The Success of the Radical Right in Europe: Origins and Consequences

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Phenomenon: Since about the 1980s, radical Right-Wing Populist (RRP) parties have experienced success in Europe. Furthermore, much of their support is blue-collar. This could both tell us something about changes to the socioeconomic structure of European countries, and suggest how lasting and significant these new parties will be.

Summary

Themes of Politics: Economic vs. Social
- Materialism: Strong “pocketbook” ties
- Post-materialism: The “winners of modernity” can look beyond pocketbook issues
- Pre-materialism: The “losers of modernity” have lost faith in pocketbook policies
- Socially, workers are to the right of left-wing party elites
- Under materialist politics, this was irrelevant because they were “locked in” by economic policy

Common Traits of RRP Parties
- “Strong leader” principles
- Xenophobic
- Anti-establishment
- Libertarian

Abbreviated Model

Core Factors
- Industrial Decline
  - Austria: High (~15%) and High (27%)
  - Denmark: Moderate (~8%) and Low (20%)
  - Germany: High (~20%) and High (30%)
- Xenophobia
  - Austria: High (~4%) and High (27%)
  - Denmark: Moderate (~30%) and Low (18.7%)
  - Germany: High (~10%) and High (4.9%)

Protest Factors
- Unemployment
  - Austria: Low (~4%) and Moderate (~30%)
  - Denmark: High (~8%) and Moderate (~25%)
  - Germany: High (~10%) and High (~50%)
- Inflation
  - Austria: Low ~3.1% and Moderate ~15%
  - Denmark: High (~10%) and Low (~5%)
  - Germany: High (~10%) and Low (~5%)
- Political stagnation
  - Austria: Moderate ~30% and Low ~18.7%
  - Denmark: High (~10%) and Low (~5%)
  - Germany: High (~10%) and Low (~5%)

Conclusions

Austria: both social and economic
- Strong core formation beneath striking protest wave

Denmark: mostly social
- Multiplicity of small parties may disperse protest voting
- Have the liberals regained credibility on “working-class libertarianism”? Has the DFP found a niche as “sidekick”?-
- Decreasing economic salience makes social appeal to workers tenable

Germany: mostly economic
- Tenacity of welfare arrangements gives social democrats strong union support, though it may alienate other groups
- Liberal policy, plus a dash of welfare = RRP formula
- Can the far left, sans xenophobia, substitute for RRP?
- Traditional explanation: Nazi past makes political xenophobia and authoritarian attitudes unmarketable
- Alternate explanation from this study: it may be the economic factors that are lagging behind
- Are regional successes the start of a breakthrough? Are stronger economic factors in East Germany the cause?