The Changing Austrian Voter

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Volume 16

Günter Bischof
Fritz Plasser
editors

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Contemporary Austrian Studies

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INTRODUCTION

The Changing Austrian Voter

Fritz Plasser and Günter Bischof

Structural changes in voting behavior are an indicator for social change and societal modernization. In fact, in the course of the last thirty years, with regard to educational and occupational structures, the Austrian electorate developed from a primarily industrially-oriented electorate toward a post-industrial information- and service-oriented one.[1] During the same period, the relations of voters to political parties also changed substantially. While thirty years ago more than 60 percent of the electorate always voted for the same party at national and regional elections, only about every third voter can be classified as a party loyalist in 2006. At the same time, the number of loyal members of political parties was cut in half. Thirty years ago, 25 percent were registered members of a political party; in 2006 only 12 percent were members of political parties. The result is a dramatic erosion of stable party affiliations which clearly shows in Austrian voting behavior. In the National Election of 1975, 95 percent of the voters knew the party for whom they would vote prior to the start of the election campaign; in the 2006 election, a mere 24 percent of the voters had already decided on the party of their choice during the last week of the campaign. Never before had such a high share of "late deciders" existed in the history of Austrian elections.[2]

In the National Election of 1975, only 3 percent voted for another party than they had voted for in the previous election; in 2006 there was a whopping 26 percent of party changers. This was the highest change rate in Austrian elections to date. It shows how much Austrian voting behavior has approached the European mainstream. For example, 28 percent of

the voters changed their party at the German parliamentary election of 2005. During the Swedish parliamentary election of 2006, there were 30 percent party changers. Within thirty years, a segmented, party-loyal, *Lager* electorate turned into a highly mobile, issue-driven electorate. In Austria as in the rest of Europe, no longer do *traditional party loyalties* but *competence of parties on issue* count first and foremost.

The erosion of stable party affiliations has simultaneously affected the rate of voting participation. While thirty years ago voter turnout rates still remained constantly above 90 percent, Austria—third behind Italy and Belgium—was, comparatively speaking, among the countries with the highest rates of voter turnout; however, in the 1980s voting participation progressively declined.[3] In 2006, only 78.5 percent participated in the national elections—the lowest voter turnout at national elections so far. In voter participation rates, Austria clearly is approaching the European average, too. In neighboring Germany, with only 77.7 percent of the population voting, the turnout rate at the Parliamentary Elections of 2005 also reached an historical low. Similar declines of voter turnout could also be observed at the recent parliamentary elections in Italy, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. In all of these countries, participation in elections—especially among the younger generation of voters—is not seen as a civic duty anymore. Reasons for declining voter turnout, however, are not only found in traditional political participation repertoires, but also in an increased readiness of politically disappointed and/or annoyed voters to express their protest by demonstrative voting abstinence.

To abstain from casting ballots is only one of several options for angry voters. Angry voters can be directly approached and mobilized by protest parties. Besides the *exit*-option, then, there is also the *voice*-option. This option was realized for the first time in the 1986 National Elections with Jörg Haider. After seizing the leadership of the FPÖ, Haider turned his party into a right-wing, populist party within the short period of ten weeks by directly appealing to voters frustrated with the traditional parties (the SPÖ and ÖVP). The National Elections of 1986 launched a spectacular series of successful elections for the FPÖ under Haider, culminating in the National Elections of 1999, when the FPÖ surpassed the ÖVP with a share of 26.9 percent of the votes. Leading by only several hundred votes, the victory was marginal, but the FPÖ for the first time became the second strongest parliamentary party in Austria. This development in the *right populist movement* in Austrian electoral history left a deep imprint on voting behavior. For instance, the share of blue collar work-

ers voting for Haider and the FPÖ quadrupled between 1986 and 1999. With a share of 47 percent of blue collar voters, the FPÖ became the strongest party among workers in 1999, overtaking the Socialist Party, Austria's traditional labor party.

But the voting behavior of labor was not alone in being gravely impacted by Haider's right-wing populism. Haider's management of fickle emotions and perfunctory impressions increasingly attracted younger generations of voters, too. In the National Elections of 1999, the FPÖ garnered a majority of votes from the electorate below the age of thirty.[4]

The National Elections of 1986, then, marked the beginning of the electoral ascendancy of Haider and the FPÖ. Yet the immediate backlash of this election was the return to a grand coalition between the SPÖ and ÖVP for the first time in twenty years; grand coalitions had governed Austria after World War II from 1945 to 1966. Facing a serious threat from the upstart, right, populist, opposition course of the FPÖ, the traditional, increasingly centrist parties governing Austria were looking for salvation in defensive cooperation and agreed to form a grand coalition under Socialist Chancellors Franz Vranitzky and Victor Klima. The electoral strength of the grand coalition parties—originally with a solid two-thirds majority in parliament—eroded further in the following years in a series of electoral defeats revealing diminishing voter confidence in their can-do spirit.[5] In the National Elections of 1999, the SPÖ and ÖVP again faced severe electoral losses. It marked both the end of the defensive cooperation and of grand coalition governments (1987-1999).

Although the ÖVP only found itself in third position behind the SPÖ and FPÖ in 1999, it agreed to form a coalition government with the FPÖ, with ÖVP leader Wolfgang Schüssel heading the government as chancellor. Haider, the governor of Carinthia, steered clear of taking any cabinet position in Vienna. In 2000, he handed the FPÖ party chairmanship to Susanne Riess-Passer who became vice-chancellor. The rest of the members of the European Union ("the EU-14") levied sanctions against the Schüssel government, which strongly polarized the Austrian electorate. Yet the governing ability of the FPÖ and ÖVP coalition seemed guaranteed at first. However, FPÖ dissatisfaction with the specific policies of the coalition government was growing steadily. Internal tensions within the FPÖ culminated in the summer of 2002 and led to early elections in the fall, resulting in a fatal defeat of the FPÖ at the polls. About 700,000 voters switched their allegiance from the FPÖ to the ÖVP, which became the strongest party, ahead by about 17 percent

of the vote for the first time since 1966, when it governed alone.[6] In spite of the basic willingness of both the SPÖ and the Green Party to form a coalition government with the ÖVP, Chancellor Schüssel decided to continue his coalition with a now gravely weakened FPÖ.

The renewed ÖVP/FPÖ government launched a series of drastic reform measures shortly after its entry into office. It set into motion basic reforms of the pension system—which large parts of the population found to be too painful. Numerous voters were turned off by both coalition parties, who consequently suffered considerable losses in regional elections. The ÖVP lost its majority in Salzburg and Styria, two traditional regions of strength where it had governed since 1945. The FPÖ approached a low point of voter confidence with only 5 percent support in the weekly tracking polls. Responding to this precipitate decline in the polls, the FPÖ ruptured and split into two factions in 2005. Haider launched a new party, "The Coalition for the Future of Austria" (*Bündnis für die Zukunft Österreichs*, or BZÖ), hanging onto the coalition government. The FPÖ came under the new party chairmanship of Heinz Christian Strache from Vienna, who repositioned the party as an oppositional protest party. Regarding its favorite issues and appeals, Strache revisited the right populist mode of the successful years 1986 to 1999.

The National Elections of the fall of 2006 spawned similar profound repercussions as the National Elections of 1999 had. The SPÖ—in spite of the looming shadows of a major scandal involving the near-bankrupt, union-owned bank BAWAG—succeeded by a tiny margin to become the strongest party once again. But the common share of SPÖ and Green Party votes was not sufficient to form a center-left coalition government. This was equally true for the ÖVP and BZÖ—their combined votes could not top 50 percent to continue the existing coalition. The SPÖ and the ÖVP therefore reluctantly agreed in January 2007, after three months of intense negotiations, to return to the combination of the grand coalition government. The Greens and Haider's BZÖ were forced to accept opposition roles. Strache's FPÖ had determined before the election to continue with its opposition role.

The results of the Austrian National Elections of 2006 demonstrate that elections have become a referendum regarding the performance and policies of the governing parties. Just as in Germany in 2005, Italy in 2006, and Sweden in 2006, Austrian voters expressed their dissatisfaction with the course of government in no uncertain terms. Political changes and switches of coalition partners were the result in all four countries as long-term governing parties and government coalitions had to face considerable losses.

On the one hand, voters demonstrated that they agreed with their chosen party's policies—as stated by two-thirds of the voters. Yet on the other hand, one-third of the voters cast *negative* votes and based their decision on dissatisfaction with their parties and annoyance with the political process. It does not come as a surprise and highlights the protest character of the vote in 2006 that 60 percent of the party changers were tracked as angry voters. Those voting for the ÖVP and the Greens were largely positive voters placing the acceptance of the policies of those parties in the foreground. Among SPÖ supporters, every third voter was an angry voter. The FPÖ and the BZÖ attracted the highest share of angry voters with their populist messages. Half of the voters for these right-wing, populist parties were primarily driven by negative emotions and attitudes in the casting of their votes.[7]

Increasingly, both volatility in voting behavior and declining party loyalty seem to be the principal trends. Declining turnout and the growing importance of issue- and performance-oriented evaluations for influencing voting decisions are indicators of the modernization of Austrian electoral behavior, clearly now approaching European mainstream voting behavior.

The topical essays in this volume analyze these trends in considerable detail. *Oliver Rathkolb* examines the long-term historical context of access to the polls and changing electoral outcomes. He goes back to the final decades of the Habsburg Monarchy when a small proportion of the propertied populace had access to the polls. On the eve of World War I, all males gained access. After the break-up of the Habsburg Monarchy at the end of the war and the founding of the First Austrian Republic, universal suffrage was declared, and women became a vital part of the electorate. In the interwar years, the principal political camps (conservative Christian Socials, Socialists, and German Nationalists) increasingly "pillarized." The give and take of seemingly chaotic democratic governance did not have broad appeal and descended into civil conflict between armed party camps. It ended in the seizure of government by the authoritarian Dollfuss and Schuschnigg regimes and the ultimate invasion of the country and takeover by the German Nazis. After World War II—and with the guidance of occupation powers—the more stable democratic regime of the post-World War II Austrian Republic emerged. Half a million Nazi party members were readmitted to the polls in 1949. Voters demonstrated great loyalty to the political camps, and the "pillarization" of Austrian politics intensified. Austrian politics stabilized in grand coalition governments and the "*Alleinregierungen*" Josef Klaus and Bruno Kreisky. Rathkolb also shows

that an authoritarian mindset continued in the subterranean mentality of Austrian voters even as female voters became increasingly independent.

Trends and patterns in Austrian voting behavior based on data gathered from representative post-election surveys and exit polls covering the period from 1970 to 2006 are at the core of the contribution by *Fritz Plasser* and *Peter A. Ulram*. Starting with a retrospective view of the *Lager* culture and its impact on the extraordinary stability of Austrian voting behavior until the early 1970s, the authors deal with the consequences of accelerated socioeconomic and sociocultural changes that have gained momentum since the 1970s. They focus on the decline of party affiliations and the resulting increased voter volatility. Since the 1970s, both party affiliations and loyalties among the Austrian electorate weakened, so did traditional determinants of voting behavior such as church affiliation and proximity to trade unions.[8] *Plasser* and *Ulram* also deal with the erosion of voting according to class in Austria and sketch a temporary blue collar realignment that culminated in the National Election of 1999, when the traditional Social Democratic party lost its sway of labor voters to Haider's populist FPÖ. Recent social change in the electorate and the development of a cleavage structure also has led to progressive gender-specific differentiation in Austrian voting behavior, resulting in a widened gender gap reinforced by generational and educational factors. These changes produced a gender-generation realignment of Austrian voting behavior and the ongoing polarization of values as well as a new value cleavage between authoritarian orientations and predominantly post-materialist/libertarian orientations.

Substantial increases of electoral volatility since the 1970s are the topic of the contribution by *Christoph Hofinger*, *Günther Ogris*, and *Eva Zeglovits*. Based on data from voter transition analyses, they analyze both the permanent increase of swing voters and changing voters and the permanent reservoir of a growing group of non-voters, evident since the 1980s. Structural factors such as the generational and social changes in Austrian society as well as the success and failure of the FPÖ to attract available protest voters from other parties contributed to this increasing volatility. An analysis of the National Election of 2006 demonstrates that all parties suffered from heavy losses to non-voters, a behavior that, in part, was also caused by negative campaign strategies that seemingly had a more demobilizing effect in 2006 than in the previous elections.

The dynamics of regional elections and their relation to the electoral behavior on the federal level are at the core of the contribution by *Herbert Dachs*. Starting with an informative analysis of the specific framework

for party competition on the sub-national level, *Dachs* differentiates between *three* phases of party majorities in regional elections: the phase of clear majorities and extraordinary stability until the 1980s; the boost of voter-mobility in the mid-1980s; and the mixed pattern of stable absolute majorities in select regions, and changing majorities in two regions, both previous strongholds of the conservative ÖVP ever since 1945.

Electoral strategies and the performance of Austrian right wing populism from 1986 to 2006 are the focus of *Kurt Richard Luther*'s essay. After an examination of the electoral performance of the FPÖ and more recently of the BZÖ, *Luther* focuses particularly upon the extent to which changes of their strategic goals were reflected in the composition and motivations of their electoral vote. Based on extensive interviews with leading representatives of the FPÖ and the BZÖ, as well as additional data from a series of Austrian Election Studies, the author differentiates between *four* phases of electoral strategies: the shift of policy-seeking to office-seeking between the 1960s and 1986; populist vote-maximization under Haider, 1986-1999; office-seeking and increasing internal disunity as a party in the ruling governing coalition, 2000-2005; and starting in 2005, a step-by-step return to populist vote maximization. Overall, the FPÖ vote was highest during its period of sustained populist vote-maximization and lowest when the party members were merely engaged in office-seeking within the coalition government; the internal polarization about strategic visions for the party did not help either. Considering the FPÖ's dismal electoral record since 2002 and its fracturing into two camps in 2005, as well as the personal animosities between the leadership of the two groups, the author comes to cautious conclusions regarding the future of Austrian right-wing populism. Clearly, a remarkably stable potential for populist electoral appeals does exist in Austria, so right-wing populism is likely to persist due to a demand for it in the electorate as a result of the enduring mobilizing capacity of polarizing issues like immigration, crime, and xenophobia.

The crucial role of the media in framing Austrian election campaign discourse is at the heart of *Günter Lengauer*'s essay, based on findings of content analysis of campaign coverage in the electronic and print media during the period from 1999 to 2006. After providing an overview about characteristic features of the Austrian media system, political information habits, and the specific relationship between political and journalistic elites, the author focuses on long-term trends in journalistic campaign coverage such as the increased personalization of campaign reports, the growing journalist-centeredness of campaign coverage, the

increasingly negative tone of journalists' evaluations of candidates and parties, and the predominant horse-race character of media reporting.[9] Almost half of the political stories in the Austrian media during the 2006 campaign focused on personalities rather than policy issues. A mere one-third of all political news stories predominantly focused on policies and substantially issue-oriented information. Contrasting his findings with comparable data from international studies, the author concludes that the Austrian style of campaign coverage resembles patterns and trends that have recently been identified for U.S., British, and German election campaign coverage.

Putting long-term trends and patterns of Austrian electoral behavior in a comparative European and global context is the goal of *Fritz Plasser* and *Gilg Seeber*'s ambitious essay. They base their findings on comparable data sets from recent National Election Studies in Germany, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.[10] After comparing central determinants of Austrian electoral behavior, the authors conclude that national deviations from international trends in electoral behavior are smaller than similarities and concordance. While Austrian voting behavior—at the height of the right populist moment in the National Election of 1999—had briefly deviated from European electoral trends, it again is approximating Western European standards since that election. Patterns of recent electoral behavior in Austria conform to mainstream trends observable in advanced Western democracies.[11]

The concluding FORUM on the National Elections of October 2006 brings this analysis of changing Austrian voting behavior up to the present. Prominent Austrian political scientists and survey researchers discuss old and new trends in the election of 2006 and speculate about its impact upon the future direction of Austrian party and governmental politics.

The two non-topical essays in this volume by two young historians deal with important moments in post-World War II European Cold War history. Together they can be read as an archaeology of efforts for an early détente in Europe. Graz-based Peter Ruggenthaler has mined new records in the Molotov files of the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History. He analyzes the interaction of the Soviet initiative on German unification and neutralization ("Stalin notes") presented to the West on 10 March 1952 with the "short treaty" initiative on the Austrian State Treaty of 13 March 1952, by the Anglo-American powers. Both initiatives were propaganda initiatives of sorts rather than serious diplomatic efforts. While Stalin ignored the Western short-treaty initia-

tive, the West fought Stalin's scheme for Germany tooth and nail. Due to a spy in the French Foreign Ministry, the Kremlin was exceedingly well informed about the West's short treaty plans. Stalin had no plans for a division of Austria, but did not want to conclude an Austrian treaty and make it a "model" for the solution of the German question. The Austrian treaty would not be signed before the division of Germany was completed. Hopes for an early détente in the Cold War in Central Europe were, thus, dashed.

The young Swiss historian Thomas Fischer analyzes a signal moment in the arrival of détente in Europe, namely the genesis of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe, culminating in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 in which the group of "Neutral and Non-Aligned" countries ("N & NA") played an important role. Switzerland, worried about neutrality being written into the treaty, and Austria, less worried about neutrality entering the conference documents, cooperated very closely from the beginning in 1969 to launch the CSCE and détente in Europe. Together with the Dutch, they pioneered the idea of organizing the conference agenda in "baskets," of which "Basket 3" on the admittance of human rights as a subject for international dialogue was particularly important. During the second stage of the conference in the Geneva preparatory meetings in 1973/74, the new caucus of "N + NA" (Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, and Yugoslavia, with Malta, San Marino, and Liechtenstein joining later) emerged through proposal of confidence-building measures between East and West. Their "moment of glory" and recognition of increased N + NA power came when they combined the principles of non-intervention in internal affairs as advocated by the Soviets with respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms as demanded by the West in "Basket 3." They kept the CSCE idea and the "Helsinki process" alive in the successor conferences of Belgrade (1977-1978) and Madrid (1980-1983) against all odds and, thus, made a vital contribution to the peaceful end of the Cold War in the late 1980s.

Extensive review essays, book reviews, and the annual review of Austrian politics complete the volume. Peter Berger's review essay on recent literature published on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 is a particularly poignant piece written from a very personal angle. Berger's essay shows that after half a century the historical memory of "Hungary 1956" is still highly contested terrain, especially in the contentious Hungarian political camps. No consensus about the meaning of this turning point in Hungarian

history has yet emerged. With the tens of thousands of refugees and the security crisis on Austria's eastern border, the events in Hungary in the fall of 1956 have always been a "site" of Austrian memory, too, and the memory of Hungarian refugees turned Austrians is equally contested. Matthew Berg's review essay on recent literature on Austrian memory of World War II treads a similarly contentious terrain as does Alexander Lassner's discussion of the still partisan meanings and memories of the *Ständestaat* in Austrian consciousness.

Finally, we treasure the opportunity to thank the people who have made this volume possible, first and foremost our contributors with the timely submission of their manuscripts and their good cheer in suffering the extensive copy-editing process with us. With Fritz Plasser as the new co-editor on the Innsbruck side, the new team is clicking as efficiently as ever. The topical essays and the FORUM are largely his initiative, and he has hit the road running with great enthusiasm and commitment to continuing the fifteen year-old tradition of *Contemporary Austrian Studies*.

In New Orleans and at UNO, Sigrid Harrer, the 2006/7 Austrian Ministry of Science dissertation fellow at CenterAustria from the University of Graz, accompanied the daily tracking of manuscripts with wonderful efficiency and aplomb. We hope her own dissertation research on aid abuse by Hurricane Katrina victims did not suffer too much from the demands of her job as assistant to the editors. Jennifer Shimek at Loyola University of New Orleans performed the demanding work of copy-editing the essays and streamlining them to conform to our style-sheet in a timely fashion and with her usual superb skill and good cheer. Gertraud Griessner was pinch-hitting when needed. It is with great regret that we noted Robert Dupont's resignation as Dean of Metropolitan College. He has helped shepherd *CAS* from the very beginning towards financial viability against all odds. Over the past half dozen years, he also served as one of the executive editors of *CAS*. We would like to thank him for his trust and emotional support and wish him well in his new role as professor of history at UNO. We will sorely miss him. In Innsbruck, Ellen Palli has produced photo-ready copy of the final manuscripts with her usual professional skill in spite of the numerous tables in the topical essays. Franz Mathis has supported our endeavors when and wherever needed. At Transaction Publishers, Irving Louis Horowitz, Mary Curtis, and our editor Cheryl Orson have helped bring the manuscript to publication.

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as well as from the Austrian Foreign Ministry through the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York and the Marshall Plan Anniversary Foundation in Vienna which is a generous institutional supporter of CenterAustria. Ernst Aichinger has returned to the headquarters in Vienna from his post at the Cultural Forum in New York. Like Bobby Dupont at UNO, he has always been the most kind and enthusiastic of supporters for *CAS*. We wish him well and look forward to cooperating in the same beneficial manner with his successor, Mr. Rauchbauer.

Larose / Innsbruck May 2007

Notes

1. Consequences of the structural modernization of Austrian society for sociocultural and political values and beliefs are documented in Wolfgang Schulz, Max Haller, and Alfred Grausgruber, eds., *Österreich zur Jahrhundertwende: Gesellschaftliche Werthaltungen und Lebensqualität 1986-2004* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2005).

2. See Fritz Plasser, Peter A. Ulram, and Gilg Seeber, "Was Wähler(innen) bewegt: Parteien-, Themen- und Kandidatenorientierungen 2006," in *Wechselwahlen. Analysen zur Nationalratswahl 2006*, ed. Fritz Plasser and Peter A. Ulram (Vienna: WUV Verlag, 2007), esp. 166-74.

3. See Mark N. Franklin, *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004).

4. See Fritz Plasser, Gilg Seeber, and Peter A. Ulram, "Breaking the Mold: Politische Wettbewerbsräume und Wahlverhalten Ende der neunziger Jahre," in Fritz Plasser, Peter A. Ulram and Franz Sommer, eds., *Das österreichische Wahlverhalten* (Wien, WUV Verlag, 2000), 55-116.

5. See Fritz Plasser and Peter A. Ulram, "Trends and Ruptures: Stability and Change in Austrian Voting Behavior 1986-1996," in *The Vranitzky Era in Austria*, vol. 7, *Contemporary Austrian Studies*, ed. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, and Ferdinand Karlhofer (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1999), 30-55.

6. See Fritz Plasser and Peter A. Ulram, eds., *Wahlverhalten in Bewegung: Analysen zur Nationalratswahl 2002* (Vienna: WUV Verlag, 2003).

7. See Plasser et al., "Was Wähler(innen) bewegt," esp. 185-87.

8. See also Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, and Hermann Denz, eds., *Religion in Austria*, vol. 13, *Contemporary Austrian Studies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2005).

9. For an analysis of political communication practices in Austria, see also Fritz Plasser, ed., *Politische Kommunikation in Österreich: Ein praxisnahes Handbuch* (Vienna: WUV Verlag, 2004).

10. A modified German language version of this article has been published synchronously in Fritz Plasser and Peter A. Ulram, eds. *Wechselwahlen: Analysen zur Nationalratswahl 2006* (Vienna: WUV Verlag, 2007), 255-86.

11. See Jacques Thomassen, ed., *The European Voter: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005).

TOPICAL ESSAYS

The Austrian Voter in Historical Perspective[1]

Oliver Rathkolb

The following article attempts to sketch an historical typology of voters in Austria, including the female part of the population who entered the picture when they were granted suffrage in 1919. What hampers such an attempt is the absence of reliable data on the basis of opinion polls, voter transition analyses, and exit polls until well into the 1960s. Therefore the article concentrated on analyzing the historical context of the public election campaigns in tandem with the election results. On the basis of numerous historical studies[2] and a few social-historical analyses—particularly of NSDAP voters before 1933—it appears possible to identify a number of trends.

Elite Suffrage for the Few in Habsburg Cisleithania (1867-1873-1906)

Because the Parliament building in Vienna, which was first opened in 1883, continues to serve as the central memory site for the will of the voters in the terms of Austrian parliamentarism and is, therefore, also part of the official politics of history, it is necessary to cast a brief glance at suffrage in the era before 1919. This will also enable us to raise the important question as to the extent continuities and discontinuities in voting patterns are discernible in the First and Second Republics.

On the territory of modern Austria, the revolution of 1848 did not, as is well-known, achieve any major breakthrough, nor were parliamentary democracy and suffrage the results of any single fiat; rather, they evolved through a long series of social compromises. The first—if highly unbal-

anced—step forward on the road that would ultimately lead to universal and general suffrage was the *Reichsratswahlordnung*, the law governing elections to the Imperial Assembly, in 1873. The lack of balance is evident from the fact that for men (or women) to be eligible for voting, they had to be owners of large estates and at least twenty-four years old; fifty-nine votes from this privileged curia were all that was required to dispatch a male representative—women being barred from candidacy—to the Imperial Assembly:[3] In this system, 4,931 big landowners elected a total of eighty-five representatives; the second and third curiae were reserved to the Chambers of Trade and Commerce (499 voters and twenty-one representatives) and to towns and marketplaces (186,323 voters, 118 representatives) respectively. The fourth and most disadvantaged curia was brought up by the rural districts (1,062,259 voters, 129 representatives); here as well as in the second and third curiae, women were excluded from voting. In the fourth curia, the right to vote was tied to open balloting; secret balloting was not available to its members. Because suffrage was also tied to the payment of taxes, only 17 percent of citizens of legal voting age were eligible to vote. In 1882, there was an increase in the number of urban voters owing to a change in the census (*Fünfgulden-Männer*, that is, men who paid an annual tax of five *gulden*, the currency of the time)—from approximately 186,000 to 299,000.

Faux General Suffrage (1907) and the Decline in Importance of the Imperial Assembly

Pressure in favor of general suffrage increased, and after the Unification Congress at Hainfeld in 1881, where the labor movement patched up its ideological differences, the Social Democrats stepped up their demands for general and equal suffrage, which was to be granted to men as well as to women. The climax of this particular strand of development was a demonstration in Vienna on 29 November 1905 with around 250,000 workers demanding this expansion of suffrage.

As early as 1903, Victor Adler, the leader of the Social-Democratic Party (SDAP) had advised the feminists in his party to waive their justified demands temporarily in order not to furnish the other side with a pretext for refusing to grant general manhood suffrage. Parliament itself ultimately resorted to formal considerations in order to explain its rejection of women's suffrage:

> The majority of the committee was swayed by the argument that to this day women's suffrage has not been adopted by any of the countries that have already introduced general suffrage and that it would be highly dubious to make the at-

> tempt to draw women into political life at a time when Austria is going through a decisive phase of its evolution.[4]

Yet the women's movement stayed on course in their political work in the direction of equal rights.

The reform did not mean that universal manhood suffrage had been granted on the city council level. In Vienna, for example, the "curiate" system remained in force until 1918, and the propertied and the educated classes and the Liberals maintained the upper hand. In 1896, the petty-bourgeois Christian Socialists succeeded through a reform of the electoral system to supersede the Liberals as the majority party. It was not until the elections of 4 May 1919 that radically new majorities formed in Vienna: 100 Social Democratic members as opposed to fifty Christian Socialists, eight members of the Czech Party, three each from the German Nationalists and the Jewish Nationalists, and one from the Democratic Party; on the level of the Viennese districts, 339 out of 630 district representatives belonged to the Social Democrats.[5]

The Imperial Assembly and its workings remained marginalized. The government was nominated by the *Kaiser*, who had an extensive repertoire of emergency measures to resort to in case the Imperial Assembly was unable to come up with the desired laws. The German population segment was given preferential treatment through gerrymandering; others, most notably the Ruthenians, were discriminated against. The anti-Semitism that surfaced, particularly in the election campaigns of the Christian Socialists and the German Nationalists, further exacerbated a tendency for exclusion.[6] Members of the armed forces were not eligible to vote, either.

A careful analysis of the distribution of seats shows that in spite of their smaller numbers, German-speaking voters were able, through the inclusion of the direct payment of taxes, to command a greater number of seats than the Czechs, Ruthenians, southern Slavs, Italians, or Romanians.[7] All in all, votes carried a different weight in a number of ways, and the German-speaking population segment clearly benefited from this dispensation.

While the outcome of the elections of 1907 and 1911 was reflected in the composition of the House of Deputies, the House's influence on the actual political decision-making process was extremely limited. At a time when parliament succumbed more and more to paralysis owing to smoldering ethnic conflicts, the government tried, first under Freiherr von Bienerth, then, as of November 1911, under Graf Stürgkh, to deprive

parliament of its *raison d'être* through a regime of bureaucratic absolutism.[8] The government's objective was to undo the damage inflicted by electoral reform. The Imperial Assembly degenerated more and more to become merely a stage of ethnic conflict.

The dominant role of the two mass parties, which was to become a characteristic feature of Austria's First and Second Republics, was already taking shape. Both parties developed their organizational structures and many of their specific affinity groups before 1918. The result was analogous to the Netherlands with their Protestant, Catholic, and Socialist "pillars" (plus a liberal pillar that critiqued the process of *verzuiling*,[9] or pillarization). This was already clearly in evidence in the elections in Vienna, when the Christian Socialists, who dominated the City Council, received 49 percent of the popular vote and were followed by the Social Democrats, who had already won 39 percent.[10]

In Cisleithania, too, the two big mass parties began to develop their subcultures, their *Lager* (or camps), each with its own papers and its own, separate cultural clubs (mostly choirs or choral societies) and sports clubs. In the period between the first two elections in 1907 and 1911, 60 percent of all newspapers were in open ideological alignment with one of the two parties.[11] In 1907, the Christian Socialists won the majority in the House of Deputies[12]; in 1911, the Social Democrats succeeded them in that role.

The contingent of 102 German Nationalist and German Liberal deputies was too heterogeneous and much too fixated on the elites to be able to form a mass party.

Voters in 1907 and 1911 had to meet the requirements specified in Beck's reform of the electoral law: at least twenty-four years of age, with Austrian citizenship for at least three years, and domiciled in their constituency for at least one year. Eligibility was tied to a minimum age of thirty.

The fault lines dividing the parties already followed those of ethnic exclusion/inclusion as well as those indicated by competing political models for the solution of the problems caused by social and economic developments; these developments had brought about major social changes as the result of the first wave of globalization and industrialization. Anti-Semitism and ethnic hatred were used openly to transmit enemy stereotypes. In this way, it was above all Social Democratic politicians such as Victor Adler and Otto Bauer who became targets of anti-Semitic agitation while at the same time the Social Democrats increasingly defined themselves as Austro-Germans. The twenty-four Czech Social

Democrats elected in 1911 acted as "autonomists" refusing to take orders from "Germans and Jews."[13] Therefore, the numerical superiority of the Social Democrats vis-à-vis the Christian Socialists (eighty-one versus seventy-six) was a purely theoretical one. The Christian Socialists in their turn had suffered losses through conflicts with a nationalistic, aggressively anti-Semitic faction.

While Christian Socialist voters tended to be found mainly outside urban areas and in certain districts of Vienna, the Social Democrats were successful above all in those districts of Vienna with a great deal of industry and in industrialized pockets in rural areas.

The statements referring to *Lagerbildung* (or camp formation) made by the Social Democrats, who had been the protagonists in the struggle for the franchise, were not lacking in clarity, either. Victor Adler, for instance, had this to say in a speech on 20 December 1906:

> Today we are justified in saying that electoral reform is complete and that the basis of Austria's Constitution is general, equal and direct suffrage. This achievement is owed above all to the working class, to its skill and to its energy. If the working class has, on the one hand, added a new weapon to its arsenal for the class struggle, the new nature of the conflict will impose on it new duties and ever more difficult tasks. It will only be able to discharge those duties if it remains committed to that path in future which has perforce led to this day: loyalty to the principles of Social Democracy, a sense of purpose and an unswerving commitment to the pursuit of our goals.[14]

Yet the Social Democrats were no more immune than anyone else against the socio-economic and geopolitical crises of the Habsburg monarchy and lost seats in 1911, even though they emerged as the victorious party (eighty-one Social Democratic seats as against seventy-six Christian Socialist ones). Otto Bauer, who was to succeed Victor Adler as the leader of the Social Democrats, summed up the mood of crisis, which had an adverse effect on the political culture of the time before World War I, in the following apposite words:

> The total collapse of domestic and foreign policy has had a paralyzing effect on people; the workers have come to the conclusion that things in Austria are past cure and slide back into a political indifference that weakens the development of our party. This is compounded by the severity of the economic crisis, which weakens our organization and our press, and by the reformist education of the workers, whose frustration at the failure of the hoped-for successes to materialize turns them against the party. All in all, a rather dispiriting situation[. . .][15]

The signals that the pre-democratic structures were also going to be dominated by politically motivated violence multiplied, not least when the leading Social Democratic functionary of Wien-Ottakring was murdered on 12 February 1913 by the brother of Leopold Kunschak, the

Christian Socialist politician. In March 1914, the Imperial Assembly was adjourned by the Emperor and was not called again until 30 May 1917 so that World War I was begun without a debate in the Assembly.

Gender Equality of Voters from 1919 Onward

World War I had reinforced the sense of crisis through traumatic experiences on a large scale and had created from the start an atmosphere that aided and abetted militancy and an inclination towards violent solutions also among male (and to a much lesser extent among female) voters. Fully 75 percent of the male population of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had been called up for military service. The population of the *Hinterland*, also in Cisleithania, notably women, was plagued by famine due to the lack of supplies and a flourishing black market. The bare outline offered by an encyclopedia entry is sufficient to indicate the extent of the damage:

> WWI, which lasted 1,563 days for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, cost its armed forces more than 1 million dead and permanently missing (of whom approximately 400,000 died as POWs in Russia, 50,000 in Serbia and more than 30,000 in Italy), 1,943,000 injured and 1.2 million POWs, many of whom did not return until years after the cessation of hostilities. The war is said to have cost approximately 90 billion *kronen*, the public debt rose from 13 to 72 billion *kronen* between July 1914 and November 1918, and inflation spiraled to 1,400% between 1914 and 1924.[16]

Otto Bauer addressed the psychological effects that the war had also on future voters when he conceded that "the years in the trenches had instilled in them a belief in violence [. . .]."[17] At home, they found a state of unmitigated crisis with a galloping rate of inflation and high unemployment. In addition to this, the old system of the authority of the monarchy, as well as its legal system, had been destroyed, as Alexander Spitzmüller, one of the finance ministers of the empire, rightly noted in his memoirs: "The most serious crime during the war was the destruction of the legal order, which made itself felt in numerous court-martials."[18]

In spite of their international peace initiatives during World War I, the Social Democrats had also been unable to distance themselves in an appropriate symbolic form from violence as a means to further a domestic political agenda. This is demonstrated by the assassination of Karl Reichsgraf von Stürgkh, then the prime minister of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, by Victor Adler's son, Friedrich Adler. In the public's perception, this was little more than a desperate measure to demand the convening of the Imperial Assembly, which Stürghk had refused to grant.

Approximately 1.04 million men from the territory that became modern Austria had served as soldiers; 180,000 of them had been killed. Moreover, 60,000 civilians, men and women, were also killed. A further consequence of the war, 90,000 widows and 270,000 orphans were part of the ruinous social structure, and more than 760,000 refugees and displaced persons were stranded within the borders of the republic of *Deutsch-Österreich*.

The very foundation of the new state on 12 November 1918, when Franz Ringhofer, one of the German Nationalist deputies of the Provisional National Assembly, proclaimed the Republic of *Deutsch-Österreich*, led to mass panic and a violent brawl, which left forty people injured and a man and a boy trampled to death in the stampede following a shooting.

Nevertheless, it was possible within a very short time, owing to the possibility of recourse to the body of administrative expertise of the monarchy, to establish a framework for elections and for the passing of social-political laws in the National Assembly such as those on the eight-hour work day, child labor, and outwork. Priority went to general suffrage for women, the lowering of the voting age to twenty, and the introduction of closed-list *proporz* with joint lists. Initially, the Ministers of Parliament (MPs) had proceeded on the assumption that German Bohemia (forty-five MPs) and the Sudetenland (fifteen MPs) would be included; that is, they assumed the total number of voters would be 10,299,000—so there would have been 48,000 voters for any one MP.[19] Another five seats were reserved for the German-speaking minorities in Brno, Olomouc, and Jihlava pending the necessary contractual agreements with Czechoslovakia. Allied *Realpolitik* as well as the integration of the German-speaking territories into Czechoslovakia put an end to these pie-in-the-sky games in the same way in which the St Germain peace treaty ended all speculations about *Anschluss* to Germany in 1920.

In spite of all this the first truly free and democratic elections were held on 16 February 1919 with a relatively high turnout (82.10% women and 86.97% men). The Christian Socialists managed to establish themselves as the party for women, whereas the Social Democrats held even less appeal for female voters than the pan-German People's Party.[20]

In a campaign that was short and intense, the Social Democrats took the offensive and advocated in radical language the switch to a new social model and the beginning of the "class struggle,"[21] that is, a continuation of the ideological development that had been interrupted

by the outbreak of the war in 1914. The Catholic Church, on the other hand, lent its support openly to the Christian Socialists; in one case in the Waldviertel parish of Oberndorf near Zwettl, this escalated into the threat not to hear the confessions of those who did not vote Christian Socialist. Wilhelm Miklas, a Christian Socialist member of the State Council (and a federal president-to-be), was attacked and manhandled during an election meeting in another Waldviertel parish, St. Leonhard near Horn.[22]

In 1919 the Christian Socialists, addressing their canvassing mainly to "farmers and artisans," focused on the need to ward off a "socialist republic" and on the metaphor of a "Christian people." Time and again, the bogeyman of a communist putsch was invoked.[23] The Social Democrats, on the other hand, plied the antagonism of the people against the rich through such concrete demands as the nationalization of the big corporations and the taxation of "unearned super incomes" and pinned the blame for widespread destitution squarely on capitalism. In addition to this, they tried to position themselves as the exemplary peace party that could be trusted to oppose another war. The German Nationalists played the xenophobic card and appealed covertly—and in diverse newspapers overtly—to anti-Semitism and the need to bring about the Anschluß to Germany.

It is remarkable that the election platform of the first "German National Socialist Labor Party," which put up candidates in some electoral districts, was already complete and remained fundamentally unchanged in its basic messages throughout the 1920s and 1930s in spite of the party's change of leadership: "… democratic, libertarian, nationalistic and therefore strictly anti-Semitic in the sense of being opposed to rampant Jewish influence in all walks of economic, public and cultural life." "What distinguishes the party from the Social Democracy," the platform continues, "is its emphasis on the concept of the nation (*ihre streng völkische Gesinnung*), its rejection of the rule of any one party and of other forms of tyranny and of revolutionary movements and its endorsement in principle of private property […]." The element that was lacking to translate this into electoral success was an appropriate political context and the possibility of latching onto the rise of Hitler's NSDAP in Germany.

Even though the German Nationalists suffered heavy losses compared to its results in 1911, twenty-six of its candidates did get elected, and on 7/8 August 1920, they founded the Pan-German People's Party (*Groß-deutsche Volkspartei*), a relatively staid affair, in which the tone was set

by senior civil servants and teachers. The dominant themes apart from the stock-in-trade *Anschluß* to Germany were anticlericalism and anti-Semitism. However, as coalition partners of the Christian Socialists, they were part of a number of governments between 1921 and 1932.

Voter mobilization had brought the Social Democrats initial electoral success; however, mobilization resulted also, as the ensuing coalitions and election results were to show, in a long-term majority right of the center, which had profound consequences for Austria's political culture. The Social Democrats also got stuck at around 40 percent of the vote throughout the First and in the early Second Republic. It was not until the party benefited in 1971 from Bruno Kreisky's electoral platform and strategic skills that a temporary improvement materialized, which resulted in a narrow 50+ percent majority until 1983.

In 1919 however, the social, economic, and, above all, unresolved geopolitical problems in the phase before the conclusion of the peace treaty were so daunting that only a grand coalition—the only one in the First Republic—under a Social Democratic chancellor, Karl Renner, seemed to offer a way out.

Social Democratic electoral success remained focused on Vienna, which was both a strength and a source of controversy. In 1920, Vienna was set up as a political entity independent of Lower Austria; ever since, the Social Democrats have been in a majority in the capital, whereas the Christian Socialists tended to predominate in the other eight provinces.

The Erosion of the Political Culture of the First Republic: "Pillarization," the Militarization of Voters 1920-1932 until the Dissolution of Parliament, Government by Dictatorship, and the Anschluß to Hitler's Germany in 1938

Electoral Results in Comparison

One of the facts to emerge from a comparison of historical Austrian election results—in spite of problems with vote weighting and the exclusion of women and members of the armed forces from the 1907 and 1911 elections—is the trebling of the numbers of citizens entitled to vote in the period between 1907 (1.25 million excluding Burgenland) and 1930 (3.959 million, again excluding Burgenland).

This did not prevent the same political parties from being dominant both in 1907 and in 1930, particularly as regards the coalition potential right of the center. While the Social Democrats' share of the vote had

increased substantially by 1930 to 41.15 percent of the vote, which translated into seventy-two seats, compared to the Christian Socialists' 35.65 percent and sixty-six seats, it was the Christian Socialists who had a potential coalition partner close at hand in the form of a new electoral alliance between the Pan-German People's Party and the *Landbund*, which had received 11.52 percent of the vote and nineteen seats.

In 1927 a joint list of the right-of-center coalition consisting of Christian Socialists and Pan-Germans had received 49 percent of the vote. That was slightly less than in 1930, but if the votes of the *Landbund* (9 percent of the vote, nine seats) are added, it turns out that the center-right bloc was stronger in 1927 than in 1930. In contrast, the Social Democrats, at 42 percent of the vote and seventy-one seats in 1927, achieved roughly the same result in both elections.

A comparison of verified data of the general elections of 1920 and 1923 yields the following results relevant to the (male and female) electorate:[24]

1) The prevalence of women entitled to vote remained the same (52.8 percent), whereas the total number of eligible voters rose slightly from 3.75 million in 1920 to 3.849 million in 1923.
2) Voter mobilization measures boosted turnout from 80 percent in 1920 (including the by-elections in Carinthia and in Burgenland after the settlement of Yugoslav and Hungarian territorial claims) to 87 percent in 1923.
3) Men still had the edge over women in turnout; they were also the focus of strategic voter mobilization measures. Male voter turnout rose from 73 percent in 1920 to 90 percent in 1923; female turnout increased only slightly in the same period (from 83 percent to 85 percent). There were, however, substantial regional differences: in Vienna, 90 percent of eligible female voters cast their vote (compared to 92.56 percent of the men); in the Tyrol, 91.49 percent (92.85 percent), and in Vorarlberg as many as 93.8 percent (94.44 percent).

In 1920 and 1923, election advertising became much more professional. Text-only posters disappeared to make room for posters with color-printed visual elements. The central political codes and metaphors, which were designed to appeal to the voters' value and anxiety systems, remained basically the same. Yet they became much more focused, clearer, and emotionally charged in the pictorial language; they were, in fact, designed to serve as "meaning formulae" capable of triggering the desired voter behavior. An aggressive coding became a pervasive feature of election posters. The 1920 working-class giant of Mihály Birós,[25] a graphic artist who had fled to Vienna after the suppression of the Republic of People's Councils in Hungary, swept away "papists and capitalists and the military" wielding a huge broom or attacks the "unified front of capitalism" with his hammer.[26] In 1930, Victor Slama, a

graphic artist and organizer of political mass events,[27] designed another working-class giant along similar lines, a creature of light vengefully waiting in the dark of the night for *Hahnen-schwanzler*, members of the paramilitary *Heimwehr*.

Christian Socialist graphic artists in their turn depicted Social Democracy in the guise of a snake strangling the eagle, the Austrian national emblem, and urged German Christians to "save Austria."[28] Frequently, the myth of Karl Lueger, a popular Christian Socialist lord mayor of Vienna, was invoked, preferably hovering above the town hall in a cloud, to "save" Vienna, as in 1923.

Ernestine Bennerstorfer[29] has analyzed 500 election posters from the period between 1920 and 1930 and comes to the conclusion that "[a]ll posters are based on the simple recipe of polarization; they construct a stereotype of the political enemy. Each party envisaged the others in terms of the 'enemy' and made this their chief contribution to the political culture of the period between the two wars."[30]

Polarization, however, did nothing to alter the fact that until the rise of the NSDAP, the Social Democrats remained in a state of stagnation; they achieved no more than relative electoral successes and were unable to prevent center-right coalitions, mostly under the aegis of the Christian Socialists, from obtaining the required parliamentary and government majorities.

At the same time, pillarization, in the sense of the formation of political camps, received powerful boosts. This is evidenced, for example, by "Red Vienna's" model attempt to create a new culture embracing all aspects of life, ranging from kindergarten and novel, non-religious forms of interment to comprehensive new educational policies and by the fact that in Vienna, too, the universities were dominated by professors with pan-German and conservative leanings and that anti-Semitism was getting more and more virulent and aggressive.

Way back in the 1860s, the first Workers' Educational Associations were established as well as Workers' Choral Societies; around 1900, the latter were given an organizational framework in the *Reichsverband der Arbeitergesangsvereine Österreichs*. In November 1919, the Social Democratic party created its own *Kunststelle* to coordinate its cultural activities; its first leader was David Josef Bach, the cultural editor of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*. The realization of the increasing importance of sports as a social phenomenon had already led to the foundation of the *Allgemeiner Turnverein in Wien* before the war. In 1919, centralization spread to this area as well in the form of the

Verband der Arbeiter- und Soldatensportvereinigungen (VAS), which was relaunched in 1924 as *Arbeiterbund für Sport und Körperkultur in Österreich* (ASKÖ).

The organization of sports provides an accurate reflection of pillarization in Austria, whose beginnings date back to the closing phase of the monarchy. The *Turnerbewegung*, a broad movement aimed at popularizing exercise to promote physical and mental well-being, with its strong German nationalistic component, had already introduced the so-called *Arierparagraph*, which aimed at excluding Jews from membership, prior to 1900. One of the consequences was the foundation in 1897 of the *Erster Wiener jüdischer Turnverein*, which was followed by the *Turnverein Zion* in Graz.[31] As the *Deutscher Turnerbund*, in addition to pursuing anti-Semitic, anticlerical, anti-Socialist, and antidemocratic goals, was also in favor of "Anschluß" to Germany, the Christian Socialists founded their own sports organization, the *Christlich Deutsche Turnerschaft Österreichs*.

Rudolf Müllner's[32] graph below reflects the athletic aspect of the pillarization that has been repeatedly mentioned; the Jewish associations, however, are missing:

The totality of organization of all areas of life shaped the outlook of voters between the two wars. Yet it must be pointed out that the trend towards social segmentation with its political consequences dates back to the times of the Monarchy, in particular to the phase of "internationalization" and the global economic crisis in the nineteenth century.

Alpinism too had already been subject to differentiation along ideological lines prior to 1914 and to subsequent massive politicization.[33] The Social Democrats' foundation of the *Naturfreunde* dates back as far as 1895.

Pillarization, which was only briefly checked by a grand coalition in 1918/1919-1920, reached its high-water mark in the foundation of paramilitary organizations. In the time immediately following the proclamation of the republic in 1918, small militias and loose groups of demobilized soldiers played an important direct and indirect role. The *Volkswehr* under Social Democratic leadership had 15,000 men under arms, and in the provinces, home guards and columns of local self-defense irregulars were active, for instance, in Southern Carinthia, where they repelled the territorial claims of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

The *Heimwehren*, a rightist conservative militia, were particularly in evidence in the provinces, for example, in the Tyrol and in Styria.

Table 1
Sports and Gymnastics Associations (*Turnorganisationen*)
in Austria's First Republic

Sports and Gymnastics Associations	Membership	Ideology
Deutscher Turnerbund (1919) DTB	In 1932, approx. 115,000 members, of whom 45,000 were children or adolescents	• German Nationalistic • anti-Marxist • anti-Semitic • anticlerical
Christlich Deutsche Turnerschaft (CDTÖ)	In 1930, approx. 40,000 members 1937 c. 58,000	• German-Christian • anti-Marxist • anti-Semitic • antidemocratic • authoritarian Ständestaat
Arbeitersport (ASKÖ)	In 1932, approx. 240,200 members	• social political • mass sports • opposed to competitive sports
Österreichischer Haupverband für Körpersport (ÖHK)	Approx. 80,000 members	• apolitical • in favor of competitive sports • individual sports

Source: Müllner, "Sportgeschichte Österreich 1918-1938," 36.

Between 1924 and 1926 in a period of relative economic stability, these militias kept a low profile. Yet from 1927 onward, militant anti-parliamentarian activities were on the rise again owing to socioeconomic crises. A clash between members of the rightist Association of Front-Line Fighters and members of the *Republikanischer Schutzbund in Schattendorf* left two dead, a man and a child, as in 1918. When the trial of the men who had fired the fatal shots ended, in a clear miscarriage of justice, with an acquittal, the Palace of Justice was stormed and set on fire by an angry crowd. Austria was the brink of civil war.

In 1923, the Social Democrats had combined their former factory and workers' brigades and the association of their party stewards to form the *Republikanischer Schutzbund* as a counterweight to the *Heimwehr* and the rightist Federal Army.

Gerhard Botz[34] has analyzed the profiles of the 305 men and the one woman involved in politically motivated violent crimes between 1923

and 1933. His findings include that 25 percent of the perpetrators were between sixteen and nineteen years of age (compared to 21 percent of the victims and 42 percent of the witnesses in this age category). Most of the perpetrators (63 percent) were between twenty and twenty-nine years old; there were hardly any in the age group of forty years of age or older, where this kind of radicalization was negligible.

There is a significant correlation between violence and high rates of unemployment, as has been empirically documented by new regional studies.[35] The increasing militarization and radicalization of political conflict, of which the fire at the Palace of Justice in 1927 is the most notorious example, seemed inevitable against the backdrop of perpetual social and economic crises. The authoritarian policies of Engelbert Dollfuss, the Christian Socialist federal chancellor who suspended parliament after a standing orders crisis on 4 March 1933, did not make it easier for the model of the small state as a viable political entity to be endorsed by a broad majority.

Finally, it was these authoritarian policies that led to civil war in February 1934 and to the *Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei* (SDAP) being banned. The attempt to hold National Socialism, in power in Germany since 1933, at bay through the establishment of an authoritarian government failed. The terror attacks of the Nazis continued, and Dollfuss was murdered in July 1934 during an abortive Nazi putsch. His successor, Kurt Schuschnigg, opted for an agreement with Hitler's Germany (the July Agreement of 1936) and a continuation of authoritarian government. The cautious opening towards the banned "left" and the trade unions at the end of 1937 came too late and was no more successful than the referendum called for 9 March (but subsequently banned by Hitler): "For Austria, free and German, independent and just, Christian and united!" When the German *Wehrmacht* marched into Austria on 12 March 1938, the Austrians offered no resistance. In the context of the time, this marked the end of the idea of Austria surviving as a small, independent political entity. Approximately 250,000 people welcomed Hitler as the "liberator", while at the same time the first series of arrests were taking place that targeted 50,000 Austrian men and women, political opponents and Jews. This also served to stake out the arena in which Hitler's referendum about the *Anschluß* was going to take place on 10 April 1938, which ended with almost unanimous approval (99.6 percent), the result of opportunism, ideological conviction, the exertion of massive pressure, perfect propaganda, and occasional vote rigging.

The NSDAP in Austria and its Attraction for Voters

Because the NSDAP was not successful as a party in the parliamentary elections of 1930—the political and, later on, also the personal proximity to the *Heimwehr*, which obtained 6.26 percent of the votes and eight seats, are disregarded in the present context—there are no data on which to base a comparison on parliamentary elections level in Austria. It is, however, possible to discern a clear trend on the basis of the provincial elections in the most populous provinces (Vienna and Lower Austria) as well as in Salzburg (24 April 1932) and Vorarlberg (6 November 1932) and of the local council elections in Carinthia on the same day.

At the Vienna provincial elections (*Landtagswahlen*), the National Socialists quintupled their share of the votes[36] (336,000 compared to 66,000 in the general elections of 1930), and the Social Democrats lost marginally (984,000 compared to 1,032,000 in 1930). The Christian Socialists lost the same number of votes (640,000 compared to 695,000 in 1930); the Pan-Germans, the *Landbund* and the *Heimatblock*, lost massively to the NSDAP (53,000 compared to 304,000).

In a pioneering move in Austria, Gerhard Botz has sketched an outline of the social structure of the NSDAP membership based on the analysis of random samples drawn from the party member files at the Berlin Document Center, which are stored today at the Bundesarchiv Berlin[37]:

> The Austrian NSDAP was, from the moment it achieved its massive breakthrough, successful—if erratically—as a protest reservoir, in which, while it attracted people from all social classes, workers and farmers were underrepresented, whereas white-collar employees and civil servants were heavily, and the self-employed somewhat overrepresented; it was an "asymmetrical people's party." Compared to other parties, it was one with a disproportionate appeal to male voters with relatively youthful activists. The generation of those born between 1894 and 1913 was typically particularly prominent. It received a special boost since the 30s from high unemployment and the permanent socio-economic crises in industrial areas as well as in rural ones. It benefited increasingly from the rise of the NSDAP under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, an Austrian, in the Weimar Republic. Even though the unemployed tended either towards apathy or spontaneous violence, no trend is discernible for that group to attach itself preferably to the NSDAP. However, groups potentially threatened by unemployment or those whose social standing had been eroded by modernization or the members of former elites were ideal fodder for the NSDAP.

The latent potential of sympathy for the NSDAP would presumably be seen to have been much bigger also among the working classes from 1933 onward, if those applications for party membership that were put on hold because no more members were accepted for the time being were fed into a social structure analysis. A total of 536,660 Austrian men and women were registered as former NSDAP members in 1946. Having been

confiscated by U.S. troops, the applications for membership are today stored in the Austrian State Archive and—in the form of microfiches—in the U.S. National Archives; they would yield a somewhat different social profile, as random samples have shown.

A Democratic Relaunch in 1945 under Allied Supervision[38]

It was an issue of overriding importance for the Allies, who had liberated Austria in 1945, and for the political elites of the Second Republic how loyal to the Second Republic the former National Socialists were going to prove as voters. Another issue unique to Austria was the integration into a parliamentary system of the elites and functionaries of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg dictatorship of the years 1933/34-38. A number of Allied experts pointed out that Austrian voters had had little experience with a live democracy and that the monarchy had been an authoritarian system. Whatever traces of democratic attitudes had developed were sure to have been swept away by National Socialism. In 1945 the Allies noted with surprise how quickly the reconstitution of state authority and the organization of elections were implemented by Karl Renner's provisional government, a government moreover that had been installed freehandedly by the Soviet Union without the consent of the Western Allies. For the United States it was apparently unthinkable in their forward planning during the final stages of the war that an Austrian government could be functional without a solid military administration, possibly under the umbrella of the United Nations, to prop it up. In mid-1944, the planners at the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) came forward with the pessimistic conclusion that an independent Austria was going to lack ingredients essential for the survival as a state or as a nation: there was no army, no police force, no independent economy; the population was heterogeneous also owing to the presence of a large number of people of German origin (*Reichsdeutsche*), and there was still no sense of national identity.

The confrontation with their authoritarian *Ständestaat* past, which U.S. planners expected the Austrians to engage in as part of the reconstruction effort, was avoided after 1945 and remained subordinated to the state doctrine of pooling the best efforts of all sides to establish a sovereign state and to bring about the withdrawal of the four allies (the United States, the USSR, Great Britain, and France). The suffering caused by National Socialism was used to justify this course and the "spirit of the camp street" was invoked again and again. This was understood as

referring to the traumatic times that functionaries of the ÖVP and SPÖ had spent together in Nazi concentration camps, the implication being that shared suffering could serve as a basis on which to overcome the massive differences of the past. There had, in fact, been isolated contacts between representatives of different parties in concentration camps. However, the majority of the SPÖ elite of 1945 (Karl Renner, Adolf Schärf, Oskar Helmer) had not been incarcerated in concentration camps, and a number of ÖVP politicians (such as Leopold Figl, Felix Hurdes, Heinrich Gleissner, and Lois Weinberger) who had been subjected to this ordeal used this fact in order to justify indirectly why they had no wish to address themselves now to the topic of the 1933/1934-1938 era. The "camp street" myth was meant to draw a line under the past in the same way in which the mythological construct of the "victim" doctrine was meant to reduce Austrian collaboration with the Nazi extermination and conquest machinery to a few guilty individuals.

In spite of a clear absolute majority of the ÖVP, Leopold Figl (ÖVP) formed a coalition with the SPÖ, included one KPÖ minister, and announced his cabinet on 8 December 1945. The challenges posed by the task of reconstruction, the Allied administration, and the onset of the Cold War made cooperation possible in spite of the ideological differences and conflicts. The electoral success of the ÖVP was partly due to a reorganization of the party system along the lines of its existence until 1933. In a move that reflected the Nazi terror and extermination regime and the involvement of many supporters and functionaries of these parties in Nazi crimes, the pan-Germans and the NSDAP were banned, and the *Landbund* was swallowed by the ÖVP.

It is remarkable that in 1945, in spite of dictatorship, National Socialism, World War II and the Holocaust, Austrian voters continued to tend towards the center right. The rejection of the Communists, who received a meager 5.41 percent of the vote, was obvious. At the same time, the Social Democrats, who had been picked to win the elections, were also considered to be too radical and got only 44.6 percent of the votes cast; even as the votes were being counted, many old hands still took a Social Democratic victory for granted. Yet a brief glance at historical precedent would have suggested a different outcome. The tendency that had been evident in the First Republic was still at work: women tended not to vote for either the SPÖ or the KPÖ; this was in itself enough to significantly affect the outcome in elections that were dominated by the female vote—3.5 million were eligible overall, of whom an extraordinary 63 percent were women because former members of the NSDAP were