

---

## Original Article

# The populist radical right in government: The structure and agency of success and failure

Andrej Zaslove

Institute for Management Research, Radboud University, 6500 HK, Nijmegen, The Netherlands.

E-mail: a.zaslove@fm.ru.nl

**Abstract** Since the 1990s populist radical right (PRR) parties have experience considerable electoral success. With political success the PRR has also gained formal political power by participating in coalition governments in Austria, Switzerland and Italy, as well as informal power, by supporting center-right governments in Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands. This article examines the conditions that shape the success and failure of PRR in their attempts to transition from opposition to government. The article focuses on four cases: three successes – the Swiss People’s Party, the Lega Nord and the Danish People’s Party and one failure – the Austrian Freedom Party. In order to explain the success and failure of the PRR in government, this articles combine insights from structure and agency approaches. Structural approaches focus on three aspects of the party environment: the PRR’s electoral success relative to other parties; policy convergence between PRR and established parties; and the growing numerical importance of the PRR for coalition formation, especially within the context of close elections and, in some cases, bipolarizing party systems. However, the article argues that the structural approach, *on its own*, does not explain the electoral success and failure of the PRR parties in government. In order to explain success and failure in government, insights from agency approaches are required. Three criteria are crucial: ‘keeping one foot in government and one foot out’, maintaining control over their policy agenda, and a well-organized party.

*Comparative European Politics* (2012) **10**, 421–448. doi:10.1057/cep.2011.19; published online 25 July 2011

**Keywords:** populist radical right; political parties; West European politics; government formation

---

For most of the immediate post-WWII period, populism had little impact on European politics. Catchall and mass parties on both the left and the right dominated party politics, and populist parties were rare. Since the 1990s, however, populist parties have experienced considerable success, often at the

expense of mainstream parties. Populism can be observed in distinctive left, center and right-wing forms, but populist radical right (PRR) parties are the most successful populist parties within the current European context (Mudde, 2007). Electoral success has solidified this party type within the political systems of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Norway and Switzerland (the PRR has averaged 12.0 per cent of the vote in these countries since 1990 in 36 national elections).<sup>1</sup> In the process, the PRR has institutionalized its party structures, often creating well-developed party organizations. Moreover, and contrary to earlier predictions, several parties have undergone leadership succession (such as the Norwegian Progress Party, the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), and the French National Front). Unlike the decline in party membership within more established parties (Mair and van Biezen, 2001), PRR membership has increased and in many cases supporters have proven to be loyal (Pedersen, 2006; Schain, 2006; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2009, 2010, p. 1320; Skenderovic, 2009a, p. 144).

With political success and institutionalization, the PRR has also gained formal political power by participating in coalition governments in Austria, Switzerland and Italy, as well as informal power, by supporting center-right governments in Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands. As a result, academics have begun to investigate the conditions that shape PRR parties' capacity to make the transition from opposition parties to government parties. Some political scientists remain skeptical of PRR parties' ability to successfully make this transition, arguing that populists must remain in opposition if they want to retain a populist identity, or that they must turn into a mainstream political party if they want to be a government party (Taggart, 2000; Mény and Surel, 2002; Heinisch, 2003). More recent research has focused on the extent to which PRR parties such as the Lega Nord (LN) and the Swiss People's Party (SVP) have made the transition to government while remaining true to their radical and populist ideological orientations (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005, 2010; Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Skenderovic, 2009a).

This article examines the conditions that shape the success and failure of PRR in their attempts to transition from opposition to government. Here, success is understood in electoral terms and is measured by the extent to which forming a government has led to continued electoral success. The article focuses on four cases: three successes – SVP, LN, and the Danish People's Party (DF) and one failure – FPÖ.

In order to explain the pattern of success and failure of the PRR in government, I combine insights from structure and agency approaches. Structural approaches focus on three aspects of the party environment: the PRR's electoral success relative to other parties; policy convergence between PRR and established parties; and the growing numerical importance of the PRR for



coalition formation, especially within the context of close elections and, in some cases, bipolarizing party systems. The strength of this perspective lies in its identification of the forces that propel the PRR into government. However, the structural approach, *on its own*, does not explain the electoral success and failure of the PRR parties once they make the transition to formal and/or informal government participation. In order to address this question it is necessary to incorporate insights from agency approaches. The findings from the four case studies demonstrate that three criteria related to agency are crucial for accounting for the electoral success of PRR parties in government. The successful PRR are able to balance their populist and radical identity as outsider parties by ‘keeping one foot in government and one foot out’ (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005), by maintaining control over their policy agenda, and by developing well-organized party structures. Well-organized refers to the combination of centralized leadership with extensive mobilization within civil society. In summary, structural variables are *necessary* to explain the inclusion of the PRR in the government coalition, but they are not *sufficient* for continued electoral success while in government.

The article begins by addressing the PRR paradox of government, highlighting the difficulties faced by PRR parties in balancing governing while maintaining a populist and radical identity. The next section discusses the literature about the PRR in government and outlines the structure and agency perspective used in this article. This is followed by a discussion of the four cases. First, three successful cases are analyzed in relation to structural and agency-oriented variables. After this the successful cases are juxtaposed with the failure of the FPÖ to sustain its electoral success while in government.

## **The Paradox of Government: The PRR and Political Power**

The PRR is now accepted as a party family that combines nativist nationalism, authoritarianism and populism. The PRR also combines charismatic and populist leadership, and a number of these parties combine these features with a well-organized political party (Mudde, 2007).

The issue of whether ‘new’ parties are able to move from opposition to government participation is not only pertinent to the PRR; all new parties that want to enter government must negotiate the transition from newness to government (Deschouwer, 2008). Each new party is faced with its own problems and challenges related to organization, expertise, institutionalization and political identity. However, the transition to government is the most difficult for ‘radical’ and ‘anti-establishment’ parties, that is, parties that situate themselves in contrast to mainstream politics. For example, Green parties must balance

power with demands for sustainable environmental policies, and in some cases with new forms of political organization (that is, the German Greens). Other cases involve tension related to regionalist parties' claims to regional autonomy, devolution or even succession and political power.<sup>2</sup>

The PRR faces its own set of unique challenges when entering government. The success of PRR parties is due, in part, to their critique of mainstream political parties, opposition to economic and political elites and demands that politics be practiced differently. As a result European PRR parties have advocated radical policy alternatives, regarding immigration, EU integration and political representation (for example, advocating the use of referenda and other forms of direct democracy). However, PRR parties are not pure anti-system parties; unlike fascist or extremist parties they do not oppose liberal democracy and parliamentary politics *per se* (Rydgren, 2007, p. 243). They are careful not to contravene the boundaries of democracy and their voters may be characterized as radical but they are not necessarily extreme (Rydgren, 2004b, p. 213). In addition, PRR parties have a pragmatic side: to be successful, they must demonstrate to their electorate that they are able to influence public policy. This creates a dilemma as on the one hand, PRR parties must retain their populist and radical identity, whereas on the other, they are compelled to participate in government.

This article examines conditions that influence success or failure when the PRR participates in government. Success is measured in electoral terms, and is determined by the extent to which a PRR party can maintain its electoral support even after entering government, or in some cases supporting a minority government (see Table 1). Obviously, electoral success is only one measure of success. Success could also be measured according to, for example, policy influence. In addition, it is not necessary for PRR parties to be in government in order to be considered successful; they may also influence the public discourse, party systems and the actions of other parties outside of government. These are all valid research topics and indicators of success, but here, success is defined in electoral terms.

The article focuses on four cases in which a PRR party has participated in a coalition government, or has supported a minority government. The first case involves the transformation of the SVP into a PRR party since the 1990s, the second involves the inclusion of the LN in the 2001 center-right Berlusconi government, and the third involves DF support of the center-right minority government in Denmark. Here, the DF is treated as a 'government' party, even though it supports the center-right minority government without being directly in the coalition. The decision to treat the DF as a government party was based on two reasons. First, as Erik Damgaard noted, in the Danish context minority governments, in combination with support parties, often function as a quasi-majority government (2000, p. 231). Second, the quasi-majority role of the DF is substantiated by the long-term status of the coalition (it has been in

**Table 1:** Success and failure in government measured by election results

<i>Party</i>	<i>Election before joining (or supporting) government</i>	<i>First election after joining government</i>	<i>Second election after joining government (if still in government)</i>	<i>Third election after joining government (if still in government)</i>	<i>Fourth election after joining government (if still in government)</i>
FPÖ	26.9 (1999)	10.0 (2002)	11.0 (2006) <sup>a</sup>	—	—
LN	3.9 (2001)	4.6 (2006) +	8.3 (2008) + +	—	—
DF	12.0 (2001)	13.3 (2005)	13.9 (2007)	—	—
SVP	11.9 (1991) <sup>b</sup>	14.9 (1995)	22.5 (1999)	26.6 (2003)	29.0 (2007)

<sup>a</sup>In 2005 there was a split within the FPÖ. The newly created party, the BZÖ remained in government and the FPÖ went into opposition.

<sup>b</sup>The SVP has been in government since 1929. I chose 1991 as the first election since the party only began to radicalize in the mid-1990s.

+ The center-right coalition was not returned to power despite the increase in support for the LN.

+ + Center-right re-entered government.

Data collected from [www.parties-and-elections.de/index.html](http://www.parties-and-elections.de/index.html).



power since 2001), extensive policy influence, and the reliance of the Liberal-Conservative alliance on the DF (Meret, 2009, p. 100).<sup>3</sup>

In the Swiss, Danish and Italian cases, the PRR was successful in their shift from opposition to government parties. The fourth and final case study, FPÖ, is a clear case of failure. The FPÖ participated in a center-right coalition starting in 2000. Even though the FPÖ (and since 2005 the splinter party, the Alliance for the Future of Austria, BZÖ) remained in government after the 2002 election until 2006, its dramatic electoral decline in the 2002 and the 2006 elections, and the newly formed BZÖ in 2005, are indicative of the party's failure to move from opposition to a party of government. The next section discusses the role of structure and agency in explaining this pattern of outcomes.

### **The role of structure and agency in explaining PRR success and failure**

As noted previously, research on the PRR in government can generally be divided into two approaches: structure and agency approaches. The structural approach focuses on the relation between party system change and the inclusion of the PRR in government. The conclusions from this perspective can be summed up as follows: first, there has been an ideological and policy convergence between center-right and PRR parties, making it more feasible for center-right parties to incorporate PRR parties into governing coalitions. Second, the electoral advance of the PRR, in combination with a series of close elections (especially in emerging bipolar party systems), implies that it is strategically advantageous for center-right parties to include the PRR in coalitions; the incorporation of the PRR often makes the difference between forming and not forming a government (Bale, 2003; De Lange, 2008).

In contrast to the structural approach, the agency perspective focuses on party identity, party organization and the strategic actions of the PRR. This approach highlights the difficulties that PRR parties face when participating in government, emphasizing the tension between populism, vote maximization and holding office (Heinisch, 2003; Pelinka, 2005).

Other approaches that focus on agency are less skeptical about the ability of PRR to participate in government while retaining their radical and populist identity (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005, 2010; Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Skenderovic, 2009a). For example, Albertazzi and McDonnell (2005) emphasize the link between the LN's success in government between 2001 and 2006 and its ability to keep 'one foot in and one foot out of government'. They concluded that it is possible for PRR parties to transition into government while retaining their populist and radical identity, as long as they are able to maintain their image as an 'outsider' party while in government.



The strength of the structural approach lies in its focus on party system dynamics, especially how inclusion/exclusion is often determined by policy convergence and by the desire of mainstream and PRR parties to obtain political power. In addition, however, this approach can, and does have, important implications for why government coalitions with PRR parties succeed. The same indicators that lead to government formation *help* explain the continued presence of the PRR in government. However, as useful as these conclusions are, I argue that this approach only provides half of the answer. It cannot fully explain why a coalition succeeds under some circumstances and not others. In other words, why did the FPÖ fail while the SVP, LN and DF succeeded?

Agency-oriented approaches focus less on party competition. However, the advantage of this approach is that the strategic actions of PRR parties are examined. It highlights the problematic nature of entering government with regard to party identity, and how it can jeopardize further electoral success. Unlike the structural approach that treats PRR parties no differently than mainstream and well-established parties (De Lange, 2008), the agency oriented approach focuses on the tensions related to forming a government and the variables that make this possible.

The analysis now turns to the case studies: I first focus on the structural explanation, focusing on the inclusion of the PRR in government and I examine how variables drawn from the structural approach *partially* explain why the PRR is able to remain in government. I then turn to the role of agency, specifically the ability of PRR parties to keep one foot in and one foot out of government (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005) to retain control over their policy agenda, and to maintain effective party organization.

### **Structure: The Electoral Rise of the PRR, Policy Convergence, and Government Formation**

One of the central elements of the structural approach concerns electoral change. When new parties gain enough votes to win seats in parliament, this not only implies a loss of votes for existing parties, it also means that the new party in parliament is a potential coalition partner. To the extent that PRR parties command significant vote shares, they are not only attractive, but sometimes indispensable coalition partners for parties on the center-right. The electoral rise and stabilization of the PRR are especially relevant in party systems where elections are particularly close. As Bale (2003) noted, the PRR can serve as an important extension of the center-right block. Table 2 elaborates on Bale's analysis, demonstrating that in party systems where the PRR has formed a government, or supported a minority coalition, its presence has often been the determining factor.

**Table 2:** The center-right and the PRR Bloc (from 1995 to 2010)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Election year</i>	<i>Seats needed for majority</i>	<i>Center-right</i>	<i>Center-right including the PRR</i>
Italy	1996	316	246	305
	<b>2001</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>366<sup>a</sup></b>
	2006	340 <sup>b</sup>	255	281
	<b>2008</b>	<b>340<sup>b</sup></b>	280	<b>340<sup>a</sup></b>
Austria	1995	92	53	93
	<b>1999</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>104</b>
	<b>2002</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>97</b>
	2006	92	66	94 <sup>c</sup>
	2008	92	51	106 <sup>c</sup>
Denmark	1998	90	58	71
	<b>2001</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>94</b>
	<b>2005</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>95</b>
	<b>2007</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>89<sup>d</sup></b>

Bale, 2003, p. 72. Updated from: <http://www.parties-and-elections.de/>, <http://electionresources.org/> and Italian Elections: Pasquino, 2001, p. 378; De Sio, 2007, p. 102; Wilson, 2009, p. 222. Where marked in bold, the center-right in collaboration with the PRR formed a government.

<sup>a</sup>In these cases, in terms of numbers, the LN was not needed; however, given the very close nature of Italian elections, and because of the 1993–2005 mixed member majoritarian voting system and the new electoral law (2005), which encourages alliances, pre-electoral coalitions were formed. As a result the support of the LN was significant. See the text for discussion.

<sup>b</sup>The single list or coalition that obtains the most votes is guaranteed 340 seats (54 per cent) in the Chamber of Deputies in order to ensure a solid governing majority. If the leading list or coalition's share of the popular vote would not automatically translate into 340 seats, it is awarded additional seats until it reaches that quota.

<sup>c</sup>In this case no center-right coalition was formed. In part, this was because of the divisions between the two PRR parties the FPÖ and BZÖ.

<sup>d</sup>The number of seats, even with support from the DF, is below the number required. Because of an additional defection this number has dropped to 88 since the elections. The government is therefore dependent upon support from additional members of the parliament, some of whom sit as independents.

Italy: 2001: Center-right: FI, UDC, AN and a number of smaller parties; Populist Radical Right, LN.

2006: Center-right: FI, AN, UDC and a number of smaller parties; Populist Radical Right, LN.  
2008: PDL; MPA; Populist Radical Right: LN.

Austria: Center-right: ÖVP; Populist Radical Right: FPÖ and since 2005 also Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ).

Denmark: Danish Liberal Party (V), The Conservative People's Party (KF); Populist Radical Right: DF 1998 elections also the Progress Party (FRP).

Switzerland is not included due to the different nature of its parliamentary system.

These findings are consistent with the four cases under investigation. The theory does have to be modified somewhat for Switzerland for two reasons, however: first in Switzerland the SVP (and its predecessor the Farmers, Artisans





and Citizens Party) has been in government since 1929 and as a result the SVP radicalized while in government (Skenderovic, 2009a). And, second, because within the Swiss parliament, being ‘in government’ must be understood in slightly different terms. In the Swiss case, being ‘in government’ means holding a seat in the Federal Council. The composition of the Federal Council is based on consensus and proportionality, and since 1959 the Liberals, Christian Democrats and Social Democrats have each been allotted two seats, and the SVP has one (this is referred to as the ‘Magic Formula’) (Kriesi and Trechsel, 2008). The growing success of the SVP challenged the Magic Formula, eventually resulting in the SVP receiving an extra seat between 2003 and 2007; it was the largest party in 2003, so one seat was no longer sufficient (Church, 2004; Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Church and Vatter, 2009).<sup>4</sup> Importantly, Christoph Blocher, the individual responsible for the transformation of the SVP into a PRR party, was chosen for this extra seat.

In Italy, although the center-right coalition was not numerically dependent on the LN (as in Austria and Denmark), a series of close elections, a fragmented bipolar party system, combined with electoral systems (both the 1993–2005 mixed member majoritarian voting system and the 2005 proportional electoral law which awards seat bonuses for the winning coalition) that encouraged pre-election alliances, meant that it was advantageous for the larger parties on the center-left and the center-right to form alliances with smaller parties (Diamanti, 2007). In this context Forza Italia (FI) brought the LN into the center-right coalition (Biorcio, 2000). In Denmark, in the 1990s, the party system was transformed into a bipolar system. As the Liberal and Conservative parties severed their ties with the moderate center liberal party, they sought the support of the DF (Bille and Pedersen, 2004; Green-Pedersen and Odmalm, 2008). Similar developments took place in Austria; the electoral rise of the FPÖ openly challenged consociational democracy. After the 1999 election, the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) saw the electoral rise of the FPÖ as an opportunity to distance itself from the social democrats and to form a center-right coalition (De Lange, 2008).

### **Policy convergence and government formation**

In addition, the inclusion of the PRR in coalition governments has been facilitated by policy convergence between PRR and center-right parties (Bale, 2003; De Lange, 2008). Although the PRR has influenced left wing parties (Bale *et al*, 2010), the influence on the center-right, especially but not exclusively regarding immigration, is particularly evident (Bale, 2003; Norris, 2005, pp. 265–266). In Austria, Denmark, Switzerland and Italy there was a notable policy convergence. This was most evident in terms of immigration, though not exclusively (see below). In Denmark, the Liberal and Conservative parties made a decisive break with the center parties and began to court

the DF, again especially regarding immigration (Green-Pedersen and Odmalm, 2008, pp. 372–373). In Italy, the center-right parties sought to focus their attention on immigration in the late 1990s, especially after the LN joined the center-right coalition in 2000 (Zincone, 2002; Einaudi, 2007). Similar developments also took place in Switzerland where there has been a general shift towards the right, especially regarding immigration policy (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007, p. 106). In addition, throughout the 1990s, because of the rise of the FPÖ and its politicization of immigration, the center-right and center-left parties had begun to implement stricter immigration policies in Austria (Luther, 2000, pp. 429–430; Gärtner, 2002; Bale *et al.*, 2010, pp. 419–420).

### **Party system competition and remaining in government**

Although the original intention of the structural approach was to explain how and why PRR enter government, this approach *helps* us understand why PRR parties remain in government. Owing to policy convergence and government coalitions based upon small majorities, mainstream center-right parties require the continued support of the PRR. This is evident in the cases under examination. In Denmark, the center-right coalition is particularly dependent upon the DF. This is due, on the one hand, to a series of minority governments, and, on the other hand, because of support from the DF on important policy issues, especially regarding immigration, the budget, municipal restructuring and support for military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq (Meret, 2009, p. 100). The rightward policy shift of the Liberal and Conservative parties means that it is less likely for the center-right parties to seek support from the social liberals (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Odmalm, 2008).

A similar scenario occurred in Italy. Even though the Italian case does differ, insofar as the LN was not numerically required, the close nature of Italian elections meant that the LN continued to be an important ally of the center-right government throughout the 2001–2006 legislative period. In addition, despite the many policy tensions within the coalition especially regarding federalism, there was also a high degree of policy agreement between the coalition members. This was especially the case regarding immigration, where FI and Alleanza Nazionale (AN) were in agreement with the LN, and regarding labor market, taxation and pension reform where the LN and FI agreed (Zaslove, 2011).

Despite the insights that are gained from the structural approach, there are also limits to this approach. As noted above, similar structural developments in Austria mirrored the three successful cases; electoral success, policy convergence, and close elections can explain the inclusion of the FPÖ in government. However, the structural approach cannot explain why and how the FPÖ failed



where the SVP, LN and the DF succeeded. In other words, the question is why the FPÖ suffered electoral decline and internal divisions, while the other three cases have experienced a small but steady electoral increase (see Table 1). In order to address this question it is necessary to include insights from the agency approach. The findings from the three successful cases demonstrate that where the PRR has succeeded in government it has been able to keep one foot in and one foot out of government, it has been able to maintain control over its core policy issues, and it boasts a well-organized party.

### **The Role of Agency: One Foot In and One Foot Out**

In Switzerland, Italy and Denmark, PRR parties have been able to retain their populist and radical identity while in government by keeping one foot in government and one foot out. They accomplished this in various ways: in Switzerland the SVP has exploited Swiss referenda and citizen's initiatives; in Italy the LN has exploited the heterogeneous government coalition; and in Denmark the DF has capitalized on its inside/outside status as a supporter of the minority coalition.

#### **Creating an internal opposition in Switzerland**

The SVP has used key features of Swiss democracy to keep one foot in and one foot out of government. Swiss democracy is built upon federalism and involves strong power for the cantons, consensus and power sharing built on a fragmented party system and weak parties, a political arrangement that focuses on dividing power among parties in the Federal Council, and a strong tradition of referenda and citizen's initiatives (Kriesi and Trechsel, 2008). This political arrangement has had a dual effect. On the one hand, the highly consensual nature of Swiss politics has created an opportunity for the rise of populism. On the other hand, the SVP has used the institutional structure of Swiss democracy, as well as traditions within Swiss decision making, to present itself as a party of government and a party in opposition at the same time. In particular, it has focused its political activities on two key features of the Swiss system: federalism and direct democracy (referenda and citizen's initiatives) (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Albertazzi, 2008; Skenderovic, 2009a, 2009b).

In the 1990s, federalism permitted the radicalizing wing of the SVP to concentrate its initial attention at the canton level. The party was able to build support within its strongholds, especially within the canton of Zurich. The Zurich wing of the SVP was able to challenge the more moderate wing of the party (especially the Bern wing), creating an internal opposition within the party. In the process, it used its local base to challenge both the national SVP

party and the Federal Council (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Skenderovic, 2009a, 2009b). In the 2000s, the SVP has evolved into a national political party, expanding beyond the German speaking cantons into the French and to a lesser extent into the Italian cantons (Mazzoleni, 2010). However, cantonal politics remain important for the party, allowing the SVP to distinguish between the party on the ground and the party in government (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Skenderovic, 2009a, 2009b).

The SVP has also exploited citizen's initiatives and referenda to keep one foot in and one foot out of government. This process is facilitated by the functioning of the Federal Council: although the Federal Council must reach a consensus for a law to pass, the law can be challenged by a referenda or citizen's initiative, often by the same parties that agreed to the law within the Council. This is an accepted practice in Swiss politics but it has been exploited, particularly by the SVP (Albertazzi, 2008). Beginning in the 1990s, the SVP opposed existing citizen's initiatives and referenda and organized its own referenda and citizen's initiatives on a series of controversial high-profile issues: EU integration, asylum, immigration, citizenship and cultural identity (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Mazzoleni, 2008). As Geden appropriately highlights, this strategy, especially regarding immigration, has permitted the SVP not to alter its political message, even while in government (2005, p. 81).

### **One foot in and one foot out in a fragmented bipolar party system**

The Italian party system moved from a system of polarized pluralism to one of fragmented bipolarism in the mid-1990s. The center-right coalition owes much of its success to Berlusconi, who brought diverse political parties into a single coalition. During the center-right government (2001–2006), the House of Freedoms, as the coalition was called, was composed of FI, AN, the LN, and the Union of Christian and Center Democrats (UDC). These parties have dramatically differing support and party platforms: support for AN and UDC comes from central and southern Italy; the LN is rooted in north-eastern Italy; and the FI, although it does better in particular constituencies, remains more of a national party (Diamanti and Lello, 2005; Diamanti, 2009).

From 2001–2006, the structure of the center-right coalition, its heterogeneous composition, and its reliance on the charismatic personality of Berlusconi permitted the LN to participate in government while maintaining its image and status as an opposition party. The structure of the center-right coalition permitted the LN to exploit its inside–outside position within the government. The LN has successfully maintained an oppositional image while in government by choosing enemies from within the government (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005, 2008) as represented by the two prime targets of AN and the UDC.



Attacks on both these parties were partially permitted by the special relationship that the LN had with Berlusconi, who remained loyal to the LN despite its strong and vocal criticism of other coalition members.

AN was attacked for supporting a centralized state and its desire to ensure the preservation of the Italian national identity. It was also seen as political force acting on behalf of the south. The LN portrayed AN as ‘anti-northern’, claiming that AN economic policies (regarding spending and state reform) and cultural policies (about language) propagated a centralized state that worked in favor of the south and to the detriment of the north (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005). Although the AN and the LN agreed on important policy issues such as immigration and security, Bossi provocatively and vocally demarcated the differences between the two, which increased over time. During the 2001 election campaign and in the early months of the coalition, Bossi and Fini often cooperated, for example joining forces to pass a new immigration law. However, differences and tensions between the two increased as Bossi’s attacks became more vocal and as Fini made a concerted effort to distance himself from the LN by attempting to moderate his own positions and objecting to the LN’s special relationship with Berlusconi (La Repubblica, 2003a, 2004; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005, 2008).

The other prime target of the LN was the former Christian Democrats, who are particularly disliked and mistrusted, perhaps even more so than the AN. LN leaders and their supporters never overcame their mistrust and resentment of the Christian Democrats; as a result they consider the UDC to be a recycled version of the First Republic (the Italian political system before 1992) Christian Democrats. The LN’s political platform differs greatly from that of the UDC, which supports a more centralized state and more intervention for the south. The LN also considered the UDC to be soft on immigration, and blamed them for forcing an amnesty for illegal immigrants and for opposing devolution. The LN claims to be the authentic representative of the Italian north, family values and moral order, unlike the UDC and Catholic organizations, which are often closely linked to the Christian Democratic party. In addition, the LN maintains that the public should be defended by being tough and standing up to enemies and threats, rather than through compromise and tolerance as is expounded by Catholic associations and Christian democratic politicians. Thus, Bossi reserved some of his harshest criticisms for prominent Christian democratic leaders (Diamanti, 2002; Diamanti and Lello, 2005; Zaslove, 2011).

Even while in government Bossi maintained that the LN differed greatly from other coalition partners because it was a party of the ‘people’. Thus, at party celebrations in Pontida held only days after forming the government, Bossi declared to his supporters that the LN ministers were faithful representatives of Padania – that they had, in fact, taken their oaths as Padanians and not as Italians (La Repubblica, 2001). During the LN’s tenure in

government, Bossi never abandoned the image of grassroots politics and continued to rely on dedicated supporters, public rallies and party festivals, especially during periods of government and policy crises. At these times, he would gather his supporters in the streets, thereby demonstrating that the street was the origin, heart and soul of the political movement. In June 2003, he clearly articulated the party's position when he declared that 'the Lega has a fist in government and two feet outside' (La Repubblica, 2003b).

### **Danish party system transformations and the DF**

Initially, it was not clear whether the DF could function as a loyal partner of the minority coalition government. Previously, much like other PRR parties, the DF was concerned with vote maximization and taking controversial and radical stances on issues (Bille, 2002) such as immigration, European integration and the welfare state. However, it was able to manage the transition and became an important ally of the center-right coalition. The governing coalition since 2001 has relied on the DF to pass its annual budget, reduce taxes, proceed with municipal restructuring, implement increasingly restrictive immigration policies, and to support military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq (Bille, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006; Rubin, 2005; Andersen, 2007; Meret, 2009, p. 100).

Unlike the other parties in government in Switzerland, Italy and Austria, the DF was not awarded high-profile portfolios in the government; it only served on parliamentary committees (Rydgren, 2004a, p. 496). This strategy has allowed the party to influence government policy, while avoiding compromise on controversial policy issues. On one hand, the party has demonstrated its direct influence on public policy, acting as the government's 'main coalition partner in day-to-day politics' (Rydgren, 2004b, p. 496; Kosiara-Pedersen, 2008); on the other, it has not mitigated its radical and populist claims. By maintaining this balance, it has been able to retain its populist message and radical demands while highlighting policy successes in party publications (Dansk Folkeblad, 2008, 2009). In the process, even though the party worked closely with the government on numerous issues, it has also differentiated itself from the government on issues including tax relief for lower incomes and pensioners, EU integration and the role of Islam in public institutions (Bille, 2004, pp. 990–991; 2009, pp. 948, 949; Meret, 2009, p. 101). The role of the DF and its support of the center-right government can be summarized as follows: (a) its role as a support party has been institutionalized; (b) the government relies on it for key policy decisions regarding budgets, municipal restructuring, immigration and foreign policy; and (c) the party has not been forced to moderate its demands in exchange for continued support of the government. In other words, the DF has been able to keep one foot in government while keeping the other foot clearly within civil society.



In these three cases, PRR parties have been able to retain a populist and a radical right identity. They accomplished this while in government, in part, because they were able to keep one foot in and one foot out of government.

### **Agency and issue ownership**

Earlier I argued that policy convergence is important for explaining why PRR parties enter government and it can also help us understand why the PRR remains in government. However, what the successful cases also demonstrate is that policy convergence is a slippery slope. Even though policy convergence is a condition for entry into government, those PRR that have remained in government have also been able to demonstrate to their electorate that they have retained control over the party's core issues.

### **The Swiss case: Direct democracy and retaining control over policy issues**

The SVP has successfully retained control over its core policy issues while in government, especially regarding immigration, tax reduction and opposition to EU integration. It has accomplished this with the use of referenda, citizen's initiatives, and because of a professionalized and well-financed media campaign. The SVP has successfully exploited the institutions of Swiss direct democracy to ensure that it maintains ownership over its core policy concerns. Some of its most notable campaigns have been in relation to immigration. For example, in 1996 it launched an initiative against illegal immigration, in 2002 it launched an initiative against asylum abuse, in 2009 it opposed the building of minarets, and in 2010 it launched a referendum on the repatriation of foreigners who commit a crime (Skenderovic, 2007, p. 174; Bosley and Richardson, 2010; Kuster and Widmer, 2010). Each of these campaigns proved to be controversial, high profile and they served to clearly identify the party's platform. The strategic and symbolic importance of Swiss direct democracy was confirmed in interviews with SVP elected members of the National Council and the party's General Secretary. The General Secretary noted that the party began to explicitly exploit direct democracy in the 1990s in order to publicize and politicize important party themes (Baltisser, interview). The fraction leader in the National Council also pointed out that the party's strategy is to ensure that it remains on message, focusing on tax cuts, opposition to immigration and opposition to EU integration. In part, he noted, this is accomplished by the use of referenda and citizen's initiatives. Referenda and citizen's initiatives have ensured a high profile for the party's political message, and they allow the party to maintain a strong presence within the local community. As a result, he concluded voters have a clear idea of the party's core issues (Baader, interview).

In addition, the SVP has exploited a well-organized and financed media campaign in order to maintain control over its political agenda. Of the four main parties, the SVP invests the most money in public media campaign and in its posters (Skenderovic, 2009b, p. 395). It employs a marketing firm to ensure the full efficacy of its message (Nidegger, interview). It has set up expert committees which serve as strategic party consultants on important party concerns, such as immigration (Skenderovic, 2009b, p. 395). In addition, it uses its Internet site to promote its ideas, platforms, successes and upcoming referenda and citizen's initiatives. (Skenderovic, 2009b, p. 396). To be sure, these resources are not only used for referenda and citizen's initiatives; however, what the SVP has discovered is that Swiss tools of direct democracy are particularly conducive for its high-profile political campaigns (Skenderovic, 2009b, p. 399), and in the process it has allowed it to retain control over its core policy issues.

### **The LN: Political mobilization and issue ownership**

The LN has been particularly successful in maintaining control over its core concerns and conveying this to its party supporters while in government (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010). The LN re-entered the center-right coalition in 2000 during the regional elections, in part, because it felt that in opposition it was not able to influence public policy (Biorcio, 2000). Thus, once in government it sought to actively influence policy areas that were particularly important for the party, most notably immigration and federalism. Immediately after entering government in 2001 the LN was instrumental in passing the Bossi-Fini immigration law. The law sought to link immigration with work, to secure stronger border controls, and to encourage immigrant integration (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003).

In addition, the party was quick to implement its demands for devolution, that is demands to reform the state and to devolve more powers to the regions. Devolution was controversial; other parties in the coalition, notably AN and the UDC opposed the LN's reform initiatives. After much internal debate and political controversy, a new federalism/devolution law passed through the two chambers of the Italian parliament in 2005 (Cento Bull, 2002; Vassallo, 2005; Bull, 2007). Although the law was eventually defeated in a referendum in 2006, the LN was able to put the blame for this on Italian voters and the other political parties.

Being in government did not soften the party's political position and in addition the LN successfully conveyed to its supporters the efficacy of being in government and its influence on public policy (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005, 2009, 2010). A survey of party supporters demonstrates that its core





supporters were satisfied with the party's position in the government and its influence on government policy, especially regarding immigration and federalism (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2009).

### **The DF: Retaining control over core policy issues in Denmark**

The DF has also retained control over its political message while supporting the center-right government. This is most evident regarding immigration policy. Danish immigration policy became stricter after 2001. The 2001 election was largely fought over immigration: as a result, after the center-right formed the government, significant changes were implemented. New policies were implemented that restricted the number of immigrants and asylum seekers, that sought tougher integration laws regarding residence and citizenship, that focused on Danish values, and emphasized labor market integration (Hedetoft, 2006). Not only did these laws pass with the support of the DF, but the move towards stricter immigration policy was influenced by the DF (Bille, 2002, p. 946; 2003, p. 932; Rydgren, 2004a; Meret, 2009, p. 100).

In addition to immigration the DF also influenced other policy areas. The DF was instrumental in supporting the government budget and as a result it gained an important influence in the general economic and social policy of the government (Bille, 2003, p. 933). The party, for example, ensured that tax cuts would benefit lower income earners and that reductions in taxes would not significantly restructure the welfare state, especially in relation to pensions (Bille, 2004, pp. 990–991).

As a result the DF was able to significantly influence policy, while at the same time the party has not been forced to de-radicalize its party program (Bille, 2006, p. 1093; Meret, 2009, p. 101). This strategy has allowed the DF to balance support for the center-right government, to influence government policy, and to maintain control over its core policy concerns.

### **Agency and party organization and the PRR in government**

Scholarship has emphasized the importance of party organization for the electoral success of PRR parties, allowing the PRR to penetrate communities and attract new and disgruntled voters (Mudde, 2007). However, party organization has also contributed to success while in government; party organization allows successful PRR parties to control internal dissent and factions, and to communicate its successful implementation of policies to party members while in government (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010).

## Organizing populism in the Alps

The SVP owes its success in government to its organizational structures. It centralized its leadership, solidified its party platform, professionalized the party, modernized its media campaign, enhanced its independence and autonomy, and increased its party membership and presence within civil society. This created a strong party identity and allowed it to minimize (though not eliminate) internal tensions while balancing oppositional politics with governing (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Albertazzi, 2008; Skenderovic, 2009a, 2009b).

The autonomy achieved by the SVP, *vis-à-vis* more moderate party wings and the party's more traditional affiliated organizations (for example, professional groups and the Swiss Farmers' Association) served to solidify Blocher's leadership, enhancing the Zurich wing's power and allowing the SVP to obtain a high degree of policy flexibility. Blocher created new party organizations with close affiliations to the SVP (especially the Zurich wing). The party created traditional party associations (such as a youth wing), while also forming independent pressure groups such as the influential 'Campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland'. The latter was headed by Blocher from 1986 to 2003 and consequently had close ties with the SVP. The party also created a party newspaper and established an annual congress in Albisgüetli, at which Blocher gives speeches and distributes party paraphernalia. These organizational structures may seem unimportant and rather conventional, but they are unusual in the context of Swiss politics (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Mazzoleni, 2008). They have proven to be very successful, especially compared with the weak organizational structures of other Swiss parties (Kriesi and Trechsel, 2008).

Blocher centralized the party, especially the Zurich wing, around his leadership. This was facilitated by the growth of loyal party organizations, Blocher's vast financial resources, a growing and loyal membership, the consolidation of its new ideological identity, and by Blocher's ability to recruit a series of knowledgeable advisors to direct party policy and electoral campaigns (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic, 2007; Mazzoleni, 2008; Skenderovic, 2009b).

## Organizing the PRR in Italy

During the fall of the so-called First Republic in the early 1990s, the LN experienced rapid growth, often manifested in numerous factions, internal struggles and dissenting voices. However, by the late 1990s, it was a smaller and leaner party with a stronger and more unified political identity. Bossi commanded almost complete control over the party, and those who remained with the party



were loyal to him, as he continued to represent the heart and the soul of the LN (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005; Ruzza, 2005; Maraffi, 2006, p. 203). A 1996 poll of party militants to determine who they considered to be the closest to LN supporters revealed that Bossi was the clear winner; no other political figure within the party came close to challenging his leadership (Biorcio, 1997, p. 246). Even now, Bossi is the undisputed leader. More than supporters of any other Italian political party, LN supporters vote for their leader; they overwhelmingly feel that a strong political leader is important and they demonstrate a strong identification and allegiance with the party leader (Diamanti, 2003, pp. 75–77; Maraffi, 2006, p. 203).

Bossi has played an indispensable role in the success and survival of the LN, but party members are also important. In line with other European PRR parties, the LN has successfully mobilized voters within civil society; over the years, the party has created numerous organizations for workers, farmers, business, Catholics, the family, the environment, youth, culture, women and education (Gómez-Reino, 2002; Ruzza, 2005). These micro-organizations have worked to mobilize support, to ensure the party has a local presence, and to involve previously disillusioned voters in the political process. This grassroots political mobilization has created a strong sense of party belonging and, as in the case of the DF and the SVP, centralized leadership coupled with a well-organized party within civil society has consolidated the identity of the LN. This allowed the party leadership to control internal dissent and to communicate the successes of the coalition government, despite some necessary compromises (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010).

### **Organizing the PRR in Denmark**

The success of the DF also relied on the organizational capacities of the party leadership. After its formation in 1995, the party sought to develop a centralized organizational structure to prepare itself for possible government. Pia Kjærsgaard has been particularly adept at minimizing policy contradictions and internal factions, thereby maintaining internal cohesion and order while increasing party membership (Pedersen, 2006).

To prepare for government after its formation in 1995, the party leadership implemented several important changes, giving more power to the leader and the National Committee (Pedersen and Ringsmose, 2004). As a result of centralization, leadership controlled decision making and the selection of candidates; party members had far less decision-making power. Party discipline was enforced, dissent was not permitted, and new members were closely scrutinized. Moreover, party disagreements were not aired in public. If an internal controversy is made public, the responsible individual is presented with a

written warning; following a second offence he or she is ejected from the party (Pedersen and Ringsmose, 2004).

Still, the party leadership is aware of the importance of party membership. The party has deliberately sought to build its membership; this strategy has been successful during a period when membership in other mainstream parties was in decline or has stagnated (Pedersen, 2006). Party membership has been exploited to mobilize voters and to set agendas. Party-oriented social and street activities are strongly encouraged, as is the mobilization of family and friends (Pedersen, 2006). Finally, the party uses its members to penetrate and influence the agendas at daycares and school boards, and within local municipal politics (Pedersen, 2006).

In these three cases, party organization is an important factor for the success of PRR parties in government. Top-down party organization controls internal dissent, while extensive mobilization within civil society has allowed the parties to 'socialize' party members and to 'convince' supporters of the advantages of being in power, despite the fact that political power often involves compromising on party policies.

### **The FPÖ in Government: A Case of Failure**

So far, the analysis has focused on structure and agency factors in order to explain both how and why PRR parties entered and continued to remain in government. This combination of factors, and the special importance of keeping one foot in and one foot out, retaining control over key policy issues, and being a well-organized party, becomes particularly clear in the analysis of an unsuccessful case.

The initial inclusion of the FPÖ in government mirrors developments in other European states: the FPÖ experienced dramatic electoral rise, growing from 5.0 per cent in 1983 (before Jörg Haider became the party leader) to 26.9 per cent in 1999. In the 1999 election, the FPÖ became the second-largest party in Austria and a process of bipolarization appeared to be underway. The ÖVP perceived the FPÖ as a potential ally against the Austrian Socialist Party (SPÖ) and against the old party system. In addition, a rightward ideological and policy shift occurred, especially regarding immigration. These structural factors contributed to the inclusion of the FPÖ in the 2000 government (De Lange, 2008).

Forming a government with the ÖVP produced tangible results: both parties obtained an equal number of ministerial posts. The FPÖ's most important portfolios were Finance and Justice and it was also given the position of Vice-Chancellor (Fallend, 2001, pp. 240–245). However, Haider was not included in the 2000 government and instead retained his position as governor of Carinthia (Fallend, 2001, p. 243), and ultimately relinquished leadership of



the party. The exclusion of Haider from government and from party leadership was highly problematic given that the FPÖ was not simply another political party: Haider had been almost single-handedly responsible for the success of the party throughout the 1990s.

The structure of the governing coalition influenced the actions and the success of the FPÖ in government. The Austrian party system is a three-and-a-half party system, so once the FPÖ was in office, it was fully 'in government'. It could not benefit from a larger government coalition to situate itself as both 'insider' and 'outsider'. The FPÖ, unlike in Switzerland, Italy and Denmark, was in the heart of power, and so it was fully implicated in the decisions of the government. As a result, it was unable to hide policy contradictions. Tensions (for example, between neo-liberal reforms and tax cuts and demands for more state spending, particularly with regard to family policies) increased within the party and between the party and its supporters over government policies. These policy contradictions had not been obvious while the FPÖ was outside the government, but once in power they became difficult for the party to reconcile. Tensions between the party's neo-liberalism and its claims to represent the 'ordinary man' were particularly pronounced given that the FPÖ included the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Social Affairs. The Finance Minister was especially concerned with balancing the budget, but too much emphasis on neo-liberal reforms meant funds were insufficient to increase family support and to cut taxes. The party was plagued by debates over which route to follow: should the focus be on lower middle class voters and fiscal responsibility or should the party maintain its focus on the 'popular' classes by emphasizing tax reductions and child support (Fallend, 2003, p. 894; Luther, 2003a, pp. 200–201; 2003b, pp. 138–142; 2007, p. 8).

The FPÖ was an established political party even before Haider took over leadership, so he inherited a political party with well-developed organizational structures. However, the party was plagued by past party divisions and internal conflicts. While in opposition, especially during the party's dramatic growth in the 1990s, Haider sought to exercise control over the party. As he took over the party and guided it in a new direction, he proceeded to weaken its internal organizational structures. Radical changes to party organization meant that Haider, and his immediate supporters, were no longer accountable to mid-level party members and activists, except during the annual party congress (Ignazi 2006, p. 115). Minimal organizational structure, and the predominant role played by Haider, worked in favor of the party (or was at least not a liability) while it was in opposition.

As the party's electoral success increased and membership grew, it became more difficult to control internal tensions. This was particularly pronounced when the FPÖ joined the 2000 government. First, overextension of resources, especially human resources, meant that it was difficult to find qualified

individuals for cabinet and committee positions. Second, the requirements of governing drained human resources from the lower echelons of the party. Third, the growing size of the membership and the pressures of government created internal tensions between the more ideologically oriented grassroots members and those who were perceived as ‘professional’ politicians. Haider exacerbated these tensions with a series of ‘provocative actions’ as he lost control of the party (Heinisch, 2003, pp. 110–111; Luther, 2003a; 2003b, pp. 139–144). Unlike the PRR parties that have been successful in government, the FPÖ’s lack of internal unity and its weakened organizational structures hindered the party’s ability to sustain its populist and radical identity while in government.

Unlike the SVP, LN and the DF, the FPÖ was not able to maintain control over its agenda while in power. As noted, the contradictions between tax cuts and support for welfare policies were difficult to contain once in government. In addition, the FPÖ was not able to capitalize on its opposition to immigration. The FPÖ was largely responsible for the politicization of immigration in the 1990s. And once in government, tougher immigration policies were implemented, such as mandatory citizenship classes for new immigrants and fast tracking for asylum applications. However, these reforms were implemented as much on behalf of the ÖVP’s Interior Minister Ernst Strasser as by the FPÖ (Luther, 2003b, p. 138).<sup>5</sup> After 2003, the party’s inability to influence immigration policy became even more apparent. As Duncan notes, immigration policy during the center-right government, especially after 2003, did not significantly change (2010), and perhaps more significantly the FPÖ was not able to retain symbolic control over the issue (Geden 81). The inability of the FPÖ to negotiate an internal space to oppose the government allowed Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel to isolate and divide the party and in the process, the ÖVP managed to tame the FPÖ, resulting in its electoral decline (Luther, 2003a, 2003b; Geden, 2005; Pelinka, 2005).

## Conclusions

The growing electoral strength of the PRR has propelled parties such as the SVP, LN, DF and the FPÖ into government. However, because these parties are still relatively small, entry into government must be accomplished through coalitions with mainstream political parties. In this article I argue that a combination of variables from structural and agency approaches explains patterns of success and the failure of the PRR in government. Party system restructuring is an important aspect of why and how PRR parties transition into government. In the four cases analyzed here, a combination of electoral success, policy convergence and close elections (often in bipolarizing party



systems) means that the inclusion of PRR parties in center-right government coalitions is often the determining factor for forming the government. In addition, the structural approach helps us understand why the PRR remains in government; the same indicators that explain the inclusion in government help explain why mainstream parties continue to accommodate the PRR while in government. However, the analysis of the success of the SVP, LN and DF highlights the importance of agency, revealing that the ability to remain in government, and not lose electoral support, requires keeping one foot in and one foot out of government. This can be done in a variety of ways: in Switzerland, by using referenda; in Italy, by exploiting a heterogeneous coalition; and in Denmark, by supporting the government from outside. In addition, it is important that the PRR parties are able to maintain control over their core policy issues in order to demonstrate the efficacy of being in government to their supporters. And finally, party organization is also vital: these three successful PRR parties have had extensive organizational capacity within civil society, and have been able to control internal factions and fragmentation.

The importance of agency oriented variables is particularly clear when the FPÖ's failure in government is compared with the three cases of success. Consistent with the structural explanation, the FPÖ was able to enter government through a combination of factors including electoral growth, policy convergence and party strategy, within the context of what at the time appeared to be a bipolarizing party system. However, the inability of the FPÖ to keep one foot in and one foot out of government, to maintain control over its political agenda, and problems with its party organization, hindered its electoral performance while in government.

Given the importance of agency for the success and the failure of the PRR in government, an important question comes into clear focus: can PRR parties learn from their past failures and from the success of other PRR parties? Evidence from other cases demonstrates that in fact this is often the case. For example, Sarah De Lange and David Art (forthcoming) argue that the continued electoral success of the Dutch Party for Freedom is due in part to Geert Wilders', the party leader, ability to learn from the mistakes of the List Pim Fortuyn. In the case of Austria the setbacks while in government have been acknowledged by key figures within the party. Andreas Mölzer, the party publicist and long-term influential party member, noted in an interview that the failure of the FPÖ stemmed from its lack of preparedness for government, arguing that it did not have the 'structure' to govern (Der Standard, 2010). To be sure, this is not merely an academic question given that the FPÖ may have to once again confront the question of whether it can govern. In the 2010, Vienna elections its support increased from 15 per cent in 2005 to 26 per cent (see [www.wien.gv.at/english/politics/election/](http://www.wien.gv.at/english/politics/election/)), whereas at the national level recent polls placed the FPÖ in second place behind the SPÖ with between

21 and 27 per cent support (Der Standard, 2011). The FPÖ, like other PRR parties, will continue to face the challenge of governing while at the same time maintaining the integrity of their populist and radical right identity. Judging from the successful cases examined here, whether this is in fact possible will be conditioned in large part, although not exclusively, by the agency of the party.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their very helpful and constructive comments. And I would also like to thank Karen Anderson, Tim Bale, Linn Clark, Sarah De Lange, Kristof Jacobs, Triadafilos (Phil) Triadafilopoulos and Liz Root for their comments on earlier drafts. I would also like to thank Anders Ravik Jupskås for his clarifications on several details regarding the Danish case. Earlier versions of this article were presented at Oxford-Brookes University, 24 August 2010, the SHIFTS research seminar at Radboud University, 10 June 2010, and the ECPR Joint Sessions, Münster, Germany, 22–27 March 2010. I would like to thank those in attendance for their helpful comments.

## About the Author

**Andrej Zaslove** is an assistant professor of Comparative Politics at Radboud University, Nijmegen. His research focuses on political parties, populism, the populist radical right, and immigration. He has published articles in *Comparative European Politics*, *Politics*, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *Political Studies Review*, and *European Review*. Most recently, he is author of *The Re-invention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism, and the Italian Lega Nord* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011).

## Notes

- 1 Calculated from [www.parties-and-elections.de/](http://www.parties-and-elections.de/)
- 2 For a good discussion see McDonnell and Newell (2011). They refer to such parties as outsider parties.
- 3 *A note on case selection*: I do not include the LN in the 1994 government and the LPF in the 2002 government since I consider them to be populist but not PRR parties in this particular point in time. For the LN, due to space considerations I only focus on the 2001–2006 government and not on the LN's re-entry into government in 2008. In addition, I have not included the Dutch Party for Freedom's support of the center-right government since 2010 since it is too early to judge whether its support has been successful.
- 4 In 2007, the SVP lost its extra seat; this was due to a split within the party between the more moderate Bern-wing and the rest of the party. During elections for Federal Council, the more





moderate candidate was elected by the other mainstream parties. This caused considerable turmoil within the party and frustration with the Council, and resulted in the SVP proclaiming that it would become an opposition party. However, this strategy proved unsuccessful; even though the SVP did not suffer at the polls, the party decided to renounce its opposition stance in 2009. It currently holds a single seat in the Federal Council (Church and Vatter, 2009).

5 In addition, the party was not able to exploit its opposition to EU integration.

## References

- Albertazzi, D. (2008) Switzerland: Yet another populist paradise. In: D. Albertazzi and D. McDonnell (eds.) *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 100–118.
- Albertazzi, D. and McDonnell, D. (2005) The Lega Nord in the second Berlusconi government: In a league of its own. *West European Politics* 28(5): 952–972.
- Albertazzi, D. and McDonnell, D. (2008) La botte piena e il militante ubriaco: La Lega Nord al governo. *Trasgressioni* 23(1): 25–43.
- Albertazzi, D. and McDonnell, D. (2009) Not just surviving, but thriving: The Lega Nord back in government. Paper presented ECPR General Conference; 10–12 September, University of Potsdam.
- Albertazzi, D. and McDonnell, D. (2010) The Lega Nord back in government. *West European Politics* 33(6): 1318–1340.
- Andersen, J.G. (2007) Nationalism, new right, and new cleavages in Danish politics: Foreign and security policy of the Danish People's Party. In: C. Schori Liang (ed.) *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, pp. 103–123.
- Baader, C. (2010) SVP representative in the Swiss National Council, Basel-Land (Basel-Landschaft), interview conducted 27 April 2010.
- Bale, T. (2003) Cinderella and her ugly sisters: The mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems. *West European Politics* 26(3): 67–90.
- Bale, T., Green-Pedersen, C., Krouwel, A., Luther, K.R. and Sitter, N. (2010) If you can't beat them, join them? Explaining social democratic responses to the challenge from the populist radical right in Western Europe. *Political Studies* 58(3): 410–426.
- Baltisser, M. (2010) SVP General Secretary, interview conducted 29 April 2010.
- Bille, L. (2002) Denmark. *European Journal of Political Research* 41(7–8): 941–946.
- Bille, L. (2003) Denmark. *European Journal of Political Research* 42(7–8): 931–934.
- Bille, L. (2004) Denmark. *European Journal of Political Research* 43(7–8): 989–992.
- Bille, L. (2005) Denmark. *European Journal of Political Research* 44(7–8): 994–1001.
- Bille, L. (2006) Denmark. *European Journal of Political Research* 45(7–8): 1084–1093.
- Bille, L. (2009) Denmark. *European Journal of Political Research* 48(7–8): 945–950.
- Bille, L. and Pedersen, K. (2004) Electoral fortunes and responses of the social democratic and liberal party in Denmark: Ups and downs. In: P. Mair, W.C. Müller and F. Plasser (eds.) *Political Parties and Electoral Change*. London: Sage, pp. 207–233.
- Biorcio, R. (1997) *La Padania Promessa: La Storia, Le Idee, e La Logica D'Azione Della Lega Nord*. Milan, Italy: Il Saggiatore.
- Biorcio, R. (2000) Bossi-Berlusconi, la nuova alleanza. *Il Mulino*, March/April (388): 253–264.
- Bosley, C. and Richardson, A. (2010) Swiss referendum backs expelling convicted foreigners. *Reuters*, 28 November, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/28/us-swiss-politics-expulsion-idUSTRE6A1R1GK20101128>, accessed 28 March 2011.

- Bull, M.J. (2007) La 'grande riforma' del centro-destra alla prova del referendum. In: J.L. Briquet and A. Mastropaolo (eds.) *Politica in Italia: I Fatti dell'Anno e le Interpretazioni: Edizione 2007*. Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino, pp. 123–145.
- Cento Bull. (2002) Verso uno stato federale? Proposte alternative per la revisione costituzionale. In: P. Bellucci and M. Bull (eds.) *Politica in Italia: I Fatti dell'Anno e le Interpretazioni: Edizione 2002*. Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino, pp. 205–223.
- Church, C.H. (2004) The Swiss elections of October 2003: Two steps to system change? *West European Politics* 27(3): 518–534.
- Church, C.H. and Vatter, A. (2009) Opposition in consensual Switzerland: A short but significant experiment. *Government and Opposition* 44(4): 412–437.
- Colombo, A. and Sciortino, G. (2003) The Bossi-Fini law: Explicit fanaticism, implicit moderation and poisoned fruits. In: J. Blondel and P. Segatti (eds.) *Italian Politics: The Second Berlusconi Government*. New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 162–179.
- Damgaard, E. (2000) Denmark: The life and death of government coalitions. In: W.C. Müller and K. Strøm (eds.) *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 231–263.
- Dansk Folkeblad. (2008) nr. 5, 2008, [http://www.dansksfolkeparti.dk/Dansk\\_Folkeblad\\_.asp](http://www.dansksfolkeparti.dk/Dansk_Folkeblad_.asp), accessed 28 February 2010.
- Dansk Folkeblad. (2009) nr. 6, 2009: [http://www.dansksfolkeparti.dk/Dansk\\_Folkeblad\\_.asp](http://www.dansksfolkeparti.dk/Dansk_Folkeblad_.asp), accessed 28 February 2010.
- De Lange, S. (2008) From pariah to power: Explanations for the government participation of radical right-wing populist parties in west European parliamentary democracies. PhD dissertation, University of Antwerp, Antwerp, Belgium.
- De Lange, S. and Art, D. (forthcoming) Fortuyn versus Wilders: An agency-based approach to radical right party building. *West European Politics*.
- De Sio, L. (2007) For a few votes more: The Italian general elections of April 2006. *South European Society and Politics* 12(1): 95–109.
- Der Standard. (2010) Die FPÖ war nicht vorbereitet. 2 February.
- Der Standard. (2011) Umfragen sehen ÖVP an 20-Prozent-Mark. 16 April.
- Deschouwer, K. (ed.) (2008) *New Parties in Government: In Power for the First Time*. London: Routledge.
- Diamanti, I. (2002) Il fantasma DC che insegue Bossi. *La Repubblica*, 15 September.
- Diamanti, I. (2003) *Bianco, Rosso, Verde... Azzurro: Mappa e Colori dell'Italia Politica*. Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino.
- Diamanti, I. (2007) The Italian centre-right and centre-left: Between parties and the 'party'. *West European Politics* 30(4): 733–762.
- Diamanti, I. (2009) *Mappe Dell'Italia Politica: Bianco, Rosso, Verde, Azzurro... e Tricolore*. Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino.
- Diamanti, I. and Lello, E. (2005) The Casa delle Libertà: A house of cards? *Modern Italy* 10(1): 9–27.
- Duncan, F. (2010) Immigration and integration policy and the Austrian radical right in office: The FPÖ/BZÖ, 2000–2006. *Contemporary Politics* 16(4): 337–354.
- Einaudi, L. (2007) *Le Politiche dell'immigrazione in Italia dall'Unità a oggi*. Rome: Editori Laterza.
- Fallend, F. (2001) Austria. *European Journal of Political Research* 40(3–4): 238–253.
- Fallend, F. (2003) Austria. *European Journal of Political Research* 42(7–8): 887–899.
- Gärtner, R. (2002) The FPÖ, foreigners, and racism in the Haider era. In: R. Wodak and A. Pelinka (eds.) *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, pp. 17–31.
- Geden, O. (2005) Identitätsdiskurs und politische Macht: Die rechtspopulistische Mobilisierung von Ethnozentrismus im Spannungsfeld von Oppositionspolitik und Regierung am Beispiel von FPÖ und SVP. In: S. Frölich-Steffen and L. Rensmann (eds.) *Populisten an der*



- Macht: Populistische Regierungsparteien in West- und Osteuropa.* Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, pp. 69–83.
- Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, M. (2002) *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Italian Politics. Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the Northern Question.* Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Green-Pedersen, C. and Krogstrup, J. (2008) Immigration as a political issue in Denmark and Sweden. *European Journal of Political Research* 47(5): 610–634.
- Green-Pedersen, C. and Odmalm, P. (2008) Going different ways? Right-wing parties and the immigrant issue in Denmark and Sweden. *Journal of European Public Policy* 3(15): 367–381.
- Hedetoft, U. (2006) Denmark: Integrating immigrants into a homogeneous welfare state. *Migration Information Source*, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=485>, accessed 28 March 2011.
- Heinisch, R. (2003) Success in opposition – failure in government: Explaining the performance of right-wing populist parties in public office. *West European Politics* 26(3): 91–130.
- Ignazi, P. (2006) *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kosiara-Pedersen, K. (2008) The 2007 Danish general election: Generating a fragile majority. *West European Politics* 31(5): 1040–1048.
- Kriesi, H. and Trechsel, A.H. (2008) *The Politics of Switzerland: Continuity and Change in a Consensus Democracy.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Kuster, S. and Widmer, T. (2010) Switzerland. *European Journal of Political Research* 49(7–8): 1186–1192.
- La Repubblica. (2001) Bossi giura su Pontida da Ciampi: Ero un padano. 18 June.
- La Repubblica. (2003a) Bossi spara su AN e immigrati: Con Fini leader, elezioni perse. 5 December.
- La Repubblica. (2003b) Bossi rilancia la Lega di Lotta: pugno nel governo, piedi fuori. 29 June.
- La Repubblica. (2004) Referendum sulla Turchia. 20 December.
- Luther, K.R. (2000) Austria: A democracy under threat from the freedom party? *Parliamentary Affairs* 53(3): 426–442.
- Luther, K.R. (2003a) The FPÖ: From populist protest to incumbency. In: P. Merkl and L. Weinberg (eds.) *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century.* London: Frank Cass, pp. 191–219.
- Luther, K.R. (2003b) The self-destruction of a right-wing populist party? The Austrian parliamentary election of 2002. *West European Politics* 26(2): 136–152.
- Luther, K.R. (2007) Electoral strategies and performance of Austrian right-wing populism 1986–2006. Keele European Parties Research Unit 5–6, 1–25, <http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/spire/research/KEPRU/working.html>, accessed 28 March 2011.
- Mair, P. and Biezen, I van. (2001) Party membership in twenty European democracies: 1980–2000. *Party Politics* 7(1): 5–21.
- Maraffi, M. (2006) Nella selva della politica: Partiti, coalizioni e altri animali. In: *Dov'è la Vittoria?: Il Voto del 2006 Raccontato dagli Italiani.* Bologna, Italy: Il Mulino, pp. 197–208.
- Mazzoleni, O. (2008) *Nationalisme et Populisme en Suisse: La Radicalisation de la 'Nouvelle' UDC.* Lausanne, Switzerland: Presses polytechnique et universitaires romandes.
- Mazzoleni, O. (2010) Participation and challenge: The 'new' Swiss people party in the federal government. Paper presented at ECPR-Joint Sessions; 22–27 March, Münster.
- Mazzoleni, O. and Skenderovic, D. (2007) The rise and the impact of the Swiss people's party: Challenging the rules of governance in Switzerland. In: P. Delwit and P. Poirier (eds.) *The Extreme Right Parties and Power in Europe.* Brussels, Belgium: Éd. de l'Université de Bruxelles, pp. 85–116.
- McDonnell, D. and Newell, J.L. (2011) Outsider parties in government in Western Europe. *Party Politics* 17(4): 1–10.
- Mény, Y. and Surel, Y. (2002) The constitutive ambiguity of populism. In: Y. Mény and Y. Surel (eds.) *Democracies and the Populist Challenge.* Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, pp. 1–21.

- Meret, S. (2009) The Danish people's party, the Italian Northern league and the Austrian freedom party in a comparative perspective: Party ideology and electoral support. PhD dissertation, Aalborg University, Denmark.
- Mudde, C. (2007) *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Nidegger, Y. (2010) SVP representative in the Swiss National Council, Geneva and the External Communications for the SVP in the Canton of Geneva, interview conducted 29 April 2010.
- Norris, P. (2005) *Radical Right: Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Pasquino, G. (2001) The Italian national elections of 13 May 2001. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 6(3): 371–387.
- Pedersen, K. (2006) Driving a populist party: The Danish people's party. Institut for Statskundskab, Arbejdsrapport, [http://polsci.ku.dk/bibliotek/publikationer/2006/ap\\_2006\\_06.pdf/](http://polsci.ku.dk/bibliotek/publikationer/2006/ap_2006_06.pdf/), accessed 28 March 2011.
- Pedersen, K. and Ringsmose, J. (2004) From the progress party to the Danish people's party – From protest party to government supporting party. ECPR Joint Session 13–18 April, Uppsala, <http://www.essex.ac.uk/ecpr/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/upsala/ws17/pedersen.pdf>, accessed 28 March 2011.
- Pelinka, A. (2005) Die FPÖ: Eine rechtspopulistische Regierungspartei zwischen adaptation und opposition. In: S. Frölich-Steffen and L. Rensmann (eds.) *Populisten an der Macht: Populistische Regierungsparteien in West- und Osteuropa*. Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts – Verlagsbuchhandlung, pp. 87–104.
- Rubin, L. (2005) Love's refugees: The effects of stringent Danish immigration policies on Danes and their non-Danish spouses. *Connecticut Journal of International Law* 20(2): 319–341.
- Ruzza, C. (2005) The Northern league: Winning arguments, losing influence. In: J. Rydgren (ed.) *Movements of Exclusion: Radical Right-Wing Populism in the Western World*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, pp. 65–84.
- Rydgren, J. (2004a) Explaining the emergence of radical right-wing populist parties: The case of Denmark. *West European Politics* 27(3): 474–502.
- Rydgren, J. (2004b) *The Populist Challenge: Political Protest and Ethno-Nationalist Mobilization in France*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Rydgren, J. (2007) The sociology of the radical right. *Annual Review of Sociology* 33(1): 241–262.
- Schain, M. (2006) The extreme-right and immigration policy-making: Measuring direct and indirect effects. *West European Politics* 29(2): 270–289.
- Skenderovic, D. (2007) Immigration and the radical right in Switzerland: Ideology, discourse and opportunities. *Patterns of Prejudice* 41(2): 155–176.
- Skenderovic, D. (2009a) *The Radical Right in Switzerland: Continuity and Change, 1945–2000*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Skenderovic, D. (2009b) Campagnes et agenda politiques: la transformation de l'Union démocratique du centre. In: O. Mazzoleni and H. Rayner (eds.) *Le Partis Politique Suisses: Traditions et Renouvellements*. Paris: Michel Houdiard Éditeur.
- Taggart, P. (2000) *Populism*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.
- Vassallo, S. (2005) The constitutional reforms of the center-right. In: C. Guarnieri and J. Newell (eds.) *Italian Politics: Quo Vadis?*. New York: Berghahn Books, pp. 117–135.
- Wilson, A. (2009) The Italian election of April 2008: A political earthquake? *West European Politics* 32(1): 215–225.
- Zaslove, A. (2011) *The Re-invention of the European Radical Right: Populism, Regionalism, and the Italian Lega Nord*. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Zincone, G. (2002) Immigrazione. In: F. Tuccari (ed.) *Il Governo Berlusconi: Le Parole, I Fatti, I Rischi*. Rome: Editori Laterza, pp. 57–71.