

Racism, Nationalism and Right-Wing Extremism Online: The Austrian Presidential Election 2016 on Facebook

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Abstract

The 2016 Austrian presidential election saw a run-off between the Green party candidate Alexander Van der Bellen and the Freedom Party of Austria's (FPÖ) far-right candidate Norbert Hofer. This paper asks: How did voters of Hofer express their support on Facebook? It presents the results of a qualitative ideology analysis of 6755 comments about the presidential election posted on the Facebook pages of FPÖ leader Heinz-Christian Strache and FPÖ candidate Hofer. The results reveal insights into the contemporary political role of the online leadership ideology, online nationalism, new racism online, the friend/enemy-scheme online, and online militancy. Right-wing extremism 2.0 is a complex problem that stands in the context of contemporary crises and demagoguery.

Keywords: Facebook, social media, new racism online, online nationalism, right-wing extremism online, Austrian presidential election 2016, Freedom Party of Austria, FPÖ, Alexander Van der Bellen, Norbert Hofer, Heinz-Christian Strache, ideology

Rassismus, Nationalismus und Rechtsextremismus online: Die österreichische Präsidentschaftswahl 2016 auf Facebook

Zusammenfassung

Bei der österreichischen Bundespräsidentschaftswahl 2016 kam es zu einer Stichwahl zwischen dem grünen Kandidaten Alexander Van der Bellen und dem FPÖ-Kandidaten Norbert Hofer. Dieser Artikel fragt: Wie haben die Wähler/innen Hofers ihre Unterstützung auf Facebook ausgedrückt? Der Aufsatz präsentiert die Ergebnisse einer qualitativen Ideologeanalyse von 6755 Kommentaren, die auf den Facebookseiten von FPÖ-Chef Heinz-Christian Strache und FPÖ-Kandidat Hofer gepostet wurden. Die Forschungsergebnisse verdeutlichen, welche politische Rolle die Führerideologie, Nationalismus, neuer Rassismus, das Freund/Feind-Schema und Militanz im Onlinebereich spielen. Rechtsextremismus 2.0 ist ein komplexes Problem, das im Kontext von heutigen Krisen und Demagogie zu betrachten ist.

Schlagwörter: Facebook, soziale Medien, Neuer Rassismus Online, Online-Nationalismus, Rechtsextremismus Online, Österreichische Bundespräsidentschaftswahl 2016, Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ, Alexander Van der Bellen, Norbert Hofer, Heinz-Christian Strache, Ideologie

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1. Introduction

Norbert Hofer was the Freedom Party of Austria's (FPÖ) candidate in the 2016 Austrian presidential election. In the first round, he achieved 35.05 % of the cast votes and became the strongest candidate. The second round took place on May 23 and saw a run-off between Hofer and Alexander Van der Bellen. Hofer's share of the vote was 49.64 %. Van der Bellen, who was the Austrian Green Party's leader from 1997 until 2008, won with a voting share of 50.35 % in the second round and a lead of just a bit more than 30,000 votes. The Austrian presidential election received lots of international interest and people were asking themselves how it was possible that a far-right candidate achieved almost half of the vote. The FPÖ filed a complaint to the Constitutional Court of Austria that resulted in a re-run of the run-off.

This paper asks: How did voters of Hofer express their support on Facebook? It applies critical discourse analysis to data collected from postings on two public Facebook pages (Norbert Hofer, Heinz-Christian Strache). The analysis situates Hofer supporters' ideological discourse in Austria's political context and history.

Section 2 engages with theoretical foundations by discussing the notion of ideology. Section 3 focuses on the theoretical clarification of nationalist and new racist ideology. Section 4 provides an overview of the Freedom Party's ideology. Section 5 explains the methodology. Section 6 presents the analysis and interpretation. Section 7 draws some conclusions.

2. Theoretical Foundations: What is Ideology?

This work studies online nationalism and online xenophobia. It is a contribution to empirical ideology critique. An underlying theoretical question that arises in this context is how one should best understand the notion of ideology. There are different traditions of how to define and study ideology. Approaches include for example Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, Lukács's theory of reification, Gramsci's theory of hegemony, the Frankfurt School, Hallian Cultural Studies, various forms and schools of Critical Discourse Analysis, Foucauldian discourse analysis, Althusserian ideology theory, etc. (Eagleton 1991; Rehmann 2013; Žižek 1994). These theories do not have a consensus on what ideology is and how it should be defined. Two major schools in the critical study of ideology go back to Antonio Gramsci and Georg Lukács.

Whereas Gramsci's approach can be characterised as ideology theory, the one by Lukács can be seen as ideology critique (Fuchs 2015: chapter 3). Gramsci understands ideology as worldviews, the "superstructure of a particular structure" (Gramsci 1988: 199) and a "conception of the world" (Gramsci 1988: 343). Lukács based on Marx's theory of commodity fetishism sees ideology as reified thought emerging in reified societies. He therefore argues that the "emergence and diffusion of ideologies appears as the general characteristic of class societies" (Lukács 1986: 405).

Terry Eagleton (1991: chapter 1) discerns various understandings of ideology by identifying six theoretical approaches:

- 1) Ideology as the "production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life" (28) (= ideology as culture) (28);
- 2) Ideas and beliefs of "a specific, socially significant group or class" (29) (= ideology as worldview);
- 3) The "*promotion and legitimation of the interests*" of a group "in the face of opposing interests" (29);
- 4) The "*promotion and legitimation of sectoral interests*" in the "*activities of a dominant social power*" (29) (= ideology as dominant worldviews);
- 5) "[I]deas and beliefs which help to legitimize the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation" (30);
- 6) "[F]alse or deceptive beliefs [...] arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of society as a whole" (30).

Especially Marx, Lukács and the Frankfurt School have influenced the theoretical concept of ideology used in this paper and the Marxian theory approach that underlies it (Fuchs 2015, 2016b, c). The notion of ideology employed relates to Eagleton's fifth and sixth meanings of ideology. By ideology, I understand thoughts, practices, ideas, words, concepts, phrases, sentences, texts, belief systems, meanings, representations, artefacts, institutions, systems or combinations thereof that represent and justify one group's or individual's power, domination or exploitation of other groups or individuals by misrepresenting, one-dimensionally presenting or distorting reality in symbolic representations (Fuchs 2015). Ideology is not simply an abstract structure, but has a concrete, lived reality: Ideological workers produce and reproduce ideologies (Fuchs 2015: chapter 3). Marx characterises the producers of ideology as "the thinkers of the [ruling] class", its "active, conceptive ideologists", who based on a division of labour within the ruling class "make the formation of the illusions of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood" (Marx/Engels 1845: 68).

The definition taken in the theory approach underlying this work implies moral realism and socialist praxis: Humans can analyse and understand the world's reality and complex problems' real causes. Ideology critique is the deconstruction of falsehood, of knowledge that is presented as truth, but is deceptive. Socialist moral realism implies that dominative and exploitative societies negate humans' general interests. They therefore should from a political point of view be abolished and replaced by a societal formation that benefits all economically, socially, politically and culturally. Such a society of the commons is a socialist society. Eagleton's fifth and sixth meanings of ideology are based on a dialectical contradiction of class societies and socialism. These are critical-political understandings that imply political praxis and the transcendence of class, capitalism and domination.

Not everyone agrees with such a definition of ideology. Theories of ideology generally disagree. For Louis Althusser (2005), ideology is an "*organic part of every social totality*" (232). "Ideology is a system (with its own logic and rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts, depending on the case) endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society" (231). Althusserian ideology theory has been influential.

Stuart Hall (1986/1996: 26) defines ideology as "the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representations – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works". Hall (1982) identifies the critical paradigm in media studies with the study of ideology. The origin would have been the Frankfurt School's challenge of behaviourist media effects research. Hall's notion of ideology is grounded in structural linguistics and the works of Gramsci, Althusser and Laclau.

The problems of Hall's understanding are twofold. First, humans are denied subject positions. Discourse and ideological structures are turned into a subject. Such structuralism becomes evident when structures are presented as actively doing something and humans are seen as structures' objects. Hall for example writes that humans are positioned and languaged (80), ideological discourses win their way (80), discourse speaks itself through him/her (88). It is then not humans who communicate ideology and discourse through language, but ideology that languages, speaks, communicates, etc. Ideology is in this approach an articulation of

linguistic elements, of rules, codes, linguistic systems, classificatory systems, matrixes, and sets of elements. Missing is the insight that ideology is an active communicative process and a social relation, in which humans, groups and classes produce and reproduce power relations. Production and reproduction of power entails the possibilities to undo, perturb, challenge, and oppose existing power relations just like it entails possibilities to take over, justify, sustain, and legitimate such relations.

The second problem is associated with the first: Social struggle becomes in a structuralist approach a struggle between ideologies. It is not seen as a power relation between humans, in which they actively produce and reproduce discourses and ideologies. Not ideologies struggle with each other, but humans, human groups and classes struggle against each other with various means, including the means of communication, and with specific capacities to mobilise power. Such resources in ideological and other struggles have specific distributions that enable various degrees of power. Hall's approach is a relativistic determinism, in which ideological struggles and alternative interpretations emerge with necessity. He therefore speaks of ideology as a "site of struggle" (between competing definitions) (70) and of significations as "controversial and conflicting" (70). There is certainly always the possibility for contestation, but no necessity for it. Asymmetric power relations can equip humans, groups and classes to different degrees with capacities to speak, communicate, be heard, visible and listened to, and to get information across to others.

General understandings of ideology represent the first and second meanings identified by Eagleton. The problem is that such a generalist understanding is morally and politically relativist. If the views that "Jews are inferior beings, that women are less rational than men, that fornicators will be condemned to perpetual torment" are "not instances of false consciousness, then it is difficult to know what is; and those who dismiss the whole notion of false consciousness must be careful not to appear cavalier about the offensiveness of these opinions" (Eagleton 1991: 15). If democratic socialism and anti-fascism are the dominant paradigms in a society, then in such a societal context, fascism, racism and capitalism are in a general understanding of ideology forms of ideology critique. Such a generality is a disservice for a critical theory of society. Max Horkheimer (1972: 28) remarks in this respect about Karl Mannheim's general theory of ideology that such general approaches "tho-

roughly purge from the ideology concept the remains of its accusatory meaning". According to Adorno (1981: 38), generalising theories of ideology employ "the terminology of social criticism while removing its sting". Whereas the critique of ideology is "determinate negation in the Hegelian sense, the confrontation of the ideational with its realization" (Adorno 1972: 466), general theories of ideology replace the determinate negation by the analysis of "general worldviews" (Adorno 1972: 472).

Eagleton's fifth and sixth definition do not imply, as claimed by Stuart Hall (1986/1996: 30), "economic and class reductionism". In the theory of false consciousness and false society, class background and position do not determine, but condition consciousness. A dominant class is often organised in competing class factions that also have competing ideologies. The example of Marx and Engels, who came from quite bourgeois families, shows that individuals are not trapped in certain ideologies because of their background. Consciousness is dynamic and reflects in complex non-linear ways the total of an individual's experiences, social positions and social relations in society.

Also in the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), there are different understandings of ideology. Norman Fairclough (2010: 73) distinguishes between critical and descriptive concepts of ideology. Teun van Dijk (1998: 8) has a more descriptive approach and defines ideology as a mental framework that is "the *basis of the social representations shared by members of a group*" that allows the organisation of the group members' social beliefs and practices. In contrast to van Dijk, Fairclough defines ideology as "representations which contribute to the constitution, reproduction, and transformation of social relations of power and domination" (Fairclough 2010: 73). His understanding is close to the fourth, fifth and sixth meanings of ideology identified by Eagleton. Reisigl and Wodak (2009: 88) understand ideology as a "one-sided perspective or world view" of a particular social group that is a means for "establishing and maintaining unequal power relations through discourse". Wodak explicitly acknowledges the influence of Frankfurt School critical theory on the discourse-historical approach of CDA (Wodak 2009: 34-35; Reisigl/Wodak 2001: 32).

Theodor W. Adorno's works show ideology critique in action. The dominant tendency is to reduce Adorno to the critique of the culture industry (Horkheimer/Adorno 2002: 94-136; for a discussion and critique of this tendency, see: Fuchs 2016b, chapter 3). Such rea-

dings overlook the wealth of Adorno's ideology critique that includes also for example studies of the ideology of anti-Semitism (Horkheimer/Adorno 2002: 137-172), fascist and authoritarian ideology (Adorno 1955: 1973), ideologies in everyday life (Adorno 1951), astrology, superstition and occultism (Adorno 1955: 1962), ideology and its critique in education (Adorno 1971), etc. Adorno understands ideology in a Lukácsian sense as "a consciousness which is objectively necessary and yet at the same time false, as the intertwining of truth and falsehood" (Adorno 1954: 189). For Adorno (1954: 190), the need for ideology critique follows from the existence of ideology. The understanding of ideology underlying this paper stands in the tradition of Marx, Lukács and the Frankfurt School. Jürgen Ritsert (1972) has based on the Frankfurt School tradition defined empirical ideology critique as a method of critical social research.

3. Nationalism and New Racism

Through ideologies, humans, groups and classes try to persuade, influence, reify, hide, distort, promote, legitimate, deceive, misrepresent, or justify dominative interests. Karl Marx (1867: section 1.4) saw capitalism's structure as inherently fetishistic: The commodity form hides the social character of capitalism behind things. Fetishism is not just an economic phenomenon, but can in class societies be found in peculiar ways in the realms of politics and ideology. Ideology tries to naturalise domination by hiding its social and historical character and dissimulating attention from the power relations underlying heteronomous societies. An example is the construction of an ideology that claims that "we" national citizens are all together facing society's problems (unemployment, poverty, crime, precariousness, crises, lack of adequate housing, welfare, education, health care, etc.), that "we" have these problems because of foreign influences, and can as a nation fight these dark forces. The ideological trick in such arguments is to disguise that "we" are not a unitary subject in a class society, but have different positions and capacities in power relations. Nationalism is a particular form of ideology.

It was Rosa Luxemburg (1976) who first used Marx's notion of fetishism as a political concept to question the fetishistic character of the nation and nationalism. She argues that nationalist ideology "ignores completely the fundamental theory of modern socialism – the theory of social classes" (135). Nationalism is a "misty veil" that "conceals in every case a definite

historical content” (135). “In a class society, ‘the nation’ as a homogeneous socio-political entity does not exist. Rather, there exist within each nation, classes with antagonistic interests and ‘rights’” (135). Nationalism is an ideology that in a particular manner veils and distracts attention from society’s class relations and the role they play in society’s problems.

Some common elements of Marxist theories and understandings of nationalism are the following ones¹ (compare: Balibar/Wallerstein 1991; Hall 1993; Hobsbawm 1992; Luxemburg 1976; Özkirimli 2010):

- *Ideology*: Nationalism is an ideology that constructs an Us/Them difference, in which the in-group is conceived as a unitary, homogeneous collective defined either by common claims to biology, genealogy, kinship and family (“race”) or by claims to a common culture (commonality of language, communication, upbringing, moral values, traditions, customs, law, religion, emotions, experiences, identity, means of communication), a common state/political system/constitution or a common economy. Nationalism as ideology makes claims to territorial power for organising a national economic and a national political system. Nationalism constructs/invents/fabricates the nation and fictive national identity. Nationalist identity stresses fixity and homogeneity, whereas in reality all societies are complex, hybrid and diverse.

- *Dialectic of racism/xenophobia and nationalism*: Racism/xenophobia and nationalism are inherently linked. Xenophobia is an ideological construction of the out-group that is not part of the illusory national collective.

- *Political fetishism*: Nationalism, xenophobia and racism are a form of political fetishism that ideologically distracts from how society’s class antagonisms bring about social problems. The distraction from and veiling of class are often achieved by the construction of scapegoats and by steering hatred against them.

- *Forms of nationalism*: Nationalism, xenophobia and racism can be directed against an inner enemy (migrants, minorities) or an outer enemy (other nations, foreign groups). One can draw a distinction between sociological and institutional racism/nationalism and between inclusive (exploitative) and exclusive (exterminatory) racism/nationalism. Furthermore there are biological and cultural forms of racism/nationalism.

- *Militarism*: Nationalism is associated with internal militarism (repression and law-and-order politics directed against immigrants and minorities) and external militarism (imperialist warfare).

Whereas nationalism constitutes an inward-oriented ideology constructing the identity of an invented political and cultural collective, racism and xenophobia define the outside of this collective, those who are considered not to be part of the nation, the nation’s outsiders, foreign elements, or enemies. Racism is “*a supplement internal to nationalism*” (Balibar/Wallerstein 1991: 54). “Racism is constantly emerging out of nationalism. [...] And nationalism emerges out of racism” (Balibar/Wallerstein 1991: 53). Classical nationalism often constructed the outsider in biological terms as a “race”, whereas today it has become more common to define the outsider in cultural and political terms. Whereas some observers therefore like to distinguish between racism and xenophobia, Étienne Balibar has coined the notion of the new racism to describe ideological continuities and parallels:

The new racism is a racism of the era of ‘decolonization’ [...] [It] fits into the framework of ‘racism without races’ [...] It is a racism whose dominant theme is not biological heredity but the insurmountability of cultural differences, a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but ‘only’ the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions; in short, it is what P. A. Taguieff has rightly called a differentialist racism (Balibar/Wallerstein 1991: 21).

Pierre-André Taguieff, to whom Balibar refers, argues that racism is ideologically naturalising differences, “either by scientific biologization or by ethnicization or ‘culturalist’ fixing” (Taguieff 2001: 200). He distinguishes between two basic types of racism. Racism type 1 biologises differences and argues that one postulated “race” is superior to another and that such differences are natural and eternal. Racism type 2 culturalises and celebrates differences. It concludes that specific cultures should therefore not mix. “Naturalization is therefore either *biologizing* or *culturalist*” (207). Both versions draw comparable political conclusions that include the erection and defence closure of borders, ending migration, and the opposition to multiculturalism: “Irreducible, incomparable, and unassimilable, the human types that differ (the reasons for difference are infinite), moreover, may not communicate with each other, neither de facto nor de jure. The impossibility of a human community beyond the enclosures is the

¹ The following list was first elaborated and presented in Fuchs (forthcoming [2]), from where it is reproduced.

ultimate conclusion of the thesis of *incommunicability*. Hence the violent denunciations of ‘cosmopolitanism’ or ‘globalism’, processes and ideals that are supposed to destroy singular and closed communities, and, more profoundly and less distinctly, their ‘identity.’ (204). Taguieff’s key insight, on which Balibar builds, is that there are biologicistic and culturalist versions of racism.

Banks and Gingrich (2006: 2) use the term neo-nationalism for the “re-emergence of nationalism under different global and transnational conditions”. Parliamentary neo-nationalists in Europe tend to be opposed to immigration and the EU and to argue for differentialist racism. They embrace strong leadership and cultural populism. Much “neo-nationalist rhetoric is sufficiently pragmatic to accept that blood-based homogeneity can never define the boundaries of the national, let alone the state, and seeks instead to generate an argument based upon historical association. [...] ‘cultural fundamentalism’ [...] has often come to replace race in the discourse of neo-nationalists. [...] [Neo-nationalism is] an essentialist and seclusive reaction against the current phase of globalisation [...] [that] primarily relates to ‘culture’” (Banks/Gingrich 2006: 9, 15, 17).

Ajanovic, Mayer and Sauer (2015, 2016)’s analysis of right-wing extremist discourses in Austria confirms the existence of a neo-racism that takes on a cultural form. Such ideological discourses tend in Austria to have a strong anti-Muslim orientation. A negative difference between Austrians and Muslims is proclaimed. Muslims and immigrants are said to cause social problems and cultural decline. The authors document ideological arguments for keeping social spaces (schools, religious space, public space, kindergartens, transportation, work places, local spaces, etc.) free from what is perceived as foreign influences. Political ethno-pluralism is the political conclusion drawn from such discourses: The implication of this ideology is Austria should close its borders for migrants, oppose a multicultural society, and that, if at all, only assimilated migrants are acceptable.

Immanuel Wallerstein argues that racism and sexism are necessary elements of capitalism. Racism and xenophobia are in capitalism strategies to “minimize the costs of production” and to “minimize the costs of political disruption (hence minimize – not eliminate, because one cannot eliminate – the protests of the labour force)” (Balibar/Wallerstein 1991: 33). Sexism would invent houseworkers and assert they are “not ‘working’, merely ‘keeping house’” (35). Housework not

just reproduced labour-power, but is also an “indirect subsidy to the employers of the wage labourers in these households” (34). The connection of sexism and (new) racism in capitalism is that they are both anti-universalist ideologies that legitimate low- and no-wage labour and discrimination.

Given the concepts of ideology and nationalist ideology, we can next have a short look at how the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) has made and advanced a particular form of Austrian nationalism that has turned it measured in election results into Europe’s most successful far-right parliamentary party.

4. The Freedom Party of Austria’s History and Ideology

The Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) emerged in 1955 from the Association of the Independents (Verband der Unabhängigen) that was founded in 1949 and was the home of many former Austrian members of the Nazi Party. Until 1986, the FPÖ had both a liberal and a German-nationalist wing. In 1983, the FPÖ under the liberal leadership of Norbert Steger entered a coalition government with the Social Democrats. In 1986, Jörg Haider became the FPÖ’s new leader. The Social Democrats ended the coalition government because they saw the rise of Haider as a shift of the FPÖ towards the far-right. In 1991, Haider praised Hitler’s employment policy by saying: “In the Third Reich, they carried out an orderly employment policy, which is not even accomplished by your government in Vienna”². Haider ignored that Hitler’s employment offensive was part of Germany’s armament and his plan of starting the Second World War. “This respectable occupation of people, which is described here in such positive terms, served, as we all know, to prepare for a war of extermination” (Wodak 2002: 40). Brigitte Bailer-Galanda and Wolfgang Neugebauer (1997: 102) write that the “FPÖ represents a successful new adaptation of old right-wing extremism”.

Under Haider’s right-wing populist leadership, the FPÖ continuously extended its voting share in national elections. Haider used election slogans such as „Stop der Überfremdung!” (*Stop the overforeignisation!*). In 1993, he started the anti-immigration-referendum

2 „Im Dritten Reich haben sie ordentliche Beschäftigungspolitik gemacht, was nicht einmal Ihre Regierung in Wien zusammenbringt” (Protokoll der Sitzung des Kärntner Landtags, June 13, 1991).

„Österreich zuerst!“ (*Austria first!*). 7.35 % of the electorate signed the referendum that called for completely stopping immigration and creating the constitutional provision that “Austria is not an immigration country”. In 1999, the FPÖ reached 26.91 % in the federal elections, became the second strongest party, and formed a coalition government together with the Conservative Party ÖVP. This right-wing coalition was in power from February 2000 until April 2005. It was isolated in the European Union. The FPÖ split into two parties, which weakened both temporarily.

In 2008, Jörg Haider died in a car accident. Heinz-Christian Strache became the Austrian far-right's new leader. He has been the FPÖ's leader since 2005. Strache used campaign slogans such as “Daham statt Islam. WIR für EUCH” (“Homeland instead of Islam: WE are for YOU”), “Wien darf nicht Istanbul werden” (“Vienna must not turn into Istanbul”), “Mehr Mut für unser ‘Wiener Blut’: Zu viel Fremdes tut niemandem gut” (“More courage for our ‘Viennese Blood’: Too much foreignness is not good for anyone”). In the Austrian federal elections 2013, the FPÖ reached 20.51 % of the votes. In national opinion polls on electoral preference, the FPÖ has since 2014 continuously achieved the highest share of potential votes (up to 35 %) and has significantly stayed ahead of the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ) (data source: neuwal.com). Michał Krzyżanowski (2013) argues that the FPÖ has undergone an ideological transition from a focus on general opposition to immigration under Jörg Haider in the years 1986-2005 towards Islamophobia since 2005.

Austria is one of the European countries hit much less by the 2008 economic crisis than others. So for example its unemployment rate stayed relatively constantly around 5 % in the years 2008-2015, whereas in Greece it increased from 7.8 % in 2008 to 24.9 % in 2015 (data source: Eurostat). In Spain, the increase was from 11.3 % to 22.1 % (data source: Eurostat). But nonetheless one can observe a very significant increase of the far-right's support in Austria, which shows that we cannot simply assume that supporters of the far-right are the losers of modernisation, crisis and globalisation, but project their fears of potential future social decline into foreigners and minorities. Neo-nationalist and new racist campaigns often “address and instrumentalise concerns and fears about downward social mobility” (Gingrich 2006: 47). Heribert Schiedel (2007: 49-50, 59) argues in this context that crises can condition fears of social downfall and that in such situations it is

crucial whether citizens find meaningful alternatives to right-wing populism. It is an important factor in such situations, to which degree right-wing populists try to create chauvinist, xenophobic, racist and anti-Semitic fear so that citizens are encouraged to project their aggressions into surrogate objects.

Norbert Hofer was a co-author of the 2011 FPÖ's party programme that defines Austria as being culturally German:

“We are committed to our homeland of Austria as part of the German-speaking linguistic and cultural community, to the groups of people native to our country and to a Europe of free peoples and fatherlands. [...] The language, history and culture of Austria are German. The vast majority of Austrians are part of the German peoples', linguistic and cultural community. [...] Austria is not a country of immigration” (FPÖ 2011).

The FPÖ defines the nation based on language, history and culture. It claims that Austrians are part of the German cultural nation and that nations must be kept separate, which is why it opposes multiculturalism. It misses that Austria has since the time of the Austrian empire been a multicultural society. To define Austria as exclusively German has been the project of the Nazis during the time of Hitler.

The Austrian president has a symbolic role. The major power lies with the government. Hofer in his electoral campaign announced that he would as Austrian president change this division of power and act not just act symbolically, but would dismiss the government if it does not accord to his prospects, for example in respect to refugee and immigration policies. “I have said that I dismiss the government if it breaks laws, breaks the constitution or again and again takes measures that harm the country. And then, the last step, the ultimo ratio, in order to avert damage from the country, can be the government's dissolution”³ (ATV, May 15, 2016). Green Party candidate Van der Bellen commented: “This would mean that the government acts by order of the President. But it is exactly the other way round: The President has to respect the government's suggestions. If you are elected and you really pursue this style,

3 Original: “Ich habe gesagt, dass ich die Regierung entlasse, wenn die Regierung Gesetze bricht, die Verfassung bricht oder immer wieder Maßnahmen setzt, die dem Land schaden. Dass dann, um Schaden abzuwenden vom Land, der letzte Schritt, die Ultimo Ratio, sein kann, die Regierung zu entlassen”.

then we are on the way into an authoritarian republic”⁴ (ATV, May 15, 2016).

Who votes for the FPÖ? In the Austrian federal elections 2013, where the FPÖ achieved 20.5 % of the vote, it was the strongest party among men (28 %), blue-collar workers (33 %), those aged 16-29 (22 %), and those whose highest educational attainment is a polytechnic school (35 %, = a one-year practical education that prepares pupils at the age of 14 for starting an apprenticeship) (SORA 2013). The typical FPÖ voter is a young, male blue-collar worker with a low level of education (Pelinka 2002). In 2014, the EU-wide average share of those who were aged 25 or above and held at least a bachelor’s degree, was 22.3 % (data source: UNESCO Statistics). Austria had with 12.25 % the lowest share of all 22 EU countries, for which data is available (data source: UNESCO Statistics).

Also in the 2016 presidential election, such divisions of the social structure of voters became evident: In the second round, 60 % of the male voters cast their ballot for Hofer, but only 40 % of the women did the same. 86 % of the blue-collar workers supported Hofer, whereas 60 % of the white-collar workers voted for the Green party candidate Alexander Van der Bellen. 55 % of those who only completed compulsory education cast their vote for Hofer. The same can be said about 67 % of those who completed apprenticeships and about 58 % of those whose highest educational attainment is the completion of a vocational school (*berufsbildende mittlere Schule*, BMS). In contrast, 73 % of those who have passed school leaving examinations (*Matura*) and 81 % of the university-educated voters opted for Van der Bellen (source of all data: SORA 2016). Class and education are key influencing factors on voting behaviour in Austria.

We will next discuss the methodology of the empirical research conducted for this paper.

5. Methodology

Netvizz is a software tool that allows extracting data from Facebook groups and pages. I used Netvizz in order to collect comments on postings related to Hofer’s presidential candidacy. I accessed Norbert

4 Original: “Das würde ja heißen, die Bundesregierung handelt auf Anordnung des Bundespräsidenten. Es ist aber genau umgekehrt: Der Bundespräsident hat auf Vorschläge der Bundesregierung zu achten. Falls Sie diesen Stil tatsächlich, falls Sie gewählt werden sollten, [...] einschlagen sollten, sind wir auf dem Weg in eine autoritäre Republik.”

Hofer and Heinz-Christian Strache’s Facebook pages on May 30, 2016, and used Netvizz for extracting comments to postings made between May 25 and 30. Given that the collected comments were posted in the days after the presidential election’s second round, it is likely that the dataset contains data that refers to the political differences between Hofer and Van der Bellen. I selected postings by Hofer and Strache that were particularly polarising. This selection resulted in a total of 15 postings: 10 by Strache, 5 by Hofer. There were a total of 6755 comments posted as responses to these 15 Facebook postings. So the analysed dataset consisted of 6755 items.

I conducted a critical discourse analysis of the dataset. *First*, I identified discourse topics. Discourses are semantic structures that consist of certain topics. A discourse topic is a semantic macro-propositions (van Dijk 1987: 48-50) or an interpretative repertoire that is a bounded linguistic building block for actions and their representations (Potter/Wetherell 1988: 172). *Second*, I searched for typical examples of these discourse topics that were included in further analysis. *Third*, I looked at how the comments constructed an Us/Them-distinction. This included an analysis of how “We” and “They” were characterised. In critical discourse analysis such characterisations are called nominations and predications. These are discursive strategies for characterising persons or phenomena in specific ways (Reisigl/Wodak 2001: 44-56). Predication is the “discursive qualification of social actors, objects, phenomena, events/processes and actions” as “more or less positively or negatively” (Reisigl/Wodak 2009: 94). I tried to identify ideological strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation that were used for constructing a collective identity.

Teun van Dijk’s (2011) *ideological square-model* is based on the assumption that there are four common ideological argumentation strategies:

- To emphasize positive things about Us (= the in-group).
- To emphasize negative things about Them (= the out-group).
- To de-emphasize negative things about Us.
- To de-emphasize positive things about Them.

“*The complex meta-strategy of the ideological square tells us that group members will tend to speak or write positively about their own group, and negatively about those out-groups they define as opponents, competitors or enemies*” (van Dijk 2011: 397).

When conducting social media analysis, questions of research ethics should be considered. It therefore is feasible to review such questions as far as they are relevant for the study presented in this work. Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce and Taylor (2012) in their textbook *Ethnography and Virtual World: A Handbook of Methods* argue for an ethics of care position in virtual world research that focuses on obtaining informed consent, avoiding harm, providing benefits to study participants, etc. The online world has moved on from virtual worlds such as Second Life and World of Warcraft to social media such as Facebook and Twitter that are now far more popular. So we today need an Internet ethics focusing on social media that takes the complex relation between public and private on these sites into account.

Janet Salmons (2016) in her textbook *Doing Qualitative Research Online* distinguishes extant, elicited and enacted online research methods. Extant methods study existing online materials created independently of the researcher's influence. Elicited methods study data that participants elicit in response to the researcher's questions. Enacted methods study data that researchers generate with participants in a study. Each type would have specific ethical requirements. There are different ethical traditions and theories. They have different implications for online research (59-68): Deontology focuses on ethical rules and guidelines (such as the guidelines of the Association for Internet Researchers). Consequentialism focuses on research outcomes. Virtue ethics focuses on the researcher's self-defined moral principles. The ethics of care give attention to participants' preferences. Salmons argues for finding a synthesis between such positions in online research. Online platforms are to varying degrees public or private. Salmons identifies a continuum that ranges from public online environments that are openly accessible without barriers to private online environments that only provide access by permission. Salmons argues that many ethical guidelines do not require informed consent for collecting data from public online platforms when the researcher does not influence the creation of the data (85-86). Hewson, Vogel and Laurent (2016: 111) in their textbook *Internet Research Methods* argue that public online data is "perhaps the least contentious in terms of being clearly in the public domain, and thus arguably available for the use as research data" without obtaining informed consent.

The British Psychological Society (BPS) argues in its *Code of Ethics and Conduct* that online obser-

vation should only take place when and where users "reasonably expect to be observed by strangers" (BPS 2009: 13). The BPS (2013) in its *Ethics Guidelines for Internet-Mediated Research* stresses the blurring between public and private space on the Internet, which complicates research ethics. "Where it is reasonable to argue that there is likely no perception and/or expectation of privacy (or where scientific/social value and/or research validity considerations are deemed to justify undisclosed observation), use of research data without gaining valid consent may be justifiable" (BPS 2013: 7).

The Facebook pages of Norbert Hofer and Heinz-Christian Strache are public pages. All postings and comments on them are visible to everyone visiting them, not just to those who like them. One does not have to have a Facebook profile to access the two pages. They can also be viewed without logging into Facebook. All postings and all comments are visible in public. Furthermore, politicians are public figures. Citizens expect them to stand in and be present in the public. This includes that they on social media post in public and offer possibilities for public communication on their profiles. Given the public character of Strache and Hofer's Facebook pages, it is reasonable to assume that someone posting a comment on such a page can reasonably expect to be observed by strangers. In such a case, one does not have to obtain informed consent for analysing and quoting such comments. Given that the users are not public figures themselves, but only make public comments when posting on a politician's public Facebook page, I do not mention the usernames in the analysis. Netvizz does not save the usernames so that the collected dataset does not contain any identifiers. The original comments were posted in German. In this paper, I only provide English translations of quotes, not the German originals.

6. Analysis and Interpretation

Figures 1-15 in the annex show the postings by Strache and Hofer that were selected as data sources for the empirical analysis. It also presents translations of these postings' text. In their Facebook postings, Strache and Hofer try to present the FPÖ as a reliable and responsible centre party that represents, takes care of and defends Austrian interests. They emotionalise the relationship of Hofer and the Austrians by calling him the "President of Hearts". This formulation implies that Hofer is a true patriot who loves Austria. The implication is that Alexander Van der Bellen is unpatriotic.

The FPÖ's patriotic love to Austria is also expressed by formulations such as "our homeland Austria and its people!" ("We are committed to our homeland Austria and its people!") or "our Austria" ("We will in any case continue to take care of our Austria"). So one of the rhetoric strategies is the emotionalisation of Austrian nationalism. Austria is presented as a homogeneous national collective that is under threat. Strache and Hofer identify a negative outside for constructing a nationalistic identity.

Many of these postings contain links to online articles published in newspapers (oe24.at, krone.at, diepresse.com) and blogs (unzensuriert.at). This fact is a manifestation of the intertextuality of online discourse: Discourses are not contained in themselves, but take networked forms. In the online world, this means that news media refer to the comments and social media profiles of politicians, whereas politicians link to articles that mention them favourably or attack those that are critical of them. The media have played a particular role in the making of Jörg Haider, HC Strache and Norbert Hofer. By engaging in helping to perform the right-wing populist spectacle, they hope to gain a larger number of users, readers, viewers and listeners. unzensuriert.at is a blog that has gained particular interest among supporters of Austria's far-right. The media company 1848 Medienvielfalt (1848 Media Plurality) published it. Its managing director Walter Asperl worked for FPÖ MP Martin Graf, while the latter was deputy speaker in the Austrian Parliament. Chief Editor

Alexander Höferl was Graf's press officer. Unzensuriert understands itself as being "committed to the truth" and as fostering media plurality. It also operates a YouTube channel that in August 2016 had around 11,000 subscribers, a Facebook page (around 47,000 likes in August 2016), and a Twitter account. It makes use of a multitude of popular social media formats, in which the FPÖ, Strache and Hofer are very frequently the main topics. Far-right social media presences, the sensationalist press and the FPÖ stand in a mutually beneficial relationship.

This perceived threat to Austria is characterised as consisting of social democrats, the Green Party's presidential candidate Alexander Van der Bellen, the Ministry of the Interior, the European Union (in the form of the President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz and the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker), and the Austrian government. Nationalism is not just constructed by positive self-

presentation, but also by negative other-presentation: It works by saying that others have insulted the FPÖ and have characterised the party as far-right, that they divide the country and play with fire, that there were abnormalities, malpractices and illegalities in the counting of the votes in the presidential election, that foreigners try to lecture Austrians, and that there is the destruction of Austria and the centralisation of power. The net effect is the attempt to create the impression that Austria is under attack by a union of foreign powers and left-leaning politicians.

6.1 The First Discourse Topic: Charismatic Leadership

In the dataset, a *first discourse strategy* focused on constructing an *in-group* of Hofer and Strache supporters by mentioning positive aspects of both politicians and presenting the two politicians as *charismatic leaders*. Here are some examples:

"7 of 9 federal states have voted for Norbert Hofer. He is the President of Hearts" (#1098).

"I find Mr Hofer and Mr Strache very sympathetic and highly competent" (#2514).

"An extraordinarily sympathetic person. [...] His statements are communicated in a very comprehensive manner to people who have not studied" (#5948)

"Dear Mr Hofer, You can express yourself very elegantly and you are a comforting person" (#5988)

"You [Norbert Hofer] are a man of character and it is to wish that you become our real President of Hearts" (#5196)

"Mr Hofer is a very impressive personality. Thank you that you stood as candidate for Austria" (#5493)

"I am proud of politicians like you and it makes hope that not-yet everything is lost in our country as long as we have such great, charismatic, honest politicians" (#5879)

These comments have in common that they emotionalise and personalise Hofer and Strache. The commenters do not assess politicians based on their ideas, but on subjective impressions of their personality and the way they present themselves. The attributes of being sympathetic, competent, comforting, charismatic, honest, and having a good character create positive emotional attachments. Hofer presents himself in public as calm, sympathetic and as for a politician relatively young. Personalisation and emotionalisation was part of his electoral campaign. The comments indicate that such emotional politics seem to work among the followers of the FPÖ. The image of Hofer as the President

of Hearts goes one step further: It tries to politically utilise feelings of love. Both Strache and Hofer used these politics of love in Facebook postings (see figures 2 and 12). Users positively reacted to this discourse topic and called Hofer their President of Hearts. This image not just expresses voters' admiration for Hofer, but also has a nationalist subtext: It expresses that Hofer loves Austria because of his scepticism of immigration and refugees.

The idealisation of Strache and Hofer is also based on the longing for strong leadership figures. The justification of the leadership ideology "is charismatic: it rests on the assertion that the Leader is endowed with qualities lacking in ordinary mortals. Superhuman qualities emanate from him and pervade the state, party, and people" (Neumann 2009: 85). FPÖ supporters in the analysed comments tended to construct Strache and Haider as superhuman leaders.

A somatisation is "the linguistic construction of social actors by synecdochisingly picking out a part or characteristic of their body" (Reisigl/Wodak 2001: 53). On the one hand, users in the dataset used gerontonyms for characterising Hofer: They argued that it is refreshing that he for a politician looks relatively young. On the other hand they also used general positive somatisations, characterising Hofer as good looking:

"One enjoys listening to him and he moreover looks so well-groomed" (#5948).

"Oh yes, and when someone looks good, then this is even better... Beautiful people have it easier than ugly ones... ;-) See Van der Bellen for example ;-((" (#5867).

"You two [Strache and Hofer] not just have a great party, but also look damn good" (#5124).

The second example shows that somatisations tend to be used ideologically for defining a bodily difference between the in-group and the out-group. The characterisation of beauty comes along with a repressive definition of an outsider as ugly. In this case, Hofer is characterised as beautiful and Van der Bellen as ugly. This is a personalisation that implies that one should vote for those characterised as beautiful and not for those who are presented as being ugly. Personalisation reduces politics to simple bodily, psychological, emotional and other subjective features of individuals. It empties out political issues from politics and results in superficial discourses focused on lifestyles, gossips, scandals, sensationalism, and celebrification.

Jörg Haider strongly advanced emotionalisation, personalisation and subjectification as strategies of

populist politics in Austria. He appeared as "fashionable, trendy, and entertaining" (Gingrich 2002: 68). This included informality, events, jokes, music; visits of discos, clubs, beer tents and Sunday morning pints (the so-called *Frühschoppen*); the staging of Haider as sportsman; or the use of different traditional, fashionable, stylish or casual fashion outfits for the right occasions. "Almost everyone finds popular entertainment, fun, leisure time, sports, relaxation, and dancing to be normal and sympathetic, and a politician who conspicuously and effectively emphasizes such activities looks more like a normal family man than do those others who constantly talk about complicated political, economic, and social matters. Emphasizing the average, the normal, and the popular thus is Haider's access route through mass culture to mainstream voters" (Gingrich 2002: 74).

Right-wing populists tend to make use of celebrity culture and the personalisation and commodification of politics: They "oscillate between self-presentations as *Robin Hood* (i.e. saviour of 'the man and woman in the street') and self-presentations as 'rich, famous and/or attractive' (i.e. an 'idol'), frequently leading to a 'softer' image" (Wodak 2013: 28). Strache and Hofer in many respects copy Haider's strategies of the personalisation and commodification of politics. They continue the Haiderisation of politics (Wodak 2013).

Other comments personalised politics by arguing that Hofer and Strache were symbols of Austrian national unity:

"Mr Strache, Mr Hofer. You two are Austria's guardian angels" (#94)

"Yes to Austria and yes to our protector Norbert Hofer. That's the only way it can work" (#203)

"Hofer is at least a real Austrian name. :-)" (#1804)

"Our president [Hofer] who stands for us Austrians" (#6083).

"Norbert Hofer!!!! Austria again and again" (#6144)

"Dear HC Strache. To be totally honest!!! You from the FPÖ are the only hope for our beloved homeland Austria!! Please continue this way and keep a very very strict eye on these traitors to the country and the people!!! I wish you all the best on your way forward!!! Comradely greetings from a convinced Austrian patriot!!! ;-)" (#3422)

These users argue that Hofer has a German name, represents Austria and that the FPÖ stands for the love of the homeland and patriotism. The use of linguonyms (German family name) and nationyms (nation, homeland, etc.) serves the purpose of describing Austria as a German-speaking cultural nation that should be

kept free from immigrants and refugees. Hofer and Strache are seen as the symbols of Austrian nationalism. The reference to Hofer as a “real Austrian name” is an indirect reference to the fact that Van der Bellen is a Dutch name and that Alexander Van der Bellen’s ancestors lived in Russia and Estonia. His parents emigrated from Estonia to Austria. The implication of such arguments is that a presidential candidate who was not born in Austria cannot represent Austrian interests and is likely to be immigration-friendly. It is the call that Austrians should prefer xenophobic, racist and nationalist politicians. “Austria again and again” is a reference to a popular chant of Austrian football fans at matches of the Austrian national team.⁵ “Immer wieder Österreich” (Austria all over again) is also the title an election song that the FPÖ used in the 2015 Vienna local elections⁶. The description of Strache and Hofer as Austria’s guardian angels, of Hofer as protector and as representing “us Austrians” is an expression of the ideological belief in a strong leader who protects the Austrian nation from immigrants and other perceived enemies.

6.2 The Second Discourse Topic: Austrian Nationalism

A second discourse topic was Austrian nationalism. It varies from the first in that it did not identify individual leaders as symbols of Austrian nationalism, but spoke about the importance of unifying the Austrian nation in more general terms.

“But also we are compelled to advocate our homeland and care for a better future” (#20)

“Austria must be preserved for us as Austrians” (#3526)

“Austria first” (#4010)

“Love for the home country is not a crime!!! But to watch how Austria is becoming destroyed is one ...” (#5318)

Karl Marx (1867) introduced the concept of commodity fetishism. He describes the commodity as “strange” (163), “metaphysical” (163), “mystical” (164), and “mysterious” (164) entity that “transcends sensuousness” (163). The commodity “stands on its head” so that odd ideas about the nature of the commodity can emerge. As a consequence, the social relations between

humans appear not “as direct social relations between persons in their work, but rather as material relations between persons and social relations between things” (166). “Grotesque ideas” (163) that naturalise forms of domination and exploitation are the result. Fetishistic thought is not limited to the economy, where the commodity, class, money, capital, etc. appear as natural, but also extends to the political world.

Nationalism is a form of political fetishism that presents a constructed national community as unitary, naturally grown, necessary, superior, and mythological by focusing on stressing a common culture, history, language, ethnicity, territory, etc. It tries to deflect attention from how class relations and power inequalities shape society. Nationalism tries “through a mythology of unity and identity, to project a ‘common instinctual fate’ (uniform social status) between bourgeois and proletarianized groups, eliding the reality of social distinction in differentiated class societies” (Woodley 2010: 17). Nationalism is an ideology that a) “divides the world into ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘friends’ and ‘foes’, positing a homogeneous and fixed identity on either side and stressing the characteristics that differentiate ‘us’ from ‘them’” (Özkirimli 2010: 208), b) makes temporal claims to an authentic connection of national citizens and their common past as well as c) spatial claims to territory in the form of “the quest for a ‘home’” (Özkirimli 2010: 209).

In 1993, the FPÖ conducted an anti-immigration referendum that was signed by 7.35 % of Austria’s eligible voters. The referendum’s title was “Austria first”. One of its demands was to add a clause to the Austrian constitution stating that “Austria is not a country of immigration”. In 2009, HC Strache published a rap song titled “Austria first” (*Österreich zuerst*). In 2011, the FPÖ titled its official party programme “Austria First” (FPÖ 2011).

Many comments in the analysed dataset propagate Austrian nationalism. They argue that Austria as a homeland should come first and that it faces the threat to be destroyed by immigrants and refugees. The implication is that Austria must be defended against foreign influences and should be a unitary cultural nation. Austrian nationalism constructs the Austrian nation as a homogeneous unit of Austrian-born German-speaking individuals who form a national bond by history, language, traditions, and culture. It sees this unity under attack by immigration, refugees and transnational institutions such as the EU. The consequence of this ideology is a call to defend the Austrian nation. Austrian national unity is just like all nationalism a

⁵ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSg6OkpIacs&feature=youtu.be>, accessed on July 5, 2016.

⁶ See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzyUuRXRQfo>, accessed on July 5, 2016.

pure ideological construction. The dialects spoken in Burgenland and Vorarlberg, the easternmost and westernmost Austrian federal states, are so different that citizens living in the two regions often have to resort to standard German in order to understand each other. Burgenland was part of Hungary from 1648 to 1921 and only became part of Austria in 1921. So the joint history of contemporary Austria is historically fairly recent. Gruber is the most common German family name in Austria⁷. In 2016, there were 915 entries for this surname in Vienna's telephone book⁸. Nowak is a very common Czech name. In 2016, there were 301 entries for it in Vienna's phone directory⁹. The prevalence of both German and non-German family names shows Austria's multicultural nature: Many Austrian families have immigrant roots that date back to an earlier generation.

6.3 The Third Discourse Topic: The Friend-Enemy Scheme

In ideologies, positive self-presentation of the in-group is often accompanied by negative other-presentation of the out-group. In far-right ideology, the out-group is often presented as the enemy who threatens the in-group and should therefore be controlled, excluded or removed. The "friend-enemy distinction implied by Manichean demonization [...] plays a fundamental role in codifying enmity" (Woodley 2010: 9). Manichaeism is a highly polarising worldview that sees the world as constituted by opposing good and evil forces. A *third discourse topic* found in the analysed comments was a Manichean worldview that used the *friend-enemy scheme* for constructing a hostile out-group. Van der Bellen was presented as the leader of the out-group and as its most despicable representative.

Some referred to Van der Bellen as "Woof-Woof" (Wau-Wau):

"We want Norbert Hofer as president and not the Woof-Woof" (#338).

"Now the Woof-Woof is the leader of the red-green mafia" (#333).

Such statements are a vilification of Van der Bellen's name, playing with the fact that "bellen" means to bark

⁷ <http://www.telefonabc.at/haeufigste-nachnamen.aspx>, accessed on June 8, 2016.

⁸ <http://www.herold.at/telefonbuch>, accessed on June 8, 2016.

⁹ <http://www.herold.at/telefonbuch>, accessed on June 8, 2016.

in German. Linguistic animalisation and biologisation is a typical semiotic strategy in far-right ideology. The aim is to dehumanise the enemy and to present him/her as a lower type of being.

Van der Bellen was also presented as being a communist and dictator:

"But let us now be glad and happy that Mr VdB saves us as communist – because communism has of course only always done the best for the people" (#564)

"VdB is de-facto the 2nd [Austrian] republic's first dictator, a flawless anti-democrat!!!" (#1147)

"Also Stalin ignored the people – Isn't Bello also a communist, right?" (#1623)

"A dictator, but one would not have expected anything else from this green liar" (#1742)

"The Austrian Stalin" (#2237)

"Joseph Stalin and Tito look down to us. You have found a worthy successor in the People's Republic of Austria under the leader VdB" (#1846)

A common comment of FPÖ supporters on Facebook was that they described Van der Bellen as a dictator comparable to Stalin and Tito. By calling Van der Bellen a communist, such users alluded to the fact that Van der Bellen at the age of twenty had once voted for the Austrian Communist Party KPÖ. The use of strongly emotionally connoted politonyms such as "communist" and "dictator" aims at communicating political danger and presenting the enemy as dangerous.

Most of these postings refer to Alexander Van der Bellen's declaration that as Austrian President he would not provide a mandate to the FPÖ to form a government if the party were the relatively strongest force after elections. On May 24, the German public service broadcasting channel ARD interviewed Van der Bellen, who said in the news programme *Tagesthemen*: "My concerns are not of a personal nature. I have always stressed this fact. They are a matter of European politics because the FPÖ so to speak plays in various suggestions with fire. It flirts with the re-nationalisation of the European Union"¹⁰. In another interview, Van der Bellen also commented on this issue: "We are not in favour of the world's Le Pens governing us"¹¹. In Van

¹⁰ „Meine Bedenken sind nicht persönlicher Art, das habe ich immer betont, sondern europapolitischer Art vor allem, weil die FPÖ in verschiedenen Andeutungen sozusagen mit dem Feuer spielt, mit der Renationalisierung der Europäischen Union liebäugelt“ (ARD Tagesthemen, May 24, 2016).

¹¹ „Wir sind doch nicht dafür, dass die Le Pens dieser Welt uns regieren“ (Die Presse, May 18, 2016).

der Bellen's view, the FPÖ spreads nationalism and xenophobia. His fear is that it has an anti-democratic agenda. This is the reason why he argues against a FPÖ mandate to form the Austrian government. Strache in one of his Facebook postings (see figure 5) inverted this logic and asked: "Who splits the country and plays with fire?" He thereby implied that not the FPÖ, but Van der Bellen advanced a dangerous form of politics.

Article 70 of the Austrian Federal Constitution regulates that the "Chancellor and on his/her recommendation the other members of the federal government are appointed by the President"¹². It does not provide regulations, to which party leader the President gives the mandate to form a government. That the Austrian President chooses not to provide such a mandate to the strongest party after election because s/he is afraid there are anti-democratic tendencies in this party is within the democratic merit of the Austrian constitution. It is by no means anti-democratic or dictatorial. To argue that Van der Bellen is anti-democratic ideologically inverts and distorts political reality.

Other commenters used the somatisation of Van der Bellen as dirty and ill for characterising him:

Who splits the country and plays with fire? A good question that can be answered quickly: The grotty and geriatric '68 generation (#1886).

The old, dishevelled man (#1991).

This train station vagabond should go and shit himself (#2188).

Unshaved, shabby trench tramp (#2189).

Allegedly the old one has cancer from smoking (#6356).

In 2016, Van der Bellen was 72 years old and Norbert Hofer 45. Descriptions of Van der Bellen as old, shabby, unshaved, ill, dishevelled or grotty aim at setting up a dichotomy that aims at delegitimising Van der Bellen and legitimising Hofer by references to bodily appearance and health. Right-wing ideology often codes the Us/Them distinction inherent in the friend-enemy scheme as a series of dualisms: On the one side we find something on the inside that is presented as modern, popular, entertaining, colourful, young, attractive, ordinary, good-looking, or healthy. On the other side, the opposition is presented as outdated, timid, boring, unappealing, old, unattractive, withdrawn, dirty, or ill.

Other enemies mentioned in comments were the European Union, mass media like the Austrian Broad-

casting Corporation, social democrats, Greens, migrants, and Islam:

[EU Commission President] Juncker must go!!! The Brussels terrorists (#3640)

Hopefully this pigsty EU decays soon! (#3659)

The lying press says the FPÖ is the problem and not mass immigration, criminality, Islamisation, the EU, the ECB [European Central Bank], bureaucratisation, the loss of prosperity, etc. That's also how the GDR [German Democratic Republic] ended, and the red-green-black [= alliance of Social Democrats-Greens-Conservatives] dictatorship will end exactly the same way! (#4145)

The aggressive ORF moderator [Lou Lorenz-Dittlbacher, who conducted a critical TV interview with Strache] is annoying – just like the whole contaminated ORF! [Austrian Broadcasting Corporation = Austria's public service broadcaster] Somehow understandable, they all fear for their jobs. If the FPÖ had to decide on that: No compulsory licence fees any longer → No ORF any longer. Sometime it will happen (#4279).

Jean-Claude Juncker congratulated Van der Bellen on his (preliminary) victory. The President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz said that this preliminary win was a "defeat of Eurosceptics"¹³. In the analysed dataset, FPÖ supporters reacted in a very Manichean and defensive manner to any criticism of Hofer, Strache, or the FPÖ. They presented themselves as victims of a conspiracy instigated by a union of green, social democratic and conservative politicians, the media, the EU, immigrants and refugees, communists, Freemasonry, etc. They perceive themselves and the FPÖ to be under constant attack and construct themselves as victims, which disregards that it is the FPÖ and its followers who tend to construct scapegoats, especially migrants, refugees and Islam. The perceived association of enemies is verbally attacked by the use of on the one hand strong political categories (terrorism, dictatorship, etc.) and on the other hand biologicistic language (pigsty, contamination, etc.).

It is not a surprise that one of the identified enemies is the EU. The FPÖ already under Jörg Haider turned into a Eurosceptic party. Haider for example wrote in 1993: "If this Europe is not to be a cultural and linguistic pabulum coming from the Brussels bureaucrats' meat chopper, then the development into a Europe of peoples and ethnic groups must be enabled" (cited in: Bailer-Galanda/Neugebauer 1997: 192). In 1996, he said: "But

¹² Bundes-Verfassungsgesetz: German version, accessed on <https://www.ris.bka.gv.at> (July 6, 2016).

¹³ Schulz-Kern-Treffen: Hofburg-Ergebnis „Niederlage für Euro-Skeptiker“. Kronen Zeitung, May 27, 2016.

our idea of Europe is not a pabulum in Brussels, but our idea is a Europe of home countries” (cited in: Bailer-Galanda/Neugebauer 1997: 193). The FPÖ’s (2011) Party Programme is committed to a “Europe of free peoples and fatherlands”. It spells out that the EU is questioned because it is seen as a danger to nationalism. “We are committed to a Europe of peoples and autochthonous groups of people which have developed through history, and firmly reject any artificial synchronisation of the diverse European languages and cultures by means of forced multiculturalism, globalisation and mass immigration. Europe shall not be reduced to a political project of the European Union” (FPÖ 2011). Austrian nationalism that puts “Austria first” was also evident in the analysed comments. Euroscepticism was very present. Hofer argues for an Austrian referendum on leaving the EU (Öxit, Auxit) in case of “Turkey joining – but also if the EU becomes more centralistic”¹⁴.

6.4 The Fourth Discourse Topic: New Racism

A *fourth discourse topic* found in the dataset was *new racism and xenophobia*. It is closely related to the friend-enemy-scheme. Immigrants and refugees were seen as the main threat to the Austrian nation.

“For the FPÖ, the Austrian to whom this country belongs first, also when refugees are on the way the Austrian MUST come first!” (#3964)

“The SPÖ and its friends have destroyed, estranged and islamised our country!” (#4144)

“Please do something before Islam swamps us !!!!!!!” (#119)

“They [those not born in Austria] do not have our roots, not our religion” (#205)

“Austria must first look for its own citizens, in respect to jobs, that they are motivated and have a meaningful life. Only then can we think of asylum seekers!” (#6457)

“What are the SPÖ [Social Democratic Party of Austria] and the Greens? In my view they are hostile towards native citizens [inländerfeindlich].... Because they allow the mass immigration of criminals.... Rapists, killers etc... Where will this end?” (#584)

“I do not want that we in Austria give shelter to even more ‘refugees’ that are none, on a mandatory basis every

year, are you still normal at all? Who wants that, not me and also not 50 %!” (#2585)

“I feel sorry for people who for example live in Traiskirchen [Austrian town with the country’s largest refugee camp] or parents in Vienna, Salzburg or Linz, whose children commute to school per train, subway or bus day by day. They live in the daily fear whether their children get home safely. [...] For me, our own country is important, the future as well as safeguards for my children [...] I am a realist and patriot who loves his country and its population!!!” (#5307).

“The country needs other politicians. Austrians first. These politics suck. Foreigners receive more than we taxpayers” (#64)

“We do not need even more asylum seekers in our beautiful Austria because we have enough of our own people who are in need of help. In my opinion one first and foremost has to do something for us Austrians before we always throw money at others” (#5916).

Whereas nationalism defines an illusionary inside of a national community, new racism is a repressive politics that defines and struggles against the perceived outside and makes use of racialising ideological practices for defending the inside/outside differentiation with violent means. The defence of boundaries takes not just place outside, but also inside a nation state. “Racism is constantly emerging out of nationalism, not only towards the exterior but towards the interior” (Balibar/Wallerstein 1991: 53). New racism operates “by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness” (Hall 1989/1996: 445). The out-group is often presented in the form of stereotypes that reduce, essentialise, naturalise, and fix the power differences between the in- and the out-group (Hall 1997: 258). New racism justifies the exploitation, exclusion, domination, or annihilation of an out-group. One can draw a “distinction between a racism of extermination or elimination (an ‘exclusive’ racism) and a racism of oppression or exploitation (an ‘inclusive’ racism)” (Balibar/Wallerstein 1991: 39).

The new racism present in the cited comments makes use of a number of classical stereotypes that can be summarised in the following statements (see Reisigl/Wodak 2001: 55):

- Cultural stereotypes: “There are already too many foreigners here and more immigrants and refugees in the country overforeignise our culture and

¹⁴ http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160702_OTSo027/hofer-in-oesterreich-eu-austritts-referendum-wenn-eu-zentralistischer-wird, accessed on July 6, 2016.

society. Foreigners have a different culture, religion and lifestyle that does not belong into our country”

- Economic stereotypes: “Foreigners take away Austrians’ jobs and dump wages”

- Criminal stereotypes: “Foreigners are criminals, violent and aggressive”

- Welfare stereotypes: “Foreigners cost lots of money that we need for our own people. They are socio-parasites who get more out of the welfare and tax system than they pay in”

- Gender stereotypes: “Foreigners are sexists and rapists. They have an inherently repressive patriarchal attitude towards women”.

The new racism immanent in the discussed statements constructs Austrians as an in-group who are under attack by foreigners as an out-group who come to Austria as immigrants and refugees. It aims at defending a pure Austrian nation from foreign influences and implicitly argues that only Austrian-born, white, German-speaking Roman-Catholics should be allowed to live in the country. Foreigners are presented as an alien social and cultural out-group that threatens Austria’s culture (language, customs, habits, religion, lifestyle), economy (jobs, wages) and the social system (crime and violence, welfare, gender relations). The statements imply an exclusive new racism, i.e. that foreigners should have to leave the country.

6.5 The Fifth Discourse Topic: Violence

The *fifth discourse topic* present in the dataset is a radicalisation of the friend/enemy- scheme: the threat or wish to use *violence against the perceived enemies*.

“Only a rebellion of patriots would now help and EVERYONE JOINS IN!” (#3163)

“If the EU violently imposes penalties on differing opinions, then this is clearly dictatorship and that’s something the majority will not accept. There will then be uprisings and demonstrations with more or less outbursts of violence” (#167).

“The time will come where they all fall into the pit. AND WE WILL THEN FILL UP THE PIT!!!!” (#5862)

[Users about the Austrian writer Robert Menasse’s voiced opinion that Strache is a Nazi and a local SPÖ-politician’s support for Menasse’s statement]:

“Such people should be immediately imprisoned” (#894) “I would immediately revoke the Austrian citizenship of SPÖ-local party secretary Reinhard Kadlec and Mr Robert Menasse” (#656)

“They all together belong into an internment camp because they are a danger to all citizens” (#742)

“For this statement, he deserves to have his face smashed in” (#571)

“Aha, this pinko should be blown away” (#1426)

[About Alexander Van der Bellen]:

“If the FPÖ would indeed achieve the majority of the votes and Bello carries out this threat, then he should be chased out of office with a wet shred” (#1913)

“My partner is already a bit afraid that I throw the next thing into the direction of the TV when I see VdB! I must really restrain myself because this morning I answered to the greetings of a Romanian who lives in my house by saying ‘Go and shit yourself’...” (#3880)

“And then people wonder if the cold lust to kill comes up in a decent Hofer-voter...” (#1945)

[About the journalist Lou Lorenz-Dittlbacher, who conducted a critical interview with Strache]:

“I would have landed the OBNOXIOUS Dittlbacher one in the face. She is even more disgusting than Thurnher [= another ORF television journalist]” (#4571)

Some of the comments demanded demonstrations, a rebellion and uprisings in the light of Van der Bellen’s preliminary victory in the May 2016-Austrian presidential election. Civil society protests are mostly peaceful and it is politically dangerous to frame them in the context of violence. There were, however, also comments that explicitly demanded demonstrations with “outbursts of violence”. Far-right ideology tends to argue for a strong state that enforces law-and-order politics. Some commenters demanded a totalitarian state that limits freedom of speech by imprisoning, interning and stripping citizenship rights from political opponents of the FPÖ. There were calls to chase Van der Bellen out of office and to kill him. There were calls for physical violence against politicians, writers and journalists. Acts of violence mentioned as means that should be directed at identified enemies included hitting, shooting, and general killing.

Such comments display the inherent violent potentials of far-right ideology. The ideological definition of a unitary nation as in-group and enemy out-groups polarises political relations. Stereotypes aim at ideologically dehumanising the out-groups and at fostering the in-group’s aggression and hatred towards the constructed enemies. Right-wing extremism tends to use a “violent linguistic rhetoric”, advance the “damaging of the political opponent”, and has an inherent “linguistic latency of aggression and defamation” (Holzer 1993: 65). Constant far-right demagoguery against huma-

nists, immigrants, refugees, socialists, etc. can lower the inhibition threshold of citizens who are prone to such ideology and can condition that they voice violent threats against perceived enemies or engage in physical attacks, anonymous online or offline threats, etc.

The German legal theorist Carl Schmitt, who was associated with Nazism, introduced the friend/enemy scheme in his book *The Concept of the Political*. “The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy” (Schmitt 1932/1996: 26). War and physical killing are for Schmitt inherent aspects of the very concept of the enemy: “For to the enemy concept belongs the ever present possibility of combat. [...] The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing. War follows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy. It is the most extreme consequence of enmity” (32-33).

The friend/enemy scheme was also at the heart of Nazi fascism. It conceived Germans as a superior race that needs to form a nation and rid itself of what it considered to be its enemies, especially Jews, socialists, the working class movements and communists. Hitler called for the annihilation of Nazism’s enemies. “If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the bolshevization of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe, for the time when the non-Jewish nations had no propaganda is at an end” (Hitler 1939). A fascist society based on mass extermination is the most devastating potential consequence of nationalism and fascism. Far-right ideology does not see social problems as the result of structural power inequalities and contradictions of society, but it personalises them and inscribes them biologically or/and culturally into individuals and groups. It uses specific naturalised and essentialised characteristics that are assigned to belong to what is conceived of as enemy groups. Fetishistic thought can lead to violence and in the final instance to fascism, Nazism and politics of mass annihilation.

7. Conclusion

The historian Willibald Holzer (1993) lists the following characteristics of right-wing extremism:

- Stress of the existence and importance of a national community;

- Exclusion of the foreign; Social Darwinism; ethnocentrism; ethnic separatism;
- Authoritarianism, anti-pluralism, opposition to democracy;
- Anti-socialism, focus on competition and performance;
- Authoritarian state;
- Scapegoating;
- Orientation on traditions; apologetic concept of history;
- A political style that features demagogy and acceptance of violence.

The core of right-wing extremism can be summarised as consisting in the principles of 1) authoritarian populism guided by the leadership principle, 2) nationalism, 3) the friend/enemy scheme, and 4) militarism (Fuchs forthcoming). This paper analysed how voters of Norbert Hofer expressed their support on Facebook. The analysis showed that all key elements of right-wing extremism could be found in online comments.

The leadership principle online was expressed as admiration for Hofer and Strache. Both were seen as charismatic leaders, to whom voters have an emotional relationship. Supporters projected Austrian nationalism into the image of superhuman leaders. Hofer was described as sympathetic, young, good-looking, which reduced politics to personalisation. Austrian nationalism online was expressed by arguments that claimed that a unitary Austrian nation consisting of a homogeneous Austrian-born linguistic and cultural community exists that is under threat by immigration, refugees, socialists, communists, Greens, critical media and transnational institutions such as the EU.

The friend/enemy scheme online could be found in the analysed dataset in the form of Manichean views of and hatred spread against the Green party presidential candidate Alexander Van der Bellen, journalists, the European Union, the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation ORF, migrants, refugees, Islam, social democrats and the Green party. Van der Bellen was characterised as dictator, communist, animal, dirty, ill, ugly, old, dishevelled and grotty. Immigrants and refugees were seen as the main threat to the Austrian nation. Users made use of cultural, economic, criminal and gender stereotypes. Elements of online militarism and militancy were present in the form of violent threats to and death wishes for politicians such as Alexander Van der Bellen, writers and journalists.

The overall result of the analysis is that right-wing extremist ideology was very significantly observable

Figure 16: Examples of online violence in the context of the 2016 Austrian presidential election



Source: <http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Mord-Drohung-gegen-Van-der-Bellen/237125974>
(published on May 25, 2016; accessed on September 19, 2016).

in the comments made on the Facebook pages of the leading FPÖ politicians Heinz-Christian Strache and Norbert Hofer. Online leadership ideology, online nationalism, new racism online and online xenophobia, the friend/enemy-scheme online, and online militarism constitute important elements of right-wing extremism online. On the one hand, demagogues exercise far-right ideology “from above”. On the other hand such ideology can only persist through hegemony “from below”. Social media are an important medium that fosters right-wing extremist responses from below to far-right ideology from above. As a result of violence propagated online, Alexander Van der Bellen was after the May 2016 presidential election put under special police protection. One Facebook posting had published his private address and called for terrorist attacks against him. Figure 16 shows some examples of online violence in the context of the Austrian presidential election.

- 1) Vienna will fall first. And then we'll see further
- 2) The chancellery and the Hofburg [office of the Austrian president] ought to be stormed, and the parliament be burnt down
- 3) Those who voted for van der Belln ought to be burnt on the stake
- 4) The Glock 17 [a type of pistol] is loaded and ready to fire
- 5) It will surely be a bombastic atmosphere
- 6) The weapon is unpacked !
- 7) Onto the streets in order to run riot
- 8) What a shame. One really should take to the streets and bring everything to a halt

Answers to the question of how to react to right-wing extremism online are not straightforward. Calls for violence should of course always be reported to the police. At the same time, the Internet will always provide possibilities for anonymity, so there will always be loopholes for militant online fascism. A small number of Van der Bellen supporters posted criticism of far-right ideology on Strache and Hofer's Facebook pages. Two example comments:

The FPÖ is a “nationalist, xenophobic party under the disguise of love for the homeland” (#5619).

“How violent are you actually? This is simply just brutal! [...] And express your opinions without death threats. I have heard that now even the Cobra [special police unit] must protect Van der Bellen because someone made death threats. You create fear. How do you think that he now feels? Nobody deserves this” (#5847)

Hofer and Strache supporters largely ignored such appeals and arguments. They did not react to them. In some cases, they voiced threats against Van der Bellen supporters:

“What if once something happens to you, when you are the centre of an act of violence, will you then wake up?” (#4060)

The crisis of capitalism has resulted in an intensification and extension of right-wing extremism that promises simple xenophobic and new racist solutions to social problems. The intensification of online right-wing extremism is a manifestation of this tendency. There are no easy fixes to this unsettling reality. Only profound social, political, socio-economic, educational and cultu-

ral responses can ground an effective form of contemporary anti-fascism. Slavoj Žižek (2016: 100) argues that what is needed is “a positive universal project shared by all participants”, a project for the commons that makes different suffering groups see that they “are parts of one and the same universal struggle” (101). Such a project is commonly called “socialism”. Given the inherent connection of capitalism, nationalism and new racism, a fundamental change of power relations, the economy and politics is needed in order to avoid the possibility of a “fascism-producing crisis” (Eley 2015: 112).

The reasons for the rise of the FPÖ in Austria are complex and manifold. They include an incomplete Denazification process, Austrian nationalism, Austrian neoliberalism, the role of right-wing media, the institutional containment of class struggle, weakness of the political Left, a low level of general education, and the patronage system (see Fuchs 2016a for a detailed discussion). The FPÖ's electoral successes are an indication that the “spectre which is haunting Europe, some 60 years after the end of the Third Reich and its national-socialist ideology, is the ‘spectre of radical right-wing populism’” (Wodak 2013: 24). One must certainly add that the spectre of new racism, new nationalism and the New Right is articulated with capitalist development and class structures – destructive forces that already Marx and Engels criticised when publishing the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. Right-wing populism combines social issues with nationalism and new racism and pretends to fill the vacuum that has been created by social democracy's move towards embracing neoliberalism and shifting itself towards the right in the political spectrum.

New right populism is “the price the Left pays for renouncing any radical political project, and accepting market capitalism as ‘the only game in town’” (Žižek 2000/2006: 41). “The populist Right moves to occupy the terrain evacuated by the Left, as the only ‘serious’ political force that still employs an anti-capitalist rhetoric – even if thickly coated with a nationalist/racist/religious veneer” (Žižek 2000/2006: 33-34). The only feasible challenge to right-wing populism solution is the re-invention of the Left and the creation of a new socialism for the 21st century. If such a project fails, then we may very well be on the path towards a new fascism in Europe and throughout the world. We are today again at the crossroads that Rosa Luxemburg, citing Friedrich Engels, identified exactly 100 years ago: “Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism.” (Luxemburg 1916: 388)

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Appendix: Hofer and Strache's Postings on Facebook

Figure 1: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 1



We are committed to our homeland Austria and its people! We continue reliably and consequently on our path! Thank you for your huge support!

Figure 2: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 2



Norbert Hofer is and remains the President of Hearts! [Image text: President of Hearts]

Figure 3: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 3



That's just primitive and shabby! [Link to an online article titled "SPÖ local party secretary derails completely: Voters of Hofer are 'Nazis, fascists, idiots'"]

Figure 4: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 4



Such rants are simply primitive, disgraceful and outrageous! Our FPÖ vice-mayor Michael Schnedlitz (image) has uncovered of a high SPÖ-functionary in Wiener Neustadt [Link to an online article titled "SPÖ politician designates Hofer as a Nazi"]

Figure 5: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 5



Who splits the country and plays with fire? [Link to an online article titled "Alexander Van der Bellen plays with fire"]

Figure 6: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 6

HC Strache
28 May at 11:30 · 🌐

Wundersame Briefwahlkartenvermehrung sogar um 60.000! Der oberste Wahlleiter Mag. Stein (aus dem BMI - Bundesministerium für Inneres) gerät gehörig unter Druck!

Neben den 5 Bezirken, wo gesetzeswidrig - ohne Wahlbeisitzer - ausgezählt wurde (der Innenminister hat Anzeige erstattet), Waidhofen/Ybbs mit sagenhaften 146% Wahlbeteiligung, der doppelten Stimme dank Briefwahlkarte (aufgedeckt von einem Video-Blogger), und viele andere Hinweise und Ungereimtheiten!

Darüber hinaus die fragwürdige BMI-Hochrechnung - nach über 65% Auszählungsgrad - mit 56,5% für Norbert Hofer, welche in Folge vom BMI gelöscht wurde. Computer irren in der Regel nicht!

Ein veröffentlichtes Online-Briefwahlergebnis vom BMI am Abend des Wahlsonntags, bevor überhaupt die Briefwahlkarten am Montag ab 9 Uhr gesetzeskonform ausgezählt wurden. Dies wurde später ebenso gelöscht und als Fehler und Panne abgetan! Computer machen in der Regel keine Fehler, nur die Personen, die sie steuern und bedienen!!!

In einem ZIB2-Interview sprach Herr Stein von 740.000 Briefwahlkarten (ein Hochrechner aus seinem Ministerium nannte exakt 738.055), welche dann wundersam aus unerklärlichen Gründen noch deutlich angestiegen sind (sogar um rund 60.000!).

Eine international völlig einzigartige, ja fragwürdige hohe Anzahl an ungültigen Stimmen bei den Briefwahlkarten und einiges mehr!

Volle Transparenz, Kontrolle und Aufklärung sind jetzt das Gebot der Stunde! Es geht jetzt um Demokratie und Rechtsstaat! Und das Vertrauen der Bürger in diesen Rechtsstaat und seine demokratischen Grundregeln!

Miraculous augmentation of the postal voting cards by 60.000! Chief election administrator MA Stein (from the Federal Ministry of the Interior) comes under significant pressure!

Besides the 5 districts, in which the votes were counted illegally without election assessors (the Minister of the Interior filed charges), there was a fabulous turnout of 146 % in Waidhofen/Ybbs, one double vote thanks to a postal voting card (uncovered by a video-blogger), and many other hints and inconsistencies!

Furthermore there was the questionable projection by the Federal Ministry of the Interior that showed 56.5 % for Norbert Hofer with 65 % of ballots counted. Computers usually do not err!

The Federal Ministry of the Interior had published the result of the postal votes online at the evening of election Sunday before the postal votes were counted on Monday after 9 o'clock. The information was later deleted and dismissed as error and malfunction! Computers usually do not make mistakes, only the people who control and operate them do!!!

Mr Stein spoke in a ZIB2-interview [evening news programme on the public service broadcasting channel ORF 2] of 740,000 postal votes (a projectionist from his ministry spoke of exactly 738,055) that then miraculously and inexplicably further increased significantly (even by about 60,000!).

There was an internationally completely unique, questionably high amount of invalid ballots among the postal voting cards! And much more!

Full transparency, control and elucidation are now the order of the day! It is now a question of democracy and the rule of law! And a question of citizens' trust in this rule of law and its basic democratic rules!

Figure 7: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 7

HC Strache
27 May at 12:30 · 🌐

Auf die guten Ratschläge von Herrn Schulz für Kern haben die Österreicher gewartet.



Hofburg-Ergebnis "Niederlage für Euro-Skeptiker"
Bundeskanzler Christian Kern (SPÖ) hat am Donnerstagabend den Präsidenten des EU-Parlaments, Martin Schulz, in Wien empfangen. Themen des Gesprächs...
WWW.KRONE.AT

Like Comment Share

HC Strache and 1.1k others Top comments

The Austrians surely have waited for Mr Schulz's "good" advice to [the Austrian Chancellor] Kern [Link to the online article "Hofburg election result is 'a defeat of the Euro-sceptics'"]

Figure 8: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 8

HC Strache
27 May at 09:20 · 🌐

Junker freut sich, mit Van der Bellen an einem zentralistischen EU-Bundesstaat zu bauen und damit in Wahrheit Österreich abschaffen zu wollen.

Wir werden jedenfalls weiter auf unser Österreich aufpassen!



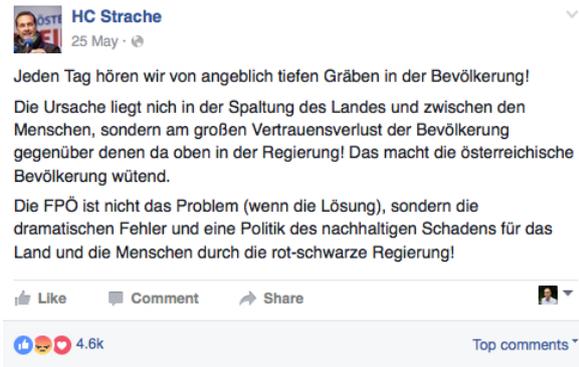
Juncker malte VdB Herz auf Gratulationsschreiben
<https://www.facebook.com/oe24.at/posts/10157023689930529>
WWW.OE24.AT

Like Comment Share

1.6k Top comments

Juncker is happy to be able to construct a centralistic EU-federal state together with Van der Bellen. The truth is that this is about Austria's abolition. We will in any case continue to take care of our Austria! [Link to posting titled "Juncker painted a heart on the letter of congratulation to Van der Bellen"]

Figure 9: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 9



Every day we hear about the allegedly deep divide in the population!
The cause is not the division of the country and of the people, but the population's loss of confidence in those up there in the government! This is what infuriates the Austrian population.
The FPÖ is not the problem (but rather the solution). The problems are the SPÖ/ÖVP-government's dramatic errors and the politics of sustainable harm caused to the country.

Figure 10: Heinz Christian Strache's Facebook posting no. 10



My interview in yesterday's ZIB 2:

Figure 11: Norbert Hofer's Facebook posting no. 11



[Hofer's reposting of Strache's posting no. 1]

Figure 12: Norbert Hofer's Facebook posting no. 2



Here is the current issue of the "New Free Newspaper", featuring images of and articles on the presidential election [Image text: Norbert Hofer remains the "President of Hearts"]

Figure 13: Norbert Hofer's Facebook posting no. 3



The FPÖ is not a right-wing extremist party. If a right-wing extremist party had run in Austria, it would have received an election result of maybe two percent. The share of fools in Austria is definitely not larger. We are a highly responsible centre-right party. [Link to online article titled "Hofer: 'Share of fools in Austria is at the most two percent'"]

Figure 14: Norbert Hofer's Facebook posting no. 4



Here are my statements from yesterday's joint press conference with HC Strache

Figure 15: Norbert Hofer's Facebook posting no. 5



My interview with the ORF [Austrian Broadcasting Corporation] from yesterday