

Chapter 11

Assessing the rise of the radical right and its consequences

After summarizing and integrating the key findings of the previous chapters, this conclusion considers their broader implications for party competition and for democracy, including whether there is any 'contagion of the right' with other parties responding to their success. The results from the study may help to dispel certain common fallacies, while also emphasizing some over-looked factors leading to radical right success. To recap the argument, the advance of new challenger parties is open to multiple interpretations, and 'demand-side', 'supply-side' and 'institutional' perspectives can be found in the literature seeking to explain the rise of the radical right. Let us summarize the evidence presented throughout the book then consider some of the consequences of this phenomenon.

The institutional structure of opportunities

From Duverger onwards, the classic literature on electoral systems suggested that these rules have an important mechanical impact upon the number of parties elected to office, with the implication that minor and fringe parties, including the radical right, have more opportunities to gain seats under proportional representation than under majoritarian systems. More recently this conventional wisdom has been questioned by studies which have suggested that electoral systems play little role in the success of the radical right.¹ Indeed it is true that there are examples where these parties have advanced within majoritarian systems (such as in Canada) as well as under PR (illustrated by the Netherlands, Norway, Belgium, and Switzerland). Nevertheless the balance of evidence indicates that in general rules do matter. The study considered the institutional structure of opportunities that minor parties face in the nomination, campaign and election stages of the pursuit of elected office.

The conclusion from chapter 4 was that nomination rules probably contribute towards the electoral success of minor radical right parties. Case-studies suggest that the legal requirements governing party registration and ballot access play an important role in limiting opportunities for radical right parties under four main conditions: Where the nomination process for ballot access proves cumbersome and burdensome for minor parties (as in the United States); where these parties fall foul of civil law, notably race relations legislation governing hate speech (as in Belgium and the Netherlands), or campaign finance regulations (as in Australia and Denmark); where constitutional provisions and court decisions ban extremist or anti-democratic parties (exemplified by Germany, Chile, and Spain); and in repressive regimes holding manipulated and flawed elections where the ballot access and campaign rules are grossly biased towards the ruling party (illustrated by Belarus). Few liberal democracies ban radical right parties outright, or impose serious limits on the parties or candidates who can be nominated for election, on the grounds that this would interfere with fundamental human rights and civil liberties in free elections. But in a handful of cases – such as in Germany, Spain, and Chile -- extremist party organizations that are directly associated with the illegal use of violence, or which condone terrorist tactics, have been forced to disband or occasionally reorganize under new labels. The fragile institutionalization of minor parties means that the fortunes of the radical right remain particularly vulnerable to legal challenges, such as the prosecution of party leaders charged with campaign finance violations, vote-rigging irregularities, or propagating hate speech.

There are many reasons why the legal statutes and formal regulation governing access to campaign media and party funding could either serve as a political cartel, reinforcing the power of incumbent parties already in elected office, or alternatively they could generate a more level playing field which provides opportunities for minor party challengers. Despite this clear logic, the evidence compared here could find no significant relationship between the available indicators of the formal legal requirements for financial and media access and the national levels of voting support won by the radical right (or more general patterns of party competition). Several important limitations mean that it is advisable to be cautious about drawing any strong positive or negative

inferences from the existing evidence, and at best the hypothetical claim must be regarded as essentially 'unproven'. This is a topic deserving of further research, for example historical case-studies monitoring developments where the campaign finance rules change to distribute more resources to fringe and minor parties.

The book also examined evidence for the impact of electoral systems, particularly the standard claim that proportional representation with low legal vote thresholds facilitates the election of smaller parties. The results of the comparison presented in Chapter 5 indicates that a revised version of the conventional wisdom is partially correct: electoral systems were found to affect the proportion of seats gained by minor radical right parties, confirming that their representation was facilitated by PR systems with low legal thresholds. Even within the category of PR systems, the existence of high legal vote thresholds also exerts an important mechanical brake on the radical right share of seats. Nevertheless the evidence suggests an important and overlooked qualification to the standard view: the effect of electoral systems works through determining the radical right's share of seats *not* votes. The effects in this regard can be regarded as mechanical rather than psychological. The institutional context of the electoral system might be expected to influence popular support for minor parties, with majoritarian systems having a psychological effect by depressing the vote share for fringe and minor radical right parties, where voters switch to more viable parties for strategic or tactical reasons. Yet this turns out not to be the case after all. It remains unclear why the 'wasted vote' thesis fails but given the proximity theory of voting, probably the main reason is that radical right supporters are located too far away from other contenders across the ideological spectrum for them to switch to their second-preference choice for 'tactical' or 'strategic' considerations.

The impact of the electoral system upon seats can be illustrated by a few examples. Under majoritarian elections, for example, the previous chapter showed how the *Front National* emerged from the fringe in the mid-1980s, boosted by the 1984 European elections held under PR, but after the rules reverted back to the majoritarian runoff system, its subsequent role in the French parliament has remained marginal. The last legislative elections in France, in June 2002, saw the FN receive the support of about 11.3% of the electorate, yet they failed to win a single seat in the *Assemblée Nationale*, due to the 2nd ballot electoral system. By contrast, after gaining a similar share of the national vote (11-12%) in the most recent general elections, under PR the *Vlaams Blok* constitute one tenth of the members of the Belgian Parliament, while *Alleanza Nazionale* hold ministerial office in Berlusconi's cabinet. Politically, winning seats, *not* votes, is vital for power, since parliamentary representation provides the radical right with legitimacy, resources, and patronage which can be leveraged, with luck and skill, into further advances. Through winning office, minor parties gain access to a public platform on the national stage, allowing them to propagate their views, influence debates, and mobilize popular support via the national news media, not just gain sporadic bursts of publicity during occasional election campaigns.

At the same time, certain important qualifications to these conclusions should be noted. In particular, the evidence about the impact of electoral systems remains limited, and the direction of causality in this relationship cannot be determined from cross-sectional evidence alone, particularly in newer democracies. What this means is that it is not possible to say for certain whether majoritarian electoral systems penalize and thereby discourage extremist parties from competing, or, alternatively, whether newer democracies containing multiple parties dispersed widely across the political spectrum are more likely to adopt PR rules in their electoral laws and constitutions. What can be said more confidently, however, is that in established democracies with relatively stable electoral systems over successive decades, or even for centuries, in the long-term it seems plausible that the rules of the game (adopted for whatever reason) will probably constrain *subsequent* patterns of party competition. In Britain, for example, the system of plurality single-member districts has persisted in elections for the House of Commons since the Great Reform Act of 1832, with the exception of a few dual-member seats which were finally

abolished in 1948. This system has greatly limited the opportunities for fringe and minor parties like the National Front and BNP to challenge Labour and Conservative predominance at Westminster, despite growing patterns of partisan dealignment and occasional surges of popular support for minor challengers like the UK Independence party in second-order parliamentary by-elections and European elections. Where electoral rules have persisted unchanged for many decades, they influence how radical right minor parties respond strategically to the structure of opportunities they face. 'Before' and 'after' cases also confirm the impact of rules. For example, when electoral reforms were introduced by the Blair Government, changing the system used in European elections from first-past-the-post to regional party list PR, this improved the subsequent performance of fringe parties, including the BNP and the UK Independence party.

The social basis of support and a 'new social cleavage' in the electorate?

The institutional context of the nomination and election process therefore shapes the opportunities facing radical right parties. As discussed in chapter 6, structural explanations commonly relate patterns of party support to the major social cleavages in the electorate. Interpretations of the nature of the social base of the radical right differ, with classic accounts of European fascism emphasizing their strength among the petit bourgeoisie displaced by organized labor and big business, 'new cleavage' theories emphasizing support among the socially-disadvantaged in affluent postindustrial societies, while accounts of partisan disadvantage suggest that social identities have generally weakened in their ability to structure voting choices. Where parties are based upon distinct social sectors, then Lipset and Rokkan suggest that they can forge enduring ties with these groups, representing their interests and concerns in the political system. Where such ties have weakened, though social and partisan dealignment, then we would expect greater electoral volatility and more potential for protest voting. What do the results of the survey analysis suggest about the social base of support for the radical right?

As we have seen, the systematic evidence supporting the 'new social cleavage' thesis remains limited, at best. The comparison of the social class profile of the radical right electorate presented in chapter 6, including multiple indicators of social inequality, suggests that they are disproportionately over-represented among both the petit bourgeoisie – self-employed professionals, own-account technicians and small merchants – *as well as* among the skilled and unskilled working class. The survey evidence presented in chapter 6 throws doubt on the claim that support for the radical right in all countries is disproportionately based upon their appeal to a 'new social cleavage' or 'underclass' of low-skilled and low-qualified workers in inner-city areas, or that their voting support is strongest amongst those with direct experience of unemployment or poverty. This cross-class coalition means that we should look skeptically upon the idea that the radical right is purely a phenomenon of the politics of resentment among the 'underclass' of low-skilled and low-qualified workers in inner-city areas, or that their rise can be attributed in any mechanical fashion to growing levels of unemployment and job insecurity in Europe. The socio-economic profile is more complex than popular stereotypes suggest. At the same time the traditional gender gap persisted, with these parties drawing disproportionate support from men. Although the pooled analysis suggests some common patterns, the results disaggregated by nation show considerable variations in the social profile of radical right voters. As shown in chapter 8, radical right voters were significantly more likely to believe that immigrants take jobs away from workers, just as they are also more likely to express instrumental racist sentiments concerning the cultural or general economic threat of immigrants. But this pattern reflects the attitudes of radical right voters rather than their direct experience, for example of unemployment. It could be that alternative more sensitive survey measures could capture any direct linkages between perceptions of job insecurity, hostility to immigrants, and support for the radical right, but the available evidence from the ESS fails to support this thesis.

The politics of resentment?

Another common perspective regards rising support for the radical right as indicative of widespread protest against the status quo, anger at the choices offered by mainstream parties, and hence an indicator of broader public disaffection in democratic societies. The 'politics of resentment' thesis is pervasive in the literature, tapping into the older tradition explaining the propensity of 'authoritarian personalities' to support European fascism². This argument is not necessarily antithetical to the 'new cleavage' thesis, as these accounts can be combined where political disaffection is concentrated among disadvantaged social sectors. Nevertheless the explanation remains logically distinct.

The evidence presented in chapter 7 confirms that those who cast their ballots for the radical right are indeed less trusting of a range of political institutions in representative democracy. Studies also suggest that a gradual erosion of institutional confidence has occurred among the public during recent decades in many established democracies, especially a decline of political trust towards parties and parliaments³. This process should have expanded the constituency of those who are potentially sympathetic towards the expression of anti-establishment sentiments. The evidence presented here therefore does support the 'politics of resentment' thesis to some extent, but we should not exaggerate either the strength or the consistency of the indicators. Certain important points need to be born in mind before concluding that any erosion of institutional trust in contemporary democracies can be blamed for the rise of the radical right.

First, growing mistrust of representative institutions is widespread throughout contemporary democracies, so it is difficult to use this explanation to account for the substantial variations in the electoral fortunes of the radical right, such as the contrasts between Norway and Sweden, or Italy and Spain, as well as differences in their performance within countries, such as the popularity of the *Front National* in Francophone Belgium and the *Vlaams Bloc* in Wallonian Belgium, or how well the Canadian Reform/Alliance/Conservative party performed in Quebec and the western states.

In addition, popular journalistic explanations often claim that public disillusionment with politics and dissatisfaction with government has fuelled the ascendancy of the radical right. Yet the interpretation of the direction of causality in this relationship remains open to question. Citizens disenchanted with mainstream parties, and alienated from the political system, may indeed gravitate towards supporting the radical right, as the party best able to articulate these concerns. Alternatively, the exclusion of radical right parties from power, coupled with the populist anti-establishment rhetoric of their leaders, could plausibly encourage mistrust of political institutions amongst their followers⁴. Chapter 7 established cross-national variations in positive or negative evaluations of government performance among radical right supporters, which were related to whether radical right parties are either included or excluded from power⁵. Where these parties become part of governing coalitions, or where conservative governments rise to power which are closely sympathetic to their aims, then radical right supporters in these nations prove more positive towards government. Where radical right parties are excluded, then, not surprisingly, this encourages mistrust of the responsiveness and performance of government among their supporters. In practice, with cross-sectional survey evidence, it is difficult to disentangle the direction of causality in the relationship between trust and radical right voting. In practice, some interaction effects are probably at the heart of this pattern, rather than the simple one-way relationship often assumed, and analysis of time-series, multi-wave panel surveys, or experimental data is probably necessary to resolve this issue.

The growing salience of cultural protectionism?

Another common sociological explanation for the rise of the radical right, indeed the conventional wisdom, focuses upon the spread of multiculturalism and more ethnically-diverse societies found today in postindustrial nations. This process is driven by many factors associated with processes of globalization, notably by patterns of long-term social change and population

migration, the growth of refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing armed conflict and failed states, and more permeable national borders and open labor markets. Many accounts assume that a public backlash against these trends has triggered the popular success of leaders such as Le Pen and Haider who articulate these concerns. In this view, the radical right can be regarded as a single-issue party, especially where mainstream parties and liberal elites in the European Union and Anglo-American democracies have failed to respond to any public resentment and growing hostility directed against 'foreigners' and 'outsiders' by setting stricter limits on immigration and asylum-seekers.⁶

The evidence analyzed in chapter 8 suggests that, contra the standard account, no significant relationship existed at *aggregate* level between the national share of the vote cast for radical right parties and a wide range of indicators of ethnic diversity in a country, whether measured by estimated official rates of refugees and asylum-seekers, the proportion of non-nationals and non-citizens living in a country, or public opinion towards immigration. Parties such as the *Vlaams Blok*, the FPÖ, and the *Front National* have consistently emphasized racist rhetoric, anti-foreigner diatribes, and the theme of cultural protectionism as the leitmotif recurring throughout leadership speeches and at the heart of their election campaign. Other policies which they advocate, such as restrictions on welfare services or the need for strong law and order, are also often coded implicitly within a racist frame. As a result, the electoral success of these parties is often interpreted to signify a public backlash directed against ethnic minorities in the countries where they do well. But, in fact, the relationship proves more complicated. At the same time, at *individual*-level, anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes, as well as general support for cultural protectionism, *do* predict who will vote for the radical right. Their electoral support was typically stronger among people who believed that immigrants are an economic threat by taking away jobs or depressing wages, that the nation's culture was undermined by foreigners, or that there should be restrictive policies towards refugees. These attitudes remained significant even after applying the standard battery of prior social controls. This pattern was found consistently in many, although not all, of the eight countries in the ESS survey with a relevant right party. By contrast, attitudes concerning economic policies, such as government policy towards income inequality or the role of trade unions, failed to prove a significant predictor in many nations, although admittedly the full range of economic attitudes towards the role of markets and the state were only poorly gauged in this particular survey.

The apparent mismatch in the results found at both these levels can be accounted for by the well-known ecological fallacy, which suggests that patterns found in public opinion at national level do not necessarily hold at individual-level, and also by the individual-fallacy, which implies that patterns established at individual-level cannot necessarily be assumed to reflect public opinion at national-level⁷. Minor radical right parties gain the support of a minority of the electorate, even in countries such as Switzerland where they are strongest, and this group is strongly skewed in terms of the normal distribution of public opinion; hence it is misleading to generalize on the basis of the attitudes held by their supporters to the general state of public opinion existing in the countries where the radical right performs well. The minority most hostile towards immigration, ethnic diversity, and multiculturalism are indeed most likely to vote for the radical right, as many others have reported. But this does not mean that the popularity or success of the radical right in a country indicates the balance of public opinion towards cultural protectionism, immigration, or race relations within that nation. It may simply mean that public opinion is sharply polarized around these issues and values, not that the median voter favors cultural protectionism.

Ideological appeals

On this basis, we can conclude that sociological theories of structural change only take us so far. What needs to be considered is not just how social conditions might facilitate attitudes conducive towards the rise of the radical right, but, even more importantly, how parties respond to public demands when crafting their strategic ideological and value appeals, targeting voters, and

building their local and national organizations. Supply-side explanations emphasize these factors, strongly influenced by the Kitschelt thesis that the central ideological location of mainstream parties, for example a liberal elite consensus emphasizing tolerance of refugees and asylum-seekers, can maximize opportunities on the far right of the political spectrum for newer insurgents. Yet the comparison of the ideological location of the mainstream center-left and center-right parties in sixteen countries, presented in chapter 9, failed to support the claim that the radical right advanced most successfully where the left-right gap was smallest. Nor was there strong support for the van der Brug variant of this argument, claiming that it is the ideological position of the mainstream rightwing party which is critical for maximizing opportunities for the radical right.

The argument developed in this book suggests that the broader context constrains party locations across the ideological spectrum. This claim builds on the observation in chapter 5 that under PR electoral systems with low thresholds, minor parties can gain elected office by winning a relatively modest share of the popular vote. Under these rules, minor parties have a strategic incentive to win seats by adopting ‘bonding’ strategies which they can use to mobilize and activate niche cleavages within the electorate. Using such strategies, the radical right typically stresses the signature issues of cultural protectionism which distinguish these parties most clearly from their mainstream competitors on the center-right and center-left. By contrast, in majoritarian electoral systems, with higher effective electoral thresholds, minor parties will fail to surmount the hurdles to elected office (and thus the rewards of status, power, money, and legitimacy that flow from office) unless they adopt broader populist or ‘catch-all’ appeals by emphasizing a wider range of values, based on vague rhetoric and simple slogans largely devoid of substantive policy content.

The evidence in Chapter 9, based on comparing the perceived ideological location of parties in thirty nations, confirms the idea that party competition is usually more centripetal in majoritarian systems while being dispersed more centrifugally across the whole ideological spectrum from far-left to far-right in PR systems. The survey evidence also suggests that both ideological values and affective orientations towards parties were important predictors of voting for the radical right in the multivariate analysis of the pooled-sample, drawing upon all thirteen nations where these factors could be compared. These attitudes reduced the significance of almost all of the social-demographic variables in the model. But to take account of the institutional context, the analysis was broken down into more detailed case-studies comparing voting behavior in Canada and France (exemplifying majoritarian electoral systems) with Norway and Switzerland (illustrating proportional systems). The multivariate models analyzed the relative impact of left-right ideological location and populist orientations (liking for the far right party) on casting a vote for the radical right in each election, including a battery of prior social and attitudinal controls. The results confirmed that in Switzerland and Norway, using proportional party list electoral systems, both ideology and partisanship played a significant role in shaping the appeal of the radical right. But in the countries using majoritarian electoral systems, in both Canada and France, only populist appeals (*not* ideological proximity) proved significant predictors of radical right votes. It would have been useful to explore the basis of the radical right vote in more countries using majoritarian systems, such as the background and attitudes of BNP supporters in Britain or One Nation in Australia, but there were too few radical right voters contained in the standard election surveys in these countries to facilitate analysis. Given these limitations, the case-study comparison cannot be regarded as definitive, but the results are consistent with the theory that electoral rules shape radical right party strategies and electoral appeals.

Organizational consolidation

The factors leading to an initial surge in support for the radical right are not necessarily sufficient to sustain their advance, as shown by the sudden rise and fall of ‘flash’ parties. Parties which have developed effective organizations -- building up financial campaign resources,

institutionalizing party rules, encouraging internal party discipline and cohesion, and fostering a grassroots base – are more likely to endure through good electoral times and bad. Minor challengers and insurgents are also likely to have more difficulties in mobilizing support where mainstream parties have established and maintained enduring partisan attachments in the mass electorate. The case-studies discussed in chapter 10 serve to illustrate the broader conditions under which radical right parties have, and have not, consolidated their advance in successive elections. Britain exemplifies a country which has experienced processes of social and partisan dealignment, but where the National Front and British National Party have consistently failed to surmount other institutional barriers to gain entry at Westminster. Yet dealignment can also facilitate occasional deviating elections; examples include the Netherlands, where the *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*'s had sudden success in May 2002, only to fall equally sharply within two years, as well as the short-term breakthrough that Ross Perot's Reform party enjoyed in the 1992 and 1996 US presidential elections. By contrast, critical elections involve an enduring shift in patterns of party competition, exemplified by the 1984 European elections in France where Jean-Marie Le Pen's *Front National*, which had enjoyed poor fortunes for a decade, experienced a major breakthrough from fringe to minor party status, a position which proved durable in subsequent contests; the 1986 Austrian election representing a decisive contest as Jörg Haider moved the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) from the margins to mainstream; and the 1993 Canadian elections marking the initial breakthrough for the Reform Party, subsequently sustained as the Alliance and then Conservative party.

The consequences for party competition in representative democracies

The broader implications of this study may also help us to understand the potential impact of radical right parties on the institutions of representative democracy. Many commentators have expressed considerable concern about the advance of the radical right, on the assumption that this development poses substantial threats to government stability, the public policy agenda, and indeed the fundamental health of representative democracies⁸. But are these anxieties actually justified? In particular, here we can consider whether there is good evidence supporting the 'contagion of the right' thesis, which suggests that the advance of the radical right has caused mainstream parties to become more socially conservative on issues of immigration and race relations, for example by encouraging governments to adopt more restrictive policies towards asylum-seekers and political refugees.

Many commentators suggest that radical right parties have probably had their greatest influence by raising public concern about their 'signature' issues, especially those of race relations, immigration policy, welfare reform, and law and order, thereby tugging moderate parties towards the extreme right⁹. In France, for example, Schain suggests that the center-right parties, the RPR and UDF, adopted the *Front National* anti-immigrant rhetoric after 1986, in the attempt to preempt Le Pen's support¹⁰. Along similar lines, Pettigrew argues that Austria implemented more restrictive policies towards refugees after the FPÖ entered coalition government with the ÖVP¹¹. In spring 2004, the Dutch government legislated to remove tens of thousands of failed asylum seekers, a measure that seems to have been influenced by *Lijst Pim Fortuyn*'s electoral success. The New Zealand First party has long adopted a hard-line position over race relations, critiquing the Treaty of Waitangi safeguarding Maori rights. Following their example, in January 2004 Don Brash, the leader of the main rightwing opposition Nationalist party, gave a speech echoing their rhetoric and playing the 'race card' over Maori rights, generating a surge of popular Nationalist support in the polls.

Of course these developments in public policy might have occurred anyway, as governments responded to global patterns of population migration, growing multiculturalism in modern societies, and the shifting tide of public opinion on these issues. In recent years, many EU states have tightened immigration policies, even where these parties remain weak. Yet the growth of the radical right could plausibly have played an important role in this process through challenging the liberal consensus among mainstream governing parties, altering public discourse,

expanding the issue space to draw mainstream parties rightwards, heightening the salience and polarization of the issue of immigration on the policy agenda, and legitimating policies founded upon racism and intolerance¹². Some of the most systematic evidence supporting this thesis was developed by Harmel and Svasand who compared the content analysis evidence of party manifestos in Norway and Denmark. In these countries, the policy platforms for the moderate Conservative parties have moved rightwards since the early-1970s, and this shift can be interpreted as a response to the electoral challenge posed by the success of the Progress parties on their extreme flank¹³.

Building upon this approach, we can use the time-series data provided by the Manifesto Research Group to see whether critical elections in France, Canada, Switzerland, and Austria, which saw considerable vote and/or seat gains by a radical right party, were consistently associated with a subsequent rightwards ideological shift in the policy platforms offered by mainstream parties. The Manifesto Research Group/Comparative Manifesto Project has used content analysis to code party platforms published from 1945 to 1998 in 25 nations, facilitating comparison of party policy programs within a common framework across many Western democracies¹⁴. Party platforms, manifestos, and election programs provide an important source of information about party priorities and values. They represent authoritative documents, given considerable prominence in election campaigns, which have been widely used in the literature to gauge the relative distance or proximity of parties. The record of parties in government are also commonly evaluated against the manifesto promises they made before coming into power, and studies suggest that many policy pledges are indeed often implemented through legislation, spending budgets, or administrative decisions¹⁵. The content analysis coding scheme developed by the MRG uses 57 categories of issues, measuring the proportion of manifesto sentences devoted to topics such as law and order, free enterprise, and the expansion of social services, assuming that the amount of attention in the manifesto reflects the relative priority which each party gives to each issue. A summary left-right scale is then developed among a sub-group of 26 items, calculated simply by subtracting the sum of 'Left' percentages from 'Right' percentages. The 'Left' coding includes statements about issues which typify social democratic or socialist principles, such as the expansion of social services and education, positive references to labor groups and trade unions, and favorable mentions of economic planning and nationalization. The 'Right' reflects priorities such as policies favoring free enterprise, law and order, and pro-military. The position of the radical right can be compared against the location of other parties in each election based on the overall Left-Right summary scale. It should be noted that the MRG scale represents the attempt to develop a generic left-right ideological scale, focused heavily upon classic issues of the role of the state versus the free market economy, rather than the issues of immigration and race relations which are more properly the distinctive territory of the radical right. Nevertheless it is one of the best available measures which facilitates time-series analysis of party locations since 1945. The 'contagion of the right' thesis suggests that after a national election where a radical right party registers a sharp gain in their share of votes and/or seats, then in subsequent elections other mainstream parties in the same country who may feel threatened will respond (particularly parties on the center-right) by moving their own position further rightwards. This thesis can be tested in cases where a critical election occurred and where the MRG project coded the platforms of radical right parties, including the sudden rise of the Reform party in the 1993 Canadian election, the *Front National* in the 1984 French election, the FPÖ in the 1986 Austrian election, and the Progress Party in the 1989 Norwegian election.

Austria

The trends in the Austrian case, presented in Figure 11.1, illustrate these patterns. The graph displays the steadily eroding voting support for the Freedom party from the mid-1950s until 1983, then the sharp surge in the share of the vote won by the FPÖ in successive elections from 1983 to 1994, before a slight fall to 1995 (the latest date available for the Austrian manifesto data in the MRG project). The figure also illustrates the rightwards shift in this party in 1986, after

Haider took over the leadership, which continued in successive elections to 1995. The graph also shows the way that, after a short time-lag, other Austrian parties also followed suit by moving their own position rightwards, including the shift evident in the ÖVP, the SPÖ, and even the Greens. Now this evidence does not and cannot demonstrate that the electoral success of the FPÖ *produced* a ‘follow-my-leader’ effect. Indeed all the Austrian parties (including the FPÖ) could have been moving rightwards simultaneously during the early-nineties, due to many independent external factors. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, and conflict in the Balkans, for example, could have altered foreign policy and security priorities on Austria’s borders during this era. The influx of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrant labor from south-eastern Asia and post-Communist Europe (especially Bosnia and Albania) could have heightened social tensions and renewed attempts to strengthen national borders. The Austrian welfare state could have been facing growing pressures in this period due to many social trends common in modern European societies, such as rising health care costs, rising unemployment, the breakdown of the traditional family unit, and the growing size of the elderly population. But at the same time the rightwards shift evident in the policy platforms of the other major parties in Austria during the early-1990s could also be plausibly explained as their attempt to curtail the growing electoral success of the FPÖ, following recognition that the public’s ‘zone of acquiescence’ had moved right on issues of cultural protectionism.

[Figure 11.1 about here]

One way to confirm the interpretation with greater confidence is to see whether there are consistent patterns for a ‘contagion of the right’ which occur in other countries, where the timing of changes in party competition can be attributed to the electoral popularity of radical right parties. Examination of trends in party competition in Norway, illustrated in Figure 11.2, show that Austria was not simply an exceptional case; instead similar patterns can also be detected where the sharp rise in support for the *FrP* between 1985 (3.7% of the vote) and 1989 (13.0%) was followed by a right-wards shift among all the other major party platforms between 1989 and 1993. We cannot establish whether it was the rise of the radical right vote in the 1989 Norwegian which caused a subsequent shift rightwards among center-right parties, since again many other exogenous factors may have generated this pattern. The fact that the Austrian and Norwegian changes in party competition occurred during roughly the same period (between 1989 and 1993 in Norway and between 1986 and 1995 in Austria) means that this pattern could possibly be dismissed as the result of a broader cultural shift in the political zeitgeist. Indeed the timing of such a shift could plausibly be regarded as a *cause* of growing support for the radical right, rather than the result of their rise in popularity. But in each case the timing was certainly coincident with the argument that the initial popular surge of radical right support in one national contest triggered a rightward shift to occur in the ideological position and the public policies adopted by the other major parties in subsequent contests.

[Figure 11.2 about here]

Yet there are good reasons to be cautious about assuming that this is a general pattern which holds across diverse nations and electoral systems. In particular, the comparison of trends in party competition in both France and Canada, in contests held under majoritarian rules, shows mixed patterns, or no consistent evidence supporting a ‘contagion of the right’ thesis in these countries (see Figures 11.3 and 11.4). In France, the graph shows that the Front National moved ahead in the mid-1980s (notably with their breakthrough in the 1984 European elections) but Figure 11.3 indicates no apparent subsequent rightward shift among other parties in this country. In Canada, as well, the sudden emergence of Reform in 1993 as a serious force in parliamentary politics, was not followed by a subsequent rightwards shift by other parties, possibly because of the simultaneous meltdown of the Progressive Conservatives as the major opposition party, along with the regional pattern of party competition in this country. The evidence from the comparative manifesto data remains impressionistic and limited, in both the countries and the time-period. But the four-nation comparison of trends allows us to conclude that a ‘contagion of the right’ effect

was probably apparent in Norway and Austria, both exemplifying consensus democracies using proportional representation electoral systems, but this pattern was not apparent in Canada and France, using majoritarian rules.

[Figures 11.3 and 11.4 about here]

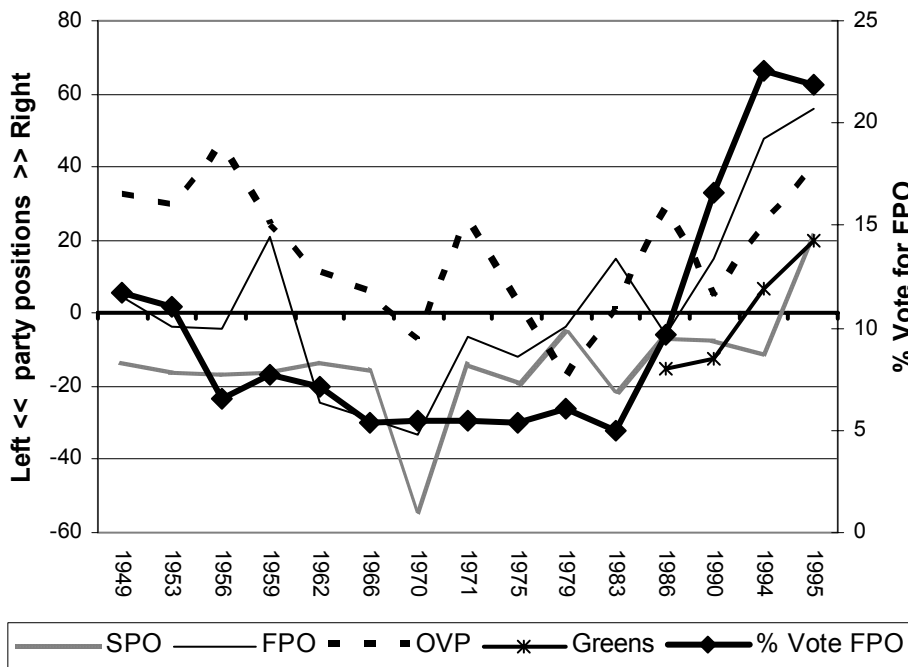
Therefore to summarize, this book has only sketched out certain features leading towards the success of the radical right. There are many avenues for further research which are opened by this study and further cross-national survey analysis would allow us to explore the consistency of these patterns in far greater depth and across a wider range of societies. It would also be invaluable to examine the nature of the party organizational structures used by the radical right and to analyze the background and attitudes of their grassroots membership, where they have developed such as base. This study has also been unable to analyze the type of campaign coverage these parties receive in the news media, which is likely to be an important part of their success if they receive disproportionate attention relative to their size. Further work is necessary to document the legislative activities and policy priorities of the radical right once they enter elected office and whether they do have problems in reconciling their 'anti-politics' message with their role in power. The impact of their leadership, including their rhetoric and style, would provide important insights into the popularity of the radical right, along with studies of the communication networks linking these parties with broader social movements and diverse groups on the extreme right. In short, a broad and diverse research agenda could build upon and expand some of the initial propositions outlined in this account, providing further insights into this phenomenon.

We can conclude that rather than 'one-level demand', or even two level 'supply-and demand' models, more comprehensive accounts can be enriched by considering the interaction of supply and demand within a broader institutional context. The book theorizes that the institutional context governing the nomination, campaigning, and election process is critical to the electoral fortunes of fringe and minor parties, notably the use of low threshold PR electoral systems. The most important political attitudes are the existence of widespread political disaffection and processes of partisan dealignment, both of which weaken the anchors of habitual voting choices, coupled with the rising salience of the values of cultural protectionism and anti-globalization. These factors are not distinctive to explaining the rise of the radical right per se; instead, they can potentially function to benefit other minor parties across the political spectrum. The survey evidence in this account also throws serious doubt on the thesis that support for the radical right is disproportionately based upon their appeal to a 'new social cleavage' or 'underclass' of low-skilled and low-qualified workers in inner-city areas, or to those with direct experience of unemployment or poverty. While common as a popular stereotype, in fact the class basis of support for the radical right remains mixed, drawing upon the petit bourgeoisie as well as traditional working class. There is also no automatic and direct relationship between rates of immigration, asylum-seekers, and refugees in a country and the radical right share of votes or seats in that nation.

Within this context, how far radical right parties are capable of responding to popular demands remains critical for their electoral success¹⁶. And this is not a purely contingent phenomenon. Their ideological values and organizational development are particularly important in determining whether radical right parties remain marginalized at the periphery of the political system (such as the BNP), or whether they become significant political actors influencing the policy agenda, gaining elected office, and even entering government ministries (such as the FPÖ). Their rise depends heavily upon how far their own strategic ideological appeals work within the constraints set by the electoral system and the distribution of public opinion¹⁷. Under PR systems with low thresholds, radical right parties can be successfully elected by adopting more extreme ideological appeals based on emphasizing their 'signature' issues of cultural protectionism. By contrast, under majoritarian systems with higher thresholds, radical right parties need to adopt more populist strategies to succeed. And where they rise, the process of building, institutionalizing, and consolidating party organizations is critical for the enduring success of the

radical right, including developing formal procedures governing leadership succession and organizational structures, mobilizing a grassroots base of supporters and loyalists, and maintaining party discipline within the legislature. Parties which fail to institutionalize can occasionally surge in support in certain deviating elections but if they fail to consolidate their success, they remain vulnerable to equally sudden collapse. The lessons of this study have important implications, not just for the success of the radical right, but also for patterns of party competition across political systems, for the future public policy agenda on issues of social tolerance, race relations and multiculturalism, and thus for the underlying health of contemporary democracies.

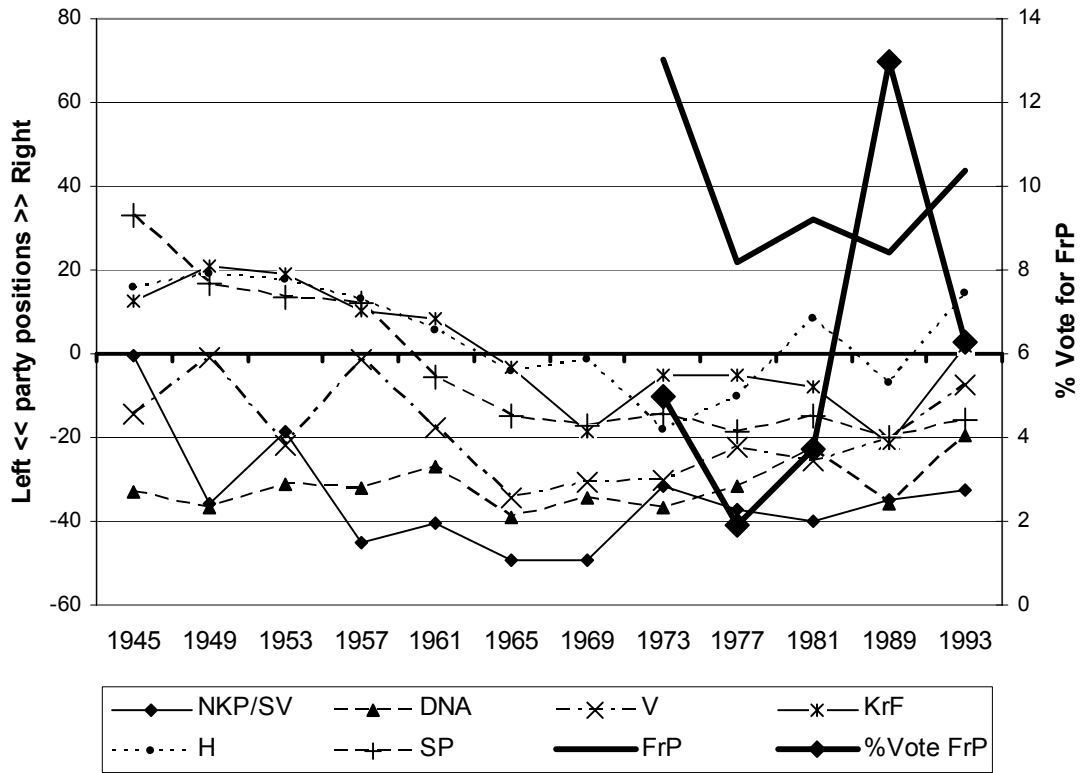
Figure 11.1: Austrian party competition and support for the FPO, 1949-1995



Notes: The estimated leftwing or rightwing party positions are derived from the Manifesto Research Group coding of party platforms.

Sources: The Manifesto Research Group.

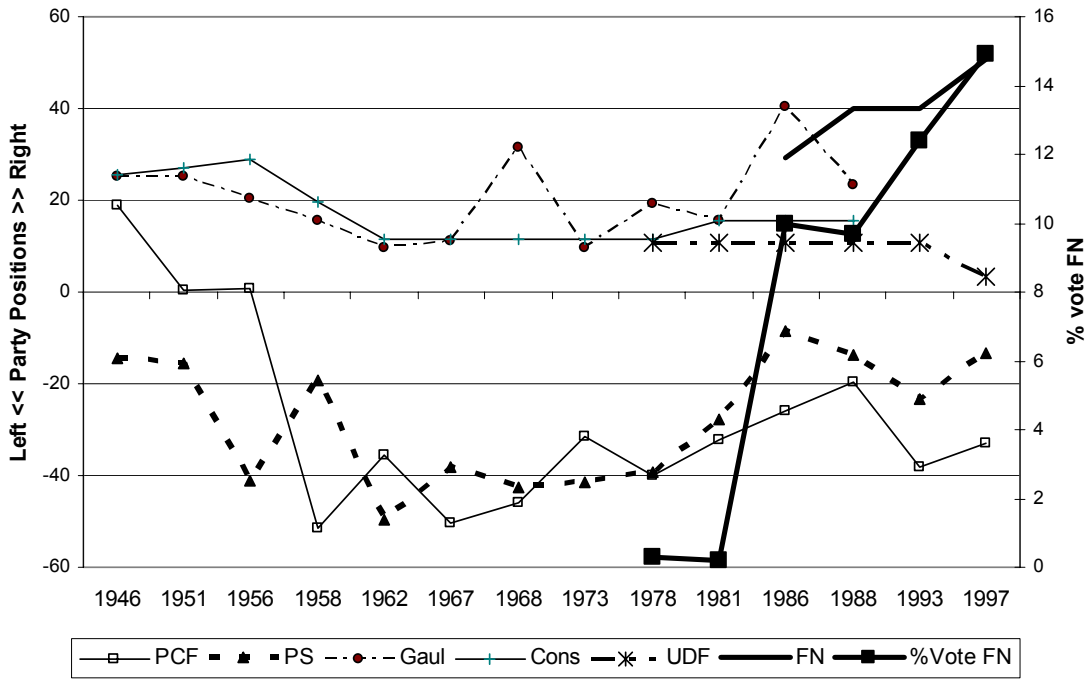
Figure 11.2: Norwegian party competition and support for the FrP, 1945-1993



Notes: The estimated leftwing or rightwing party positions are derived from the Manifesto Research Group coding of party platforms.

Sources: The Manifesto Research Group.

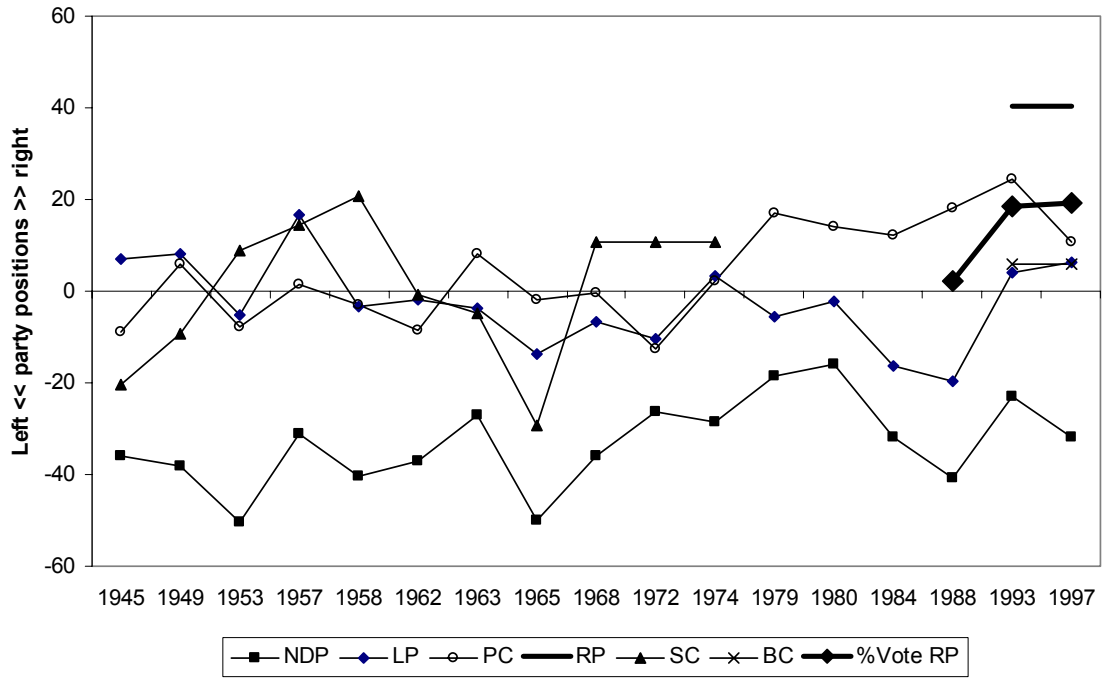
Figure 11.3: French party competition and support for the *Front National*, 1946-1997



Notes: The estimated leftwing or rightwing party positions are derived from the Manifesto Research Group coding of party platforms.

Sources: The Manifesto Research Group.

Figure 11.4: Canadian party competition and support for the Reform party



Notes: The estimated leftwing or rightwing party positions are derived from the Manifesto Research Group coding of party platforms.

Sources: The Manifesto Research Group.

¹ Herbert Kitschelt, with Anthony J. McGann. 1995. *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan; Elisabeth Carter. 2002. 'Proportional representation and the fortunes of right-wing extremist parties.' *West European Politics* 25 (3): 125-146; Elisabeth Carter. 2004. 'Does PR promote political extremism? Evidence from the West European parties of the extreme right.' *Representation* 40(2): 82-100.

² This claim is most clearly articulated by Hans-Georg Betz. 1994. *Radical Rightwing Populism in Western Europe*. New York: St Martin's Press. For the US case, see Jean Hardisty. 1999. *Mobilizing Resentment: Conservative resurgence from John Birch to the Promise Keepers*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. The most systematic survey analysis evidence is presented in Wouter Van der Brug and Meindert Fennema. 2003. 'Protest or mainstream? How the European anti-immigrant parties developed into two separate groups by 1999.' *European Journal of Political Research* 42: 55-76.

³ Pippa Norris. 1998. *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Russell J. Dalton. 2004. *Democratic Challenges: Democratic Choices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁴ See, for example, J. W. Koch. 2003. 'Political cynicism and third party support in American presidential elections.' *American Politics Research* 31 (1): 48-65.

⁵ A similar interpretation of the general causes of satisfaction with government is presented in Christopher J. Anderson. 1995. *Blaming the Government: Citizens and the Economy in Five European Democracies*. New York: M.E. Sharpe; Christopher J. Anderson. and Christine A. Guillory. 1997. 'Political institutions and satisfaction with democracy.' *American Political Science Review* 91(1): 66-81.

⁶ See, for example, Rachel Gibson. 2002. *The Growth of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.

⁷ For a debate about these issues, see M.A. Seligson. 2002. 'The renaissance of political culture or the renaissance of the ecological fallacy?' *Comparative Politics*. 34 (3): 273-285; Ronald Inglehart and Christopher Welzel. 2003. 'Political culture and democracy - Analyzing cross-level linkages.' *Comparative Politics*. 36 (1): 61-70.

⁸ See Patrick Hossay and Aristide Zolberg. 2002. 'Democracy in Peril?' In *Shadows Over Europe: The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe*. Edited by Martin Schain, Aristide Zolberg, and Patrick Hossay. Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapter 13.

⁹ Tim Bale. 2003. 'Cinderella and her ugly sisters: The mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bi-polarizing party systems.' *West European Politics* 26 (3): 67-90.

¹⁰ Martin Schain. 1987. 'The National Front in France and the Construction of Political Legitimacy.' *West European Politics* 10(2):229-252.

¹¹ Thomas F. Pettigrew. 1998. 'Reactions toward the new minorities of Western Europe.' *Annual Review of Sociology* 24:77-103.

¹² Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham. Eds. 2000. *Challenging immigration and ethnic relations politics: Comparative European perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also the comparison of Germany and Italy on this issue in Ted Perlmutter. 2002. 'The politics of restriction.' In *Shadows Over Europe: The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe*. Edited by Martin Schain, Aristide Zolberg, and Patrick Hossay. Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹³ Robert Harmel and Lars Svasand. 1997. 'The influence of new parties on old parties' platforms: The cases of the progress parties and conservative parties of Denmark and Norway.' *Party Politics* 3 (3): 315-340; W. M. Downs. 2001. 'Pariahs in their midst: Belgian and Norwegian parties react to extremist threats.' *West European Politics* 24 (3): 23-42.

¹⁴ See David Robertson. 1976. *A Theory of Party Competition*. London: Wiley; Ian Budge, David Robertson, and Derek Hearl. Eds. 1987. *Ideology, Strategy and Party Change: Spatial Analysis of Postwar Election Programmes in 19 Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Ian Budge, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Andrew Volkens, Judith Bara and Eric Tanenbaum. 2001. *Mapping Policy Preferences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

¹⁵ See, for example, Richard Rose. 1974. *The Problem of Party Government* London: Macmillan; Hans-Dieter Klingemann, Richard Hofferbert and Ian Budge. 1994. *Parties, Policies and Democracy*. Boulder: Westview.

¹⁶ In this regard, the approach adopted by this book builds upon, but also adapts, earlier work developed by Herbert Kitschelt, with Anthony J. McGann. 1995. *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan

¹⁷ This aspect of the theory draws heavily upon earlier work developed by the author, as applied to this particular context. See: Pippa Norris. 2004. *Electoral Engineering*. New York: Cambridge University Press.