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Oliver Gruber

More than Just the Economy, Stupid!

Austria's Social Democrats and Their Ambivalent Relationship to Migration

1. Introduction

Austrian chancellor Werner Faymann's resignation in May 2016 was a political first. Never before had domestic immigration and asylum policy contributed substantially to the fall of a chancellor and leader of the Social Democratic Party. In his resignation speech Faymann referred explicitly to the refugee crisis and his asylum policy decisions as contributory factors:

Last year Austria gave over 90,000 people the right of asylum. At the beginning of the year it was clear that the EU had no solution. It would have been irresponsible not to have taken measures of our own. Not because they are better, nor because we were that way inclined, but simply because reality requires that responsible people assume that responsibility. There was a lot of resistance to this, not least in my own party ... The question is, in this era of great challenges, does one have people's full backing, does one have strong support in the party? I have to answer »no«. This strong support has ceased to exist.¹

This episode shows the extent to which migration, asylum and integration have become defining challenges for Austrian social democrats. Although, of course, these issues involve a number of independent policy areas and, while closely connected, require their own particular policy measures, for simplicity's sake in the present chapter we shall refer to all of them under the single term »migration«. These issues are not only looming ever larger in party competition for an increasingly volatile electorate, but are also contributing to the emergence of an ever more intractable fault-line within the party, culminating in the resignation of their party leader and chancellor.

Based on this development we shall analyse the Austrian Social Democratic Party's (SPÖ) ambivalent dealings with the issues pertaining to migration. First, we shall outline the basic conditions with regard to immigration, public opinion and the party system, which shape party competition for the political heights with regard to migration. After that we shall take a brief look at the key stages in the SPÖ's handling of the migration issue, as well as the related party competition strategies. Finally, this will form the basis for an analysis of the policy problems hitherto and the potential of future social democratic policies in this central policy area.

2. Framework of the Migration Policy Debate in Austria

Austria as a Reluctant Country of Immigration

After Austria, in the form of the Habsburg Monarchy, had for centuries been a multi-ethnic empire, with Vienna as its centre, its fall and the proclamation of the First Republic, »German Austria« were accompanied by a striving for a national identity that initially was strongly oriented towards Germany and ethno-culturally and linguistically defined.² Even though after 1945 this orientation gave way to a more specifically Austrian interpretation of nationhood,³ it continued to lack a multi-cultural character or even a self-conception as a country of immigration. Initially, the recruitment of guest workers in the 1960s and 1970s and its contribution to rising immigration did little to change this. After levelling off slightly up to the end of the 1980s, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Balkan wars and the favourable economic situation led to a new, this time more significant rise in immigration, which resulted between 1989 and 1994 alone in a doubling of the proportion of foreign citizens (from 4.2 to 8.4 per cent). This was accompanied by a change in the self-perception of the political elites and intensified political contestation concerning the legal regulation of migration.

Critical Overhang of Public Opinion and Debate

In Austrian politics, since the emergency of the migration topic, anti-immigrant parties have always enjoyed a strategic advantage over pro-migration parties⁴: It is not just that the Austrian population is among the most critical of migrants by European comparison, as, for example, the European Values Study has repeatedly confirmed: to date, Austria's antipathy index values⁵ have been above the European average in every survey (1990: .142 to .129; 1999: .119 to .112; 2008: .232 to .120).⁶ This pattern in public opinion is amplified by a media debate in which the reporting of the

tabloid press (*Kronen Zeitung*: 31 per cent, *Heute*: 13 per cent, *Österreich*: 9 per cent), with its national penetration, ranges from critical to outright hostile with regard to »foreigners«, while more nuanced reporting is to be found rather in the lower-penetration quality media (*Der Standard*: 5 per cent, *Die Presse*: 4 per cent, *Salzburger Nachrichten*: 3 per cent), as well as on public television (ORF).⁷⁸

Transformation of the Party System

Also worth noting, from a party political perspective, is the fact that along with changing nature of migration, the party system was transformed from a »limping« three-party system into a moderate pluralism, with five parliamentary parties. This has had significant consequences for how the migration issue is tackled. As late as the 1980s Austria's refusal to regard itself as a country of immigration had been accompanied by a low profile for the migration issue in parliament, which at that time was regulated much more in terms of labour market policy within the remit of the social partners.⁹ With the entry into parliament of the left-wing/libertarian Green Party and the right-wing populist swivel of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) under Jörg Haider's leadership, from the mid-1980s for the first time two parliamentary parties established topical hegemony on the migration issue, followed by the liberal FPÖ offshoot the »Liberal Forum« (LIF) in the 1990s and the second - right-wing populist - FPÖ offshoot »Alliance for the Future of Austria« (BZÖ) in the 2000s.

As a result of these developments the migration issue became far more politicised, as becomes clear, for example, from analysing the election programmes of Austria's parliamentary parties.¹⁰ While the FPÖ, the Greens and, later, the BZÖ had the highest proportion of statements on migration issues and ethnic diversity in their manifestos (in some election campaigns they took up as much as a quarter of the text) the two mass parties that governed Austria in a Grand Coalition until 1999, the SPÖ and the ÖVP, were lukewarm about an issue that wasn't much of a vote-winner for them. Given the rising immigration in the 1990s and constant electoral losses in favour of these new niche parties, however, they too were forced to address the issue more actively. In consequence, they took up migration as an election issue with much more vigour and since then it has been a fixture in party political contestation in Austria (for example, the average proportion of National Council election programmes taken up with the issue of migration and ethnic diversity has gradually increased, from 1.6 per cent in the 1980s to around 8 per cent in the 1990s and as much as 12 per cent in the 2000s).

Competitive Conditions Facing the Two Mass Parties

The changes in strategy adopted by the SPÖ and the ÖVP with regard to migration were implemented with an eye towards various party-political interests, ideological preferences, vote maximisation and participation in the government.¹¹ As regards vote maximisation the two parties were beset primarily by voters switching to the right-wing populist FPÖ, albeit not simultaneously. In the 1980s the ÖVP registered more substantial losses to the benefit of Haider- FPÖ, while in the 1990s it was the turn of the SPÖ,¹² although in different segments of the electorate. While the ÖVP lost out to the FPÖ primarily among salaried employees, the self-employed and freelancers, the Social Democrats were deserted in particular by blue-collar workers, disgruntled by the effects of globalisation. The two mass parties were naturally keen to halt this voter exodus.¹³

Furthermore, with regard to participation in government, coalition-forming had become more important due to the wider options now available beyond the Grand Coalition. In fact, this affected the ÖVP more than it did the SPÖ, because there has yet to be a left of centre coalition majority in the Second Republic (only during the one-party SPÖ government under Bruno Kreisky between 1971 and 1983 did the right of centre parties fail to attain a parliamentary majority). The increased importance of coalition issues was largely due to the electoral strength of the right-wing populist camp, which since 2005 has been represented in parliament by two parties, namely the FPÖ off-shoot »Alliance for the Future of Austria« (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, BZÖ) under the leadership of Jörg Haider, and, until recently, the »Team Stronach«, which between 2013 and 2017 had largely taken the place - in terms of both personnel and ideology - of the BZÖ. As a consequence, since 1986 no majority has been attainable without the participation of the right-wing populist camp for a coalition government outside the Grand Coalition.¹⁴ This has long been used to justify the assertion that »there is no alternative« to it.¹⁵ The additional strategic coalition option with the extreme right was more viable to the ÖVP, however, as ideological neighbours on the centre-right and finally came into being from 2000 to 2006 in the ÖVP/FPÖ government coalition. Although after this interval the Grand Coalition made a comeback in 2006 the marriage of convenience between the SPÖ and the ÖVP - not least because of the refugee policy crisis - again appears to have reached its limits.

3. The Austrian Social Democrats and the Migration Issue: Three Decades on Fast Forward

Dwindling popularity among voters, limited coalition prospects, growing pressure from the right and increasing immigration and social diversity have compelled the SPÖ to attempt a political balancing act since the 1980s, giving rise to different answers at different stages.

The Origin of the Social Democrats' Balancing Act

The year 1986 represented a turning point for Austria, marked in the spring by the Kurt Waldheim affair and his election as president, despite his Nazi past, and in the autumn by Jörg Haider becoming leader of the FPÖ. The new Social Democratic chancellor Franz Vranitzky reacted to the changed situation by dissolving the SPÖ/FPÖ government coalition and calling new elections. Furthermore, within the party he implemented a *cordon sanitaire* (the so-called »Vranitzky doctrine«), according to which the Social Democrats should no longer seek official cooperation with the Haider FPÖ. Although this doctrine long remained the official party line with regard to the FPÖ and thus indirectly shaped basic SPÖ migration policy, incrementally it developed into a new internal party cleavage, in a party that, historically, had hardly been short of internal conflict. While the Vranitzky wing, broad swathes of the federal SPÖ and the party's powerful Viennese regional faction rejected a rapprochement with the FPÖ and its »*Ausländerpolitik*« as contrary to the spirit of social democracy, other regional factions of the SPÖ - especially in Carinthia - as well as trade union representatives not only considered this categorical rejection to be a strategic mistake, but also welcomed a more restrictive immigration policy.

In particular in trade union circles protectionist attitudes towards labour migration were hardly unprecedented; the so-called »primacy of natives« (*Inländerprimat*) enshrined in the 1925 Protection of Native Workers Act (*Inländerarbeiterschutzgesetz*) continued even during the »*Gastarbeiter*« period and into the new millennium and was removed from the Employment of Foreign Nationals Act only in 2011.¹⁶ David Goodhart (2011) has described this conflict, which is increasingly characteristic of Western party systems and poses a particular problem for social democrats, as a struggle between »liberals« and »communitarians«: on one hand, there is an optimism about globalisation on the part of a highly educated middle class that is more open with regard to other cultures and committed to post-materialist values, and on the other there is a pessimism about globalisation among the less educated middle and working

class who are critical of migration and focused on securing the borders and material prosperity.¹⁷

This line of conflict was most clearly personified during the 1990s by the alternating restrictive and liberal proponents of the SPÖ that were holding the interior minister's post, which is responsible for migration issues. In light of the dramatically increasing immigration the appointment of Franz Löschnak in 1989 was still considered a step in the direction of a stricter approach - including fundamental reform of Austrian law on foreign nationals with the introduction of direct immigration controls by means of quotas, its detachment from the employment of foreigners, obstacles to family reunion and a new asylum law. Six years later, his replacement by the »textbook leftist« Caspar Einem was taken as a sign of accommodation on the part of the SPÖ - including a liberal softening of the law on foreigners in the form of security of residence for long-term immigrants and a better deal for non-EU citizens with regard to access to unemployment assistance - and the first significant deviation from the traditional social-policy primacy afforded to natives.¹⁸ This thaw was short-lived, however. As early as 1997, with the cabinet reshuffle of new SPÖ party leader and chancellor Viktor Klima, the succession of former state secretary Karl Schlögl brought one of the most prominent advocates of FPÖ rapprochement and a restrictive migration policy back to the helm of the Ministry of the Interior. With good reason Einem and Schlögl were, later on, to become the main rivals for party leadership, as the SPÖ had to return to opposition in 2000, after 30 years in the chancellery. Quite indicatively for the state of the party's dispute on this matter, however, Alfred Gusenbauer emerged as the winner from this internal dissension, the compromise candidate around whom both wings of the party were able to rally.¹⁹

Old Worries and Changing Roles in the New Millennium

During the early years of opposition under the first cabinet of the new ÖVP chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel the SPÖ - having been liberated from governmental responsibility and responsibility for internal affairs, but also because of the now bipolar competition structure between »left-wing« opposition and »right-wing« government - distanced itself even more clearly from the restrictive government policy (for example, in the course of the amendment of the law on foreign nationals 2002 with its introduction of an integration agreement and a rotation model for seasonal workers) and also took more liberal positions in its manifesto in the elections to the National Council in 2002.²⁰ Under the slogan »As much immigration as nec-

essary, as much integration as possible«, controlled immigration was propagated, oriented towards the needs of the labour market. At the same time, however, a »right to integration« was conferred on immigrants: that meant bestowal of full rights as quickly as possible, for example, with regard to access to social benefits, family reunification or municipal voting rights. Even the explicit rejection of cooperation with the FPÖ was retained in the party manifesto. However, the longer the SPÖ remained in opposition the more this immigration policy stance weakened again. This was discernible, for example, in the increasingly more relaxed relationship with the FPÖ under Gusenbauer,²¹ but also in the support given, after intensive internal debate, to the legislative package on foreign nationals of 2005. The latter marked the most comprehensive reform in this regard since 1945 with recodifications and amendments of all related legislative texts occasioned by the implementation of the European *acquis*, although this was distinguished by the most meagre implementation possible of EU directives (in particular with regard to family reunification and right of establishment).²² The SPÖ's election manifesto of 2006 was also characterised once more by a more centrist position, which focused more on obligations concerning integration than in 2002 and particularly emphasised the labour market protection periods to be applied to the new EU member states. Observers interpreted these steps as leading up to resumption of a grand coalition.²³

Its return was owed to the equally limited options of the SPÖ and the ÖVP: the SPÖ still lacked a majority of seats left of centre, while the ÖVP had lost its right of centre majority due to the implacable split in the right-wing populist camp (BZÖ versus FPÖ). This left a marriage of convenience in which the SPÖ, despite its election victory, ceded the key ministries of finance, internal affairs and foreign affairs to the ÖVP. This also resulted in a new balance of power within the grand coalition concerning migration policy, which survives today. Henceforth an ÖVP-led ministry of internal affairs set the pace on migration issues, while the SPÖ under Alfred Gusenbauer and his successor Werner Faymann found itself increasingly forced to play second fiddle on migration policy. The separation of the integration agenda from that of migration and asylum policy by the establishment of a State Secretariat for Integration (SSI) in 2011 and a Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs in 2013 - both headed by ÖVP young hopeful Sebastian Kurz - reinforced this role even further. Although the SPÖ had intended to develop its own integration approach by 2010 within the framework of its manifesto debate, they had still not managed it by the time the SSI was set up.²⁴ And although occasionally - such

as in the 2006 election manifesto - ideas of their own for a state secretariat of integration (for example, in the SPÖ-led Chancellery) were expressed,²⁵ they never managed to hold their ground as regards their coalition partner. Instead the ÖVP, with the institutional steps we have described, increasingly owned the issue, while the SPÖ slowly but surely ceded migration-policy hegemony.²⁶

Paying the Political Price

The SPÖ's passivity on the issue of migration and integration policy was not without consequences, for either the party or the chancellor himself. The National Council elections of 2013 had already highlighted the major loss of trust in the grand coalition, when both parties registered their worst ever results (SPÖ: 27 per cent, ÖVP: 24 per cent). Nevertheless the two election losers decided, in the face of the poor economic situation and record unemployment, to form the »smallest grand coalition« in the Second Republic, which found itself in an even graver plight as a result of the refugee movement of 2015. Especially for the SPÖ the party's migration-policy dilemma manifested itself dramatically in the course of only a few months: in September 2015, at the peak of the refugee movements, and in a situation of historic proportions Chancellor Faymann, in agreement with his German counterpart Angela Merkel, guaranteed safe passage through Austria, sharply condemned Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán's treatment of refugees and declared his sympathy with active civil society and its culture of welcome. This period of explicit solidarity and the emphasis on a humane solution, in the sense of the best possible reception of the refugees, soon gave way to political disillusionment. Only a few months later the SPÖ leadership had given in to the pressure of the continuing refugee movement, to its coalition partner and to its own restrictive wing. It agreed to a reinforcement of the southern Schengen border, a time limitation on the right to asylum, the closure of the Balkan route and, finally, a statutory emergency regulation option, including a ceiling on refugees.²⁷

Deprived of the option to appoint a more restrictive proponent to post of the minister of the interior - given ÖVP responsibility for this department -, symbolic personnel policy now shifted to the SPÖ-led defence ministry. With the appointment of Hans-Peter Doskozil in December 2015 not only was a migration policy hardliner endorsed for a defence ministry that was now vital for refugee policy concerns, but also strengthened exactly the very regional faction that only a few months previously had breached the Vranitzky doctrine and entered into a coalition with the FPÖ

in Burgenland (the most easterly federal state in Austria). Already back then the Social Democratic debate on how to deal with right-wing populists was revived and the party leader was put on notice. His asylum policy U-turn, however, brought the conflict to a head and finally forced him to resign - with the words cited above regretting the loss of support - in May 2016 as a result of disastrous opinion poll results. Not without reason his successor Christian Kern strengthened an internal »values commission«, tasked with thoroughly thinking through the conditions for cooperation with the FPÖ, while continuing to adhere to fundamental social democratic principles. However, even Kern himself, refrained from altering the asylum policy decisions of his predecessor.

4. The Core of the Social Democratic Dilemma:

Problems and Potential

Austria's Social Democrats, like many of their European sister parties, face a migration-policy dilemma. The issue is a key component of a *cultural conflict axis* (or cleavage) that has become characteristic of Western European party systems,²⁸ along which the SPÖ has come to occupy a strategically unfavourable position. It neither has a traditional, fixed ideological position on this issue, unlike its rivals on the ideological margins of this axis, nor are its own voters and party officials united on this question. Confronted with a climate of opinion that is overwhelmingly hostile to immigration and a voter structure that hinders left of centre majorities, the SPÖ's room to manoeuvre is narrowed even further. While the right of centre conservative rivals are able more easily to shift their position towards their ideological neighbours on the radical right (such as the FPÖ in Austria),²⁹ the anti-fascist roots of social democrats and their commitment to a society based on solidarity mean that such a step cannot be taken without major internal conflicts. This predicament is nothing new, of course, but it has intensified with the increased importance of the axis of *cultural conflict* because the conflict between liberalism and communitarianism described by Goodhart (2011) can no longer be ignored.

Developments along the *economic left/right fault-line*, which was formerly so central to western European party systems, have also exacerbated the SPÖ's plight because social democracy has come into disrepute here, too. In the face of the ongoing economic crises, rising unemployment as well as precarious employment conditions and standards of living, an increasing proportion of the Social Democrats' former core constituency has come to hold them responsible for leaving them in the lurch (in particular when they were still in government). Although in the 1990s the

Social Democrats were still the driving force in numerous European governments,³⁰ recent years have left many observers with the impression that even during the immense financial and economic crisis they were unable successfully to counteract the financial and economic policy hegemony of conservatives. And while Europe's right-wing populists are in the process of establishing a new »nationalist international« (from western Europe to Russia and now also to the United States) by appealing to »the people« and »the nation«, Europe's Social Democrats, once a mouthpiece for an exploited working class in the global struggle to improve their living standards and working conditions, have got tangled up in a protectionist isolationism, thereby contributing indirectly to the maintenance of inequality catalysed by a neoliberal financial and economic policy. The Social Democrats' role is increasingly being reduced to that of preserving the system, attempting to mitigate the harshest features of this economic regime, yet unable to reform its dysfunctions sustainably (worth remembering, that in the post-war decades there was considerably more political consensus on this issue).

Given the intricacy of this dilemma the question arises: what alternatives are open to (Austrian) Social Democrats in dealing with the issue of migration? In what follows we present a number of suggestions, based on four key conclusions.

Winning Back the Ideological High Ground

Paradoxically, the first answer to the migration-policy dilemma has to be sought, initially, in a different place. For Social Democrats it is vital to win back the ground lost along the economic fault-line. As long as Social Democrats can offer no prospect of substantial improvement with regard to working conditions and living standards to its own traditional core electorate - in particular the increasing number of »atypical workers (in other words, part-time workers, discontinuous and/or precarious employees with changing working hours and/or income regulations, quasi freelancers and the bogus self-employed), who constitute a substantial proportion of a new generation of employees - then they will continue to lose floating voters who are no longer socialised within the framework of the traditional political camps.

It will be possible to reverse the trend, however, only in terms of the Social Democrats' key competences. This means that they need to nail their colours to the mast of equal opportunities in the labour market, education, taxation, etc., areas in which the achievements of the post-war period are crumbling. But this also entails adjusting focus concerning

what first and foremost are material conflicts and only secondarily cultural issues.³¹ This would also be a weapon against the economic policy approaches of their right-wing rivals, which serve only to exacerbate social inequality and precarious employment conditions rather than to tackle them. Individualisation, an emphasis on competition and privatisation make it more difficult for members of the new precariat to recognize they're shared dilemma and instead open the door to nationalist or even authoritarian tendencies. Furthermore, even 25 years after Francis Fukuyama (1989) proclaimed the »end of history« Social Democrats are still unable to provide comprehensive proposals for constraining the effects of the free-for-all in the globalised market economy and therefore have to contest their right to represent so-called »ordinary decent people« with right-wing populists across the spectrum. This requires a revival of European or international cooperation between social democratic parties to develop a project on progress, based on solidarity, especially in the current context of the EU's multi-level governance system and a geopolitical constellation in which a fragmented Europe increasingly risks losing out. Such a project necessarily cannot hope to bear fruit right away, but would have to be a long-term effort to find ways in which social democratic principles can be implemented under conditions of globalised markets and mobility, as well as a transformation of the world of work. Should Social Democrats not be able to bring these essential issues back to stage-centre and re-establish themselves as a leading voice on their own ground then it hardly matters what strategies they are able to come up with to tackle the cultural fault-lines anyway.

Rationalising the Political Culture

Another vital task is to counteract the increased hysteria and fake news on this issue stirred up by the gutter press, poorly moderated online platforms and social media filter bubbles,³² and indeed not only from a social democratic standpoint, but also inspired by a fundamentally »anti-populist« attitude on the part of all political forces with an interest in substantive debate. On one hand, problematic findings on migration policy cannot and should not be denied, yet on the other hand, particular solutions should not be categorically rejected; rather the aim should be to get back to a rational debate in contrast to a political culture founded on polarisation and emotionalisation. This, indeed, is the root of the recent successes of right-wing populists: namely, whipping up people's multifarious concerns, none of which, taken in themselves, are purely imaginary, but all of which are greatly exaggerated. Right-wing populism is hardly new in this,

and not merely a response to the current malaise, but the political expression of the »return of a way of thinking and speaking that appears to be a constant part of modern European culture«. ³³ Many of its features are all too familiar to us from the inter-war period: anger towards »the powers that be« as an allegedly privileged elite (as the FPÖ puts it, the »*Haute volée*«) that pursues only its own interests; a loss of trust in political institutions, which are presented as weak and corrupt, incapable of solving today's problems; the perception of the state as an alien power that squeezes some in order to transfer resources disproportionately to others. If moderate political forces in a society do not do enough to counteract this anger perception they surrender that terrain on which they enjoy an edge (in terms of political seriousness) over the populists

Clarity and Prominence in Positioning

The third answer concerns the need to establish a clear stance on migration. The ambivalent policy of »muddling through« ³⁴ on migration issues has to be replaced by a clear and proactive position. The main emphasis here is on clarity, consistency and profile, and only in the second place on content. The split in the SPÖ on this issue contributes to disillusion on both wings of the party and among groups sympathetic to it, who at the same time feel left in the lurch. While the more restrictive faction complains that the party currently is paying for having been too permissive previously on migration and integration issues, left-wing criticizes that its own - albeit strongly supported by civil society - integration efforts are being constantly undermined and thwarted by restrictive government policy. The minimum requirement of a Social Democratic migration policy therefore must be to develop a sustainable position that makes it possible to explain to the party's own members and voters in a convincing manner what are the unalterable social democratic principles regarding immigration and integration. Although this basic consensus is still very narrow, it is urgently required for both the party's internal cohesion and its image among the electorate. This also applies to a constant and prominent message on this issue, for which communication planners today have a whole new arsenal of opportunities to address target groups individually and directly.

Creating a Unique Selling Point with Regard to Migration Policy

Finally, when it comes to contents, it is crucial to avoid leaning too far towards right-wing populist positions. While this is already a risky strategy for right of centre conservative parties, whose success depends very much

on national political contexts; ³⁵ it applies even more to social democrats. On one hand, taking a more restrictive approach would relegate the party to the role of monkey to the FPÖ's organ grinder, which can always go one better in this regard. On the other hand, given the position adopted by the ÖVP on this matter there is scarcely any room for another party in the restrictive camp. Finally, if one considers the potential of such a policy for exacerbating internal party divisions the SPÖ would risk losing more than it could gain.

Instead, it would be advisable first of all to digest a bitter insight: for the time being, a fair proportion of the voters who have jumped ship to the FPÖ will not be won back by social democratic measures of whatever kind, until the Freedom Party camp weakens itself due to poor government performance or internal conflicts (as happened on both occasions it formed part of the government, in 1986 and 2002) - and even in that case the ÖVP has tended to benefit rather than the SPÖ, in terms of votes. ³⁶ The 1.5 million non-voters who today make up the largest electoral group would seem to have more potential, but they are unlikely to be won over to the Social Democrats if the latter pivoted towards a restrictive migration policy. Such a strategy scarcely seems expedient either from ideological motives or for the purpose of vote maximisation. Only from the standpoint of coalition-forming might it serve to attract a right-wing partner to help it hold on to power, but it is questionable whether this would work out.

If the SPÖ therefore wants to cement a plausible unique position along the cultural axis it would have to attempt, in a society (and electorate) characterised by diversity, a proactive dialogue in two directions: on one hand, where this is still on the cards, it should encourage immigrants and their progeny to participate actively, to integrate in society and to adopt fundamental political and cultural norms (such as language, basic democratic principles, everyday values and so on), while on the other hand, it should call on the receiving society to cultivate more social inclusion, awareness of discrimination and participation in social integration. The Social Democrats need to foster an approach that takes seriously the second group's fear of slipping down the social ladder and the first group's experiences of discrimination, and somehow convey to both that no one will be left behind who is willing to play an active role in society. Goodhart (2011) speaks of a »liberal communitarianism« that unites communitarian needs for security and community with the liberal affirmation of diversity. Underlying this is an understanding of solidarity-based community beyond ethnic lines, which does not seek to erase them, but rather aims at a model of shared citizenship with equal emphasis on civic duties and civic

rights, accessible to all, regardless of origin, skin colour and so on.³⁷ After all, diversity is a reality whose reversal into cultural uniformity is feasible only at the price of violence and is hardly compatible with the ideological core of social democracy. A social democratic approach based on inclusive integration has to take account of this internally, even if - as at present - it continues to be combined with protectionist measures.

5. Outlook

Migration policy has become one of the most formative issues facing contemporary European democracies and poses particularly tough problems for its social democratic parties. This applies not least to the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), which since the late 1980s has been confronted not only by an increase in immigration and social diversity, but also with the presence of right-wing populist parties, which have been able to exploit this issue to win over voters. As we have seen, the social democratic solutions to this have been ambivalent thus far. This has stoked internal party strife and culminated in the course of the refugee movements of 2015/2016 in the resignation of the party leader and chancellor Werner Faymann. His successor, chancellor Christian Kern, now faces the challenge of resolving this conflict and thus with reshaping his party's migration policy.

The expansion of a »values commission« can, alongside the ongoing debate on adopting a new party manifesto - the current version dates from the previous century - be one of many necessary steps to reposition the Social Democrats. But these measures should be taken not only at national level, but also linked together at European and international level, if the party wants to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Finally, it is not by chance that the current problems exhibit striking parallels with the founding era of social democracy in the crisis of bourgeois liberalism in the nineteenth century. Similarly, in light of current developments, the advent of national fascism in the early twentieth century can no longer be dismissed as merely a historical aberration.³⁸ In this context the Social Democrats' financial, economic and labour market policy solutions along the economic axis weigh just as heavily as their attitude to the issues of migration and diversity along the cultural axis of conflict, which appears to be so significant today. It is a long time since the only thing that really mattered was »the economy, stupid!« in determining the future viability of (Austrian) social democracy.

Annotations:

- 1 Faymann, 9 May 2016.
- 2 Jagschitz 1997.
- 3 Picker, Salfinger and Zeglovits 2004.
- 4 Meyer and Peintinger 2011.
- 5 Antipathy is surveyed here on the basis of attitudes to unwanted neighbours. In this survey the term »foreigner« includes people of a different skin colour, Muslims and immigrants. The index ranges from a minimum value of 0 (antipathy towards no one in this group) to 1 (antipathy towards everyone in this group).
- 6 Friesl, Renner and Wieser 2010; Rosenberger and Seeber 2011.
- 7 Plasser and Ulram 2003.
- 8 For the reach data see Mediaanalyse 2015. Source: <http://www.media-analyse.at/>.
- 9 Perchinig 2010.
- 10 Gruber 2014.
- 11 Müller and Strøm 1999.
- 12 Hofinger, Ogris and Thalhammer 2003; Picker et al. 2004.
- 13 Müller 2000.
- 14 With one exception: the sole example to date of a coalition formed without the involvement of the right-wing populist camp and outside the Grand Coalition came after the 2002 National Council election, when the FPÖ, in response to internal party conflicts, found its vote cut by a third and the ÖVP achieved its best result of the era of moderate pluralism. At this time the ÖVP was open to any coalition options, including the possibility of a centre-right coalition with the Greens. Despite the launch of coalition negotiations and a strong willingness on the part of the Greens the talks collapsed and the ÖVP decided to continue a coalition with the FPÖ (Richter 2011).
- 15 Müller 2008.
- 16 Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther and Sitter 2010; Krings 2013.
- 17 Goodhart 2011, p. 15.
- 18 Perchinig 2010.
- 19 Rathkolb 2015; Wineroither 2009.
- 20 Gruber 2014.
- 21 Under his leadership there was another FPÖ/SPÖ coalition under Jörg Haider in the southernmost federal state Carinthia in 2004.
- 22 Perchinig 2010.
- 23 Bale et al. 2010.
- 24 Der Standard, 23. 9. 2009, p. 6; Der Standard, 14. 10. 2010, p. 7; Die Presse, 25. 6. 2011, p. 8.
- 25 Die Presse, 12. 10. 2010, p. 4.
- 26 Gruber and Rosenberger 2016, 2017.
- 27 Gruber 2017.
- 28 Kriesi et al. 2012; Kriesi et al. 2008.
- 29 Meguid 2008.
- 30 Merkel, Egle, Henkes, Ostheim and Petring 2006.
- 31 Elchardus 2011.
- 32 Ioanide 2015.
- 33 Elchardus 2011.

- 34 Bale 2011, p. 11.
 35 See Gruber and Bale 2014 on this.
 36 Hofinger et al. 2003; Plasser and Ulram 1987.
 37 Sheffer 2011.
 38 Hobsbawm 1998.

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Bitter Debates: Flight, Immigration and the Polish Left

1. Introduction

A public debate on immigration broke out in Poland for the first time on the occasion of the refugee crisis in 2015. Similar to other countries in Europe, it was very intense, but the national context in which it took place - it was an election year - affected its development considerably. The year 2015 was very difficult for the Polish left. It was in a frail state in the parliamentary elections, failing for the first time to make it into Parliament, which also impacted the party's stance on immigration. This chapter analyses the course of this debate in depth, in particular how migration, which until that point was a fairly marginal issue, suddenly emerged in the political mainstream and became the subject of an election campaign that was to bring about a watershed change in the political arena.

To obtain a better understanding of this debate, we shall investigate several junctures in more recent Polish history, in particular Polish emigration after 1945, because its causes and course significantly shaped attitudes towards the topic of migration. At the same time, we shall explore the causes of the anti-refugee atmosphere in Poland as a whole before turning to the stance of the Polish left on the topic.

2. The Watershed Elections

With thousands of refugees teeming before the gates of the European Union in the summer of 2015, triggering the so-called refugee crisis, Poland was entering into the hottest phase of the electoral campaign leading up to parliamentary elections scheduled for 25 October. The centre-right party *Platforma Obywatelska* (PO - Citizens' Platform), which had been governing for eight years, was in danger of losing power to the populist right-wing party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS - Law and Justice). As re-