

Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe

Into the mainstream?

Edited by

**Tjitske Akkerman,
Sarah L. de Lange and
Matthijs Rooduijn**



Extremism and Democracy

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The book accomplishes a great fact-finding mission describing the consequences of right-wing populists in government for party competition. It begins the hunt for theory and finds new puzzles: the effects of radical right-wing government involvement are more complicated than anticipated. The book is an indispensable building block for any scholar dealing with this subject.

*Herbert Kitschelt, George V. Allen Professor of International Relations,
Duke University, USA*

In 2000 Hainsworth *et al.* noted that the extreme right was moving "from the margins to the mainstream." Fifteen years later, in a long-overdue but worthy 'successor' to Hainsworth's seminal volume, Akkerman *et al.* observe that radical right-wing populist parties have now solidly moved "into the mainstream".

*Cas Mudde, Associate Professor, Department of International Affairs,
University of Georgia, USA*

This book offers an updated and in depth analysis of case studies of right-wing populism and extremism, alongside the validation of a crucial hypothesis: have these parties conquered more of the political space of the moderate mainstream right? Thanks to an empirically grounded comparative survey examining the phenomenon, the authors demonstrate that, contrary to shared wisdom, the populist far right is still secure in its extreme position, and remains quite distant from other mainstream parties all over Europe. Moreover, underlining the fact that the gap between extreme and mainstream parties has only been narrowed where a critique of the European Union is concerned, the authors offer further hints to the sensitive topic of euro-scepticism.

Piero Ignazi, Professor of Comparative Politics, University of Bologna, Italy

Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe

Radical right-wing populist parties, such as Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom, Marine Le Pen's National Front or Nigel Farage's UKIP, are becoming increasingly influential in Western European democracies. Their electoral support is growing, their impact on policy-making is substantial, and in recent years several radical right-wing populist parties have assumed office or supported minority governments.

Are these developments the cause and/or consequence of the mainstreaming of radical right-wing populist parties? Have radical right-wing populist parties expanded their issue profiles, moderated their policy positions, toned down their anti-establishment rhetoric and shed their extreme right reputations to attract more voters and/or become coalition partners? This timely book answers these questions on the basis of both comparative research and a wide range of case studies, covering Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

Analysing the extent to which radical right-wing populist parties have become part of mainstream politics, as well as the factors and conditions which facilitate this trend, this book is essential reading for students and scholars working in European politics, in addition to anyone interested in party politics and current affairs more generally.

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1 Inclusion and mainstreaming?

Radical right-wing populist parties in the new millennium

*Tjitske Akkerman, Sarah L. de Lange and
Matthijs Rooduijn*

Introduction

The West European radical right-wing populist party family has gone through various transitions during the past three decades. In the 1990s, the adoption of anti-immigration and populist master-frames opened up an escape route from the margins for many radical right-wing populist parties. As a result, they gained increasing support from voters, with parties like the French National Front (Front National; FN), the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs; FPÖ), the Norwegian Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet; FrP), and the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei; SVP) supported by more than 10 per cent of the electorate (see Table 1.1).

After the turn of the millennium, the upward trend continued for most radical right-wing populist parties, with the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti; DF) and the Flemish Interest (Vlaams Blok/Belang; VB) also crossing the 10 per cent mark. Moreover, a number of new, electorally successful radical right-wing populist parties emerged on the scene, such as the Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich; BZÖ), the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally (Laikós Orthódoxos Synagermós; LAOS), the Dutch List Pim Fortuyn (Lijst Pim Fortuyn; LPF), the Dutch Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid; PVV), the Swedish Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna; SD) and the Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset; PS). As Table 1.1 shows, the average radical right-wing populist party vote share in national elections has increased from 8.0 per cent in the 1990s to 12.5 per cent in recent years (see also Mudde 2013; Zaslove 2011).

As a consequence of increased support, various radical right-wing populist parties have entered governments, either as cabinet members or as support parties of minority governments (Akkerman and De Lange 2012; De Lange 2012a, 2012b). In Austria, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland, radical right-wing populist parties took up the responsibilities that come with holding office, while in Denmark and the Netherlands, the DF and the PVV agreed to support minority governments without formally joining them (see Table 1.2). Many of these parties participated in multiple coalitions, leading to the formation of 17 governments including, or being supported by, radical right-wing populist parties between 1990 and 2015.