



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

“Bin Kurz wählen”: Sebastian Kurz’s political success in view of right wing populism and Jörg Haider

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Thesis submitted as partial requirement for the conferral of Master in International Studies

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2018

Acknowledgements

I want to thank Katarina Milosevic, Luca Spiniello, Henrique Magalhães, and Valérie Brabanders for all the love and support they have provided me during the master, thesis, and in my life in general.

Abstract

The purpose of this work is to provide greater clarity on Sebastian Kurz, as he is the leader of moderate right wing political party in Austria, the ÖVP, but specifically on his political success in the context of modern day Austria. The country has been one of few European countries to elect an extreme right wing into parliament, and the traces of that are still being felt today. The main catalyst for that was Jörg Haider, who was an extremely successful Austrian politician from the 1980s up to his death in 2008. This work as such seeks out to find lines of comparison between the two, who share some common traits: having achieved great success at an early age, notable for their public presence and views on key right wing issues such as immigration. Finally, this work aims to put Sebastian Kurz in the framework of right wing populism and see how close his campaigning tactics, speeches, and viewpoints approach those of Haider's.

Abstrato

O objetivo deste trabalho é obter mais clareza sobre Sebastian Kurz, como é o líder do partido político de direita moderada na Áustria, o ÖVP, mas especificamente sobre o sucesso político dele no contexto da Áustria hoje em dia. O país tem sido um dos poucos países europeus a eleger um partido da extrema direita no parlamento, e os vestígios disso ainda se ressentem hoje. O principal catalisador para isso foi Jörg Haider, que foi um político austríaco extremamente bem-sucedido desde os anos 80 até sua morte em 2008. Este trabalho procura encontrar linhas de comparação entre os dois, que compartilham alguns traços comuns: sucesso em tenra idade, notável pela sua presença pública e pontos de vista sobre questões fundamentais de direita, como a imigração. Finalmente, este trabalho visa colocar Sebastian Kurz no quadro do populismo de direita e ver como suas táticas, discursos e pontos de vista de campanha se aproximam dos de Haider.

Keywords

Austria, populism, right wing, Kurz, Haider, campaign, immigration

Palavras-chaves

Austria, populismo, política direita, Kurz, Haider, campanha, imigração

Glossary of Acronyms

BZÖ: Bündnis Zukunft Österreich

FPÖ: Freiheitliche Partei Österreiches

MSI: Movimento Sociale Italiano

ÖRF: Österreich Radio Funk

ÖVP: Österreichische Volkspartei

SPÖ: Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1 Challenges & Definition of Extreme Right.....	4
1.2 Literature Review.....	7
2. Historical Context and Leadership of FPÖ & ÖVP.....	9
2.1 ÖVP and Kurz.....	9
2.2 FPÖ and Haider.....	12
3. Campaigning & Media	15
3.1 Kurz's campaigning and media strategy.....	18
3.2 Haider Campaigning & Media	21
4. Immigration.....	25
4.1 Kurz.....	25
4.2 Haider.....	31
5. National Socialism.....	38
5.1 Kurz.....	38
5.2 Haider.....	38
6. Conclusions.....	43
References	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Annex	I

1. Introduction

With the onset of the 2015 refugee crisis, several countries were heavily hit by the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers. The at the time newly minted chancellor of Austria himself, Sebastian Kurz, wrote an open letter in *Time* magazine at the end of 2017 on the pure statistical gatherings – in 2015 Austria took on nearly ninety-thousand asylum seekers, and the following year over forty-thousand, with only Sweden and Hungary outnumbering them (Kurz, 2017). The significance of this can be seen as the starting point of another upswing for the extreme right in Austria. To be clear, though, the extreme right as Piero Ignazi defines it can be considered as a deviation of the mainstream right party. Therefore, even if the FPÖ are not the leading party in government, 2017 marked their third entrance to parliament (after the 1999 and 2002 elections) as the co-leading party in the coalition with the ÖVP.

What this materializes as, however, is that Kurz actually represents a move to the moderate right wing agenda, resulting in no new expression of the emerging extreme right, but instead an alliance of the moderate right against members of the right. As such, Kurz, whose rise to political prominence was largely connected to his swift call for action and policies regarding the immigration channels and movements in his country in 2016 as foreign minister, came forward as the spokesperson for his party, the Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP).

This can be considered as a key reason for Kurz being called a populist, as opposed to belonging to the extreme right – as his platform is based on one key topic, without expanding further beyond that, he could incite the flames of populist sentiment in his voters and the general Austrian public. As a result, he helped ramp up his party's image in the public's eye, even changing it literally – under his leadership, the party's traditional black colors and banners were dropped for a light blue, to let others recognize the party as having changed from a stolid, archaic party to a younger, fresher one, much like Kurz. (At the time of writing, Kurz's age has been the subject of much discussion in the media, being a mere 31 years of age.)

The purpose of this thesis, in effect, is to analyze what in Kurz's discourse and message can be most closely found in Haider in order to determine the similarities and differences between the two. Seeing as Kurz has been in office only since December 2017, the natural result is that little academic work has been done on him beyond his work as Austrian foreign minister since 2015, where in which this work primarily dealt with his response the refugee crisis. However, there has been much discussion on the same issues that proved to be the foundation for Haider's political

platform. That said, it is key to understand the way in which this has taken shape and been molded on current political environments, both within the country and general attitudes on the world at large, over a span of twenty years.

This consists of the not new rise of right wing populism throughout all of Europe, although the ascent of right wing movements has garnered much local and international media attention. This includes within Austria itself, from an internal point of view, and those looking on from outside. Although the recent wave of populism has made headlines since 2015, this is not the first time that right wing populism has made waves in Austria, and as such it is noteworthy to analyze the different ways in which this has taken shape over the past three decades among diverse political actors and parties.

To understand why this is so, it is worth to remark, at least on a broader level, upon the foundation of Austrian identity and the issues that have most incited citizens to vote why they have, and which parties they feel best represent them. As a rather well off OECD country, with one of the best living standards of the world, let alone within the European Union (OECD, 2017), it could almost be deemed puzzling as to why or how right wing populism could have such a deeply planted root in such a well off society. As a result, one of the issues that most concerns Austrian natives is that of immigration, and all of the misgivings that it could lead to and influences it could have.

Another key element, perhaps more predictably, is the effect of unemployment, and how the combination of the two (immigrants taking employment from native-born Austrians), results in deep resentment. Also of interest, but while not completely within the scope of this work to fully explore, is the beleaguered pension system that Austria has, which has taken particular wear and tear over the years (No author, 2015), leading as well to economic uncertainty and negative forebodings for the future. While the full extent of unemployment is a subject that should be approached in more detail in future literary work, it is worth considering for the time being as one of the major vehicles that has pushed right wing governments and ideologies to take the forefront in Austrian parliament in different shapes over the past several decades.

Since Jörg Haider began to preside over the Freiheitliche Partei Österreiches (FPÖ) in Austria from the mid-1980s, the party took an unprecedented rise to parliament and governmental power a mere quarter of a century later through a coalition with one of the country's two main parties, the Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP). Although this initially ended up failing just a few years later, and the EU 14 members at the time cast sanctions over the country, right wing populism has been

on the rise in the country again. At the time of the FPÖ's original governmental failures in 2002 and after, many academics and pundits at the time remarked on how the inherent nature of the party as an anti-establishment party would lead to its own self-demise once it would take on the role of an institutionalized party and lose its anti-system veneer (Luther, 2001: p. 6). And while the conclusions they reached in the aftermath of these events had merit, the party has recently come into the government again having been inaugurated in November 2017 through a coalition once more with the ÖVP, and this is worth questioning considering the differing European political climate and attitudes between now and the early 2000s.

Kurz decided in December 2017 that his party would form a coalition with the FPÖ to lead the government, which garnered some political consternation throughout Europe, in particular from German media and other English language broadsheets (*The Economist*, *The Guardian*, etc). This, however, stands in stark contrast to the sanctions that had been imposed some 17 years earlier by European Union member states due to the outrage of having an extreme right wing party in the government. With the general rise of right wing sentiment throughout Europe, the situation in Austria could no longer be considered an exception, and far from an anomaly.

In all instances, the FPÖ is or was the junior partner in the coalition, but the persons to have caught the national limelight are without a doubt Haider and Kurz, despite coming from different parties. After the controversial coalitions between the ÖVP and FPÖ from 2000-2006, and up to Kurz's rise to the forefront, the leading political party in Austria was the Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ). To drive the point home even further, before the 1999 elections, the SPÖ had been the leading political party in Austria since 1966, and since 1955 the parliament had been in a continuous coalition between the SPÖ and ÖVP.

The relatively recent shakes up and changes with the Austrian demographics of politics has been of European interest for much of the last two decades, and with the recent developments of Kurz's new government, more changes can be expected. In addition, one must take into consideration what about these two figures in Kurz and Haider that appealed so much to the Austrian electorate, and as such, see what they share and have in common.

Therefore, my question is: In what ways has Sebastian Kurz's political discourse and rhetoric been based after Haider and the FPÖ?

As such, what I seek to do is analyze the campaign trails of both Haider and Kurz leading up to their eventual electorate victories, analyzing as such their discourse, speech patterns, manner, and

what topics they fall back on to strike a chord in the public. This work will have a more detailed analysis of both Kurz's and Haider's stances, such as on immigration, the church, and unemployment. It will seek to understand what their stances were or are on these issues, as well as looking at their party's press statements, interviews, campaigns, slogans in getting their message across to the Austrian people. Afterwards there will be a comparison between the two, and finally concluding remarks on what my findings have been. Furthermore, much international interest was generated by Haider and the FPÖ throughout the 90s and early 2000s.

Woschitz (2011) carried out some academic research on Haider's speaking style and campaigning efforts for the FPÖ, albeit primarily in German. Seeing as their campaigns were in German, and in particular most news and writing on Kurz has been focused within the German speaking world, this work can provide insight into both Kurz and Haider's campaign efforts in English.

1.1 Challenges & Definition of Extreme Right

One of the challenges facing the work at hand is defining precisely that which it aims to discuss: what the extreme right is. As noted by Hainsworth, the term is nebulous at best, and is "not agreed upon universally" (Hainsworth, 2008: p. 2). A good place to start, however, would be by clarifying what exactly the new European extreme right is not, or at least, what they have sought to distance themselves from. That said, the term "extreme right" is also not the standard term. Much like the parties that are largely considered extreme right themselves, the terminology has changed over time as well. "Right wing extremism" has been the go-to term since the 1970s, but before that "neo-fascism" and "neo-Nazism" had been used among researchers and academics. And as Ignazi points out, "until the 1980s the term extreme right was synonymous with that of neo-fascism" (Hainsworth, 2008: p. 34).

Furthermore, other terms like "radical right," "neo-populist," and "radical right wing populist" have conjointly been used. The clear line between the traditional, mainstream right wing has been blurred with the arrival of these non-mainstream parties. One way this can be seen is the difference between two strands of the "new right" from the 1980s. The first of which is classified as the French new right under Alain de Benoist (as exemplified by Greece, an ethnonationalist think-tank that began in 1968, a leading group of the Nouvelle Droite) and the Anglo-Saxon version as personified by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. The latter of which focused more on ideas like "the right to difference, anti-egalitarianism, and anti-universalism" (Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*, 2008: p. 34) This has resulted in some confusion in knowing how to categorize

the wide variety of right wing parties throughout Europe, especially as they are not uniform in any strict ideological consensus. A leading writer on the subject of populism and the extreme right, Mudde (2006) wrote: “I define populism as an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus the “corrupt elite” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* of the people”¹ (Geden, 2006: p. 19).

As Geden also notes, “in specific cases, it can be justified that “right wing populism” on the basis of its ideological orientation can also be classified as extreme right, whereas within the extreme right there are a variety of ways in which there is nothing populist that adheres to it” (Geden, 2006: p. 19)

Bale also provides key insight into the issue of where these political ideologies meet on their respective spectrum, stating as such that “center right politicians have begun to inhabit the same discursive universe as their far right counterparts” (Bale, 2003: p. 75). This of course renders the argument more difficult, especially as will be seen upon further inspection in the case of the FPÖ/ÖVP. From a more Germanophone perspective, the term of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (ethnic community) lies at the heart of the entire new right movement (Hockenos, 1995: pp. 75-80). The concept of the people, as tied together by descent, tradition, and fate, is now commonly referred to as a racist term as utilized by the Nazis in spreading their propaganda.

While many have attempted to trace and define the new extreme right in alignment with their ancestors, the fascists and Nazis from the first half of the twentieth century from the pre Second World War period, this perception would not entirely be appropriate. The new extreme right can be categorized separately, primarily through the distinction of time periods. The traditional extreme right can be loosely considered as having arisen in the wake of the Second World War, perhaps most visibly first in Italy in 1946 with the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), which paid tribute to Mussolini and the country’s former fascist inclinations. As a result, to develop a common ground upon which these parties can generally be compared on, most began as anti-establishment parties, anti-democratic in nature, with racist and nationalist tones.

¹ Mudde (2004: 560) macht zurecht darauf aufmerksam, dass populistische Formationen zwar beständig Ressentiments gegen *die* Eliten schüren, es sich bei ihren Führungspersonlichkeiten meist aber keineswegs um Angehörige randständiger sozialer Gruppen handelt. Viele Parteiführer seien deshalb treffend mit dem Begriff ›Außenseiter-Eliten‹ zu beschreiben, „connected to the elites, but not part of them“.

Otherwise, their trajectories and lifespans can generally be classified as beginning as outsiders on the political scene, protesting against the establishment, and gradually streamlining their approach and policies in order to be able to access parliamentary or governmental roles. When measured in terms of actually being able to winning majority votes in elections and heading over government, there have been few bona fide success stories, with Austria being a notable example in this regard. But the spread of right wing populism, or extreme right parties as represented in government, either locally or in the European Union, has been felt, regardless of being able to break through (the Front National in France would be a good example of this).

What is most difficult about these parties to fully grasp is how fluid they are – they change their programs and images in order to be able to get closer to what it is they want: namely governmental power. Interestingly, though, is how this is not specific just to the FPÖ, as it can also pertain to mainstream parties. As Luther explains, “While the ÖVP had dropped its social welfare orientation rooted in Catholic traditionalism as it changed through the late 1980s and early 1990s, the FPÖ seemed to pick up on social welfare as its ideological positions became clearer in the late 1990s. The FPÖ was seeking to establish a more professional image with a goal of replacing the ÖVP as the main right of center party in Austria” (Luther, 2011: pp. 453-470). Of particular interest is how these confused ideologies in opposing directions helped the FPÖ solidify its base and find new supporters who had grown weary of the ÖVP.

In general, this tendency to malleability is normal, as parties and movements do not have to be rigid in how they define themselves, and as times change so do societal needs (Gotsbachner, 2012: p. 147). As Taggart notes, “populism (is) rather a set of ideas than ideology ... populist parties mostly prefer an interchangeable party concept to ideological consistency, in order to adjust the party program to the populations’ demands” (Taggart, 2000: p. 4). This would exemplify how, for the extreme right, one of their most defining aspects is how they have succeeded in developing and modifying their goals and changing their images over time. In the Austrian case, the FPÖ was founded by former Nazis shortly after the State Treaty was signed in 1955, and were largely ignored until they started streamlining their policies and getting closer to the mainstream parties. This can be clearly seen as how “in order to win voters and express allegiance to the Austrian nation-state, the FÖRFPÖ has had to move further away from a pan-German nationalism towards imagining an Austrian nationalism that is Eurosceptic, ethnocentric, and anti-immigrant” (Hainsworth, 2008: p. 81).

Several authors have noted how the FPÖ's chameleon-like abilities have helped it stay alive and adapt, with Hainsworth commenting how the party had to "adopt a more economic liberal and mainstream position" (Hainsworth, 2008: p. 33) after a decade of electoral failures. By the early 1980s this had resulted in some parliamentary success, as they joined a coalition with the SPÖ in 1983 as the junior partner. However, at that stage, the FPÖ was still a liberal party, which would change when Haider would join their ranks three years later in 1986. However, even in the context of the FPÖ post-1986, with Haider at the helm, his stances and views on several matters changed and fluctuated in order to reach the largest audience possible, such as his positioning and take on the European Union, despite his controversial comments and rhetoric. That said, as Ignazi pointed out, the accession of Haider meant "a different program in which the forgotten, nationalistic, pan-German position returned" (Ignazi, 2008: p. 112).

1.2 Literature Review

The main sources used for this thesis are qualitative in nature and come from the campaign trails of Kurz (from 2013 to 2018) and Haider (particularly in the early 90s), interviews of theirs, videos from YouTube, party programs, and social media efforts. Secondary sources come from literature review magazines, and books that focus on the rise of populism and the new right within Europe, and naturally within Austria as well. General newspapers, magazines, and interviews with quotes and historical background for the defining moments and key issues for both the FPÖ and ÖVP will always be used to fill in whatever gaps that were found within the academic literature. Campaign slogans, promises, and motions that were put on the voter's ballots at the behest of Haider's FPÖ and Kurz's ÖVP will also be analyzed, providing a more visual aspect. The influence and appeal of these ads and campaigns will also be taken into consideration.

As such, this research, while not following their approach directly as that is not entirely pertinent here, will consider the discourse analytical methodology, as it can be a method others in the future can use to approach this subject in a different manner. Discourse analysis is a set of techniques in which it is possible to create a series or web of connections between texts and their meanings. Originally formulated for the analysis of purely linguistic texts, discourse analysis methods have come to form the basis for analyzing "texts" that consist not just of words, but also of visual forms such as images and diagrams (static or animated), full-motion video, sound effects and music, and various interactive features (Lemke, 2012: pp. 79-90). In this way, discourse analysis is defined as

the analysis of language going “beyond the sentence,” or in other terms, the study of language patterns.

2. Historical Context and Leadership of FPÖ & ÖVP

Before going further into the analysis of the rhetoric and campaigns of Haider and Kurz and their respective parties, it would make most sense to specifically state the platforms on which these entities are at their core comprised of, and go into the background of their respective most important leaders. When discussing ideologies and politics, which are constantly moving and changing, parties are not static or stationary. What incites people to vote, also for different parties, can and does change over the course of time. That is one of the greatest difficulties of the work at present – the defining political movements and statements of the country are not one and the same, especially as the time span covered here is from 1986 to 2018. However, the key issues can more or less be categorized accordingly.

First, there are now three main parties in Austria. The ÖVP is the first, which is a classical center right wing party. The second is the SPÖ, a traditional center left wing party, which have been largely characterized by coalitions together that rarely resulted in any meaningful change within the country. Finally is the FPÖ, the extreme right wing party that has been continually gaining traction since the 1980s.

2.1 ÖVP and Kurz

As both are on the right side of the political spectrum, the ÖVP found a, ideologically speaking, potential government partner more along the lines of their key concerns and matters. Therefore, creating a coalition with the FPÖ could make more sense and be more in line with their values than further extenuations of the impasses when working with the SPÖ. The development and rise of the FPÖ in Austria over the course of these nearly thirty years is a testimony to this, as the FPÖ established itself over time as an anti-establishment party seeing as there were and still are only two other main parties in Austria that have a legitimate chance of reigning over the government. Therein, however, lies the controversy at the heart of this work – a mainstream party working with a perceived dangerous, populist party in a democratic European country sparked concern and anxiety in 1999 and again in 2017/2018. However, this is the third time since 1999 that the two parties have worked together as the leading government, with the FPÖ always as the junior partner (the first time was 1999, second in 2002, and third in 2017). The conditions of their most recent success, of course, are different than in the past – the FPÖ was actually leading in votes until Kurz took over the leadership of the ÖVP in May 2017 (Jäger, 2017). Subsequently the FPÖ lost some of its momentum, although they still achieved their second best result in parliamentary elections

(26%), only slightly below their 1999 outcome at almost 27% (The Guardian, 2017). Therefore, something about their politics resonates within Austrian society, and they saw something in Kurz that they felt reflected their wishes as well. As such, this is why it is key to understand what it is about Kurz and how close he is, within the mainstream right wing party, to actually portraying the extreme right, and if his politics also fan the flames of populist anger and fear.

On the other hand, the ÖVP “profiles itself as a standard Christian-Democratic party with conservative (in an Austrian context, visibly Catholic-oriented) moral culture stances, with limited support of the market economy” (Hajda, 2010: p. 12). There is research and deeper analyses on the party, but within the context from 1986 to the present day, it is on a much smaller scale in comparison to that which can be found on the FPÖ. From this perspective, it is important to understand what about Kurz’s rise to the summit of the party means, as this was classified in the media as a major break from typical party processes, as they label themselves now “the new party for the people” (die neue Volkspartei).

The ÖVP have, as such, struggled to differentiate themselves. They want to be different from the other right wing parties in Austrian politics, namely the FPÖ and BZÖ, yet they wish to remain in the center, which has proven to put them under some difficulties. What further makes this difficult is how that, on social and economic issues, there is not much that distinguishes the three from each other, in particular regarding economic liberalism and social conservatism (Williams, 2013: p. 83). That being said, however, the FPÖ has clearly been the leader among the three for championing greater social welfare and reduced taxes, although the two in some way counterbalance the other. As Sebastian Kurz is the leader of the ÖVP, it would be useful to briefly reflect upon and review what has shaped the ÖVP to be the party it is today and how it has change, in particular how it has not changed over the years. Of particular salience is how this has changed under Kurz's to this point brief leadership. This will also permit a chance to understand the points where the ÖVP and FPÖ converge and can be different. Some points can also be made regarding their relationship with other since the mid-1980s and how they have helped or damaged the other.

The ÖVP, by all accounts, can be considered a "standard Christian democratic party with conservative (in an Austrian context, a visibly Catholic-oriented one) moral cultural attitudes and a limited support of liberal economics ... with the party furthermore wishing that the country gradually be a member of NATO, and is clearly Euro-optimistic " (Hajda, 2010: p. 12). In other words, the ÖVP is a largely typical center right wing party, which from the late 1940s to the late

1960s was the leading political power in Austria. Its failings and shortcomings have been noteworthy and frequent since the 1970s, in large part to its organizational structure and inability to adapt to changing outside circumstances.

As Muller and Steininger (1994) pointed out, "adaptation of the party organization to a changing environment is, in the long run, the only viable strategy for party goal achievement ... while the ÖVP's environment was subject to important changes, all of which worked against the party, it has failed to adapt to them. ... this has reduced the competitiveness of the ÖVP" (Müller & Steininger, 1994: p. 1). They largely attribute this failure to its internal structure, which is composed of several differing leagues and factions, making the ÖVP "[among all western European parties] probably the most shaped by factionalism" (Müller & Steininger, 1994: p. 2), including business and farming leagues, among other occupational groups. Shifting demographics and societal changes have also been a factor in this. In the 1940s and 1950s, the ÖVP won by far the most votes among farmers and religious voters. Despite the previous affirmation of the ÖVP's core and basis in Catholicism, "while more than 80 percent of Austrians are Catholics ... regular attendance at mass dropped from 30% between 1951 to 18% in 1989" (Müller & Steininger, 1994: p. 6), proving that its internal composition remained largely the same as external shifts were occurring. To this day, religious voters remain one of the ÖVP's main groups, but as well "voters of the ÖVP tend to have an advanced age and a higher work and education status" (Danner, 2014: p. 13).

These changes, or lack thereof, however, are not entirely representative of the situation. As Muller and Steininger noted, "the organizational inertia of the ÖVP is in stark contrast to the party's large ideological mobility over the post-war period" (Müller & Steininger, 1994: p. 25). One of the main theories they were trying to prove in their work was the response the ÖVP put up when faced with electoral defeat or difficulties. Due to the intrinsically complicated nature of their structure, it was a difficult task to undergo true reform. This was so despite clear efforts that they wanted to improve upon their diminishing turnout at the polls. Where Muller and Steininger point out that ideological adaptation was one of the key ways in which they did try to reach out to voters (pointing out, in particular, the "introduction of an eco-social market economy rather than organizational reform" (Müller & Steininger, 1994: p. 21), Williams posits that although right of center thought and policy dominated the political landscape in the 1980s and 1990s in Austria, the incoherent mish-mash of

ideologies only served to undermine the ÖVP in its attempt to widen their appeal (Williams, 2013: p. 76).²

In Riegler's view, the introduction of this eco-social aspect to the ÖVP in the early 1990s, which dealt with ecological concerns and "incorporated environmental trade-offs with the economy" (Williams, 2013: p. 76) was at odds with the other major ideological positions within the party, namely those of traditional neo-conservatism and neo-liberal economics. Despite their attempts to make some kind of reform, they suffered even more losses in the 1990 elections. The party's more traditionally lined ideals regarding family values and morality stood as such in sharp contrast with its newer approach of focus on individualism - "for instance, individual responsibility became a key framework applied to addressing contemporary problems. In sum, the ÖVP [went] through an identity crisis [during the 1980s and 1990s]" (Williams, 2013: p. 76). Furthermore, as previously noted, the loss in votes from church-goers may also be in alignment with other ideological shifts in the 1980s, whereby "they pressed for preservation of family values albeit with less of a church-sponsored or social welfare state component than they had maintained in previous decades" (Williams, 2013: p. 76).

This is an element on Kurz that makes his connection to the party and his rise to power so interesting. First, he became the *Staatssekretär* (state secretary) of integration when he was just twenty-five. Two years later, in 2013, he was already the government's Minister of Foreign Affairs. He can also be seen in an advertisement to vote for the ÖVP during the campaign election, which can be seen as an early indication of where things could go. As Bodlos and Plescia remarked, Kurz proved to be a forceful figure within the party, demanding that he "single-handedly [nominate] government members and the candidates for the third (national) tier of the electoral ballot" (Bodlos & Plescia, 2018: p. 2). They later point out his role in calling for the snap elections that occurred in October 2017, as well as completely changing the party's image and banners. Since 2017, the ÖVP labels themselves as "The New People's Party". With his youthful image, and emphasis on making politics "cool again", Kurz won over the hearts of many voters in Austria.

2.2 FPÖ and Haider

Ultimately, the key issues that have defined the platform of the FPÖ in attaining their popularity can be divided according to the following: immigration, anti-corruption measures, law and order, unemployment, gender, the European Union, the church, and social politics (namely their

² See Ennser (2012 p 167)

controversial pension system). Several of these elements can be combined with other ones, such as more immigration leading to higher Austrian-native unemployment, but all of these factors have played a major role in defining the Austrian political landscape over the past three decades. And with the rise of Haider and his controversial tactics in winning over votes, much has been written on him, including each of the aforementioned issues. With the perceived danger of the FPÖ, many have made an attempt to try and understand better the underlying reasons for their success, in particular through Haider.

In order to understand the context better of who Haider was, and what helped shape his own identity, an important aspect to consider would be his family history – his parents were national socialists and he had grown up with the concept of Austria as being an extension of Germany (Bunzl, 1992: p. 32). This would later prove to be one of his largest political points throughout the 1980s, of Austrians being “national Germans”, or *Deutschnational*. What this means is that while not all of the Nazis’ ideologies were exactly replicated, several of them found their way in these *Deutschnational* political parties in the wake of the Second World War, including the aforementioned *Volksgemeinschaft* concept, German nationalism, anti-Semitism, and anti-communism. Identity politics as such always played an important role since his early days as a politician, and this was the heart of both Haider’s and the FPÖ’s politics. Even as a youth, at the age of sixteen, he said “the noblest of tasks is resistance against all attempts to separate Austria from Germanness” (Bunzl, 1992: p. 33).

His position on being a German national portrayed a natural linking point between Haider and the FPÖ at the beginning. Before he joined it in 1986, the party was markedly more German nationalistic in nature (Hainsworth, 2008: p. 72), whereas from that moment on that would become increasingly subdued, and replaced instead with a more Austrian nationalist approach, as they saw that that would result in better showings at the polls. The goal to win more votes was always the number one priority – “in order to win voters and express allegiance to the Austrian nation-state, the FPÖ has had to move further away from a pan-German nationalism towards imagining an Austrian nationalism that is Eurosceptic, ethnocentric, and anti-immigrant” (Hainsworth, 2008: p. 81).

The FPÖ’s early success was largely attributed to the charismatic and energetic way in which its leader, Haider, carried himself in interviews and spoke to the people. By the time the party entered governmental office in 2000, Haider himself had had to officially (although not entirely) step down

as chairman of his party's ranks, and did not enter government due to the controversy. With the party facing further splintering in the immediate aftermath of the FPÖ reaching the parliament, Haider then created another party, the Bündnis Zukunft Österreich (BZÖ), in 2005, which has not had anywhere near the same amount of parliamentary success that the FPÖ has had.

That meant that Haider was replaced with Heinz-Christian Strache since 2005 as the party's leader, and although not a key figure at the forefront of this work, his stances and beliefs should also be considered to some extent when analyzing his policies and where he wishes to direct the FPÖ in the future. This is all the more relevant as he is, by extension, the current Austrian vice-chancellor and will have to work with Kurz in unifying their beliefs and how they wish to execute their strategies.

While the FPÖ in the late 1980s and early 1990s was not defined by its economic platform, it managed to get more voters that leaned towards liberal market economics. In detriment to the SPÖ as opposed to the ÖVP, however, but still relevant considering the growing divisions between the two and inability to deliver on substantial reforms, was the FPÖ's ability to draw on disenfranchised workers and common people. In this way, both parties contributed towards the rise of the FPÖ, beyond just the speaking power and charisma of their leader. Succinctly put, however, is that this resulted in them "[losing] their strategic advantage, allowing the terms and issues to be dictated by the FPÖ ... As one party general secretary put it, leaders of the two mainstream parties appeared to be very afraid of the FPÖ and the way that Jorg Haider was able to mobilize people" (Williams, 2013: p. 77).

3. Campaigning & Media

Before speaking on Kurz in greater detail, the last aspect to mention in differentiating the two parties on the political spectrum is a more detailed look at how similar (or not) they carried out their campaigns leading up to the 2013 election. KJ Danner wrote a detailed comparison of the two elections, providing invaluable insight on where the two parties meet, which, as he proved, occurs more often than not (Danner, 2014: p. 32). In his research, he highlights a few key strategies that right wing populist parties employ to win over votes: personalization, politics of national identity, anti-establishment attitudes, emotionalization, and simplification. This insight is important to recognize from an academic literature standpoint where the ÖVP was before Kurz became their leader and eventual chancellor of Austria, because it is one of the few sources available that indicates just how close the ÖVP was to the FPÖ, even sometimes exceeding the FPÖ at their own populist style and game (Danner, 2014: p. 32). This, as such, is invaluable to analyze the present situation.

On their own, these terms can be understood best within context: personalization is by emphasizing a sole figure (or the leader) of the party, national identity is focusing on the will of the native born people over others, anti-establishment attitudes as in being a protest party trying to uproot the system, emotionalization works by arousing voters to feel strongly on certain issues, and simplification is a method through which complicated or detailed matters become simplified by easy answers or solutions regardless of the complexity.

His savvy online networking skills, youthful exuberance, and positive energy contributed much to his success as well, not least the diplomatic way in which he carries out his business. Newspapers and magazines in Germany have already paid attention to his success and have highlighted aspects of his campaign trail that their politicians could copy in the future (two sources here, paste later). Kurz, as such, was able to breathe new life into a political party that desperately needed reform and change, while at the same time using the refugee crisis to his benefit as a means to speak out on his political agenda.

To best understand his point of view, and how his campaign worked, it would be important to look at the campaign tactics used for the ÖVP and Kurz himself, and also look at how media has portrayed him, in addition to his relationship with the media. As a politician, and a successful one at that, having been the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the issue of immigration (especially "out of

control", un-educated, low-level immigration) has been one of the topics most often approached by Kurz, and certainly one of those that has led to the natural *Bündnis* with the ÖVP.

None of these aspects are unique to populist parties, and as can be seen, mainstream parties like the ÖVP also use them. What is different, however, is the degree to which populist parties use them, which is significantly higher than mainstream ones. Case in point, Hartleb points out how some typical strategies for populist parties are how they respond to modern society's issues, by criticizing immigration, Islamophobia, anti-globalization, and being Euro-skeptica (Hartleb, 2011, p. 65). As Danner notes, "the FPÖ applied the determined strategies of populism [in the 2013 electoral campaign] to a higher degree than the ÖVP. More remarkable, however, is the ÖVP's campaign as it clearly shows populist tendencies which might not have been expected" (Danner, 2014: p. 32). This can also be understood naturally to some extent: when a mainstream party is part of the so-called establishment, it is difficult to go against them without undermining their own credibility. As Schoen notes, "governing parties, in general the established parties, focus on achievements and political successes. In contrast, opposition parties tend to act more offensively, for example by doubting the governments' competencies and advocating change and reforms" (Schoen, 2005: p. 508). The importance of this research was that it emphasized the actual campaigning strategies, for as other authors have noted, online media campaigning and television advertisements had, up to 2013, been much less utilized in comparison with print media and posters, with parties spending as much as "90% of their budget on advertisements in magazines and newspapers" (Dolezal & Zeglovits, 2014: p. 646). This would change within the most recent election, but the idea is to provide an idea of how the two parties campaigned before this *Aufbruch* in the Austrian campaigning strategy. There is even a national law on how the political parties can spend on their elections, with the limit amounting seven million euros (Danner, 2014: p. 14), but these numbers were clearly surpassed, for example with Team Stronach, reporting to have spent roughly thirty million euros on their campaign in 2013, another neo-liberal right wing party that started gaining ground in the 2000s in Austria (Dolezal & Zeglovits, 2014: p. 646) .

Danner's definitions the aforementioned strategies regarding analyzing populist messages could largely be found within both parties' campaigns (personalization, national identity, etc). He had his own postulations that all of these elements would be more strongly used by the FPÖ. Some of these examples include "using personal speech" (personalization), "referring to *Heimat*" or "we/our/your" pronouns (national identity), "accusations" or "refusal of the legitimacy of the

government" (anti-establishment attitudes), "arousal of negative/positive emotions" or "touching sensitive issues" (emotionalization), and "use of easy syntax and diction" (simplification") (Danner, 2014: pp. 19-20). He analyzed twenty-seven FPÖ and twenty-two ÖVP advertisements in print media, and found that regarding personalization, FPÖ overwhelmingly beat the ÖVP, with 96% of the FPÖ's ads including a visual of Strache, as opposed to a mere 23% including a picture of the then ÖVP leader Michael Spindelegger. However, both frequently used pronouns like "I" or "we" in their messages. Despite the visual prominence of Strache, the message was to vote for the party, not for him, therefore resulting in a more balanced than at first glance perspective of this aspect. Regarding national identity, both extensively used the colors of the Austrian flag in the backgrounds of their campaign ads, although referring to Austria was much less, and "never referred to Austrians" (Danner, 2014: p. 23). One element that could perhaps be of some surprise is how anti-establishment attitudes were prevalent not just for the FPÖ, but also for the ÖVP. In the case of the FPÖ, this can be expected, and in 2013, it was the party that most attacked the others, including the ÖVP, but "39% percent of the ÖVP's advertisements attacked other parties" (Danner, 2014, p. 24). In the ÖVP's case, they attacked the SPÖ, the government with whom they were jointly governing at the time, including warning against future coalitions between the SPÖ and the Greens. As could perhaps be expected, the ÖVP abstained from any negative remarks on right wing, populist or otherwise, parties, and the main content of these anti-establishment messages were indeed different, as the two parties have wildly varying views on the European Union, for instance.

Regarding emotionalization, as has been already noted in this work, emotions such as fear and anger are common ploys utilized by right wing populist parties, so it can be expected that the FPÖ would exploit these feelings as well. One image for the FPÖ displays Strache, with the headline saying "A stop to social rip offs – we fight for your money" (see Annex 1, Figure 1). The ÖVP also spoke of money, particularly tax issues, in their campaigns, so their language can also be considered "exaggerated and illustrative", for example calling a tax measure to be an "avalanche of fees" (Danner, 2014: p. 25). In contrast to the FPÖ, the ÖVP focused much more on positive aspects, such as "job places", "relief", and placing the ÖVP's leader as "honest, reliable, dynamic". Finally, simplification is an aspect that although would normally be thought the FPÖ would use for their benefits, the ÖVP also displayed a tendency to simplify their stances on important issues. The FPÖ, first, gave simple solutions to difficult situations, like "[calling] for cutting off fees and taxes and

give promises to higher social benefits at the same time" (Danner, 2014: p. 29). Whereas the FPÖ gave simple solutions, the ÖVP made their advertisements as simplistic as possible, with one thought or idea per ad in the heading. In this sense, the FPÖ drew attention to complicated matters, but the ÖVP kept it as barebones as possible. In this sense, the ÖVP proved to be even more simplistic, although with less of a focus on negative aspects, as was the case with the FPÖ.

What this research exhibits is the different ways in which populist strategies can be used by not just blatant parties, confirming what Mudde had stated before that the lines can be blurred between the two. The ÖVP, however, of course, did not become the leading party in 2013, despite performing better than the FPÖ. The winning formula seemed to be within Kurz's campaign, which begs the question to what extent he used populist strategies in his campaigning efforts, and how much of these elements can be found within Jorg Haider.

3.1 Kurz's campaigning and media strategy

The ÖVP, as such, before Kurz took leadership in May 2017, was in disarray. In national polls leading up to the 2017 election for a full two years, the FPÖ was the most popular party in the country by a good 30%. With a firmly pro-European Union stance, as well as anti-immigrant, which was in line with his FPÖ brethren, Sebastian Kurz swept the stage in Austrian politics. Although international media have portrayed him as a far right populist (Emily Schultheis, 2017) and some of his manners and techniques are distinctly populist, his style and rhetoric are much more streamlined and mainstream. One key difference between Kurz and Haider is their approach to public discourse: Kurz is rarely, if ever, inflammatory, and his way of speaking is significantly more subdued as to rarely incite strong backlash. The relationship with the media is also better: Kurz's campaign in 2017 was strongly backed and based on a digital platform, through "Team Kurz" on social media, including his Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. Although some of his comments on these media have received some scorn in the public eye, his way of utilizing the most modern ways of online communication proved to help push him and his reformed party toward their 2017 electoral victory.

What distinguishes Kurz from the get go from Haider, for example, is his positive attitude to many subjects. His youthful vibrancy is visible in videos, and has been since the beginning. One of his earliest, and most notable, campaigns for the ÖVP was "Schwarz macht geil" in 2010 (Black is cool), with black being then the ÖVP's official party color. He utilized, as such, a "Geil-o-mobile"(a "hot" car) for the press, and carried an official party, stating that "It's going to get amazing in the

campaign because all young people know that Schwarz does super politics, Schwarz has incredible parties, and Schwarz makes Vienna so cool, which is why we decided to start this youth campaign, beginning tonight" (Kurz, 2011).

This immediately positive, even if youthfully naïve, approach is perhaps the largest factor that separates the two in how they discuss and carry out their politics. This is important to mention, as the positivity is not as easy to cull from his writing style, as will primarily be analyzed here. That said, however, the diplomatic abilities that Kurz has must be emphasized – even when touching on difficult, serious matters, Kurz is rarely negative.

This has even been commented on in the press, with one journalist going so far as to say that, during an hour long German television program, "Not a single bad word. Not on Angela Merkel, not on the FPÖ, not about Donald Trump. ... Not a single bad word from Sebastian Kurz, not even after sixty minutes" (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 2018).

While the SZ newspaper has been visibly anti-Kurz, and is one of Germany's most liberal print media, their message here, ultimately, was his inability in defending his positions beyond mere platitudes and vague answers. This, in some aspect, is one area where Haider and Kurz can draw the most similarities – Haider was famously vague and when asked upon his particular stances, as was seen earlier in this work. He was given the time to defend himself and his controversial stances. As regarding the Geil-o-mobil, however, since 2010, when Kurz was just twenty-three years old, the politician has matured and gotten older, but has not lost his touch with the youth, as can be seen through his political campaign.

By changing the party's banner color, design, and marketing strategy (by putting a particular emphasis on social media), Kurz has focused on branding himself as the ÖVP's modern poster boy. Slick images of posters focusing predominantly on Kurz's face, with the new cyan color, were part of an effort of "Team Kurz", Kurz's own social media efforts to have voters vote for him, with the focus of the campaigns being on "Kurz 2017", and "Vote for Kurz, the New People's Party", with an X over a ballot box next to ÖVP. Slogans included brief, vague, yet catchy sayings, such as "*Diesmal Kurz*" ("This time let's make it quick/This time Kurz", a play on words since his last name means short or brief in German) (see Annex 1, Figure 2). Another example referring this play on words was "*Bin Kurz wählen*" (see Annex 1, Figure 3), ("Went to vote quickly/Went to vote for Kurz") this time without his face, but with black print over the bright cyan and white party banner colors. Other ads emphasized short, content-void messages. Another instance was "Jetzt. Oder

nie!"("Now. Or never!") (see Annex 1, Figure 4) which can clearly be a draw on the emotionalization aspect in the previous section, gathering up the anxieties of the voters that if they do not vote for Kurz their chance to change their lives is limited or would be over.

Further displays of clearly populist strategies can be seen in the national identity motion to emphasize "*Österreich zurück an die Spitze: Für uns alle*" ("Austria back on top: For all of us") (Die Presse, 2017). Finally, with Kurz in clear view, "*Tun, was richtig ist. Für Österreich*" (Do what is right. For Austria") (see Annex 1: Figure 5). Despite not having the colors of the Austrian flag this time, the themes and strategies so used by the FPÖ in 2013 come in clearer focus than in previous ÖVP attempts. While not explicitly anti-establishment, Kurz clearly posits himself (and by default his party) as the answer to solve the problems caused by other parties, by being something new and different that they cannot offer Austrian citizens. As such, by emphasizing the "we" notion of Austrians, what is best for the country, and drawing on voter anxiety, with little emphasis on clear policies and highly simplistic terminology, most of the populist strategies previously mentioned can be seen in use in full flight. The one ad that was found that spoke of any kind of policies also utilized simplistic designs, of cyan and white, with an icon for each talking point. Some of these talking points include "*Neuer Stil in Regierung*" (New style in government"), "*Klima- und Energiestrategie*" (Climate and energy strategies"), "*Verwaltung effizienter & serviceorientierter machen*" ("Make management more efficient and service oriented") towards the bottom, with "*Mehr Sicherheit für unser Land*" ("More security for our country") and "*Familienbeihilfe ins Ausland angepasst*" (Family assistance adapted for people abroad") at the very top (see Annex 1: Figure 6). The slogan is again brief, "*Versprochen. Gehalten!*", which means "Promised. Kept my word!" This ad was posted on the Team Kurz Facebook page on February 20, 2018 (Facebook: Team Kurz, 2018), indicating that these were matters promised during the campaign trail, but no such promises were mentioned in the actual ads themselves.

Beyond the Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts, there were also measures in public that were included for online sharing. In summer 2017, Team Kurz set up platforms in public squares with a cyan-colored door with the words "Open. For you" written on them, a good occasion for photo-ops (see Annex 1: Figure 8). On July 15, Team Kurz wrote on Facebook, "Already 77,000 supporters for Sebastian Kurz. Many of them have passed through this door to be a part of our movement. We're overjoyed over each and every one of them who wishes to join us in changing Austria for the better" with a man opening the door for (presumably) his two young children to join

him on the other side, among other images of family and friends part of the "movement". In addition to this initiative, there were cyan-colored cars with the label "*Team Kurz: Ich bin dabei* (Team Kurz: Count me in)" on the doors that circulated streets to spread the message (see Annex 1: Figure 8).

However, despite these methods and strategies to win cheap, emotionalized votes, there is content to Kurz behind the methods used to get it across. As has been pointed out, populist strategies can be used in a wide variety of manners, and Kurz goes beyond the typical tropes and restrictions of it: whereas Haider and Strache were/are hostile to the media, Kurz likes to use the media to his benefit, and has been open and clear in his discourse, particularly in writing. Although Haider wrote a book in 1993, *Freiheit, die ich meine* (a reference to a popular German song from the 19th century), and he loved the attention he received from the media, Haider was not someone who willingly shared his clear thoughts with the media, particularly in written form.

3.2 Haider Campaigning & Media

As can be understood, Haider was a prominent politician long before the rise of social media. This means that a direct comparison with Kurz is impossible as they used different platforms: Kurz, as seen above, uses social media and technology to spread his message easily. Haider, on the other hand, used more traditional means when campaigning, and that is mainly through radio and television broadcasts, interviews, appearances on talk shows, and especially slogans. This section will focus primarily on the slogans as those were also prominently used by Kurz in his successful campaign run, and are the easiest to compare.

Another difference to note here is that the data on Haider is of course much more, as he had the chance to run several times for office. The slogans presented here range throughout the 1990s. In the lead up to the winning campaign in 1999, one of the main slogans used was "We guarantee to put an end to over-foreignization" (see Annex 1: Figure 9). In the image next to it, it is possible to see another sign that states, "We guarantee to put an end to abusing the asylum system". On a platform of "increasing social benefits, introducing a 23% flat tax, decreasing immigration, cutting the size of the government, injecting a more entrepreneurial spirit into the economy, and fighting corruption" (Freeman, 2002: p. 116), Haider succeeded in splitting up the coalition between the ÖVP and SPÖ.

One salient instance whereby Haider showed his prowess in commanding crowds, and exemplifying his ability to change his mind on a subject and convince those listening to follow suit,

was on the European Union. Before Austria joined the European Union in 1995, Haider and the FPÖ were pro-European Union, but when he saw that there was a chance to gain ground on the EU-skeptic side of the debate, he changed his tune (Gotsbachner, 2012: p. 144). Although he was on the losing end of this argument, he became the spearhead for anti-EU sentiment, could claim it as his own, and set the standard for other parties in the future to approach this subject as well. Although one could consider these tactics to be opportunistic, to gain as many votes as possible no matter in what way, their results were long-lasting and still have resonance today.

Gotsbachner makes reference to a particular technique that Haider employed, by the name of *Volksnähe*, translated literally to “closeness to the people”, but to be understood as “approachability”. This was one of the tactics Haider most used to gain votes from those outside of his main party circle – by playing on his Robin Hood role, he would directly interact with citizens and offer them money in person (Gotsbachner, 2012: p. 148). This takes on a quite literal meaning of the word closeness to the people, as he used his larger than life persona to directly be among those he claimed to fight for. As such, when people made accusations against Haider, he could deflect their words back to his followers, as can be seen in some of the slogans he made during his campaigns.

Some examples of this can be seen in a few of the several slogans employed by the FPÖ. For instance, one used during the 1995 national elections: “*Er hat Euch nicht belogen*” (He has not lied to you), with an image of Haider, under which can also be read “*Einfach ehrlich, einfach Jorg*” (Simply honest, simply Jorg). By representing himself as an honest, good man, as the sole savior of the Austrian citizen so to speak, he could save his people from the corrupt, lying politicians in the government, and speak out for them as he was one of them.

This way he could compare himself to Robin Hood, as he actually at certain points did. To emphasize the point further, in another campaign slogan from the same time period, the message “*Sie sind gegen ihn, weil er für Euch ist*” (They are against him, because he is for you) could also be read (see Annex 1: Figure10). With the view of him leaning back in a chair, smiling, he could show a relaxed attitude against his detractors while building up his supporters with easy answers for their critiques. This kind of approach proved to be key for the FPÖ and Haider.

By getting down to the common person’s level, and using simple, engaging, but at the same time authoritative language, Haider could speak through whatever format he used to come across as authentic and sincere. Another instance of this expressed in a campaign slogan was also in 1999,

where one can see Haider with three other people, all smiling, with their names underneath their faces, stating “True friends keep their word” (see Annex 1: Figure 11). In this way, it is possible to see Haider engaging with the common every day man and developing this relationship that he was indeed one of them.

By getting people to side with him as being as he did (willingly or otherwise) lie and propagate half truths, but the truth of these matters often only arose after the fact, when the damage of his statements had already been made. One prominent example of this was when he attacked a Green politician of having been part of the Rote Armee Fraktion, resulting in her having to step down from her position in the work, and although she took him to court, he could not present any proof to back up the statements that he had made against her³ (Mayer, 2005: p. 54).

³ See Scharsach, Kuch, Haider. Schatten über Europa 212 Paragraph 7.

4. Immigration

4.1 Kurz

With the Austrian political scene in crisis throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the stage was set for someone to capitalize on the feelings of resentment, anger, and fear throughout the country. The media's fascination with his persona gave him exactly that stage to perpetuate, defend, and normalize his radical ways of thinking, and the effects are still being felt to this day, despite his death in 2008. His influence has been enormous in Austria, and the FPÖ has maintained its position as a considerable opponent for the two mainstream parties, the ÖVP and SPÖ. Despite their meager outing in the 2002 parliamentary elections, gaining only 10% of the national vote, they have consistently risen with every election since. One of the leading results of this is undoubtedly the refugee crisis of 2015 which has been a major issue throughout all of Europe, especially eastern Europe, where Austria clearly is more ideologically like-minded than other western European neighbors, namely Germany and Sweden.

For the purpose of the work at hand, it is important to note two key ideological issues within the realm of the right wing that pertain to both the ÖVP and FPÖ have. These, in general, have been two of the most important issues on the European continent for a variety of reasons over the last several decades: immigration and what to make of the European Union. As both are right wing parties, one positioned in the center and the other on the far right of the scale, it is salient to understand better how they differentiate themselves on these issues when trying to reach out to their voters and implement policies. This aspect is also vital to understand as Williams points out that right wing ideology has had a slight advantage over the left wing in terms of pure voters and adherents in Austria, yet it is the center-left SPÖ that has been the head of the government for much of the past two decades⁴ (Williams, 2013: p. 76). This points out a certain disconnect and fragmentation between the two parties and an inability, to some extent, to not exploit the advantageous position the right wing has in the country. Where the two parties collide and differ may provide some insight into this puzzling aspect.

The FPÖ has been consistent on its positioning regarding immigration and its Euro-skepticism, despite its at times different shades on these issues. In simple terms, ÖVP is pro-European Union, and has not consistently focused on immigration as a key issue. From 1999-2013, the ÖVP put a

⁴ See Ennser (2012 p 167)

mere 1.6% focus on immigration within its campaigns, which is much lower than the numbers from the FPÖ in the same time period: 6.7% (Bodlos & Plescia, 2018: p. 4). Back in 2013, "a general secretary from another party said of the ÖVP that they presently may have somewhat of an identity crisis. Unclear positioning on the European Union was one example of this given, where the ÖVP has been traditionally pro-European, yet presently it has an outspoken finance minister who uses populist discourse for how to deal with the finance crisis at the European level" (Williams, 2013: p. 81).

Even on an issue where the ÖVP had long been uniform, there proved to be disparities within the party. Regarding its organizational chaos, a member of the ÖVP general secretariat spoke how "the *Realpolitik* of *Regierungspolitik* holds us hostage ... [with the same politician suggesting that] party ideological goals have tended to come into conflict with coalitional politics and appealing to voter preferences as well as the need to hold the factions with the party together" (Williams, 2013: p. 82).

This crisis set the stage for Sebastian Kurz, from the ÖVP, as such, to rise to national fame and acclaim. His staunchly anti-immigrant stance and aid in blocking off refugee routes between Austria and Eastern Europe put him in good favor with other right wing parties. Being the youngest Austrian chancellor ever, at just age 31, he, like Haider, rose to fame very quickly and young at the same time. With his youthful demeanor and promise to renew Austrian politics and make it "geil" (cool) again, he shares certain traits from the offset that can be found within the FPÖ as well, both ideologically and, in his own way, anti-establishment as well, but from the inside. With that in mind, the next section on Sebastian Kurz has its limitations in scope due to the scant amount of academic research on his speaking style or stances on issues, outside of his response to the wave of refugees in 2015 and 2016. Instead, the conclusions reached on where he lines up with the traditional and new extreme right will be my own, based off of interviews, campaign slogans, promises, and newspapers, both from opinion and news articles.

Since the end of 2017, Kurz has written at least two articles for publish consumption, especially one for *Time* magazine which is in English, and another for a book called *The Future of Europe and Judaism* (Kurz, 2017) (Deutsch, 2017). In both articles, Kurz speaks of his number one subject, that of immigration, and its effects for Austria, the European Union, and the world at large. For *Time*, the title spoke for itself: "Only By Regaining Control Can We Solve the Migration and

Refugee Crisis", referring as such to the issue that gave him his biggest platform since 2015 in achieving his local success (Kurz, 2017).

For the *Time* article, the content was naturally much shorter and condensed than could be in other contexts. Written at the time of his *Angelobung* in the parliament in December 2017, he wrote of how the issue of migration has changed throughout history, particularly in terms of pure numbers. He spoke of how this was not the first time that Austria took in refugees, but this time was different, seeing as at "at the height of the crisis 10,000 to 12,000 people arrived at the Austrian border every day - [stretching] our admission capacities to the limit" (Kurz, 2017).

He spoke of his success in closing the western Balkans route, reducing the number of people who came to Greek islands to reach Europe to about one thousand, as opposed to the previously much higher registered numbers. However, he pointed out how the route to Europe through the Mediterranean remained open and dangerous and needs reform, "effectively becoming a ticket to Central Europe." He refers to how roughly one million migrants "mostly from Western and Sub-Saharan Africa" are still waiting to try and reach Europe through the Mediterranean. In terms of action to be taken, he speaks out for improved resettlement programs, and that "it should be us, not smugglers, who determine who is admitted to Europe" (Kurz, 2017).

While these affirmations and observations are on point, they remain relatively generic, without adding much to what is already mostly known about Kurz. The only difference is that for an English speaking audience, unaware of Kurz and his achievements, and his position on issues, this could be a good introduction to the politician. Much more interesting, however, is the insight that he provides, in his native language, in the article written for the book on Europe's future.

In an academic context, this is perhaps the best view at the current time into what defines Kurz's view points and why he thinks what he does beyond the crisply photoshopped images in his campaign advertisements.

"Securing social peace and a promoting a 'We Feeling'" is the name of the article, and it weaves some parts of his populist strategies in the title itself at the outset, but he goes deeper into the subject of immigration and what it means for Austrian society. From the outset, several of the topics are the same as what was found in the *Time* article (migration through the Balkan routes and Mediterranean), and at times the wording can be as generic as then as well – "migration is becoming an increasingly more difficult challenge nowadays" , the article's opening line for example (Kurz, 2017). He expresses his understanding of why immigration is occurring at the rate at which it is –

“civil war, lack of prospects ... political, ethnic, and religious persecution and repression, structural unemployment, climate change, are just some examples that trigger immigration, and puts the European continent as the place people want to be, placing it under extreme pressure” (Kurz, 2017: p. 123)

His take on immigration is firmer than many of his European contemporaries, and frequently mentions the unequal division of refugees and asylum seekers among European partners. At the same time, he refers to how “under this heightened pressure of migration, Austria has excelled, as, when compared with other European states, has taken on among the most refugees in the last years” (Kurz, 2017: p. 124). This can be seen as a clear reference to national excellence, even under worsened conditions, how the country has been head and shoulders above their peers.

However, he expresses elements of understanding and compassion through the hard-lined measures he would take. His stance is that Europe should refer to the “Australian model” to be used “regarding European maritime borders”. In this case, ships would be held off on the coast from departing filled with refugees, and put them either back in their country of origin or put them in centers “where they can be held in chosen islands and looked after in humane ways” (Kurz, 2017: p. 125). Most convincingly, perhaps, is that this way these large numbers of people would stop having false hopes in getting to Europe through dangerous means, and avoid the thousands of numbers who drown to their deaths in the Mediterranean trying to escape their countries.

Kurz makes two more general points in the article on immigration: the influence this has on Austrian society and identity and the problematic of integrating immigrants into Austria. It is in both of these areas that Kurz makes his strongest points and most interesting observations about the future and development of Austrian society regarding its already visibly present element of immigration in the nation and as such coping with it in the future. He points out how “Austria’s society is visibly marked by migration – roughly 1/5 of all citizens in Austria have some migratory background, which is why the presence of a national integration strategy clearly sets the path for a modern society” (Kurz, 2017: p. 125). What is to note in this statement is how something different can already be found, on a large level, within the society in of itself, and what separates him from figures like Haider and Strache is the vision directly set on the future. He accepts that certain aspects have changed and will continue changing. He actively speaks how this foreign background can help structure the future of Austria, although what is similar to his populist brethren is the

notion that the immigrants that are currently within the country are fine. The goal, ultimately, is to prevent more from coming in.

The juxtaposition of integrating immigrants, who naturally have their own backgrounds, and adding those elements to Austrian society, is where Kurz has his greatest difficulty in finding a compromise. These immigrants can contribute to the future of Austria by “being able to speak German, educated, employable, having appropriate living behavior, hobbies in line with the society and voluntary engagement, mental and physical health, as well as adhering to a culturally respectful cohabitation on the basis of a common basis of values, as these are the foundational preliminaries for any successful integration” (Kurz, 2017: p. 126). Although the phrasing is positive, even uplifting, it puts Austrian societal standards at a high level, indicating that those who come into the country do not or are unable to meet these standards, hence needing these integrational efforts.

Of particular note, however, is how Kurz mentions: “The fact of the matter is that our country has become ethnically, culturally, and religiously more varied, which has effects on patterns of identity within our society” (Kurz, 2017: p. 131). The problematic of this stance lies in the fact that it contradicts the notion that immigrants, due to their varied backgrounds, can contribute to Austrian society, yet bases their success on a set standard of Austrian values that are imposed on them. Kurz recognizes change, but he does not want to lose the essence of what Austrian culture is through increased levels of migration. In this sense, the vision towards a “modern society” in the future can become blurred, because the question remains how the society becomes modernized if it is rooted in the same ideals from the past under different circumstances.

A further look on this stance can be seen in how Kurz views national, Austrian identity, and how immigrants can achieve this as well through integration efforts. This is, perhaps of all issues that have been raised in this work, the most three-dimensional one through the eyes of the politician himself, and needs to be analyzed accordingly as such. “A challenge in integration is without a doubt that people classify their country of origin as their home. An emotional connection to Austria remains a desired result over the course of an integration process” (Kurz, 2017: p. 132). Transforming Austria into the apple of each immigrant’s eye, and their true home, in essence rejecting their country of origin, would be, for Kurz, a successful case of integration. While beyond the scope of the work at hand, the difficulties in successfully implementing such an initiative for a variety of reasons could render this as an, if not populist, almost absurd notion on the level of what it means to combine the unique attributes of an immigrant to contribute towards a modern society,

must be considered. Kurz himself seems to recognize the challenge at hand: “It frequently happens that people who were born and live in Austria do not consider it their *Heimat*”) (Kurz, 2017: p. 130). While he does not specify if this includes any of the 4/5 of Austrians without some level of migrant background, it is clear that patriotism and devotion to the nation is of the utmost importance, which is a stance traditionally supported by the FPÖ.

However, Kurz defends his position. He states that “the understanding of this term [*Heimat*] should not remain cast apart and based off of memories and experiences that help shape identity, *Heimat* is something that, ideally, is not merely locked in the past” (Kurz, 2017: p. 131). This is one of the most forward-thinking statements Kurz has throughout the article. Without falling back on platitudes, he utters a propositive confirmation that connects the concepts he has of home and nation and ties it back to his youthful, positive ideals that have helped win over so many votes. Also of interest is how Kurz writes “it should therefore be emphasized that [*Heimat*] deals with an identity-marking notion that can change and can also be shaped in the future” (Kurz, 2017: p. 132). Therefore, according to Kurz, the notion of society and self are changeable and malleable concepts, but aims to stabilize them by holding on firm to a stable sense of Austrian identity, which in its own way must not change through immigration.

Kurz also quotes, “*Identität ist noch nirgends vom Himmel gefallen*” (“Nowhere has identity yet fallen from the sky”, from a Swiss poet, Adolf Muschg, to emphasize his point further. Identity development is a daily process, which is influenced from living conditions, leading him to say that “in Austria, we can live our lives in freedom, security, and dignity, and Austria has much to offer in terms of cultural, religious, political, and sexual development, and these achievements are protected through our Constitution” (Kurz, 2017: p. 133). Kurz testifies to the strengths of these qualities in the sense he believes Austria is a place where foreigners can develop their loyalty and “*Heimatsgefühle*” (“feelings of home”) in Austrian society. As a side note, my own personal capacity to understand references to Germanic culture is limited, but the reference to the poet is interesting. This is one of the few recognizable instances where Kurz made a cultural reference, which is in some contrast to Haider, who littered his speech with allusions and references to Germanic culture, particularly elements that could be construed as seedy or connected to Nazism, as has been seen in this work already. In this case, drawing on contemporary Germanic literature with a positive overtone to it further reflects back on the persona of Kurz, showing he is an educated, literate member of society as well.

Kurz closes his overall discourse on diversity within Austria with the acceptance that “It is necessary to clarify for our society that diversity has long become a reality and integration is an individual and societal process, it requires commitment, and is an unavoidable prerequisite for a pluralistic society” (Kurz, 2017: p. 133). As Kurz has frequently shown in his public behavior, he is a well-groomed diplomat, and these words touch on all the right points – Austrian society must come to grips with its status as becoming pluralistic and learn to deal with the changes. Yet it highlights the strain involved, from both sides, and the work together that will be necessary to overcome those hurdles.

Finally, he states that “To this effect, the principle of ‘Integration through Service’, on which nobody should be judged based on their origin, skin color, or religion, will be based instead on what they can contribute in Austria, is paving the way for our work on integration” (Kurz, 2017: p. 134). This provides a succinct, diplomatic close to the foundation of Kurz’s politics – a positive, forward-thinking vision to the future, yet rooted in the concept of the nation and “our” work towards it, likely meant together.

The essay at hand that he wrote touched largely on immigration and national identity. With his history and expertise in the subject, serving his country in official office as such for most of his adult life, it can be understood that this subject is the one he understands best and can best get his point across. At the same time, these are two key aspects of political populist strategy, and when seen through a more positively imbued lens, and from the vantage point of a mainstream party’s soap box, the results show that he was able to strike a nerve in his country almost immediately upon taking lead over the party.

One of the most defining aspects of the extreme right, or right wing populism, in general is immigration and identity politics. This is the most vital element to analyze as it has surely been the aspect that has most defined the FPÖ’s political impulse and direction since the late 1980s up to today, and is the most viable to compare with Kurz and the ÖVP now as that is the subject he and his politics have most been associated with.

4.2 Haider

One of the more interesting numbers that can be extrapolated from the early 1990s alone in Austria is the extent to which anti-immigrant sentiment could be felt in the nation. Whether or not this was flamed in particular by the success of Haider and the FPÖ, or was something that had been hidden under the rug until that point, it should be noted how an anti-Semitic mind frame in particular was

among the strongest throughout all of Western Europe. According to one study, “one in five people assert[ed] the country would be better off without Jews and half agree[d] that Jews bear some blame for their persecution over the ages” (Hockenos, 1995: pp. 75-80). However, with the ghost of the Second World War still in the backdrop, the scapegoat moved from Jews to immigrants in general, especially asylum-seekers and refugees.

A general aspect of the new right, as well as being Haider’s key issue, was of course that of restricting immigration and tightening laws. Haider often spoke of *Sozialschmarotzer* (social leeches), as it was they who were taking jobs from Austrians who deserved the jobs instead. Immigrants in general were the root of all of the country’s main problems, such as unemployment, housing, high taxes, and particularly crime. *Ausländerkriminalität*, *Scheinasylanten*, and *Illegalen* (foreign crime, fake asylum seekers, and illegals) were the key terms used throughout the 1990s, although the constantly referred to numbers of foreigners committing crimes could not be backed up by official numbers of data. The underlying racism implied here, as many of these foreigners were Africans or former Yugoslavians fleeing war in the region, is a further testament to the fine line that populism has to draw in order to succeed.

Further racially profiling comments from 1990 on immigrants can be seen regarding how immigrants, namely were “not the best” that were arriving in Austria. Namely, these foreigners coming were the ones committing crimes, which native-born Austrians were naturally unable to commit. The statement that “not the best” come, and the ones who are stay in their homeland, is also unfounded. The FPÖ’s general secretary at the time, Heide Schmidt, spoke in clearer terms what was meant by such a statement⁵. When prompted: “Being liberal does not mean closing your eyes to legitimate issues, and it does not mean hypocritical tolerance. We are not simply going to solve the issue of crime so long as we are quiet about it ... when Haider speaks up, how it is not always the best who come, it simply means that only the worst arrive in our country, which is a further attest to the available criminal statistics” (Grewenig, 1993: p. 130).

By claiming to speak the truth at the discomfort of the corrupt, political elite, this is yet another aspect of classic populist discourse that was used to the fullest extent regarding the immigration issue in this time period. As such, Haider’s most defining moment in his anti-immigrant push was the highly controversial 1993 referendum, “*Österreich zuerst*” (Austria First) (Bailer-Galanda &

⁵ Radio emission ÖRF pressestunde Nov 9th 1990

Neugebauer, 1997: p. 92). Right before this referendum, another survey was held to determine the national mood on immigrants, which consequently demonstrated how slightly over half of the population thought that immigration was the greatest “threat to their welfare”, and another 38 percent were afraid of a wave of refugees coming in.

The point of the referendum was to tighten Austria’s asylum and immigration policies. Although the actual referendum was a huge flop, with only 7% of Austrians showing up to vote at all, the government still responded to the propaganda. Austria’s minority and immigration legislation ended up being tightened, and therefore what at the outset seemed to be a defeat proved to be a victory in its own way. This is also something that happens with the discourse of the extreme right entering the mainstream, and another notable technique that it uses – by having it become part of the national (and international) narrative and discourse, it normalizes the process and mainstream parties adapt by adding it to become part of their agendas as well. The extreme parties maintain their radical flourishes, and as such keep pushing the status quo until their demands are accepted naturally in government, whether they are actively represented in it or not.

Among the new European right wing, Haider was among its more enigmatic figures in the 1980s and 1990s. What he had in common with others, like Jean-Marie le Pen from the Front National in France at the same time, was a charismatic attitude and disposition. He was a renowned speaker and orator, able to gather crowds and have his presence felt. Having previously been a journalist, he knew how to use media and how to communicate to get his point across and how to reach an audience. There were, however, a variety of techniques and tools that Haider used to maximize his gifts as a populist speaker and politician.

Before going further with the immigration aspect of Haider’s discourse, which was an important one, there are other ways in which his rhetoric drew upon other techniques that allowed him to not just target a specific audience but expand upon it without falling back on specific language, such as clear hate speech. Hate speech in both Germany and Austria have been forbidden since the end of the second world war, but naturally just because this kind of expression is not allowed to be clearly spoken does not mean that the message cannot be carried out in other, subtler ways. This is where the “genius”, if it can be called that, of Haider’s speaking prowess can truly be found.

As regarding the so-called new European right, “in [their discourse], there are constantly recurring points such as racism and xenophobia” (Grewenig, 1993: p. 119), and this can be seen in Haider’s speech as well. Beyond the realm of specific themes, however, it is “more interesting for populist

discourse [the] processes that do not leave themselves open for any clear deciphering, and precisely because they do not build upon general but particular knowledge” (Grewenig, 1993: p. 121). What he is referring to is that when something is uttered and has any room for doubt in what the meaning behind it can be, this can be simply inferred as an allusion. Within the new right wing discourse, the power of the allusion is particularly hefty, and in the Austrian case of being outlawed, could and did prove to be an effective one.

Another aspect of Haider is that his politics could be fluid. It is worth pointing out how his stances could and did change with the passing of time, depending on how whatever situation arose could best be taken advantage of. A prime example of this could be Austria joining the European Union – in the 1980s Haider was one of the most pro-European advocates throughout Europe, but the tides had turned in the early 1990s (Hockenos, 1995: pp. 75-80). With the rise of globalization, the FPÖ went in a different direction in order to capitalize on the growing resentment of the effects this had on the losers of modernization, and maximize the Austrian nationalist sentiment. To that extent, Haider said “we have never said goodbye to Europe, but our idea of Europe is not centered on the same old thing in Brussels, instead our idea of Europe is that of the Fatherland, of variety, of opportunities, of chances for the people.” Furthermore, he stated that “we [don’t want to have to] pay heed to supranational guardianship over us. We want secure jobs in Austria ... we want middle class companies that are true to Austria and not make them transform into *vaterlandslose* multinationals” (Bailer-Galanda & Neugebauer, 1997: p. 193).

Therefore, what made Haider’s discourse so particularly effective, and to that effect populist, can be understood in the words of Franz Januschek: “populistic rhetoric is characterized by those uttering it as drawing on common place prejudices in order to take advantage of their own political goals, as well as aiming to convince the people that they themselves are above such prejudices” (Grewenig, 1993: pp. 118-119) . By drawing on the fears and anxieties on those listening to him, and making them feel like he was one of them and listening to their needs and desires more than any other politician, he could pursue his own goals and achieve success.

This could be done as he appealed to the common man and his needs and wants within Austrian society. As others have noticed, in addition to focusing on the working class, another way to reach even more people was by speaking out to those who had been deemed “losers” in a modernized world and unable to find work within the confines of the modern day job market. His stances could have weight because he depicted himself as among the common people. However, the opposite

could also occur: he was for the everyday person, but as in his own words, “the FPÖ is no party for people who get up late, are freeloaders, or expect to make lots of money without working for it” (Bailer-Galanda & Neugebauer, 1997: p. 109).

This specified who exactly belonged in his group of targeted, preferred Austrian individuals within their society. He was for the hard working Austrian who contributed to the country, to national industries, but since he was also attempting to mobilize those who had failed in accordance to the new globalized world order, his approaches and policies can be seen here as having a difficult time juxtaposing with one another. As the FPÖ’s inherent policies were against the use of government money in aiding “loafing about immigrants”, this could also be extended to Austrians needing social help. However, as Haider said, “we are sending out a clear signal to the hardworking and efficient Austrians. Our politics are not in the game of distributing out any social gifts. We protect those who have to work hard. That is our target group” (Bailer-Galanda & Neugebauer, 1997: p. 109)

The dilemma lying at the heart of this is rather self-evident: whoever was good enough to get a job, be diligent and hardworking at it, or was a highly skilled professional, or a gifted young person, was not part of some failed life project or would have a hard time adapting to the modern needs of industrial society. However, this flawed perception of the reality of the Austrian job market could be cast aside, as the weight of Haider’s comments were strong enough on their own to be meaningful for those listening to them. Should anyone not have a job, but was Austrian, his and the FPÖ’s goal was to create more by focusing on national companies and industry and training native-born Austrians to fill the gaps in the marketplace instead of having to rely on foreign workers. As Haider said himself, “if other people are for industry lobbies, we are for the middle class, we are trade, crafts, we want to create chances for them in the future” (Bailer-Galanda & Neugebauer, 1997: p. 193). Despite these claims, however, it was not the unemployed who supported him, instead it was rather those in the middle class who feared to lose their social standing or jobs and had lost faith in the traditional parties to protect them (Hockenos, 1995: pp. 75-80).

This kind of deflection is important as “for a right wing populist party, both the technique of its approach as well as its organizational form are in a close relationship with its communicated political content, as such the way in which it rejects certain contextual views is how it gains its own ideological quality” (Decker, 2004: p. 47). What that ultimately means is that by rejecting or

diminishing one element or aspect within an ideology, such as the negative role immigrants have within a country, the supposition that what is being rejected can be justified as its own position is more important through the way in which the interlocuter communicates it to the listener.

In summary, Haider's rhetoric can be defined as fitting well within the framework of right wing ideologies and populism as well. By focusing on the impoverished, cheated out citizen by the corrupt politicians reaping their benefits on their behalf, Haider and the FPÖ that he helped shape following his joining of the party in 1986 were able to target a section of the voting population in Austria that felt left behind in a changing, modernizing world. The truly impressive part of his oratory skills could be found in the ability to reach out to anyone willing to hear what could be perceived beneath the actual quality of the words themselves, as in the case of the allusions.

This, in short, is the topic which most can define and describe the European new right since the 1980s. The issue of immigration has always been number one on the list, and the rest largely falls to the backburner, although these are also important matters to discuss. One could accuse these right wing parties as being "one note", as the arguments they make for their own conception of the *Volksgemeinschaft* is always dependent on the number of immigrants that are entering the country, and that sets the scene for the other talking points on a national or international level. Whatever arises internationally, however, is put on a backburner, as the only matters that are truly important are those who belong to the ethnic composition of the native-born citizens. This emphasis on the issue, however, has helped normalize and make it a legitimate concern and political subject to broach within the mainstream parties on both the left and right.

As can be seen even in that example, the influence of immigration and focus on the Austrian national was as central as the subject of the European Union itself. With that said, the conversation could change, but the stance on immigration as such would not. This ironclad position can still be seen within the FPÖ's agenda: *Österreich ist kein Einwanderungsland* (Austria is not a migration country). This was one of the main points written for the failed 1993 referendum, *Österreich Zuerst*, and it remains a cornerstone of the FPÖ's ideology. In the 2017 party program for the national parliamentary elections, on the very first page, the same statement can be read: "*Unsere Grenze sichern – Österreich ist kein Einwanderungsland* ("Make our borders safe – Austria is not a migration country)" (FPÖ die Sociale Heimatpartei, 2017). Next to it is an image of Austria on a map of where it is in Europe, with a "no crossing" image super-imposed within its territorial borders.

As for Haider, his career was built upon and duly thrived on the issue of immigrants in Austria. The art and manner in which he could utilize the media to his advantage due to his natural charisma and charm to diffuse controversial statements he and his party made only made their efforts stronger, even in the wake of several failures and disappointments, such as the 1993 referendum and the international negative reaction to his “orderly labor politics” comments. Even by 1994, the FPÖ had achieved over twenty percent of the national parliamentary votes, and by 1999 that had reached almost twenty-seven percent. With such a result, with some hundreds of votes more than the ÖVP, the FPÖ had the ability to be the majority party in parliament. However, even with that success came setbacks – Haider did not enter the government, as he was too controversial, instead opting to hand over the position to chancellor Schüssel from the ÖVP.

5. National Socialism

5.1 Kurz

National Socialism is perhaps the area between the two where Kurz distances himself the most, and in the most positive light. Kurz has been controversial on some fronts (adopting an extreme right approach on some issues, such as immigration, or courting the FPÖ with its roots in Nazism), but aside from the relationship with FPÖ, there are no connections or references to the Nazi regime. The only controversy was when German satirical website, Atlantic, referred to him as Baby Hitler, with the tag “Finally: we can kill baby Hitler” (Mischke , 2017). Otherwise, Kurz was praised on his open acceptance and stance of Austria’s role in its contribution to Nazism, which is something no other previous Austrian prime minister had done (Keinon, 2018). Considering the article he wrote in the book *The Future of Europe and Judaism*, this is already a clear example that Kurz has no ties to National Socialism.

Regarding his stances on important issues, since immigration is the most important issue on his platform, the topic is not particularly incendiary. It has consistently been one of the country's most visible issues since the early 1990s, so there is very little controversial in the way of what he believes and how he expresses his beliefs. In one interview, however, he was pressed on defending the FPÖ's Nazi history, and their extremist past, to which he only said in response that "every party has a history ... the FPÖ are not the heirs of National Socialism, otherwise [I would have never] formed a government with them." This is a further example of Kurz’s excellent diplomatic skills and knowing how to phrase himself in the right way when directly approached.

5.2 Haider

To understand Haider’s connection to National Socialism, one must begin from the beginning of his career path. Since the late 1970s he had been actively involved in politics within the region of Carinthia, reaching the upper echelons of the FPÖ by 1986, a sharp ascent, largely fueled by anti-Slovene sentiment. Carinthia has a large Slovenian minority population, and as an attempt to stifle burgeoning attempts to make schools bilingual and give Slovenians greater status in the region, Haider took advantage of the situation to have his platform start to be built on the issue of immigrants in his state. The history of Slovenes in the region goes long back, however. Indeed, as Hockenos notes, “during the Second World War, Austrian Nazis expelled and murdered Austrian Slovenes in order to create an ethnically pure German Carinthia” (Hockenos, 1995: pp. 75-80). The

resentment from this time period to this day has not vanished, and perhaps has only been mitigated since then.

This, as such, can be considered Haider's first attempt, and a successful one at that, in utilizing populist tactics to have his political goals met. With them, he reached the position of FPÖ party secretary in Carinthia in 1977 and took a seat in the federal parliament in 1979, at a mere 29 years of age. Even a decade later, the remarks against Slovenians in Carinthia still proved to be a pressing matter for Haider and his party – in 1988, Haider spoke about the Slovenian's fight for minority rights in Carinthian schools, saying that “if you lay in bed with dogs, then you shouldn't be surprised if you wake up with fleas” (Grewenig, 1993: p. 128). This statement proved to be controversial not just for its racial undertones in referring to Slovenians as lowly creatures, or insects, it also recalled to many the “Ungezieferdiktion der Nationalsozialisten” (the vermin proclamations of the Nazis), which then was a reference to the Jews, but now could possibly be an allusion to the Slovenians. The FPÖ delivered a press conference saying that this expression came from Thomas Jefferson, “a co-author of the American Constitution”, and had no connection to any Nazi sentiment. However, this expression is certainly not connected to Thomas Jefferson more than any other person, so this is another testament to the ability of Haider and to that effect his party as well to twist and deflect the meanings of their words and statements. This way, they could express their anti-Slovenian sentiment and utilize it to incite more of a response from Carinthians to be against Slovenians, but at the same time to present themselves as misunderstood, unfairly judged representatives of the people.

He could successfully draw parallels with the Third Reich and Nazis without being perceived as a Nazi sympathizer, and as such gain in more attention from the media both locally and internationally. “The danger in Haider's interaction with the truth is the reaction of the media” (Mayer, 2005: p. 54), reflecting the same sentiment that Junaschek had, given the relationship between the two. The more focus given to the cause the more it could be spread, and as time passed, the less inflammatory it could be, and more expected. As Bailer had noted even in 1997, before Haider and the FPÖ would reach their heights in 1999, and later again in 2017, “since Haider took the top position in the FPÖ, the party has been met with starker criticism abroad than within Austria itself” (Bailer-Galanda & Neugebauer, 1997: p. 190)

A specific example that can be provided here is how adamant Haider was in stating that he never wished to become vice-chancellor. By stating that, the first level to unfold would be the degrading of the position in of itself, and then naturally the wish to instead become chancellor and have the power for himself to have. Another level below that would be how his political opponents would react to such a statement – and from the position of the ÖVP, they could understand that Haider wanted to take them on and then bring them down during elections. Finally, historians could and would have another level to understand regarding this one particular instance. Notably, before Hitler had become chancellor himself, he had demonstratively shown his refusal in accepting the offered position of vice-chancellor. This is just one of many examples that Junaschek portrayed in which Haider cleverly, and in his own way, could make allusions and references to the Third Reich but could largely come out unscathed.

One example of this was regarding him having used the term “totaler Krieg” during a press conference in 1988 which was partially shown on television, when discussing his anger over how the mainstream parties were dealing with the elections in his region of Carinthia. The term was made famous during a speech by Josef Goebbels, the Nazi’s propaganda minister in 1943 at the Berliner Sportpalast at a critical moment when the Nazis had finally made public that the tides were turning against their favor in the war. Goebbels asked the crowd, which had been carefully selected to be the most boisterous supporters they could find, if they “want total war?” And when Haider was asked on why he had used such a controversial term, his answer was as follows: “Yeah, because I am just so... *unbothered* about it, that I...can also use expressions that simply fit the situation best.”

Junaschek concedes that sometimes it is difficult to avoid using war-like terminology, and in this case can be perceived as an exaggerated metaphor. However, the allusion to Goebbel’s speech can also be interpreted as a reference to the similarities between the war at the time of the speech and the current war, so to speak, regarding the campaigning situation with the SPÖ and ÖVP. Through the usage of terms that had been employed by Nazis, and in the attempt to make them acceptable again is also a technique that populists can also use – as Haider could “activate with this allusion the historical war-experiences of those hearing the message, without obviously appropriating the hinted at terminology himself” (Grewenig, 1993: p. 126). And as he was given a chance to defend himself and his choice of words, he could distance himself in doing so. This is an important element that will come up again next.

The most notable instance in which Haider spoke of or alluded to the Third Reich, and which was rightly so construed as being a positive affirmation on his behalf from the general public, was when he spoke of the *Beschäftigungspolitik* of the Third Reich – namely the measures that were taken throughout the 1930s to reduce the unemployment rate in Germany. This proved to be highly controversial, as he said in the Carinthian parliament in 1991 to an SPÖ representative that “in the Third Reich they did proper *Beschäftigungspolitik*, which is something that your government cannot even bring in Vienna”⁶ (Grewenig, 1993: p. 133) What was so provocative about the statement was that he isolated one specific element of the Nazi’s policies and assessed it positively, although in political discourse this is immediately looked down upon and can be understood as being sympathetic to the Nazi cause.

Like in the previous example of the reference to Goebbels’ speech, he referred to a situation that had both good and bad sides from the Nazi time period, but as he did not specifically state what was bad (or good) about these policies, he could still distance himself from the comment itself, saying later that “I have in no way intended to make a positive assessment of the Third Reich’s *Beschäftigungspolitik* in relation to the Austrian’s *Beschäftigungspolitik*”, later saying as well “I have expressed myself, I believe, not in the way in which you have understood it. If it is of any comfort for you, I take what I said back with regret” (Grewenig, 1993: p. 134).

The outrage and reaction to his statements proved to be costly for Haider – he was removed from the ballot in the Carinthian elections, especially in light of the negative international impression it left. But it must be noted that it was primarily due to this negative press and not because Haider was seen at home as a negative force or figure. Bunzl remarks how that while outrage may have been large, “it is fair to say that people vote for Haider not because he praised the orderly labor policies of the Third Reich, but perhaps in spite of it” (Bunzl, 1992: pp. 28-36). In fact, as Januschek points out, Haider was given many chances in Austria to defend himself and create further distance from his statements in interviews, such as when he was asked by journalists from the Österreich Radio Funk (ÖRF) if he regretted his comments in the state parliament. By having the chance to repeatedly defend his actions, he could legitimately make the claim that he had been misunderstood and refute any invitations from other politicians to step down from his position at the head of the Carinthian state parliament and push his agenda elsewhere, namely on immigration and work politics.

⁶ See Kärntner Landtag 13.6.91

When asked for a second time in as many days if he regretted his statements, he said “I have made sure that no misunderstanding is present regarding my comments, for what I said was simply acknowledgment of something that happened in the Third Reich, namely that many jobs were made and filled through an intensive *Beschäftigungspolitik*. As such unemployment was eradicated, and this was said in occasion of the debate that is being had that today in Austria there are increasingly more unemployed people, therefore we are employing more foreigners doing the work we should be doing.”

In order to elicit reactions from people, and as such have his statements and opinions spread through the media, he frequently fell back on one technique. This was “attacking his political opponents in political debates, through lack of any arguments of his own, with lewd and defamatory insults, cover them with scorn and derision, therefore it was not always clear to distinguish between his prose and the truth” (Mayer, 2005: p. 52). Vulgarity and profanity through teasing, chiding and verbal aggressions were further ways in which Haider could make a point and get people to respond, either positively or negatively. One instance of this was when he called the SPÖ central secretary a “dog” that “pisses on his leg”, saying that “we are already used to hearing his yapping ... the only question left is when he’s going to start paying a dog tax” (Bailer et al, 1997: p.156). The most unnerving aspect of this statement, beyond making cheap insults to get a laugh from his supporters was in how the Nazis had “already successfully played with these emotions, such as against Prussian SPD jurist Ernst Heilmann, who died in the Buchenwald concentration camp, where he was forced to reside in a dog house and bark whenever someone passed him by” (Bailer-Galanda & Neugebauer, 1997: p. 104).

6. Conclusions

As a result, it cannot be a surprise that Kurz has been considered a populist. With his focus on national security, family, and clearly populist strategies to get his message across and influence voters, his positioning is on the right side on the political spectrum. Williams wrote how the ÖVP should go farther to the right, considering the political atmosphere in Austria, but how this is a tricky move for mainstream right wing parties, as it can undermine their baseline. Kurz, however, has shown that he can utilize populism in an unabashedly mainstream way, beyond the negative inclinations and emotions that the FPÖ and others like them utilize to mobilize their voters.

These differences, however, mark a clear enough break from that which helped Haider rise to power. Haider drew on the fears and anxieties of Austrians, using purposefully vague and controversial statements to bring attention to himself. He was an intelligent politician for many reasons, and so is Kurz, but for different reasons. Kurz has also strongly used populist rhetoric and strategy, but almost in an “upside down” way. Kurz draws a fine line between his mainstream party position, with his largely traditional conservative views, but emphasizes hot issues that are sure to get reactions from voters. This can best be seen in his party political platform.

How the two used their party platforms to reach out to voters is where the two draw the closest similarities. The FPÖ, in essence, was personified by Jörg Haider in the late 1980s up to the early 2000s. This can be seen in the print advertisements that focused almost exclusively on his public personality, his views, with direct quotes and interaction with the reader (“he has not lied to you” being one example), with little in terms of direct courses of action on policy implementation. Kurz’s strategy was much the same, excepted inverted through a positive channel – although he also drew on voter anxiety, simple images and sentences, and catchy word play and phrases, not to mention public gimmicks that drew crowds and could be shared on social media for a wider audience to see. The cult of personality based around Kurz by focusing on “Team Kurz”, as opposed to the ÖVP, was a clear break from the 2013 political elections, whose candidate received much less visual attention in the ads. However, in terms of populist strategy, Kurz’s campaign upped the ante considerably in most other regards, especially those of personalization, emotionalization, and simplification.

In their own different ways, their guarded manner can be another similarity. As Haider frequently spoke around prior statements he had made, not properly defending them or failing to properly apologize for them, Kurz too goes to great lengths to beat around the bush. This can best be seen

in his continual defense of the FPÖ and their Nazi history and extremist actions. By purposely avoiding to speak out on negative aspects of certain issues, he can give the impression he is not speaking badly of anything, so he has nothing to defend, because he is a fair, diplomatic politician. While the two ultimately converge on several different aspects, there are also considerable differences. Much was said at the time of the election results how the international response was rather tame. Many said that this had to do with the fact that the political climate being accepting of European populism at the time of the elections (Baluch, 2017). In this writer's views, the political perception of Kurz as a well-to-do young man and public persona as a bubbly, tech-savvy reformer had more to do with this tame reaction than anything else. If any aspect was criticized, it was the decision to include the FPÖ as the junior partner in the government.

As such, it can be stated that Kurz mostly drew upon the print and poster campaigning strategies of Haider (and also Strache, as can be seen from the 2013 election campaign analysis) to achieve his success. Otherwise, an intelligent online and media campaign proved to pay dividends for the success at the polls. While Haider was unable to have this kind of technology at his disposal at the height of his powers, this was something unique to Kurz within Austrian politics, as Strache also primarily stuck to the techniques and platforms used from the 2013 election. As Mudde had written before, the line between different sections of the right wing, and what is populist or mainstream, is continuously blurred, and Kurz's successful campaign is further proof to how frequently the two cross paths in today's political climate.

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Annex 1



Figure 1: Danner (2014): 'Austrians First!' - Election Campaigns by Right-Wing Populist Parties



Figure 2: <https://secure.sebastian-kurz.at/plakate/> (2017)



Figure 3: <https://secure.sebastian-kurz.at/plakate/> (2017)



Figure 4: Team Kurz Facebook Page (2017)



Figure 5: <https://secure.sebastian-kurz.at/plakate/> (2017)



Figure 6: Team Kurz Facebook page (2018)



Figure 7: Team Kurz Facebook Page (2018)



Figure 8: Team Kurz Facebook Page (2018)



Figure 9: Demokratiezentrum Wien (1999)



Figure 10: <https://twitter.com/dernaro/status/646977190282833920> (2015)



Figure 101: <https://www.fpoe.at/> (1999)



Figure 11: Politico (2018)