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Pelinka, A.

Citation

Pelinka, A. (2002). Consociational Democracy in Austria: Political Change, 1968-1998. *Acta Politica*, 37: 2002(1-2), 139-156. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3450887>

Version: Publisher's Version
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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

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Consociational Democracy in Austria: Political Change, 1968 - 1998

Anton Pelinka

University of Innsbruck, University of Michigan

Abstract

As a consequence of the experience of centrifugal democracy, civil war and dictatorship, Austria's 'Second Republic' developed from 1945 onwards a special kind of consensus-oriented democracy. Based on the reconciliation efforts of the two traditional political movements – the Social Democrats and the Catholic Conservatives – the Austrian political system became an example of political 'over stabilization'. In the 1990s, this type of consociational democracy lost more and more its ability to mobilize political loyalties within its traditional framework. The rise of the rightist populist Freedom Party (FPÖ) and the new Green Party indicates the alienation of the traditional elitist network and the younger generation. The FPÖ's entry into a coalition cabinet – allied with the conservative OeVP – is a rather dramatic signal of political transformation.

The basic philosophy behind the consociational type of democracy in plural societies is to reduce the rule of competition in favour of a balance between competitive and coalescent elements, between conflict and consensus orientation. The rules of the game should not be 'the winner takes all', but rather that the loser gets something too. The history behind this philosophy is a deep fragmentation caused by violent domestic conflict.

1 Historical overview

The Second Republic's inclination towards consociational democracy is not explained by the Austrian constitution. After 1945, the constitution was still the same as it had been during the years of the First Republic; years that certainly cannot be called 'consociational'. Consociational democracy is the specific political culture as it developed after the catalyst years of authoritarian and totalitarian rule.

The political culture of the First Republic fits the pattern of centrifugal democracy in that it was already fragmented along the lines of the camps. Three subcultures divided Austrian society and its political system: the two major ones, the Socialist and the Christian-conservative, and the smaller pan-

German one. The leaders of those three camps responded to this situation by competing according to the rules of liberal democracy. Because nothing could be gained by adopting a moderate attitude toward the political centre, this competition set in motion a trend away from the centre: centrifugal democracy.

The most striking aspect of this development was that the camps treated each other according to the logic not of domestic, but of foreign policy. This included an arms race that led directly to the civil wars of 1934. Centrifugal democracy had brought about the destruction of democracy. (For a broader explanation of the historical background of Austria's political culture, see Pelinka 1998: 9-36.)

The fragmentation still did not disappear after 1945. In his study of Hallein, a town near Salzburg, G. Bingham Powell, Jr. described and analysed the deep hostility that still characterized the relationship between 'black' and 'red' Austrians in the 1960s (Powell 1970). There was still an identity between party functions and functions in all the secondary groups that dominated social life. There was no independent life beyond the camps. And the camps were still characterized by strong hostile stereotypes. Powell summarized the findings of his study:

(1) partisan distrust and hostility are indeed associated at the individual level with pure or cumulative (rather than mixed or cross-cutting) cleavage position and with membership in partisan secondary groups; and (2) hostility and distrust between major political groups complicate and reduce the effectiveness of political decision-making (Powell 1970: 138).

After twenty years of consociational democracy, the fragmentation and the 'Lager-Mentalität' (camp mentality) were still there. Politics was still considered to be a battle between the forces of good and evil. The two major camps, in a coalition cabinet jointly responsible for Austria's development, still took a dichotomic view of society. To put it more precisely, because the old stereotypes still worked on society, on the 'masses', the elites were free to behave according to the model of consociational democracy.

The political leaders who counted in 1945 and the years immediately thereafter were the elites of the SPÖ and ÖVP, of the Socialist and of the Christian-Conservative camp. The Communists did not really count: As soon as it was obvious that the USSR did not plan to integrate Austria into its Marxist-Leninist realm by force, the influence the KPÖ had enjoyed in 1945 was a thing of the past. The KPÖ was not strong enough to build a camp for itself. The SPÖ kept its de facto monopoly on the political left because the Social Democrats were able to reestablish their camp with all the familiar structures and organizations of the last decades of imperial Austria and the First

Republic: socialist organizations for everyone, fulfilling every social function, from child care to provisions for a true socialist burial. And the pan-German camp was paralysed. Identified for good reasons with the Nazi regime, the camp, which had been the Christian Socials' coalition partner between 1920 and 1933 simply did not exist in political terms.

Austrian style consociational democracy was the result of elitist learning. Christian Socials, now organized as the ÖVP, and Social Democrats, now the SPÖ, reversed their mutual attitude, at the top level. Instead of competition with no restrictions, their policy was cooperation with some competitive elements. This cooperation had two outside enemies, which provided the new alliance with the necessary coherence:

- Nazism, especially for foreign policy purposes.
- Communism, at first especially for domestic purposes, later, under the influence of the Cold War, also for foreign policy purposes.

The ÖVP-SPÖ alliance had to prove that this new kind of cooperation was the patriotic Austrian answer to the Nazi experience. And the alliance also had to prove that it was the only alternative to Communism. Without this alliance, there would be chaos and dictatorship and foreign rule – this was the message both parties tried to deliver, especially to their own members. The coalition became popular by explaining how dreadful any alternative would be.

The Austrian consociational democracy consisted from the very beginning of two levels or two focal areas: the cooperation between the ÖVP and SPÖ on the government level, including a parliamentary alliance; and cooperation between employers and employees, or between their respective interest organizations. These two elements were characterized by different logics and competences:

- Government and parliament followed the rule of liberal democracy, which the grand coalition simply by its existence restricted until 1966. This rule followed the logic of a zero-sum game. If *you* don't want to lose, make sure that someone else will. Majority rule existed, electoral victories had an impact on parliament, and elections were a competitive procedure on a political market, the same as in other liberal democracies. Government and parliament dominated all non-economic matters, and both government and parliament were under the control of political parties, namely of the ÖVP and SPÖ.
- Business and labour established their own rule of corporatism. Majority rule was abolished, and a mutual veto made compromises unavoidable. The zero-sum game did not exist, and elections had no or at least no immediate influence. Corporatism dominated all economic matters, including most aspects of social policy. The corporatist level was controlled by economic interest groups organized to represent employers, employees or agriculture.

Both levels were integrated by virtue of their amalgam of political parties and economic interest groups. Political decision-making was synchronized by the identity of political personnel: the two major camps controlled not only the parties but also the organized economic interests. There was no significant voice on the corporatist level that was not controlled by the parties, and no significant voice was heard on the government level unless it was under the control of the major economic interest groups.

This synchronization had structural and personal aspects. The structural aspect was the participation of all major interest groups in the pre-parliamentary legislative process by means of a formalized invitation to evaluate any draft coming from any ministry ('Begutachtungsverfahren'). It was especially the involvement of the major parties in the major interest groups and vice versa through factions ('Fraktionen'), which linked parties and interest groups by belonging to both of them.

The combination of structural and personal links necessitated the pattern of multiple functions. Because government and corporatism had to be synchronized, and because this synchronization included a number of persons fulfilling roles on both levels, there had to be more roles than persons. The often criticized 'multiple functionaries' were the consequence.

Figure 1 The two logics of government and corporatism

	Government	Corporatism
Differences:		
Players	Political parties	Economic associations
Arenas	Parliament	Social partnership
Philosophies	Competitive	Coalescent
Rules	Majoritarian	Unanimity
Tendency	Public disclosure	Little disclosure
Powers	Non-economic	Economic
Similarities:		
Structures	Both are linked by party factions within economic associations	
Personnel	Both are controlled in an elitist, cartel-like way	

Source: Pelinka (1998: 26)

The structural and personal links prevented the two areas from moving apart. The differences concerning majoritarian versus unanimity rule also implied different tendencies in self-promotion and self-perception: parties in parliament competing for votes are always inclined to go public as much as possible. On the other hand, interest groups, who have to preserve their ability

to compromise, are always interested in avoiding publicity if possible.

The grand coalition established corporatism from 1945 on, step by step:

- In 1945, Social Democratic, Christian and Communist trade union representatives founded the ÖGB. This gave labour a strong, centralized institution capable of overcoming the competition between labour unions, which depended on the different camps and could not develop a political suprastructure such as the ÖGB was designed to become.
- In 1946, the law establishing the Federal Chamber of Commerce (now: Austrian Chamber of Economics) gave the traditional chambers of commerce, which had existed on the regional level since 1848, an umbrella organization. Business got its suprastructure in the same way as labour had with the ÖGB.
- Between 1947 and 1951, the major interest groups (ÖGB, Federal Chamber of Commerce, Chambers of Labour, Chambers of Agriculture) and the government produced a total of five agreements on wages and prices. For the first time, government and corporatism had formally cooperated in political decision-making.
- In 1957, the Joint Commission on Wages and Prices was established (Bischof & Pelinka 1996) This commission, founded by Chancellor Julius Raab and ÖGB-president Johann Böhm, was the epitome of corporatism in Austria: the four major interest groups which ran the Joint Commission and were responsible for the five agreements between 1947 and 1951, emancipated themselves from government control.

After the end of the first grand coalition, mutual veto, as one of the main characteristics of consociational democracy, had to be reinterpreted. Until 1966, either of the two coalition partners could veto a cabinet decision. Despite the competitiveness, which defines parliament, the Austrian federal cabinet is not modelled on majoritarian rule but on the rule of unanimity. On the government level, the veto between the two camps was based on their participation in the cabinet. When the first one-party cabinet was installed in 1966, there was no veto power left in government for the opposition party – from 1966 to 1970 the SPÖ, and from 1970 to 1986 the ÖVP. The emphasis on consociationalism had to swing towards corporatism.

But there was still much left in government to provide an inter-party balance. Especially state and local politics continued to follow the model of grand coalition. In five of the nine states the state constitution differs from the federal with respect to cabinet appointments. In these five states, the cabinet ('Landesregierung') is constituted according to proportional representation, thus all major parties have to be represented not only in parliament but also in the cabinet. On the local level, municipalities use approximately the same model (Pelinka & Rosenberger 2000: 211-220).

On the federal level, corporatism even gained in importance after the end of the first grand coalition. Josef Klaus, chancellor and ÖVP party chairman during the four years of the Second Republic's first one-party cabinet, remembers the informal contacts he had established with Anton Benya, president of the ÖGB and a leading SPÖ figure. Klaus and Benya used these contacts not only to exchange views but also to reach agreements concerning policy matters (Klaus 1971: 88 ff., 388). At the very same time, when, on the official government level, Westminster-style confrontation had replaced the grand coalition and the SPÖ was behaving like a traditional opposition party, consociational links between the head of the ÖVP-government and the head of the SPÖ-dominated labour federation were working.

The importance of corporatism, especially from 1966 to 1987 – the interim years between the two grand coalitions – is illustrated by the history of the Labour Act ('Arbeitsverfassungsgesetz') from 1974. The bill did not include constitutional amendments and therefore did not require a two-thirds majority in parliament. At the time, the SPÖ commanded an overall majority in the National Council so it theoretically should have been no problem to pass the act without having to compromise with anyone outside the SPÖ. The SPÖ and the ÖGB were programatically committed to the idea of 'parity co-determination', which meant giving labour representatives 50 per cent control of the boards ('Aufsichtsräte') of all joint stock corporations ('Kapitalgesellschaften'). But the SPÖ did not want to push parity co-determination through parliament. Instead, it first tried to work out a compromise with the employers' associations (Federal Chamber of Commerce, Association of Austrian Industrialists). And only after a compromise had been reached, which gave labour representatives one third of the positions on the boards and included further restrictions, did the act pass in parliament with the votes of the opposition party, the ÖVP (Atzmüller 1985: 75-101).

Consociational democracy, Austrian style, was characterized by its great elasticity and flexibility. Top-ranking politicians were able to move from one arena to the other and had full control over the games of politics. They could shift decision-making from the government level to corporatism and back to government. They were able to combine parliamentary and pre-parliamentary elements. They lived in the best of both worlds: liberal democracy to fulfil the expectations of enlightenment, human rights and Western traditions; and corporatism to plan and control with little or no disturbance from democratic upheaval or intense class warfare.

Little wonder, then, that it was a pope who called Austria an 'island of the blessed' (Luther & Müller 1992: 8). Pope Paul VI realized that Austria was able to combine some of the doctrines the church preached with the traditions of Western democracy. The Austria of the 1970s was a fully developed Western

democracy, which, at the very same time, could escape some of the less attractive effects of being such a democracy. 'Social peace' expressed itself in an absence of significant strikes and a broad consensus including all main aspects of foreign and domestic politics. Other countries might have their conflicts, but Austria was happy being different.

Consociational democracy, Austrian style, was not only a set of institutions and procedures designed to reduce the competitiveness of liberal democracy. It was also an opportunity to reduce the illusions of greatness and dreams of power, which the ideological camps had nurtured for such a long time. For Social Democrats, power sharing was unavoidably linked to accepting limits on socialist expectations. Tied to a Christian-Conservative partner with veto-power, the SPÖ had to accept the impossibility of implementing the theory of true democratic socialism. Austro-Marxism had to be watered down. For the ÖVP, accepting the Social Democrats as permanent partners meant lowering the expectations the Christian-Conservative camp had for a Christian Austria.

By lowering expectations and destroying illusions, the political leaders had taken the first step in the directions of reconciling Austria and Austrians with the reality. But their clients, the voters, had difficulty following. Until 1945 and for some years after, the voters stuck to the old creeds and dichotomic pictures of 'good' and 'evil'. But after decades of power sharing, nobody really believed that a true socialist or a true Christian society was just around the corner. Consociational democracy had harmonized the overstretched ideologies with a reality that was significantly more modest than anyone had been led to believe.

That was the moment when consociational democracy in Austria had to start crumbling. The preconditions for consociational democracy were undermined by the successes of the concept. By reducing social fragmentation, it had also reduced political hostility. The auto- and heterostereotypes had lost their dichotomic significance; the 'reds' had a less negative impression of the 'blacks' (and vice versa); the enemy was not so dreadful any more.

It was the attitude of the younger generation and the significant changes it underwent in the 1980s, which caused the walls of consociational democracy to start to crumble. When the younger generation realized that the old perception of two hostile camps no longer fitted into political reality, they started to leave the camps. For them, the old fragmentation along traditional cleavages was history.

Consociational democracy, Austrian style, is the history of self-elimination by success. The old elite groups were able to bridge the deep gaps from the past so successfully that the gaps disappeared. But in closing those gaps, the elites destroyed their power base. The cleavages responsible for the old camps disappeared – and so did the old camps.

2 The forces of change and transformation

The elections of the Nationalrat on October 3, 1999, showed which social factors were decisive for the election outcome. The most visible (and most decisive) factor was the generation gap; other factors, which must be added in order to understand the outcome, were education (and correspondingly, occupation) and gender. The generation, education and gender gaps had already been visible since the late 1980s, indicating significant changes in the political system's social environment.

Generation divided Austria into two almost completely different societies. Generational replacement played an important role in the dramatic increase in volatility. Those parties that represent the two traditional, major camps – the SPÖ and the ÖVP – still have an overwhelming hold on the older generation. The third traditional party, the FPÖ, and to an even greater degree the two non-traditional parties, the Greens and, until 1999, the LIF (Liberals) attract a significantly younger electorate.

During this period of political transformation, in the 1990s, political attitudes were sharply divided by the generation gap, by a deep cleavage created by traditional loyalties to the parties of the traditional camps and by loyalties of a new, distinctly more volatile type.

Table 1 Age groups and voting behaviour in 1999; percentage of the different age groups

	PÖ	FPÖ	ÖVP	Greens	LIF
Younger than 30	25	35	17	13	4
30 – 44	32	29	23	8	4
45 – 59	35	21	32	5	4
60 – 69	39	25	31	1	2
Older than 70	39	25	31	2	0

N=2,200

Source: Plasser & Ulram (1999: 32)

This deep cleavage signifies the end of the 'camps'. For about one hundred years, beginning in the 1880s, the Austrian camps and their respective parties were able to pass on political loyalties within the borders of the camps. An Austrian was usually born into a particular camp and stayed within it, in turn handing down this loyalty to the next generation. Being born into a camp meant undergoing a political socialization: through youth groups, cultural organizations, educational programmes and leisure activities, a person was more or less completely bound to this camp. A person was either 'black'

(politically Catholic, that is Christian-Conservative), or 'red' (Social Democrat), or 'blue' (pan-German in the 1930s, and later often described as 'brown' due to the almost complete takeover of this camp by the NSDAP).

In the 1930s, however, there was a break in this chain, in this continuity: the Austrian Nazi party attracted voters (up to 1933, the year of the last free local elections), members and sympathizers in numbers far beyond the strength of the traditional pan-German camp. Even before 1938, the Austrian Nazi party became a successful catch-all party, winning acceptance among the traditional Christian-social and the traditional social-democratic electorate by invading political Catholicism and labour. In the 1930s, the traditionally closed camps were no longer so closed.

Between November 1945 and April 1946, the Allies registered 428,249 Austrians, or about ten per cent of the adult population, as (former) members of the NSDAP (Stiefel 1981: 34). If the many Austrians who were still outside the country during the first year after World War II (for example, in prisoner-of-war camps) were taken into account, then this figure would be even higher. About 600,000 Austrians had joined the Nazi party (Luza 1975), a number that corresponds almost exactly to the membership of the best-organized party of the First Republic, the Social Democrats. Considering that the pan-German camp in the First Republic had only been able to attract one third as many votes as the Social Democrats (and the Christian Socials) between 1919 and 1932, these membership figures emphasize the success the Austrian NSDAP had even with Austrians who did not come from the traditional pan-German camp. And it is also clear that it was especially the younger generation born into either the 'black' or the 'red' camp that went over to the Nazi party (Pauley 1981: 91-96).

But in 1945, and especially in 1949, when most of the former NSDAP-members got back their voting rights, the old pattern was fully reestablished. The two major parties, strengthened by the rejuvenated socializing powers of their respective camps, were able to win about the same share of votes as in the First Republic: together they got 82.7 per cent in 1949. The pan-German VDU (League of Independents, predecessor of the FPÖ) got 11.7 per cent, or 489,273 votes (Plasser et al. 1996: 344 ff), which was approximately the same number of votes as the two smaller parties of the pan-German camp had received in the First Republic. Compared with the 600,000 members – not voters – the NSDAP had had in Austria, the reestablishment of the traditional camp system and of the two and a half party system had an interesting impact: a significant number of former Nazis had joined the two major parties, at least as voters, but in many cases as members, too. The camp system was back.

Once reestablished, the traditional party system and its tradition of socialization within the camps worked rather smoothly to control Austrian politics by means of its hereditary system. Everybody had his (or her) place in

the party system, and in most cases this place was defined by birth and was therefore for life. It worked about four decades, and only then things started to change. In the 1980s, the combined voting share of the two major parties started to decline. The FPÖ, the Greens and later also the LIF were attracting more and more voters. But it was not so much the general electorate that started to leave the SPÖ and ÖVP; it was mainly the young voters who, no longer content to remain within the borders of the camps into which they had been born, went over to the FPÖ, to the Greens and the LIF.

Because this was happening under the conditions of liberal democracy, it must have a different meaning from the generation gap, which was responsible for the rise of the Austrian Nazi party. In both cases – in the 1930s as well as in the 1980s and 1990s – the Socialist and the Christian-Conservative camps were (and are) losing control over political socialization. However, in the 1980s and 1990s, this cannot be the by-product of political instability as was the case in the 1930s. It must be seen in connection with the stability of the Second Republic. The younger generation's inclination to leave the two major parties is based on a feeling of (political) stability, not instability. They are not going over to a totalitarian party with militant structures like the Nazi party. They are attracted either to the Greens or the Liberals – parties with no permanent organization or structure reminiscent of the strict organizations the camps were famous for – or to the FPÖ, which is a traditional party with vestiges of the pan-German camp that are still important for political recruitment within this party. But the FPÖ does not attract its new electorate by binding it through membership or organization. During the eight years when the FPÖ's share of the vote exploded from five to more than 20 per cent, its membership did not increase significantly. In 1985, the official data for FPÖ-membership was 37,057, and in 1994 it was 42,200 (Nick & Pelinka 1996: 75). Since 1986, the FPÖ has been a much less traditional party that it was prior to that time.

The fact is that the younger generation is not leaving the major parties to join parties of the same type, nor are they leaving traditional parties. An increasing number of the younger generation was never effectively socialized by the traditional structures of political parties and ideological camps. They never 'belonged' to such traditional parties and camps and are now demonstrating their preference for a much looser alliance, for example, by not voting at all. Voter turnout is on the decline in Austria, falling from 92.9 per cent in 1975 to 81.9 per cent in 1994, rising again to 86.0 per cent in the 1995 general parliamentary elections, and falling again to 80.4 per cent in 1999 (Plasser et al. 1996: 344 ff.; Pelinka & Rosenberger 1999: 164). Younger voters are quite flexible, changing party affiliations much more easily than the older generation, and do not view casting a vote as a lifetime decision.

The political behaviour of the younger generation must be seen as a process of political polarization. The parties, which significant numbers of younger voters prefer, are (with the exception of the Liberals) seen by the electorate to be less centrist than the SPÖ or ÖVP. The Austrian electorate perceives the Greens as the most left-wing party and the FPÖ as the most right wing.

Table 2 Perception of political parties on the right-left scale

	Greens	SPÖ	LIF	ÖVP	FPÖ	Self-perception of the electorate
	2.26	2.37	2.86	3.37	4.02	2.93

N=2,200; 1.00=very left; 5.00=very right

Source: Plasser et al. (1996: 166)

The young vote is a polarized and polarizing vote. This can be seen in connection with the education gap. For decades, education as an electoral factor, according to traditional assumptions about the correlation between class and education, followed a well-established pattern: voters with a higher level of education, thanks to their bourgeois background, showed a significant preference for the ÖVP, the party of the moderate right, while a more than proportional number of voters with less education, as a consequence of their non-bourgeois background (with the exception of the agricultural vote, that is the labour vote), voted for the SPÖ, the party of the moderate left. This is still the case with older voters but no longer true of the younger generation.

Among younger voters, the left-right-dimension has been completely reversed: a higher level of education means a more than proportional tendency to favour the Liberals and the Greens – both of which, according to the dominant perception, are to the left of the ÖVP, and in the case of the Greens even to the left of the SPÖ. A lack of higher education means a more than proportional tendency to favour the FPÖ, which is seen as the most right wing of all the Austrian parties.

Table 3 Education gap in 1999, percentage of the voters

	SPÖ	FPÖ	ÖVP	Greens	LIF	all voters
Elementary school only	21	16	18	3	3	17
Vocational training	49	55	41	29	24	46
Higher education	30	30	41	68	73	37

N= 2,200

Source: Plasser & Ulram (1999: 39)

If the education gap is correlated with the generation gap, the differences become even more significant. Among blue-collar voters, the FPÖ has become the party of choice, ahead of the SPÖ; among the youngest voters with higher education, the Liberals and the Greens are competing with the ÖVP. That means that a high school certificate or a university degree is no longer correlated with voting right of the centre, and lack of higher education, especially in the case of the blue-collar vote, is no longer correlated with voting left of the centre.

This reversal of the traditional correspondence between education and the left-right scale calls for an explanation, which can be found by analysing the blue-collar vote. Between 1986 and 1999, the blue-collar vote shifted dramatically from the SPÖ to the FPÖ. With respect to the generation gap, this means that as a group, the younger blue-collar voters have changed their preference from a moderate left-wing party to a not-so-moderate right-wing party.

Table 4 Blue-collar vote, from 1979 to 1999, division between SPÖ and FPÖ, percentage of blue-collar voters

	SPÖ	FPÖ
1979	63	4
1990	53	21
1995	41	34
1999	35	47

Source: Plasser & Ulram (1999: 35)

The education gap must be interpreted as an indicator of a general trend towards modernization. As early as 1960, Seymour Martin Lipset analysed the authoritarian tendencies among blue-collar workers in the United States (Lipset 1960). The impact of significant numbers of working class voters casting their ballots not for traditional left-wing parties but for those from the right, especially for authoritarian rather than moderate right-wing parties, was felt much earlier in other Western democracies than in Austria. The traditional perception of the labour vote as being inclined towards leftist parties had already been corrected, first in the United States and then in Western Europe, before the Austrian party system felt any effects of this reversal.

It is not at all remarkable that this trend can be observed in Austria too. What is remarkable is that this trend was so delayed in Austria. The delay can be explained by the preserving effects, which the traditional ideological camps – in the case of labour, the socialist camp – had for such a long time. The strength of social democracy in Austria provided the blue-collar element with

a political and ideological home which workers claimed as their own. Now that home is no longer providing shelter – at least not for the majority of the young blue-collar workers – they consider themselves homeless. Since the camp has lost its function as a subsidiary home for young blue-collar workers, they are responding as workers have done already in other comparable societies: they are moving towards the right and evolving authoritarian tendencies.

Because the socializing powers of the camps and their ability to stabilize political beliefs and behaviour within their borders are in decline, the effects of modernization are setting in. But this decline is the impact of modernization. The demographic trend towards the cities (urbanization) and the economic trend towards the tertiary sector (service-oriented industries) are feeding the need for education. Education and social as well as geographical mobility are destroying the ability of traditional camps to control political loyalties. Social modernization provokes political transformation – even in Austria.

This can also be seen with respect to the political attitudes that distinguish male and female behaviour. The gender gap, long time an insignificant factor in Austrian politics, has reached Austria.

Table 5 Gender gap in 1999, percentage of male and female votes

	SPÖ	FPÖ	ÖVP	Greens	LIF
Male	31	32	26	5	3
Female	35	21	27	9	4
Gender gap	+4	-11	+1	+4	+1

N= 2,200

Source: Plasser & Ulram (1999: 32)

The gender gap, expressed by the difference between the male and the female vote, is especially significant for the FPÖ. The FPÖ is a male party: the probability of an Austrian man voting for this party is significantly higher than it is for an Austrian woman. The upswing that the FPÖ has enjoyed since 1986 must be attributed mainly to the male vote.

The gender gap can be explained by means of international comparison. In most Western European countries, the 'post-materialist' type of political party the Greens are representing is especially attractive to women. On the other hand, 'rightist-populist' parties – a category which clearly includes the FPÖ – attract significantly more men than women (Plasser et al. 1996: 188; Hofinger & Ogris 1996) The European division between the 'harder', more materialistic orientation of male voters and the 'softer', post-materialist orientation of female voters has finally come to Austria.

The surfacing of the gender gap is also an indicator of modernization. Austrian politics can be explained more and more by patterns that are already established in other socially and economically advanced societies. The idea of specific Austrian behaviour and Austrian uniqueness is vanishing.

The increasing importance of generation, education and gender means a decrease in the impact of factors such as religion, 'Volk' (ethno-centrism) and class – at least in the traditional sense. The SPÖ, the party of the traditional labour movement, has already lost the majority of the young (blue-collar) labour vote. The upswing of the FPÖ, the party of the pan-German tradition, cannot be attributed to pan-Germanism and traditional ethno-centrism. The FPÖ's recent popularity must be explained by the amalgamation of the remnants of pan-German ideology with general Austrian patriotism and the populist protest agenda, which the FPÖ has been representing since 1986 (Plasser & Ulram 1995). The SPÖ has retained the old blue-collar vote and much of the new middle-class vote, but this cannot be analysed as the effect of traditional class orientation. And the decline of the ÖVP can be explained by the decline of political Catholicism and the resulting diminished impact religion as such has on political behaviour.

New fragmentations are, of course, visible. The transformation is not changing Austria into a heaven of perfect harmony. In fact, quite the opposite is true. There is a deep-seated conflict between the winners and the losers of modernization, expressed in the xenophobic attitudes of the latter. There is a significant increase in the importance of gender and education in political behaviour. And hidden behind the generation gap, there is an explosive potential: the modernization losers have become identified with Austria's Nazi past. When the FPÖ, the party established by former Nazis for former Nazis, became a decisive factor in the Austrian party system and joined, in 2000, the Austrian government, the explosiveness of this potential became clear.

It was Haider's policy and especially his rhetoric as party chairman after 1986, which provoked a deeper awareness of the FPÖ's roots. Until 1986, the FPÖ was able, rather successfully, to play down these roots. But as from 1986, the FPÖ chose to remind the Austrian and the international public of the party's specific background (Pelinka & Rosenberger 2000: 54-60)

The FPÖ's success story since 1986 has almost nothing to do with the old cleavages, which constituted and defined the traditional camps. It has everything to do with Austria's integration into Europe. Not with Austria's membership of the EU, but with Austria's full participation in the dynamism that Western societies have developed, transgressing borders. Austria is not an island – neither of the blessed nor of the damned.

There is one factor that has continued to make Austria special – despite the trends toward Europeanization. Austria was and still is considered the country that has the special burden of being the country of Adolf Hitler. Right-wing

attitudes in Austrian society and politics, perhaps not so different from parallel tendencies in other countries, has created general suspicion. When, in 2000, the new Austrian government included a party that was widely seen as the party of the extreme right, this suspicion came out into the open and isolated Austria against its will.

3 Conclusion : de-Austrification and re-Austrification

The consequences of the general elections in 1999 have been rather dramatic. The elections saw the FPÖ – for the first time ever – ahead of the ÖVP with an extremely small margin. The SPÖ was able to keep its pool position despite some losses. The trend, visible since the late 1980s, was strengthened: SPÖ and ÖVP were losing more and more the ability to mobilize voters. Especially the FPÖ and, to a lesser extent, the Greens profited from this.

Table 6 National Council Elections 1999

	Percentage of votes	Seats in the National Council
SPÖ	33.15	65
FPÖ	26.91	52
ÖVP	26.91	52
Greens	7.40	14
LIF	3.65	0*
Others	1.99	0

Turnout: 80.42 %.

*Due to the 4 per cent threshold clause

Source: Pelinka & Rosenberger (2000: 164)

In February 2000, after weeks of negotiations first between SPÖ and ÖVP and then between FPÖ and ÖVP, a coalition government was formed by the FPÖ and ÖVP under the chancellorship of the ÖVP's chairman, Wolfgang Schüssel. The SPÖ went into opposition after three decades of leading the government.

It is not the end of the grand coalition that makes this development so significant. It is the international, especially the EU's response to this new coalition, which deserves the term 'dramatic'. What could be seen as 'normalization' is seen to be very special, very deviant – especially from the European viewpoint.

The farewell that the SPÖ had to say to the leading role in government could have been explained as a further step towards 'Europeanization' or 'Westernization': it was just time for a change. But this was completely

overshadowed by the FPÖ's entry into government. The other 14 EU-governments argued, backed by a European Parliament resolution, that the FPÖ can not be accepted as a party within an EU-government. The 14 EU-governments decided to downgrade bilateral relations with the new Austrian government. The FPÖ's xenophobic rhetoric was used as an official justification. The FPÖ's roots in Austria's Nazi past must be seen as an additional explanation for such a unique response (Pelinka 2000).

The FPÖ's success correlates in an interesting way with the decline of social partnership. The cartel-like cooperation between labour and business became weaker, beginning in the 1980s (Karlhofer & Tálos 1999). And, as a result of the decrease in consociationalism, the anti-cartel slogans became more successful. The FPÖ's opposition to the post-1945 order of Austrian politics started to succeed after the decline of this particular set of formal and informal rules. As long as consociationalism was able to control the political system as well as the economy, the FPÖ could not create much of a momentum against the power cartel. The FPÖ's rise was much more the consequence of the cartel's decline than the cause of it.

The new coalition started to challenge some of the structural remnants of Austrian consociationalism: The Social Affairs portfolio was split between a new 'Generational Ministry', led by an FPÖ-minister, and the Ministry of Economics, led by an ÖVP-minister. The latter, coming from the 'Business League' of the People's Party and an entrepreneur himself, is in charge of labour relations, including the control over the Chambers of Labour. For the first time since 1945, labour relations were not in the hand of a politician with special links to the ÖGB, the Trade Unions. Even between 1966 and 1970, during the years of the ÖVP's single party government, the social affairs ministry was run by a representative of the Christian Unions – the minority faction within the ÖGB. For the first time since 1945, labour relations were integrated into an overall economic ministry, which is also in charge of controlling the Chambers of Commerce.

Even before 1999, social partnership was in decline. It was the general perception that social partnership had already lost some of its impact on Austrian politics and that this decline would continue (Karlhofer & Tálos 1999). The FPÖ-ÖVP coalition is a catalyst that quickens this process of decline – weakening social partnership and weakening consociationalism.

These new situation presents an interesting paradox. At the very moment, when Austria seems to make the last possible decisive step towards (West-) European normality by destroying consociational structures, it is reminded of its still (and even more) special status:

- The challenge to written and unwritten rules of Austria's special political culture can be seen as further adaptation to conflict oriented democracy. It can be argued that Austria is becoming more like the other (West-)European democracies – with a political culture less consociational and more competitive.

- The inclusion of the FPÖ completely destroys this image. For the EU, the inclusion of the FPÖ in the Austrian government is a throwback into Austria's past and a reminder that Austria is still very special – because it was not able to deal sufficiently with its responsibility for Nazism. (For the FPÖ's character, see Pelinka 1998, especially 173-203.)

Austria has almost ceased to be a special case of consociationalism. But Austria has become another special case: the country that is used for a new European policy of 'cordon sanitaire'; for a warning signal that right-wing extremism will not be tolerated on government level within the European Union. In a certain way, Austria has to go back to point zero – to start once again in shaping its understanding of democracy.

In September 2000, the governments of the other 14 EU members lifted the bilateral measures against the Austrian government. The reason was that a report on Austria by three 'wise men' had argued that the measures had been productive, but that they would become counterproductive in the long run. This report also argued that the human rights situation in Austria is not principally different from the other members, but that the FPÖ's specific character is still reason enough to observe the behaviour of the Austrian government carefully (Kopeinig & Kotank 2000; Karlhofer et al. 2001).

Austria has almost escaped its role as a very special case. But instead of a special case of consociational democracy, Austria is now seen as a special case of rightist extremism. Consociational democracy was an instrument to escape the traps of history. After using this instrument, it had seemingly become obsolete. But Austria is back, detained in a trap again. And once again it is linked to the country's history.

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Domestic and External Constraints on Austrian Corporatism: Challenges and Opportunities

Markus M.L. Crepaz

University of Georgia

Abstract

The toughest challenges to Austrian corporatism originate in the domestic sphere as a result of an increasing chasm between societal values and the political institutions that were designed to represent these values. The modernization process moves society ever further away from the cultural and sociological pillars on which corporatism was built, leading to a situation in which the corporatist apparatus is perceived to be increasingly out of touch with the demands of the public. In addition, political changes, such as the rise of post-material parties, and the inclusion of hitherto anti-corporatist parties into a coalition government will further reduce the influence of corporatism on policy-making. However, with Austria's accession to the European Union, and globalization pressures in general, the institutional structure of corporatism and the expertise of corporatists may well become a major asset in assisting Austria as it faces pressures towards convergence.

1 Introduction

When Pope Paul VI declared Austria the 'island of the blessed', Austria distinguished itself by a remarkable degree of social harmony among its ideological camps, by social peace and by a virtual absence of industrial disputes. The era of the 1950s, 1960s, and mid-1970s was characterized by cooperation and concertation between the elites of the socialist and conservative parties and their corporatist complements. These were the heydays of Austrian corporatism creating a very predictable and stable politics, not only domestically but also with Austria's neighbours.

However, since the early 1980s, dramatic changes have been taking place. One of these changes is the relentless push for modernization. Austria's economy has morphed from an industrial to a post-industrial, service-oriented economy with attendant changes in its society; a referendum in 1978 rejected the operation of Austria's first and last nuclear power plant; in 1984 young Austrians chained themselves to trees to prevent the construction of a hydroelectric dam in order to save rare frogs and proved victorious against the