evidence, voters who cast their ballots in support of the Italian radical-right parties exhibited similar, if not greater, levels of trust in both the Italian Parliament and European Parliament when compared with voters who supported the other major Italian parties.

Table 4: Trust in Italian Parliament by Party Vote¹¹⁰

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7-Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
PCI	22.2%	66.6%	11.1%
PSI	25.5%	48.5%	26.0%
FI	22.8%	50.0%	27.0%
LN	18.2%	45.4%	36.4%
AN	16.9%	61.5%	21.6%

¹⁰⁹ The far-right LN and AN parties are placed randomly. The reader should not infer that the AN is to the right of the LN.

¹¹⁰ N= 33 PCI, 161 PSI, 170 FI, 11 LN, and 65 AN

Table 5: Trust in European Parliament in Italy by Party Vote¹¹¹

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7- Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
PCI	11.1%	77.7%	11.1%
PSI	7.6%	47.8%	44.1%
FI	18.2%	47.5%	30.3%
LN	18.2%	27.3%	54.5%
AN	11.3%	62.9%	25.8%

While I had predicted that all the far-right voters would indicate less trust in political institutions than their counterparts, I suspected Italy might have a different result. The AN is a bit of an anomaly amongst far-right parties in the sense that it has a relatively poor base that relies heavily on governmental assistance. The AN's base is located primarily in southern Italy's Mezzogiorno region which has long lagged behind the rest of the country in terms of economic development. In the last 30 years, the Italian government has embarked upon considerable measures to dramatically increase investment (and offer incentives for private companies and individuals to do so) to decrease the gap in economic prosperity between Italy's poor south and prosperous north. Robert Putnam's 1994 study indicated that despite this, the Italian south still lagged far behind the north in economic prosperity, institutional performance, and trust of political institutions. This simple test, however, could indicate perhaps trust in institutions is on the rise since Putnam conducted his landmark study. However, given that my study does not examine this question by region, the reader should take this observation with a grain of salt. Indeed, Alleanza Nazionale does have considerable support in all of Italy's regions, and I have

¹¹¹N= 9 PCI, 159 PSI, 164 FI, 11 LN, and 62 AN

no way of knowing the regional breakdown of the Alleanza Nazionale support in the 2002 ESS dataset.

The results for Lega Nord are a complete surprise, given that its leader Umberto Bossi has not only expressed complete disdain for Italy's Parliament, but also the idea of a unified Italy in general. Bossi and his supporters believe that northern Italy should become a sovereign state called Padania. The odd results can likely be attributed to the excessively small sample of Lega Nord voters (11).

While I have attempted to attribute the relatively strong trust Alleanza Nazionale voters have in Italy's Parliament to the economic assistance many voters have received from the government, I am surprised they also have this trust for the European Parliament. This result was highly unexpected and counter-intuitive as we generally believe that far-right parties and their voters are somewhat skeptical of the supranational EU.

This result was most prominently seen in my results for Austria, where there was a dramatic difference in trust for Austria's Parliament and trust for the European Parliament amongst the radical Freedom Party's (FPO) voters. Like the previous cases, the parties in Austria are organized from left-right starting with the Grune (Greens), Socialists (SPO), conservatives (OVP), and radical right (FPO).

The FPO voters revealed a similar level of trust in the Austrian Parliament compared to the voters of the other political parties. However, FPO voters were much more likely to distrust the European Parliament than the voters who supported the mainstream Austrian parties. The FPO respondents indicated that they had almost no trust in the European Parliament at a rate of 61.6% which was more than double the proportion of Greens who answered the same way (29.8%). Only 8.2% of FPO voters expressed high-complete levels of trust which was roughly

Table 6: Trust in Austrian Parliament by Party Vote¹¹²

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7-Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
Grüne	22.7%	44.1%	33.2%
SPO	28.2%	45.3%	26.5%
OVP	18.0%	48.7%	33.3%
FPO	33.7%	37.8%	28.5%

Table 7: Trust in European Parliament in Austria by Party Vote¹¹³

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7-Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
Grüne	29.8%	50.4%	19.8%
SPO	41.4%	40.5%	18.1%
OVP	38.0%	46.0%	16.0%
FPO	61.6%	30.1%	8.2%

¹¹² 229 Grüne, 482 SPO, 528 OVP, 74 FPO

¹¹³ 222 Grüne, 460 SPO, 488 OVP, 73 FPO

half of the conservative OVP's proportion (the second least-trust Austrian partisans of the EP).

This result is not surprising, and reveals the Austrian far-right's longstanding suspicion of the European Union and the democratic West in general. Austria's radical-right indeed often makes favorable references to Germany's Third Reich and many of the policies of Adolf Hitler. Many Austrians in general have been quite suspicious of the West, and the country preferred to be neutral throughout much of the Cold War. Nevertheless, the Austrians generally did not want their government to succumb to the pressure of the Soviet Union, and thus joined many of the Western institutions solely to stave off this threat from the East.

The Austrian far-right's contemporary opposition to the EU likely reflects their fears over Eastern European immigration into Austria as a result of the supranational institution's expansion into that region. Austria has experienced a strong wave of immigration from the east since the termination of the Cold War, and as I discussed earlier, this has increased the FPÖ's votes share amongst voters all over the ideological continuum as it has been the one party that has adopted a decidedly anti-immigrant rhetoric.

The Flemish nationalist Vlaams Blok voters exhibited trust levels in both the Belgian and European Parliaments that were far below their counterparts in six other major Belgian parties. I thought the most striking finding in the Belgian case is how similar the trust levels were amongst voters of the other six major parties which cross-cut Belgium's deep-rooted lingual divide. Vlaams Blok sticks out as a considerable outlier with its voters exhibiting very similar low levels of trust in their domestic and European Parliament as the voters of France's Front National.

Thus, the question now is how did far-right voters compare to each other in levels of trust in domestic parliament and the supranational EP.

Table 8: Trust in Belgian Parliament by Party Vote¹¹⁴

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7- Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
Agalev	16.7%	45.6%	37.7%
Ecolo	16.7%	53.7%	29.6%
SP	14.8%	54.8%	30.4%
PS	25.7%	53.7%	20.6%
VLD	16.4%	54.7%	28.8%
CVP	14.5%	49.4%	36.1%
VB	53.8%	41.0%	5.1%

Table 9: Trust in European Parliament in Belgium by Party Vote¹¹⁵

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7- Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
Agalev	11.9%	51.6%	36.5%
Ecolo	19.3%	49.0%	31.6%
SP	23.2%	51.2%	25.6%
PS	31.1%	55.4%	12.5%
VLD	21.8%	54.1%	24.1%
CVP	18.2%	48.6%	33.2%
VB	53.3%	38.7%	8.0%

¹¹⁴ 90 Agalev (Flemish-speaking Greens), 54 Ecolo (French-speaking Greens), 135 SP (Flemish Socialists), 121 PS (French Socialists), 225 VLD (Liberals), 233 CVP (Flemish Christian Democrats), and 78 VB (Flemish nationalists)

¹¹⁵ 85 Agalev, 57 Ecolo, 125 SP, 119 PS, 216 VLD, 214 CVP, and 75 VB.

The Flemish nationalist Vlaams Blok voters exhibited trust levels in both the Belgian and European Parliaments that were far below their counterparts in six other major Belgian parties. I thought the most striking finding in the Belgian case is how similar the trust levels were amongst voters of the other six major parties which cross-cut Belgium’s deep-rooted lingual divide. Vlaams Blok sticks out as a considerable outlier with its voters exhibiting very similar low levels of trust in their domestic and European Parliament as the voters of France’s Front National.

Thus, the question now is how did far-right voters compare to each other in levels of trust in domestic parliament and the supranational EP. Table 10 (below) and Table 11 compare levels of trust exhibited by far-right voters cross-nationally.

Table 10: Trust in Domestic Parliament amongst Far-Right Voters

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7-Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
FN	56.2%	29.2%	14.6%
LN	18.2%	45.4%	36.4%
AN	16.9%	61.5%	21.6%
FPO	33.7%	37.8%	28.5%
VB	53.8%	41.0%	5.1%

Table 11: Trust in European Parliament amongst Far-Right Voters

	No Trust-3	Moderate Trust (4-6)	7-Complete Trust
<u>Party</u>			
FN	53.4%	37.8%	8.8%
LN	18.2%	27.3%	54.5%
AN	11.3%	62.9%	25.8%
FPO	61.6%	30.1%	8.2%
VB	53.3%	38.7%	8.0%

Analysis of the crosstabs results for levels of trust in domestic and supranational political institutions suggests a great deal of disparity amongst far-right voters across country lines. The Italian far-right parties exhibited a high level of political trust in both the Italian and European Parliaments which largely resembled the views expressed by supporters of the mainstream Italian parties. The Austrian FPO exhibited a similar level of trust in the Austrian Parliament when compared to their mainstream counterparts, but revealed a sharp difference when the focus became the European Parliament, with the Austrian FPO voters being much less likely to trust the EP than their mainstream counterparts. The French FN and the Belgian VB voters exhibited a lack of trust in both their countries' Parliaments and the EP.

With the notable exception of Austria, far-right voters exhibited a similar level of trust in their domestic parliament and the European Parliament. Majorities of the FN (53.4%), FPO (61.6%), and VB (53.3) indicated that they do not trust the European Parliament; an expected result given previous research indicates that the radical-right is typically viewed as suspicious of supranational institutions.

The second independent variable I examined was interest in politics of voters for each major political party in the four countries I have examined. The ESS measures interest on a 4-pt scale that includes the responses of “Very Interested”, “Quite Interested”, “Hardly Interested”, and “Not Interested”. In Tables 12-16, the reader can see how each far-right party’s voters compared to voters of the other major parties in their respective country.

Table 12: Interest in Politics by Party in France¹¹⁶

	Very Interested	Quite Interested	Hardly Interested	Not Interested
<u>Party</u>				
PC	22.2%	41.7%	30.6%	5.6%
PS	16.7%	35.1%	36.9%	11.3%
UDF	9.6%	46.2%	38.4%	5.8%
UMP	15.6%	42.2%	33.9%	8.3%
FN	8.3%	20.8%	33.3%	37.5%

Table 13: Interest in Politics by Party in Italy¹¹⁷

	Very Interested	Quite Interested	Hardly Interested	Not Interested
<u>Party</u>				
PCI	0	22.2%	55.6%	22.2%
PSI	17.4%	38.3%	28.1%	16.2%
FI	8.0%	32.2%	35.6%	24.1%
LN	27.3%	18.2%	45.5%	9.1%
AN	18.5%	43.1%	27.7%	10.8%

¹¹⁶ N= 36 PC, 282 PS, 52 UDF, 192 UMP, and 48 FN.

¹¹⁷ N= 9 PCI, 167 PSI, 174 FI, 11 LN, and 65 AN

Table 14: Interest in Politics by Party in Austria¹¹⁸

	Very Interested	Quite Interested	Hardly Interested	Not Interested
<u>Party</u>				
Grüne	26.7%	50.0%	19.8%	3.4%
SPO	23.2%	39.9%	27.7%	9.2%
OVP	24.8%	42.3%	27.0%	5.9%
FPO	22.7%	46.7%	25.3%	5.3%

Table 15: Interest in Politics by Party in Belgium¹¹⁹

	Very Interested	Quite Interested	Hardly Interested	Not Interested
<u>Party</u>				
Agalev	7.7%	50.5%	33.0%	8.8%
Ecolo	10.3%	46.6%	39.7%	3.4%
SP	11.5%	48.2%	28.8%	11.5%
PS	10.9%	28.7%	34.9%	25.6%
VLD	8.2%	50.4%	31.0%	10.3%
CVP	9.3%	38.6%	28.9%	23.2%
VB	10.3%	38.5%	24.4%	26.9%

Contrary to my expectations, voters who cast their ballots for radical-right parties did not indicate levels of interest in politics that differed dramatically from their mainstream counterparts in Austria or Belgium. In Italy, the relationship again was the opposite of the

¹¹⁸ N= 232 Grüne, 491 SPO, 529 OVP, and 75 FPO

¹¹⁹ N= 91 Agalev, 58 Ecolo (Flemish and French-speaking Greens) 139 SP, 129 PS (Flemish and French-speaking Socialists) 232 VLD (Liberals), 246 CVP (Flemish Christian Democrats) and 78 VB

predicted direction, with Italian far-right AN and LN voters being more likely to say they were interested in politics than the voters of the mainstream parties in Italian politics. The one radical-right party whose voters expressed an interest of voters that reflected what I hypothesized was France’s Front National. Only roughly 30% of FN voters said they were either very or quite interested in politics while majorities in every other party in French politics indicated they were interested or quite interested. Additionally an astounding 37.5% of FN voters indicated they had no interest in politics, a proportion that was more than three times greater than the next least-interested French Socialists (11.3%). Similar to the results for levels of political trust, far-right respondents exhibited considerable differences when compared cross-nationally.

Table 16: Interest in Politics Expressed by Far-Right Voters

	Very Interested	Quite Interested	Hardly Interested	Not Interested
<u>Party</u>				
FN	8.3%	20.8%	33.3%	37.5%
LN	27.3%	18.2%	45.5%	9.1%
AN	18.5%	43.1%	27.7%	10.8%
FPO	22.7%	46.7%	25.3%	5.3%
VB	10.3%	38.5%	24.4%	26.9%

The respondents who voted for the FN and the VB expressed comparatively low interest in politics with 37.5% and 26.9% indicating they were not interested, respectively. In addition supporters of these parties were also least likely to indicate that they were very interested in politics with only 8.3% and 10.3% expressing strong political interest. The AN, LN, and FPO

were comparatively more interested, and those who voted for the Italian far-right parties actually showed the highest level of political interest than any other bloc of voters in Italian politics.

The third independent variable my study includes is the belief in whether or not politicians generally care about average citizens by party. As I have mentioned, previous studies suggest that a period of mainstream party platform convergence often is followed by considerable success of a far-right party because a substantial amount of voters are left unrepresented by centrist ideology and policy preferences. For this reason, I have hypothesized that far-right voters are more likely to think that politicians do not care about people like them than other voters. In Tables 17-21, I have included the results of the crosstab tests.

Table 17: Politicians Generally Care What People Like Me Think (France)¹²⁰

	Hardly Any	Very Few	Some	Most
<u>Party</u>				
PC	19.4%	38.9%	36.1%	0
PS	23.1%	31.7%	38.4%	4.6%
UDF	11.8%	21.6%	52.9%	11.8%
UMP	10.9%	29.2%	50.0%	6.8%
FN	41.7%	35.4%	20.8%	2.1%

¹²⁰ N= 36 PC, 281 PS, 51 UDF, 192 UMP, and 48 FN

Table 18: Politicians Generally Care What People Like Me Think (Italy)¹²¹

	Hardly Any	Very Few	Some	Most
<u>Party</u>				
PCI	22.2%	55.6%	22.2%	0
PSI	23.4%	26.9%	36.5%	9.6%
FI	18.5%	37.0%	32.9%	6.4%
LN	27.2%	36.4%	36.4%	0
AN	26.6%	29.7%	32.8%	9.4%

Table 19: Politicians Generally Care What People Like Me Think (Austria)¹²²

	Hardly Any	Very Few	Some	Most
<u>Party</u>				
Grüne	21.5%	29.8%	39.9%	6.6%
SPO	27.6%	35.2%	29.4%	6.2%
OVP	23.6%	29.5%	36.4%	9.1%
FPO	34.7%	28.0%	28.0%	6.7%

¹²¹ N= 9 PCI, 167 PSI, 173 FI, 11 LN, and 64 AN

¹²² 228 Grüne, 486 SPO, 525 OVP, and 75 FPO

Table 20: Politicians Generally Care What People Like Me Think (Belgium)¹²³

	Hardly Any	Very Few	Some	Most
<u>Party</u>				
Agalev	10.0%	23.3%	47.8%	16.7%
Ecolo	10.3%	29.3%	51.7%	5.2%
SP	10.1%	31.2%	45.7%	8.0%
PS	19.5%	40.6%	34.4%	3.9%
VLD	10.4%	33.8%	40.7%	9.5%
CVP	9.9%	29.6%	47.3%	8.6%
VB	30.3%	40.8%	21.1%	2.6%

Table 21: Politicians Generally Care What People Like Me Think (far-right)

	Hardly Any	Very Few	Some	Most
<u>Party</u>				
FN	41.7%	35.4%	20.8%	2.1%
LN	27.3%	36.4%	36.4%	0
AN	26.6%	29.7%	32.8%	9.4%
FPO	34.7%	28.0%	28.0%	6.7%
VB	30.3%	40.8%	21.1%	2.6%

Again in regard to the notion of whether or not politicians generally care about people like them, the Front National voters in France and Vlaams Blok voters in Belgium responded in a manner that was similar to each other and considerably different than the other voters in their

¹²³ 90 Agalev, 58 Ecolo, 138 SP, 128 PS, 231 VLD, 243 CVP, and 76 VB

country. France's National Front voters were almost twice as likely as French Socialists (the closest party) to answer that hardly any politicians care about what they think (41.7% to 23.1%)

The mainstream Belgian parties answered the question very similarly with large majorities answering that very few or some politicians care about what people like them think. However a much higher proportion of VB voters indicate that hardly any politicians care what they think, and over 70% of the VB respondents fell into the first two categories of very few or hardly any politician caring. In fact, a majority of respondents for every far- right party fell into these first two categories. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that every Austrian party also had a majority of respondents falling into these two categories, and the same can be said about the Italian Communists who had an overwhelming 77.8% of respondents answer the question in this manner which is a proportion which is almost 20% greater than the French Communists.

The independent variable I examined was the degree to which people who voted for a party believed immigrants take away or create jobs in the economy. The ESS measures this question on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (Immigrants take away jobs) to 10 (Immigrants create new jobs). I have again collapsed the eleven ESS categories into three: 0-3 (Immigrants take away jobs), 4-6 (immigrants probably take away and create new jobs), and 7-10 (immigrants add new jobs). Tables 22-26 show the results for each country and for each far radical-right party.

Table 22: Perceived Effect Immigrants have on Jobs by Party (France)¹²⁴

	Take Away-3	4-6	Create New Jobs
<u>Party</u>			
PC	19.5%	64.0%	16.5%
PS	15.4%	54.2%	30.4%
UDF	7.6%	69.2%	23.0%
UMP	25.1%	62.2%	12.5%
FN	60.5%	35.4%	4.1%

Table 23: Perceived Effect Immigrants Have on Jobs by Party (Italy)¹²⁵

	Take Away-3	4-6	Create New Jobs
<u>Party</u>			
PCI	44.4%	44.4%	11.1%
PSI	26.6%	48.8%	24.6%
FI	33.5%	45.3%	20.9%
LN	54.5%	27.3%	18.2%
AN	24.6%	60.0%	15.3%

¹²⁴ N= 36 PC, 277 PS, 52 UDF, 191 UMP, and 48 FN

¹²⁵ N= 9 PCI, 162 PSI, 170 FI, 11 LN, and 65 AN

Table 24: Perceived Effect Immigrants Have on Jobs by Party (Austria)¹²⁶

	Take Away-3	4-6	Create New Jobs
<u>Party</u>			
Grüne	11.8%	58.3%	29.9%
SPO	26.8%	58.0%	15.2%
OVP	21.2%	67.0%	11.8%
FPO	37.1%	57.1%	5.7%

Table 25: Perceived Effect of Immigrants on Jobs by Party (Belgium)¹²⁷

	Take Away-3	4-6	Create New Jobs
<u>Party</u>			
Agalev	16.0%	72.4%	11.4%
Ecolo	22.3%	59.2%	22.4%
SP	18.7%	62.7%	18.6%
PS	42.4%	50.4%	7.2%
VLO	23.8%	66.4%	9.7%
CVP	28.6%	58.1%	13.2%
VB	46.6%	46.7%	6.7%

¹²⁶ N= 221 Grüne, 465 SPO, 503 OVP, and 70 FPO

¹²⁷ 87 Agalev, 54 Ecolo, 134 SP, 125 PS, 226 VLD, 234 CVP, and 75 VB

Table 26: Perceived Effect of Immigrants on Jobs by Party (Far-Right)

	Take Away-3	4-6	Create New Jobs
<u>Party</u>			
FN	60.5%	35.4%	4.1%
LN	54.5%	27.3%	18.2%
AN	24.6%	60.0%	15.3%
FPO	37.1%	57.1%	5.7%
VB	46.6%	46.7%	6.7%

The results for the immigration question revealed that France’s Front National voters were the most likely of any party in the four countries I examined to believe that immigrants take away jobs with a solid 60.5% of FN respondents expressing this belief. Evidently Le Pen’s rhetoric of “2 million immigrants take the jobs of 2 million Frenchmen” has gained some traction with French voters, especially amongst those with lower skills sets who believe they are most likely to have their job taken by an immigrant worker.

Voters who supported Vlaams Blok and the Freedom Party of Austria were also the most likely in their respective countries to indicate that immigrants take away jobs. It should be noted that in both cases, Socialists were the second most likely to express this belief, and in Belgium there was only a 4% difference between French-speaking Socialists and Vlaams Blok voters who indicated that immigrants take away jobs (46.6% to 42.4% respectively). As I mentioned earlier, the FPO in particular was able to expand its base into Vienna’s working class neighborhoods, a traditional stronghold of the Austrian Socialists due to anxiety these blue-collar voters felt about

the influx of Eastern European immigrants into Austria which coincided with the end of the Cold War.

Alleanza Nazionale voters again did not answer as I expected. 60.0% of AN respondents fell into the moderate category on immigration and AN voters were the least likely of the major parties in Italian parties to indicate they believed immigration took away jobs. In contrast, the Italian Communists, Lega Nord, and Forza Italia voters expressed concern about immigrants and jobs at relatively high levels, despite a prominent belief that the Italian society is rapidly aging, and thus the Italian economy will likely face a labor shortage in the near future.

The study I have undertaken tests hypotheses that relate to theories about institutional trust and far-right voting, political interest and far-right voting, protest vote theory, and the beliefs voters have about immigration and job security. In regard to institutional trust, France's Front National and Belgium's Vlaams Blok voters indicated much lower levels of trust in their countries' parliaments than the voters who cast their ballots in support of mainstream parties. While indicating similar levels in trust of the Austrian Parliament as the other Austrian parties, the FPO voters revealed a high level of distrust for the supranational European Parliament, an expected result given the Austrian far-right's longstanding suspicion of the EU.

France's FN voters also indicated low interest in politics with 70% of Front National voters indicating they were not or were hardly interested in political affairs. This was nearly twice the proportion of Italian AN voters who answered the question in the same way, and the AN and LN voters in Italy were the most likely of any Italian voters to be very or quite interested in politics. The Austrian FPO voters indicated similar levels of interest compared with voters who cast their ballots for mainstream parties, and the same can be said for Vlaams Blok voters in Belgium. However, the latter (along with Belgium's French-speaking Socialists and Christian

Democrats) indicated levels of disinterest in politics at a rate that was twice that of the voters for the other parties in Belgian politics.

The only variable in my study in which every far-right party's voters compared to the other voters in their respective systems in the same way was the question that asked if politicians care what people like the respondent think. Every far-right party's voters were the most likely to think that hardly any politicians care about what people like them think. The effect was biggest in France and Belgium where 41.7% of Front National voters and 30.3% of Belgian Vlaams Blok voters answered the question in this manner. I believe these findings offer considerable evidence for the protest theory, which suggests far-right voters cast protest votes against parties they believe don't have their interests in mind. Perhaps it is this notion that politicians don't care about people that leads many of these voters to support parties that rail against the complacent and out-of-touch government that doesn't represent them.

In regard to immigration, all of the far-right voters except those who cast their ballot in favor of Alleanza Nazionale were the most likely to express the belief that immigrants take away jobs. The effect was again strongest in France, with 60.5% of Front National voters expressing this concern. In Austria and Belgium, the far-right voters were most likely to have this point of view, but they were followed closely by Socialists whose blue-collar voters had similar beliefs. This finding emphasizes the ability of far-right parties to attract voters from across the ideological spectrum by appealing to their concerns on issues such as immigration that many of the traditional, mainstream parties would prefer not to deal with.

Overall, I think the most important finding of my study was the amount of variance amongst the far-right voters cross-nationally. Many people have a stereotypical sense of far-right voters that they attempt to apply universally. In agreement with previous studies, I would

suggest that these parties are indeed products of their unique political system with quite different appeals and vote bases.

However, as far-right parties continue to participate in a significant way in politics, there will be a demand for more studies to investigate this phenomenon. The study I have conducted offers some insight into four countries where the radical-right has experienced a considerable level of success, but there is room for both more in-depth studies on these cases, and especially the cases where the far-right parties have thus far failed to be a relevant force in their country's politics. In addition, the current literature can be enhanced by both elaborate case studies that offer insight into one far-right party's situation and studies that examine far-right movements in a large number of countries. The latter body of work will be particularly needed as new far-right parties seem to be emerging in the former communist countries and Latin America.

IX. CONCLUSION

The far-right's recent successes in politics have caused considerable alarm in countries where these movements have gained traction, and abroad where opponents hope they will not. In Austria and Italy, the far-right has already participated in the governing coalition, indicating both a level of strength and clout which worries their domestic opponents and observers abroad. With Bulgaria and Romania's recent accession into the European Union, the far-right now has a recognized and funded caucus in *Identity, Sovereignty, and Tradition* which may prove to be a difficult force to contend with inside the European Parliament.

The far-right's success has come at a period of transition for Europe, as it moves closer towards uniting its eastern and western regions which were so bitterly divided in the second half of the twentieth century. In addition, the European Union faces the difficult task of getting all its member states to agree to a constitution which will establish the ground rules for some time to come. In this period of rapid economic and political changes, it is clear some voters have concerns that they feel are not being addressed by the mainstream parties, and thus are reaching out to far-right parties in frustration. In upcoming elections in the recent future, we may gather some insight into whether this far-right party success was a temporary phenomenon or if these radical-right parties are around to stay.

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**APPENDIX:
PARTIES AND ABBREVIATIONS INCLUDED IN THE STUDY**

Radical Right Parties

FN = Front National (France)

AN= Alleanza Nazionale (Italy)

LN= Lega Nord (Italy)

FPO= Freedom Party of Austria

VB = Vlaams Blok

France

PC= Communist Party

PS= Socialist Party

UDF= Union for French Democracy

UMP= Union for the Popular Movement

Italy

PCI = Communist Party

PSI= Socialist Party

FI= Forza Italia

Austria

Grüne = Green

SPO = Socialists

OVP= Conservatives

Belgium

Agalev = Flemish-speaking Greens

Ecolo= French-speaking Greens

SP= Flemish-speaking Socialists

PS= French-speaking Socialists

VLD= Flemish liberal Party

CVP= Christian Democrats (Flemish)

VITA

Nathan Price was born in Oregon, Ohio, in 1981. He is a 2000 graduate of Genoa Area High School where he was active in the school's soccer club, CYO basketball team, student council, and chapter of National Honor Society. In 2003, he studied at the Miami University Dolibois European Center located in Differdange, Luxembourg, completing a thematic sequence in the European cultural heritage. He is a 2004 graduate of Miami University. Upon graduation, he taught high school for a year, but ultimately decided to further his education. He is scheduled to graduate from Louisiana State University with a Master of Arts Degree in August of 2007. Nathan currently lives with his family in Genoa, Ohio.