

Cinderella and Her Ugly Sisters: The Mainstream and Extreme Right in Europe's Bipolarising Party Systems

TIM BALE

The rise and mainstreaming of Europe's Green parties has not only enlarged the left bloc in many party systems but helped to drive a trend toward bipolar competition. This article argues that the rise and mainstreaming of far right parties has done the same for the other side and reinforced the trend. This change in the political opportunity structure was not simply seized upon but in part engineered by a centre-right willing to rely on former pariahs for legislative majorities. By adopting some of the far right's themes, it legitimised them and increased both their salience and the seats it brought into an expanded right bloc. Once in office, the centre-right has demonstrated its commitment to getting tough on immigration, crime and welfare abuse, not least to distract from a somewhat surprising turn toward market liberalism. The analysis concludes by asking what this means for both bipolar blocs in the longer term.

Far right parties¹ can no longer be thought of as somehow pathological or even parasitical. They have a significant number of loyal voters; they seem better able to survive institutionalisation than was previously assumed; and xenophobia and welfare chauvinism are endemic in every European electorate.² There is every chance, then, that such parties will indeed 'succeed in securing a permanent niche in Western Europe's emerging political market'.³ They even seem capable, now and then, of breaking out of that niche. High-profile performances in parliamentary and presidential elections routinely spark dark warnings of a neo-fascist resurgence by media columnists across the continent.

Recently, however, the same columnists have taken comfort from the reversals of fortune suffered in January 2003 by the LPF in the Netherlands and by the FPÖ in the Austrian elections held the previous autumn – both of which owed much, they claimed, to the canny co-option of the far right's agenda and voters by more mainstream politicians.⁴ That comfort can be found in such a way is consistent with the media's tendency to frame such

stories as some kind of shared search for a way to 'deal with' a force that supposedly has no place in 'decent' democratic politics. It may be, however, that this interpretation is misleading, ignoring as it does the connection between the success of new populist parties and the apparent swing of western Europe's political pendulum away from social democracy and back towards the centre-right.

This connection is a crucial one, and one to which political scientists need to devote more attention. It represents a repetition on the right of a development that first occurred on the left – a development destined to shape not just political fortunes in Europe but also its party systems. Peter Mair, in the conclusion to an article which usefully qualified and contextualised the 'success' of Europe's Green parties, pointed out that their most significant contribution may have been (by becoming mainstream and coalitionable) to boost the various left blocs in Europe's multiparty systems.⁵ This not only helped to explain why in 2000 (when the article was published) social democratic parties had swung back into power all over the continent and why they looked likely to hold on to power for some time. It also prefigured, argued Mair, an even more profound systemic reorientation – the shift away in places like the low countries, Italy, Austria and Germany, from a politics heavily influenced by centrist coalitions towards the sort of competitive bipolar pattern evident in, say, Sweden and France, but at its most paradigmatic in Malta, Greece, Spain and the UK.

Mair's first prediction – that a newly expanded left bloc would enjoy a lasting advantage over a right which still contained pariah parties – has proved largely incorrect. The prediction rested on an assumption that relations between extreme and mainstream right would remain 'strained' or even still subject to 'the exclusion principle'. While strains remain, there are few party systems where the far right is now truly a pariah – at least to those on the same side of the left–right divide. However, Mair's second prediction – the resultant reinforcement of bipolarity – is as a consequence all the more likely to be borne out. Europe's right bloc, like the left before it, is realising its full potential.

In a work which sets out explicitly to address how the centre-right parties 'handle' their far right counterparts, William Downs outlines the pros and cons of five basic responses: 'ignore, isolate, co-opt, collaborate, impose legal restrictions', and suggests that preferences for one or the other 'are shaped by electoral ambitions and perceptions of individual democratic responsibility'.⁷ Notwithstanding the analytical clarity of his valuable, empirically grounded contribution, these responses are by no means as distinct in practice as they are in theory. Evidence from a range of countries also suggests that, in as much as there is a trade-off between democratic responsibility and electoral ambition, then the latter is proving more powerful than the former.

Our basic argument is as follows. West European party systems may be thawing, but there is no fluid free-for-all. Indeed, the much-touted fragmentation and polarisation under way is occurring alongside a trend towards two-bloc electoral competition. In the abstract, this is explicable from a Downsian perspective.⁸ Entrepreneurial parties exploiting new issues (or re-treading forgotten ones) come into the market. The older parties (especially those out of office), realising the appeal of those issues and recognising the need for potential coalition partners, seek alliances with the new entrants. They themselves begin to address those issues. This reaction may have the effect of helping to shape preferences in a manner that may increase support for the new entrant at the expense of old parties, perhaps even themselves. But it will hopefully expand the size of the alliance as a whole, facilitate coalition building and provide at least a net increase in its support sufficient to ensure that it obtains a dominant position within that coalition. Should its efforts be rewarded with office, the old party delivers on any promises made on those issues in order to maintain the coalition and to hold on to and possibly expand market share. This strategy poses a strategic dilemma for its opponents, but also may contain the seeds of the new coalition's own undoing.

Translated into an empirical argument, this outcome means that the centre-right, by including the far right either as a coalition partner or as a support party, has removed what was essentially an artificial constraint on the size of any right bloc in parliament, thus putting an end to a situation in which far right votes – whether they were garnered from conservatives or (possibly and better still) from social democrats – were effectively wasted. This has been feasible in part because far right leaders over the last decade have deliberately (and not always without difficulty) sought to achieve a place in national government by rendering themselves and their parties more 'respectable'.⁹ But the centre-right has also done much to make its own luck: it, and not just the far right, has affected Western Europe's political opportunity structure in a manner which is very much to its advantage. Over time, but especially recently, it has helped to prime (and therefore increase the salience of) the far right's agenda – most notably, though not exclusively, on immigration, crime and welfare abuse – thus rendering it both more respectable and more of a vote-winner. This strategy has helped the centre-right more or less progressively to abandon its shaky commitment to treating the far right as a 'pariah' – something the far right has been calling for and working towards for a decade or more. In short, and somewhat belatedly, Cinderella and her ugly sister may have become each other's fairy godmother.

There are few West European countries unaffected by all these changes. We confine our analysis, however, to those countries singled out by Mair as

on a path to bipolarity, all of which happen to have electoral systems that make significant far right representation in parliament at least a possibility if not necessarily a likelihood.¹⁰ We also include Sweden on the grounds that it has attracted attention on account of its relative immunity to the anti-immigrant politics to which two other Scandinavian countries in our sample seem prone. This produces a group of countries where the centre- and far right have recently either formally coalesced (Italy, Austria and the Netherlands) or put together a parliamentary majority capable of supporting a government of the centre-right (Denmark and Norway), and a second, smaller group where this kind of formation is not currently the case (Sweden and Germany). We examine the two groups on three dimensions, right-bloc expansion, issue priming, and pledge redemption, testing in turn the following hypotheses, each of which follow from the Downsian perspective outlined above:

- that, where a far right party exists that is capable of bringing in votes and seats that previously might have gone to the left or were merely wasted on what was hitherto a pariah, the right bloc will be effectively expanded via the party being called upon to cooperate in forming a government led by the centre-right (H1);
- that in those countries where the centre and far right cooperate or have recently cooperated to form governments, centre-right parties will have, for some considerable time prior to recent elections, afforded mainstream respectability to the far right's anti-immigration and welfare-chauvinist agenda – and to an extent not in evidence in those countries where such cooperation is lacking (H2);
- governments in those countries where the centre and far right cooperate, or have recently cooperated, to form governments follow through after elections on symbolic and/or substantive policies akin to those initially proposed by the far right – which is not the case where such cooperation is lacking (H3).

REACHING OUT AND PULLING IN: EXPANDING THE RIGHT AT THE EXPENSE OF THE LEFT

Mair's identification of a trend towards two-bloc competition in Western Europe is clearly borne out by recent elections in all the countries examined here, as well as elsewhere. The 2001 election in Italy reinforced a continuing trend to bipolarity in that country.¹¹ In Norway and Denmark, the poor performance of some of the centre parties in recent elections sees them moving closer to the kind of two-bloc competition that has characterised Sweden. Meanwhile, in Germany, the attachment of the

Greens to the SPD and the FPD to the CDU/CSU evidenced in the 2002 elections suggests that it, too, is currently very much a two-bloc party system. In the Netherlands, the sense of relief at the demise of the 'unnatural' purple coalition that ruled before the shock general election of 2002 was palpable, while Labour's recovery in 'round two' (and its turning down a grand coalition) actually offset any incipient trend away from bipolar thinking implied by the understandable reluctance of the CDA and the VVD (once their hopes of a two-party majority faded) to contemplate getting back together with the febrile LPF. The result of Austria's 2002 election may also have made a grand coalition possible, but it should not blot out memories of pre-election hopes for an SPÖ/Green coalition and a continuation (albeit a rebalanced one) of the ÖVP's cooperation with the 'sensible' component of the FPÖ.

At the same time as this bipolarisation is proceeding apace, mainstream conservative, (market) liberal and Christian democratic parties have been able to take power from left blocs that for a time looked, if not invincible, then at the very least a hard nut to crack. Our first hypothesis puts forward an explanation (H1). Table 1 gives an indication of the ballast added to the right bloc in each of the first group of countries by the addition of the far right's seats and reminds us how instrumental they were in helping the centre-right to form governments. It thus provides initial support for the main thrust of our hypothesis that the right has got its act together to ensure that votes and seats that were previously wasted on pariahs are no longer wasted because they are no longer pariahs. Full confirmation, however, requires further unpacking and investigation of the stronger suggestion that these were seats that, to quote H1, might previously have gone to the left.

The suggestion relates to a decade of research, as well as tentative analysis of more recent election results, which indicates that support for far right parties in most countries is skewed towards the kind of people who in times past could probably have been relied upon to vote for left-wing parties or at least not provided votes that would have helped right-wing governments to form. The far right increasingly does disproportionately well among working-class men living in urban areas who possess little in the way of educational qualifications or job security and who therefore experience more than most the downsides of globalisation, one of which (in their view) is the threat posed by immigrant competition to their jobs, their welfare, their security and their culture.¹² This demographic picture is historically associated with a tendency to vote left rather than right. Over the last decade or two, however, as socialist and social democratic parties seem to rely ever more strongly on the public sector (and often female) salariat as key components of their core constituencies, far right parties have

TABLE 1
THE RIGHT BLOC IN SELECTED WEST EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES, 1993–2003

	Election year	Seats required for legislative majority	Centre-right	Centre-right <i>plus</i> far right
Germany ¹	1994	337	341	341
	1998	335	245	245
	2002	302	295	295
Italy ²	1994	316	261	366
	1996	316	246	305
	2001	316	338	368
Austria ³	1996	92	53	93
	1999	92	52	104
	2002	92	79	97
Netherlands ⁴	1998	76	67	67
	2002	76	67	93
	2003	76	72	80
Denmark ⁵	1994	90	89	100
	1998	90	58	75
	2001	90	72	94
Norway ⁶	1993	83	42	52
	1997	83	54	79
	2001	83	62	88
Sweden ⁷	1994	175	152	152
	1998	175	159	159
	2002	175	158	158

Notes: Right-wing governments formed after elections are indicated in bold.

¹ Centre-right comprises CDU/CSU and FDP.

² Centre-right comprises members of either Polo (1994 and 1996) or Casa (2001) della libertà, but excludes Lega Nord in 1996 and 2001 and AN in 1994 – the years in which each could be considered far right parties.

³ Centre-right is ÖVP. Far-right is FPÖ.

⁴ Centre-right comprises CDA and VVD. Far right is LPF. New government excludes it in favour of social liberal D66.

⁵ Centre-right comprises V and KF (current government). Far right is FrP and/or DF.

⁶ Centre-right comprises H, KrF and V (current government; excludes Centre Party). Far right is FRP.

⁷ Centre-right comprises M, FP, KD and C (members of last 'four-leaf clover' bourgeois coalition).

Source: 'Parties and Elections in Europe', www.parties-and-elections.de, compiled by Wolfram Nordsieck..

as good a claim – and in some countries a better one – to be ‘the party of the workers’.¹³ By bringing the far right into its bloc, is the centre-right finally forcing the centre-left to pay in full the opportunity cost of leaving behind a swathe of society that once it was proud to champion – the ‘natural constituency’, if you like, of the left bloc, which could (at the very least) have been relied upon on *not* to vote for the centre-right?

In Austria, it is estimated that in 1999 well over a third of workers voted for Haider, and that the FPÖ – despite the failure of its attempt to set up a trade union allied to the party – gained disproportionately at the expense of the SPÖ. But such support was nothing new: it was clearly apparent in European Parliament elections in 1996, the figure in the general election in 1995 was 34 per cent, following a performance the previous year that had made ‘huge inroads into the core SPÖ electorate’.¹⁴ And it possibly will be even more pronounced in the future: analysis of the FPÖ’s disastrous showing in late 2002 may well show that the defection of its 1999 middle class voters to the ÖVP has skewed FPÖ support even more towards blue collar workers.

That the defection seems to have been primarily one of the middle class may explain why it did little to boost the SPÖ. In the 2003 election in the Netherlands, however, the implosion of the LPF seems to have benefited the PvdA (and possibly the Socialist Party) disproportionately, which would seem to confirm the widely held belief among commentators that the success of the far right in 2002 came directly at the expense of the left.

In Denmark and Norway, too, the far right attracts significant and growing ‘proletarian’ or ‘popular’ support to the extent that in the 1990s ‘the two Progress parties even obtained a higher proportion of workers among their electorate than any other party, including the Social Democrats’.¹⁵ This does not mean of course that the erosion of its historical core vote in the working class is wholly down to the far right. Such erosion, as we know, is a long-term problem with myriad causes that go beyond an alleged failure to pick up on or respond to the populist agenda on, say, immigration. The Norwegian Labour Party, for instance, may well have lost the votes of both traditional and newer (that is, female, public sector) supporters by floating ideas like trimming welfare, reorganising the health system, and privatisation at a time when the centre-right was emphasising its centrism and the Socialist Left (Sosialistisk Venstreparti) was offering to defend the welfare state – and when Fremskrittspartiet (Progress) was exploiting the unusual luxury of being able (supposedly) to square the tax-cuts/quality public services circle, not by ‘kicking out’ all the foreigners or moving to ‘zero immigration’, but instead by using Norway’s immense petroleum fund to pay for everything. Nor should we forget that many disgruntled centre-left voters (perhaps even a majority of them) may well

switch directly to the centre-right – as seems to have happened at the 2001 Danish election when one Rasmussen was swapped for another.¹⁶

On a similar note, we should observe that Italy does not provide so much support as some other countries for the idea that the far right is doubly useful to the right bloc because, Heineken-like, it ‘reaches the voters other parties cannot reach’. Support for the Lega Nord is not only concentrated in the north but concentrated among the self-employed, so much so that it actually failed to cross the threshold to win seats in the PR section in 2002 and as a result even rendered itself mathematically unnecessary in the Berlusconi coalition. Just as importantly, Forza Italia would seem to need no help in picking up working class votes and probably ate into the support of its less centrist coalition partners rather than relying on them for votes it otherwise could not win. Nonetheless, the Casa delle libertà as a whole garnered less support in both the plurality and the PR sections than in 1996, and won the elections because Berlusconi managed (more than his competitors on the left) to get all the parties in ‘his’ bloc to cooperate in pre-electoral pacts that maximised its share of seats in the Camera dei Deputati.¹⁷

Italy, and (if early indications about vote movements in are borne out) Denmark too, mean we cannot confirm the ‘strong’ version of the hypothesis, namely that the expansion of the right bloc is necessarily connected to the capacity (growing or otherwise) among far right parties to suck votes from the left. On the other hand, the essential thrust of the hypothesis that the far right has helped the centre-right against the left does not rest ultimately upon its ‘stealing’ previous and/or potential socialist voters (though that may well be happening in some countries), but centres on its ability to add votes (and above all seats) that would otherwise be of no value to the right bloc and thereby help it to form a legislative (if not always an executive) majority. In passing, we need not ignore either the fact that the far right also ‘steals’ votes from the centre-right: indeed, the full or semi-incorporation of the far right into bourgeois blocs is also a rational response to this development; incorporation helps ensure that being robbed of those votes no longer translates into a loss of office to (or a failure to win office from) the left.

HELPING THE FAR RIGHT COME IN FROM THE COLD: ISSUE PRIMING

One of the most astute academic analysts of the far right phenomenon, Roger Eatwell, has noted that ‘the extreme right can be legitimised when political discourse, especially on the centre right, becomes contaminated by its themes, notably ones related to immigration’. He goes on, however, to suggest that this is an unfortunate by-product or negative externality of an

essentially well-meaning strategy to ‘temporarily defuse the insurgent movement’ – a ‘technique [that] can backfire’.¹⁸ That this conclusion is perhaps an unwarranted, albeit generous, assumption is the basis of our second hypothesis, namely that in those countries where the centre and far right cooperate or have recently cooperated to form governments, centre-right parties will have, for some considerable time prior to recent elections, afforded mainstream respectability to the far right’s anti-immigration and welfare-chauvinist agenda – and to an extent not in evidence in those countries where such cooperation is lacking.

While few centre-right politicians have made the point explicitly, the differences between them and their far right counterparts (notwithstanding the claims of social scientists to detect irreconcilable distinctions) are arguably differences of degree rather than kind. The composite ideology that emerges from numerous studies of far right parties is one that stresses a state which is heavy on law and order but light on taxation and red tape, a nation proud of its unique history and culture, a place where hard work and self-reliance are rewarded, a society in which the deserving (pensioners, women with children, and the working poor) are supported, but the undeserving (criminal or moral delinquents and scroungers) are punished, while immigrants (on the assumption they are both undeserving and culturally unassimilable) are excluded.¹⁹ That the ideology is often expressed in more populist, more vivid language cannot disguise the fact that this vision would gain broad assent from those active in centre-right politics and their supporters. Indeed, when it comes to the three issues that really matter – crime, welfare-abuse and immigration – surveys would suggest that the views of most voters are (and may always have been) more clearly reflected by the right than the left. The mainstream right has always been willing to expose the ‘soft underbelly’ of leftist commitments to human rights, anti-discrimination, progressive penal policy and welfare regimes which are prepared to risk exploitation by the fraudulent minority in order to ensure assistance goes to the genuine majority. It therefore has neither difficulty nor compunction in emphasising them again now – even if it was populist politicians who first fused them into the rhetorical amalgam that today sees each of the three routinely associated with the other two.²⁰

Previously, however, there would have been greater distance between a centre-right that tacitly acknowledged ‘problems’ in these areas and a far right fixated on foreign immigrants as a source of social and economic woes, and on the need to kick (or at least keep) them out as a quick-fix solution. But the last decade has seen this distance shrink as centre-right politicians have begun to inhabit the same discursive universe as their far right counterparts. This has arguably proved crucial in two ways. First, as is often observed, it helps to legitimise what were previously regarded as the

rhetorical excesses of the far right, thereby rendering its message respectable and making it a respectable option for voters where once it may not have been. Second, and more directly, mainstream politicians, because of their position as 'authorised' news sources, can significantly increase the salience of issues on which the far right has long been campaigning. This is not to say that welfare abuse, violent street crime and unwanted immigration are not real problems which worry real people. Nor is it to claim that the media would not have picked up on them but for the attention devoted to them by mainstream politicians. It is simply to recognise the key role of the latter in mass media with the agenda-setting capacity to 'prime' voters' sense of what is and is not politically salient and therefore help determine not so much their political preferences but the basis on which their political choices are made.²¹

The notion that by talking about things politicians can help them become important admittedly runs counter to the fashionable notion, peddled by pundits across Europe, that it was 'a conspiracy of silence' about immigration on the part of the mainstream that brought about the electoral success of the far right. Yet challenging the common wisdom in no way obliges us to reject out of hand the spatial theories of party competition on which it is (albeit implicitly) based²² – particularly if one acknowledges the ability (or at least the attempts) of parties to shape as well as accommodate preferences.²³ In many countries, as we go on to show, the mainstream right, rather than participating in some kind of cross-party taboo, has called loudly for action on, for instance, immigration in ways which, while falling short of the words and demands of their far right originators, are more than faint echoes. The claim that centre-right politicians have colluded with their centre-left counterparts not to address issues relevant to the rise of the far right is therefore mistaken. It does not run counter to spatial theories, however, to suggest that copy-cattling which may have begun as a response to the threat posed by a newcomer quickly mutated into an equally rational effort to drive political discourse (or at least allow it to be driven) in a direction more promising for the right than the left.

The clearest example of mainstream politicians taking on the agenda of the far right is Austria. In 1995, the then new leader of the ÖVP, Wolfgang Schüssel ran 'as a "good Haider"', suddenly refusing to rule out a coalition with him, but ended up trapped again in partnership with the Socialists.²⁴ From then on, the Grand Coalition of the ÖVP and the SPÖ (both of which, but especially the former, have a history of deals with the FPÖ in subnational government) began implementing aspects of FPÖ policy well in advance of the formal arrival of the party in government in 1999. As an attempt to wrest the initiative from and thereby lessen the appeal of the far right, however, it proved a failure: Haider simply 'upped the ante' every

time the government came up with proposals and legislation that came near to meeting his demands. When, for instance, the coalition put into place policy that concentrated on 'integrating' existing immigrants rather than inviting more in, Haider called for repatriation.²⁵

In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi is widely credited with providing the *sdoganamento* ('redemption') without which Gianfranco Fini's attempt to bring Italy's far right in from the cold via the transformation of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) into Alleanza Nazionale (AN) may not otherwise have succeeded. Berlusconi's support for Fini's campaign for the mayoralty of Rome presaged his own 'entry onto the field' by a matter of months and was of course done with an eye to boosting the chances of a party which, along with the Lega Nord, soon became a coalition partner for Forza Italia. Berlusconi could of course claim that his strategy has been designed to tame a beast that few would like to see return to the Italian political scene given its interwar and wartime history. And such claims are not without some justification, given the growing consensus that, since the historic Fiuggi conference in 1995, Fini and his party really have moved beyond fascism and left the immigrant-bashing to the Lega Nord.²⁶ Berlusconi could also argue that his own statements on the immigration issue were designed – again successfully in view of the 2001 election results which saw Forza Italia make big gains at the expense of the Lega – to spike the guns of the latter. They certainly give the Lega's hot-headed, charismatic leader, Umberto Bossi, some competition. Berlusconi might not have encouraged his supporters to march by torchlight to condemn 'foreign crime' and remind fearful citizens that supposedly eight out of ten prisoners are immigrants; but he did suggest in opposition that perhaps police should be allowed to fire on the *scafisti* and their speedboats which bring illegal immigrants onto Italy's beaches.

In Denmark – the last country, by the way, that could be accused of maintaining some sort of taboo on the immigration issue – parliamentary and local cooperation between centre and far right has occurred since the early 1990s.²⁷ In the run-up to the 2001 election, prominent politicians of the mainstream right made two things plain. First, they assured voters that they were not the zealous market liberals their opponents made them out to be and that they had tempered their enthusiasm for the small state with a recognition that the public did not want choice expanded at the cost of cuts in Denmark's extensive public provision. Second, they reminded people that they were taking a tough stance on immigration and, as is normally the wont of the far right, connected the issue with (street) crime and welfare dependency: Venstre put out a notorious billboard which exploited public anger over the acquittal of a group of Asians charged with gang-rape, and its leader (and now Prime Minister) Anders Fogh Rasmussen made much of

the contrast between the unemployment rate for Danes (around five per cent) and newcomers from the developing countries (over 50 per cent), declaring that 'Denmark must not be the social security office for the rest of the world'. In fact, the two planks of the strategy were connected. There would be no need for cuts, Venstre claimed, because a tougher stance on immigrants would ensure that foreign claimants would not bankrupt a welfare state which was primarily there for Danes. This was a classic resort to the 'welfare chauvinism' that one of the earliest (and best) analyses of Scandinavian populist parties identified as key to their agenda and their appeal to ordinary working people especially.²⁸ The holding of the election in the wake of 11 September 2001 helped ensure the success of the strategy: immigration – already high on the list of voter concerns and prominent in media stories on the abuse of welfare and family reunion provisions – all but dominated the election campaign.²⁹

The Netherlands and Norway, however, appear to offer rather less support to the first part of our second hypothesis (H2). In the Netherlands, the 2002 coalition deal between the CDA, VVD and the far right LPF was not the culmination of years of subnational or parliamentary flirting, and in Norway, immigration was not – at the 2001 election anyway – a particularly big issue or one that the centre-right (the Christian Democrats, the Liberals and the Conservatives) attempted to talk up beforehand. But we should be careful before rushing to assume that both countries provide wholesale exceptions to the rule.

In the Dutch case, it is clear that, even though the Dutch centre-right has not given the far right anything like the extent of discursive encouragement granted by mainstream parties in the other countries, the isolation of forerunners of the LPF, like the Centrumdemocraten, was rarely as watertight as most international media sources covering the Pim Fortuyn phenomenon implied.³⁰ Similarly, not all Dutch mainstream politicians are quite as progressive and tolerant as the foreign media likes to think. Throughout the 1990s, for example, VVD's then-leader Frits Bolkestein stayed out of cabinet and skilfully (that is, with 'plausible deniability') raised predictable media interest (and the equally predictable ire of the left) by allegedly stereotyping immigrants as scroungers and criminals; VVD also made the tougher treatment of 'economic refugees' a campaign theme in 1998. During the decade Dutch governments continued, though without seeking to make headlines, progressively to tighten the Netherlands' immigration and asylum regime.³¹

An ongoing cross-party consensus on tightening the nation's regime was also an important reason why immigration played a relatively subdued part at Norway's 2001 election – though that consensus was itself arguably testimony to the extent to which all parties have tried to keep pace with the

Fremskrittspartiet on the issue. So, too, were two more contingent factors. First was the issue's subordinate role this time around on Carl I. Hagen's personal agenda relative to his original *raison d'être*, tax cuts, and a developing (if potentially paradoxical) enthusiasm for spending on (Norwegian) health and the (Norwegian) elderly – a subordination reinforced by events in late 2000/early 2001, when Hagen effectively expelled a group of internal troublemakers whose racist outbursts risked undermining his ability to negotiate his way into a centre-right coalition after the forthcoming election. The second factor was the consensus among the other parties against xenophobia which emerged very publicly after the high-profile racist murder (and subsequent sympathy demonstrations) in January 2001 – a consensus that a mainstream party would have been unwise even to flirt with renegeing on during election year, despite concern over a big increase in asylum seekers.

Yet what of the two countries where the centre-right and far right have not cooperated to form governments? To take Germany first, some aspects would seem to undermine our hypothesis that the centre-right in such countries has been less careless about lending legitimacy to the far right. From the late 1980s onwards, for instance, the CDU/CSU has mounted campaigns in both government and, more recently, in opposition designed to demonstrate an apparently hard line on immigration (which was connected to both crime and welfare costs) and relaxation of Germany's traditionally restrictive citizenship laws.³² As Minkenberg presciently observes, these campaigns presaged rather than responded to rises in popularity of the far right which occurred in the 1990s, and 'produced the terms of a political discourse' which served the latter well.³³

Nor, of course, did they stop there. The SPD/Green government's moves to reform the citizenship laws and import skilled labour, as well as coping with the fall-out from 11 September, saw the CDU/CSU organising opposition to the reforms, issuing occasional jeremiads on the dangers of multiculturalism or trying (in September 2000) to win state elections with a slogan like '*Kinder statt Inder*'. More recently, at the 2002 Bundestag elections the CDU/CSU Chancellor-Candidate Edmund Stoiber suddenly promised to start deporting 'Islamists', while his home affairs spokesmen suggested that immigrants should be made to take (and pay for) 'integration courses' and should recognise underlying values 'moulded by Christianity'.

Significantly, however, such promises and suggestions were acts of last-gasp desperation by men from whom victory seemed to be slipping. In the run-up to the long campaign of 2002, there had been debate in the CDU/CSU camp over whether immigration should be made a key campaign issue; but it appeared to be resolved in favour of those who thought, on balance, such a strategy might (like the never officially sanctioned '*Kinder*

statt Inder' campaign) backfire – as indeed moves in a similarly controversial direction by the FDP seem to have done. This – along with the fact that the jeremiads mentioned above were generally delivered by lesser lights and loose cannons – suggests that in Germany there were constraints (perhaps historical, perhaps international) on the kind of concerted, sustained flirting with far right themes evidenced in most of the countries where centre-right and far right ended up cooperating in government. Those constraints clearly fell away just before polling day, but both the continuing illegitimacy of the German far right and the previous temporary self-denying ordinance on the part of the centre-right ensured that any resultant priming effect would be minimal.

Sweden stands out even more. True, the country and its centre-right has not been utterly untouched by far right populism in the past. In the early 1990s Ny demokrati (New Democracy) came from nowhere partly on the back of anti-immigrant feeling and provided a parliamentary majority for one of the country's short-lived bourgeois governments. However, the party's implosion saw Sweden regain its apparent immunity to Progress-style politics, with its conservative party, the Moderata samlingspartiet or Moderates (under pressure from younger, more cosmopolitan activists) continuing its support for a multicultural, non-isolationist, modern Sweden through to a general election in 2002 that (like Germany's) bucked the trend towards centre-right government in Western Europe.

Interestingly, that election gave rise to unexpected and fierce debate on the failure of immigrants to integrate into Swedish society, with the initiators of that debate, the centre-right Folkpartiet Liberalerna, which to some looked on its last legs, making the largest gains of any party, trebling its seats in parliament. But its gains came mainly at the expense of the Moderates rather than the SAP. And leader Lars Leijonborg continually stressed that his newly discovered gimmick – the demand for tougher language requirements for citizenship applications – had nothing to do with weakening Sweden's commitment to helping asylum seekers, insisting it should be taken together with his call for more immigration to meet forecast labour shortages. True, the apparent progressivism and generosity of this stance needs to be qualified: for one thing, emphasising the intention to 'integrate rather than segregate' and explicitly warning 'racists' not to vote for him was arguably doing little more than rendering populism politically correct, thereby attracting voters who would never have dreamed have voting for the far right Sverigedemokraterna; for another, the envisaged new migration would be predominantly non-EU guest workers, subject to immediate repatriation should they become unemployed for more than three months, and ineligible for a raft of welfare benefits. But the fact that the case for immigration (albeit with a nod towards welfare chauvinism) was

very much the business case, namely the introduction of a more flexible labour force as a way round continuing domestic hostility to liberalisation, probably limited its appeal to the SAP's support-base and thus the chances of shifting votes between left and right blocs rather than just *within* the latter. More important still, while immigration did – even more unexpectedly than in Germany – feature in that election, it likewise did not benefit the far right and was not part of any sustained move on the part of the centre-right.

The absence (at least heretofore) of any such move is arguably one of the keys to understanding why Sweden (and perhaps also Germany, to some extent) apparently presents a less welcoming environment for the 'radical right populist' parties that inhabit other Scandinavian countries.³⁴ Despite a sizeable proportion of voters in every European state being antipathetic towards immigrants and immigration, the performance of the far right varies considerably from country to country – a fact that has recently (and rightly) led some of the most perceptive analysts of that performance to stress the importance of political agency (and especially effectively run, market-cornering parties) in making relevant what might otherwise remain latent.³⁵ The ability of more conventional politicians, through the media, to make the far right's agenda politically salient may well be just as important an agency effect in this interaction between political demand and supply – and similarly helpful in explaining variation between states.³⁶

WALKING THE TALK: REDEEMING RIGHT-WING PLEDGES

With office comes the responsibility of turning words into deeds. According to the third and final hypothesis, governments in those countries where the centre and far right cooperate, or have recently cooperated, to form governments follow through after elections on symbolic and/or substantive policies akin to those initially proposed by the far right – which is not the case where such cooperation is lacking. So far, as we go on to show, this would appear to be the case, but with one important qualification, namely that this 'pledge redemption' tends to extend only to immigration (and related) policy. Centre-right governments show no signs of adopting the increasingly interventionist and nationalist economic platform of their far right 'partners'. Indeed, quite the opposite: if anything, the centre-right in government would appear to be considerably keener on market liberalism than it had signalled to voters in opposition. This consideration (along with the obvious desire not to lose votes by clearly failing to honour promises to respond to public concern and to maintain a legislative or executive coalition) may help to explain why centre-right governments are largely living up to their campaign rhetoric. By demonstrating that their more

populist promises were more than merely cheap talk, they hope to make up for any loss of support that may ensue from their risky pursuit³⁷ of economic and social policies that seem to give the lie to the centrist image that they took care to project in the run-up to elections.

In Denmark, Venstre's incoming Minister of Refugees, Immigration and (note) 'Integration' (*Flygtninge, Indvandrere og Integration*), Bertel Haarder, and Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen made much of their determination to stop their country's generous benefit levels attracting more than its fair share of Third World asylum seekers. New laws were quickly passed tightening hitherto generous criteria for acceptance, increasing the waiting period for permanent residency, reducing benefits for those waiting, making it more difficult for residents to bring in a (young) foreign spouse but easier to send home any such person who was allowed to stay in the event of a subsequent divorce. Public support for the changes was not unanimous, but it was high – possibly encouraged by official figures showing a marked decline in asylum applications which suggested they were already putting paid to Denmark's supposed reputation as a soft-touch for so-called 'benefit tourists' and 'bogus refugees'. Interestingly, and in marked contrast, the Danish government faced widespread criticism when, after campaign reassurances to centrist voters on welfare and public spending, what was effectively its first budget called for large cuts in public expenditure. Possibly the harder line on immigration and related issues represented not just the reality of relying on the support of the Danske Folkeparti, but was also an attempt on the part of the government to elide criticism over its somewhat surprising rediscovery of its ideological roots. Sometimes, of course, a happy marriage between prudence, pruning and populism proved possible: one high-profile victim of a purge of quangos was a favourite target of Kjærsgaard *et alia*, the Board for Ethnic Equality (Naevnet for Etnisk Ligestilling).

In Austria, too, the ÖVP made little or no effort to persuade the FPÖ to water down the 'integration contract' their coalition brought in – a contract that involves non-EU nationals who have arrived since 1998 and want residence having to pay for assessed courses in language and citizenship on pain of fine or deportation. As in Denmark, this seems to have been a quid pro quo for its own neo-liberal-influenced reform agenda, which included a push for de-regulation, privatisation and a refocusing of expenditure away from welfare, health and education and towards budgets such as law and order.³⁸

Italy's right-wing government has also followed through legislatively and administratively on its pre-election rhetoric, though not without rumblings from its business constituency, which cares less about seizing boats and expelling existing illegals than about meeting serious labour

shortages. This concern in part explains why in Italy, in marked contrast to him jumping to take credit for the drop in crime to which the tougher stance on foreigners supposedly contributed, Berlusconi allowed his coalition partners to take the credit (and therefore some of the heat) for the more technical, labour-market aspects of the so-called 'legge Fini-Bossi'.

In the Netherlands, many commentators were surprised in summer 2002 at the determination of a supposedly 'centrist' new Prime Minister to pursue economies in welfare spending of the kind they might have expected from VVD but hoped the CDA would moderate. They were equally surprised by the tough immigration policy of the short-lived coalition between the two and the mayfly LPF, particularly after CDA leader Balkenende had apparently warned LPF that it would need to tone down its demagogic demands. On immigration, the 45-page coalition agreement announced in June 2002 trailed plans to clamp down on businesses which employ illegal immigrants, to restrict and make more expensive family reunion, and to oblige asylum seekers not just to take compulsory language and citizenship classes (as they are now obliged to do in other countries, such as Denmark), but to pay an upfront (refundable) deposit for the privilege. Nor were there any signs either prior to or during the election in 2003 that the CDA was looking to retreat from commitments which their spokesmen were, notably, just as active in defending against criticism as their LPF 'colleagues'.

In Norway, it would have been difficult for the government that formed, with the support of Progress, after the election of 2001 to find much to tighten in an already restrictive regime. But even so – amid concern at rising asylum applications and the conduct and opinions of those refugees (especially religious Muslim refugees) already allowed to stay – it found ways to persuade the public that its eye was still on the ball. Led by a minister (Erna Solberg) seemingly given special responsibility for personifying this watchful stance (via periodic statements on the propensity of immigrants to commit crime and to isolate themselves by not speaking the language and not marrying Norwegians), the government floated the idea of banning marriage between first cousins and (perhaps more justifiably) dealing harshly with refugees who take trips to the countries from which they have supposedly fled persecution. More concretely, it launched a high-profile police operation against illegal immigration in November 2002, and then a fortnight later announced it hoped to bring in integration classes (with financial penalties for non-attendance). Interestingly, both initiatives coincided with the 2003 budget negotiations that began with calls by Hagen's Progress party for a stricter immigration policy.

In all those countries governed by the expanded right bloc, then, pledges to 'do something' about immigration seem to have been taken seriously. But

what of the two countries where the right failed to ride the supposedly European wave back to power? In the first, Sweden, there is little to suggest pursuit of the kind of symbolic and/or substantive policies that have characterised centre-right governments in our first group of countries. Although the Persson government shows few signs (beyond investigating how to attract highly skilled workers in shortage areas) of wanting to make it much easier for those trying to come in, it reacted furiously to suggestions made by Danish politicians in May 2002 that it was publicly criticising their own hardline stance while privately wanting to do something similar in order to stem the tide of asylum applications from those who could no longer get into fortress Denmark. And during the election a few months later, it showed no signs of making concessions to any anti-immigrant feeling that some accused the Liberals of whipping up.

There was a similar reaction by the German government. The CDU/CSU's belated decision to focus on immigration during the 2002 election produced only calculated contempt from Chancellor Schröder, despite his vulnerability on the issue. This vulnerability only increased after the election when, in mid-December, the Federal Constitutional Court struck down (on procedural grounds) the government's recently passed immigration legislation – legislation designed to widen the grounds for asylum applications, to rationalise residence permits, to make it easier to recruit skilled foreign workers and to set up (albeit not in the didactic form demanded by the opposition) education programmes for newcomers. This immediately brought forth promises from the CDU/CSU that it would use its strength in the Bundesrat to ensure that any reintroduced bill would be more restrictive. Schröder's response – that the legislation would go through parliament in pretty much its original form – may have been unrealistic given his weakness in the upper house, but it also appeared to reflect a determination not to sell the pass on this issue – a determination no doubt reinforced by the strong stance of the junior coalition partner and by figures showing a big fall in the number of applications for asylum in 2002. Like Sweden, then, Germany seems to confirm the contention, laid out in H3, that governments of the centre-right and centre-right in continental Europe do things differently in deed as well as in word.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

It would seem, then, that the evidence from a range of countries provides broad, though sometimes nuanced, support for our hypotheses – a finding summarised in Table 2. Where a significant or potentially significant far right party exists, the centre-right has exploited its existence in order to regain office and, once there, has put in place policies (notably on

THE RIGHT IN BIPOLARISING PARTY SYSTEMS

85

TABLE 2
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

	Right-bloc Expansion	Issue- priming	Pledge- redemption
Germany	No	Inconsistent	No
Italy	Yes	Yes	Yes
Austria	Yes	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	Yes	Little	Yes
Denmark	Yes	Yes	Yes
Norway	Yes	No	Some
Sweden	No	No	No
Hypothesis Supported?	Essentially	With qualifications	In full

Notes: Centre-right led governments indicated in bold.

immigration) that traditionally were more closely associated with the extreme rather than the mainstream. As a consequence, the bipolarisation of party competition observed by Mair may be proceeding apace, but the advantages conferred on social democrats by the incorporation of new politics parties into the left bloc he also predicted have proved short-lived. This raises a 'where to from here' question for both the left and the right blocs.

Taking the right first, recent elections in Austria and the Netherlands have produced results suggesting that the expansion in the right bloc can be sustained but that its benefits may go disproportionately to the centre-right: the ugly sisters may have gone to the ball, but it is Cinderella who seems most likely to live happily ever after. Indeed, if one may be permitted a metaphorical move from folktale to fauna, the LPF and the FPÖ appear to have fallen victim to what might be called 'the black-widow effect': coalition (the political equivalent of mating) leads not to mutually sustaining relationships but rather to unceremonious cannibalisation of a junior partner swiftly seen to have outlived its usefulness. That the far right can turn out to be a superfluous spider rather than a cuckoo-in-the-nest is, as we have seen, comforting to some commentators. But it may not be the best thing for the right bloc since, as a Downsian analysis might predict, it may put paid to the albeit blurry market segmentation that in part assisted its expansion. This could compromise its ability to attract votes (and therefore seats) the centre-right (because of its positions on socio-economic issues) is still unlikely to be able to garner for itself.

There is another (Downsian) cloud on the horizon for the centre-right, relating to the 'issue-attention cycle'.³⁹ It may be that law and order, support for 'the family' and the continued predominance of majority culture and 'common sense', have, since the start of the new century, been salient to the point (in some countries at least) of crowding out the issues that are traditionally seen as deciding elections. But their symbolic, if temporary, resolution and any faltering in the economy is likely to bring back contests in which the 'standard of living' will once again begin to matter more to voters than 'quality of life'. Meanwhile, they will be able to check the reality behind the centre-right's insistence that, first, it has abandoned minimalist market liberalism and, second, rather than posing any threat to high quality public services, it can make a better show at running them than their traditional defenders on the left. Voters may also catch on to tensions within the right bloc between the centre-right's desire to shrink (or at least shave) the state and the far right's move (as its 'proletarianisation' has continued apace) to tone down earlier enthusiasm for the market economy in favour of calls for 'national preference' and welfarist protection for those left behind by globalisation.⁴⁰

But what of the left, and the difficulty it will have in responding to its opponents' newfound capacity to realise the full potential of the right bloc? The issue-attention cycle means the Greens, where available, may bring in too few seats to make a difference. The obvious alternative is to try to fight the right on its own territory – a strategy recommended by 'Blairite' public intellectuals like Anthony Giddens, who claims that social democratic parties, 'if they are to sustain or recover wide public support', need to think about developing policies 'which are "tough on immigration, but tough on the causes of hostility to immigrants"'.⁴¹ This was arguably the route chosen by the Dutch PvdA, whose modernising new leader, Wouter Bos, made it plain that, on immigration most of all, his party had 'learned from its mistakes'. He moved simultaneously to close the gap and yet maintain a subtle difference between Labour and the CDA via, for instance, supporting the latter's integration courses (even to the extent of making full welfare benefits conditional on its completion) but making more money available for mounting them properly.

In the minds of many commentators, at least, the strategy was an out-and-out success, helping the PvdA to bounce back from the supposedly cathartic rebuff of the 2002 election. But evidence from some of the countries in our sample suggests they may, as usual, be jumping the gun. In Austria, in the 1990s, the SPÖ, then in a Grand Coalition, met some of the demands of the FPÖ for tighter asylum and immigration policy, partly in the hope – forlorn as it turned out – that it might stem the flow of socialist or potential socialist voters towards Haider. In Norway, too, the left attempted

to 'take the wind out of the sails' of the far right and at the same time respond to trade union concerns about employment and welfare for members in the face of 'cheap labour from abroad', but a lot of good it did them. Likewise the Danish Social Democrats' 2001 campaign promises – admittedly vague, disputed and belated – to tighten up on immigration.⁴²

In fact, not only is the accommodation strategy not necessarily successful, it is also potentially counterproductive. Social democratic and Labour parties, after all, have to trade off the gains that might ensue against not only the potential loss of liberal supporters but also the damage it might do to their relations with other, more progressive, parties to which they might defect. This might include not only Greens, but also 'left' parties that are strident in their support of multiculturalism and – up until now anyway – have been considered beyond the coalitionable pale by social democrats. This exclusionary attitude may need to change – just as it has already changed on the other side of the political spectrum. Were such a course adopted, it would represent the acceleration of a process that otherwise might take decades: European democracies, after all, took the best part of 50 years to reintegrate xenophobic populist parties and less than 15 years have passed since the collapse of communism. It would also provide a richly ironic testimony to the extent to which the right – mainstream as well as extreme – has succeeded in re-engineering Western Europe's political opportunity structure.

NOTES

The author would like to thank the editors, Cas Mudde and especially Jocelyn Evans for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

1. There is no universal agreement among academics on who or what constitutes the far right; see C. Mudde, 'The War of Words: Defining the Extreme Right Party Family', *West European Politics* 19 (1996), pp.225–48. On the grounds that the correct label is turning out to be an 'essentially contested' question that we do not intend to try to answer here, the deliberately loose terms 'far right' and 'extreme' are used here to refer to parties that have left behind antipathy to democracy, and currently participate in elections on a protest and populist platform of curing social ills via a programme stressing, at the very least, more law and order and an end to the supposedly over-generous treatment of foreign (or perhaps non-Western European) immigrants.
2. On the far right's increasing voter loyalty, see J. Evans and G. Ivaldi, 'Les Dynamiques Electorales de l'Extrême-Droite Européenne', *Revue Politique et Parlementaire* 1019 (July–Aug. 2002), pp.67–83. On the point that charisma need not be traded off against institutionalisation see A. Pedhazur and A. Brichta, 'The Institutionalisation of Extreme Right-Wing Charismatic Parties: A Paradox?' *Party Politics* 8 (2002), pp.31–49. On popular attitudes, see SORA, *Attitudes Towards Minority Groups in the European Union: a Special Analysis of the Eurobarometer 2000* (Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia 2001).

3. H.-G. Betz, *Radical Right Wing Populism in Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan 1994), p.189.
4. See, e.g., the editorial 'Taming the far Right', *Times*, 26 Nov. 2002.
5. P. Mair, 'The Green Challenge and Political Competition: How Typical is the German Experience?' *German Politics* 10 (2001), pp.99–116.
6. Compare the wealth of comparative material concerned with the far right with the paucity of work on the mainstream right, which includes only two or three edited collections or monographs, such as D. Hanley (ed.), *Christian Democracy in Europe: a Comparative Perspective* (London: Pinter 1994); B. Girvin, *The Right in the Twentieth Century: Conservatism and Democracy* (London: Pinter 1994); F. Wilson (ed.), *The European Centre Right at the End of the Twentieth Century* (New York: St Martin's Press 1998).
7. W. Downs, 'Pariahs in their Midst: Belgian and Norwegian Parties React to Extremist Threats', *West European Politics* 24 (2001), p.24.
8. A. Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row 1957).
9. A good example is provided by Pia Kjærsgaard of the Dansk Folkeparti (DF) whose drawn-out duel with Mogens Glistrup for leadership of Denmark's far right was always rooted not just in personality but also her desire 'to turn the party into a more consistent, trustworthy, nonsocialist party that would be ready to make compromises'. See L. Svåsand, 'Scandinavian Right-Wing Radicalism', in H.-G. Betz and S. Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies* (New York: St Martin's Press 1998), p.80.
10. For a useful discussion on the relationship between electoral systems and far right voting and parliamentary representation, see E.L. Carter, 'Proportional Representation and the Fortunes of Right Wing Extremist Parties', *West European Politics* 25 (2002), pp.125–46.
11. See G. Pasquino, 'Berlusconi's Victory: The Italian General Elections of 2001', *South European Society and Politics* 6 (2001), pp.125–37.
12. S. Immerfall, 'The Neo-Populist Agenda', in Betz and Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right*, pp.250ff.
13. Betz, *Radical Right Wing Populism*, pp.150–66.
14. D. Morrow, 'Jörg Haider and the New FPÖ: Beyond the Democratic Pale', in P. Hainsworth (ed.), *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From Margins to Mainstream* (London: Pinter 2000), p.55; and M. Sully, *The Haider Phenomenon* (New York: Columbia University Press 1997), p.118.
15. J. Goul Andersen and T. Bjørklund, 'Radical Right-Wing Populism in Scandinavia: From Tax Revolt to Neo-Liberalism and Xenophobia', in Hainsworth (ed.), *Politics of the Extreme Right*, p.216. See also A. Widfelt, 'Scandinavia: Mixed Success for the Populist Right', *Parliamentary Affairs* 53 (2000), pp.497–8.
16. See M. Qvortup, 'The Emperor's New Clothes: The Danish General Election 20 November 2001', *West European Politics* 25 (2002), p.210.
17. Pasquino, 'Berlusconi's Victory', p.133. Note that the 2001 Casa negotiated a stand-down deal with Pino Rauti, the leader of the Fiamma Tricolore, the neo-fascist rump of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), reducing the chances of splitting the Casa's senate vote but opening up access to subsidies for the neo-fascists.
18. R. Eatwell, 'The Rebirth of the Extreme Right in Europe', *Parliamentary Affairs* 53 (2000), p.423.
19. On cultural incommensurability and nativism, see H.-G. Betz, 'Exclusionary Populism in Austria, Italy and Switzerland', *International Journal* 61 (2001), pp.393–420.
20. See Betz, *Radical Right Wing Populism*, pp.88–91.
21. The political communications literature on priming and agenda setting is huge. The key definitions are best explored in the following 'classics': S. Iyengar and D. Kinder, *News That Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1987), and of course the seminal M. McCombs and D. Shaw, *The Emergence of American Political Issues: The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press* (New York: West Publishing Company, 1977), which echoed Bernard

- Cohen's view that 'the mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about'.
22. See H. Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 1995). Empirical evidence to support the hypothesis is limited: see M. Lubbers *et al.*, 'Extreme Right Wing Voting in Western Europe', *European Journal of Political Research* 41 (2002), pp.364–5; but see also A. Abedi, 'Challenges to Established Parties: The Effects of Party System Features on the Electoral Fortunes of Anti-Political-Establishment Parties', *European Journal of Political Research* 41 (2002), pp.551–83.
 23. See P. Dunleavy, *Democracy, Bureaucracy and Public Choice* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991).
 24. M. Riedlsperger, 'The Freedom Party of Austria: From Protest to Radical Right Populism', in Betz and Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right*, p.37.
 25. See M. Sully, *The Haider Phenomenon* (New York: Columbia University Press 1997), pp.82–5; E. Sensenig-Dabbous, 'Social Democracy in One Country: Immigration and Minority Policy in Austria', in G. Dale and M. Cole (eds.), *The European Union and Migrant Labour* (Oxford: Berg 1999). See also M. Minkenberg, 'The Radical Right in Public Office: Agenda-Setting and Policy Effects', *West European Politics* 24 (2001), pp.13–14.
 26. See J. Newell, 'Italy: The Extreme Right Comes in from the Cold', *Parliamentary Affairs* 53 (2000), pp.469–85.
 27. Svåsand, 'Scandinavian Right-Wing Radicalism', p.88.
 28. By welfare chauvinism is meant a belief that is not so much anti-welfare as believing welfare 'should be restricted to "our own"'. See J. Goul Andersen and T. Bjørklund, 'Structural Changes and New Cleavages: the Progress Parties in Denmark and Norway', *Acta Sociologica* 33 (1990), p.212.
 29. See R.G. Andersen 'The General Election in Denmark, November 2001', *Electoral Studies* 22 (2003), pp.153–93.
 30. See P. Lucardie, 'The Netherlands: The Extremist Center Parties', in H.-G. Betz and S. Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right: Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies* (New York: St Martin's Press 1998), p.121.
 31. A report on the 1998 elections for this journal noted suggestions that the anti-immigration Centre Democrats, who disappeared from parliament that year, may have lost their 'unique selling point because immigration became a legitimate issue on the political agenda and because immigration laws have become more strict'. See W. van der Brug, 'Floating Voters or Wandering Parties. The Dutch National Elections of 1998', *West European Politics* 22 (1999), pp.179–86.
 32. See S. Green, 'Immigration, Asylum and Citizenship in Germany: The Impact of Unification and the Berlin Republic', *West European Politics* 24 (2001), pp.82–104.
 33. See Minkenberg, 'Radical Right in Public Office', p.6. See also M. Lubbers and P. Scheepers, 'The Trend in Extreme Right Voting Behaviour: Germany 1989–1998', *European Sociological Review* 17 (2001), pp.431–49.
 34. J. Rydgren, 'Radical Right Wing Populism in Sweden: Still a Failure, But for How Long', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 25 (2002), p.39.
 35. The FPÖ's drubbing at the polls probably had much to do with its inability to hold together or maintain any consistent line, and the erratic behaviour of its leader(s), as it did any masterplan on the part of Herr Schüssel. Likewise, the LPF's performance in 2003. On the importance of agency in explaining variation, see, among others, H. de Witte and B. Klandermans, 'Political Racism in Flanders and the Netherlands: Explaining Differences in the Electoral Success of Extreme Right Wing Parties', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26 (2000); C. Mudde and J. Van Holstein 'The Netherlands: Explaining the Limited Success of the Extreme Right', in Hainsworth (ed.), *Politics of the Extreme Right*; J. Veugelers, 'A Challenge for Political Sociology: The Rise of Far Right Parties in

- Contemporary Western Europe', *Current Sociology* 47 (1999), pp.78–100; and Lubbers *et al.*, 'Extreme Right Wing Voting', p.371.
36. Lubbers *et al.* suggest that agency matters more than what they term 'the immigration-restriction climate', but hint at the possibility of a feedback relationship between the two. See Lubbers *et al.*, 'Extreme Right Wing Voting', p.365.
 37. Downs, 'Economic Theory of Democracy', pp.103–9.
 38. For more detail on Austria, see the excellent analysis in Minkenberg, 'Radical Right in Public Office', pp.14–17.
 39. See A. Downs, 'Up and Down with Ecology: The Issue Attention Cycle', *Public Interest* 28 (1972), pp.38–50.
 40. See Eatwell, 'Rebirth', p.422. Much of this would clearly be anathema to most centre-right parties, which by and large (and with the exception of agriculture) accept the need to extend the free-market beyond state borders, more often than not with the help of the EU.
 41. A. Giddens, 'The Third Way can Beat the Far Right', *Guardian*, 3 May 2002.
 42. Andersen, 'General Election in Denmark', p.190.