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## ‘Anything Goes!’ – The Haiderization of Europe

Ruth Wodak

In case of doubt we have put a limit on the presumptuousness of the powerful and have strengthened *the back of citizens*. Although the ruling class has never forgiven us for this, *the people* have thanked us for this by supporting us. Our politics has thus been condescendingly denounced for being populist. But whatever!

Jörg Haider, Speech ‘On the State of the Republic and the Situation of the FPÖ’, 12 November 1999, emphasis added

### ‘We’ and ‘the people’

On 21 February 1848, *The Communist Manifesto*, written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, was published in London. The *Manifesto* starts with a phrase which soon became, and has remained, very famous: ‘A spectre is haunting Europe, the spectre of communism’. In the meantime, this prominent phrase has been recontextualized many times: to indicate the ‘democracy deficit and loss of trust in the European Union’,<sup>1</sup> or the alleged and perceived ‘threat of migrant workers from Eastern Europe who might take the jobs away from German workers’,<sup>2</sup> or to point to manifestations of racism across Europe.<sup>3</sup> In all these cases, what seems to be meant and described points to something unknown or strange, a vague, only partially visible and blurred phenomenon (a ‘spectre’), which has thus not become distinct, nor attributable to a traditional and recognizable category. Moreover, this vague phenomenon is seen as potentially powerful, threatening to ‘overwhelm’ an entire continent, or impinge on abstract concepts, such as employment or democracy, related to this continent, namely Europe. Semantically, the meaning of this phrase also entails dynamism and change.

<sup>1</sup> <www.euractiv.de/europa-2020-und-reformen/artikel/eu-vertrauenskrise-ein-gespenst-geht-um-in-europa-0050884> [accessed 15 November 2011].

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> <http://minderheiten.at/stat/stimme/stimme25c.htm> [accessed 15 November 2011].

In this way, this famous and so frequently re- and misused phrase seems to fit the phenomenon under investigation in this chapter (and volume) well: the 'spectre which is haunting Europe', some 60 years after the end of the Second World War and the official abolishment of the Third Reich and its national-socialist ideology, is the 'spectre of radical right-wing populism' (see also Judt 2008, 2010). To date, although many books, book chapters and articles<sup>4</sup> have attempted to understand and propose theories about these 'new' social movements, we are still confronted with a range of puzzles and unexplained aspects: Are these movements really new and in what ways? Why have these social movements become so successful in such historically different national and sociopolitical contexts as, for example, France, Austria, Greece, Hungary, Sweden and Switzerland? Whom do they address and how, and what kinds of rhetoric, slogans and argumentation schema do they usually employ? Do they 'perform politics' in the same way, that is, like more traditional mainstream politicians in a globalized world where politics and media are related to each other in such intricate ways (Wodak 2010a, b, 2011a, b, c, Higgins 2009)?

If one reads the above-quoted utterance by Jörg Haider, the infamous former leader of the *Austrian Freedom party* (FPÖ) from 1986 until 2005, and then of the FPÖ's splinter group *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich* (BZÖ) until 2008,<sup>5</sup> the identification with *the people* is striking. Who are 'THE' people? The use of the *argumentum ad populum* in an overgeneralizing manner to define one's own identity is certainly a constitutive feature of radical right-wing populist parties. *Argumentum ad populum* is integrated with the *fallacy of hasty generalization*, which implies that: first, Haider does represent *THE people*; secondly, that all individuals who make up this vague group have the *same* beliefs, hence projecting his own beliefs onto the entire group of Austrians; and thirdly, that nation states actually consist of *homogenous* groups, of people. An important related rhetorical trope comes to mind: *metonymy*. In this way, Haider sees himself as standing for the people: 'Haider = Austria' is the underlying metonymic meaning.<sup>6</sup>

But not only identification is noticeable, a sense of achievement is also explicitly visible – Haider seems proud of having already succeeded in stopping the implied exploitation of 'normal' citizens by the powerful: the FPÖ thus supports the people *against those up there*. And thirdly, there is Haider's positive self-presentation as courageous and defiant: even if the others are angry and will not forgive us [the FPÖ], it does not matter! Haider is the authentic representative of 'THE people,' one of us,

<sup>4</sup> See inter alia: Butterwege 1996, Pelinka and Wodak 2002, Wodak and Felinka 2002, Rydgren 2005, Ignazi 2006, Hainsworth 2008, Mudge 2009, Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2009, Kovács 2010, Harrison and Bruter 2011, and Globisch and Pufelska 2011.

<sup>5</sup> On 8 October 2010, Haider – totally drunk – was speeding and crashed his Porsche in a small Carinthian village in the middle of the night, and subsequently died.

<sup>6</sup> See Reisigl and Wodak (2001), van Eenemeren (2010) and Reisigl (2007) for detailed definitions of specific argumentative schemes and moves. In this chapter, I rely on the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak 2009, Wodak 2001, 2011a) when analysing radical right-wing populist rhetoric in some of its current manifestations. Due to space restrictions, I cannot present this framework in any detail in this chapter; however, I will define and explain specific concepts whenever I apply them in the analysis of concrete examples.

chosen to protect and defend 'us' like *Robin Hood*, courageous and brave, saying things which others would like to say but do not dare. I will come back to these typical features of radical right-wing populist rhetoric below.

Of course, similar rhetoric can be observed in many European countries and beyond. Thus, not only in Austria but across Europe, the *extreme right* have carefully refined their electoral programmes under the rubric of nationalist-populist and chauvinistic slogans, and have subsequently adopted more subtle (i.e. *coded*) forms of exclusion and racism.<sup>7</sup> The move away from overt neo-fascist discourse has in fact allowed some parties to expand their electoral support as *populist nationalist parties*, focusing on the protection of – seemingly homogenous – national identities or a 'mythical' homeland (*Heimat*).<sup>8</sup> This has led to an increase in discriminatory and exclusionary language use, not its decline, since racism often now takes more pervasive diffuse forms on board, except for some Eastern and South European countries (such as Hungary, Poland, Romania, Russia, Greece, and the Baltic States; see, for example: Wodak & Richardson 2012), chapters by Kovács (Ch. 15), Auer & Kasekamp (Ch. 16), and Shekhovstov (Ch. 17) in this volume) where explicit racist, xenophobic and antisemitic utterances remain part and parcel of respective political cultures. Indeed Holz (2011) suggests that in the former Stalinist-communist European countries, anti-Semitism has a specific unifying transnational function:

Der nationale Antisemitismus ist aufgrund der ihm inhärenten Figur des Dritten genuin transnational und im gleichen Atemzug und aus dem gleichen Grund heraus national. Er ist transnational, weil er die Juden als *Welfeind* der Nationen und der nationalen Ordnung imaginiert. Beides zusammen aber bedeutet, die Welt aus Sicht der eigenen Wir-Gruppe zu beschreiben, also von einer Mehrzahl an Völkern auszugehen, und diese nationale Ordnung der Welt – und nicht nur der eigenen Existenz der eigenen Gruppe – im Juden bedroht zu sehen... Ein solcher gemeinsamer Feind verbindet. Der gemeinsame Antisemitismus lässt keineswegs alle Grenzziehungen zwischen den europäischen Nationen verschwinden. Gerade die extremen Rechten sind in aller Regel extreme Nationalisten und Feinde all dessen, was sie für fremd halten. (200–1)

National anti-Semitism is genuinely transnational because of the inherent figure of 'the Third/Other'; simultaneously, anti-Semitism is national because of the same reason. It (anti-Semitism) is transnational because it views Jews as the enemy of the entire *world* and also of all national order. Taken together, this means that the world – seen from the perspective of a 'we-group' and not only from the view of one's own existence in one's own group – feels threatened by 'the Jew'. Such a common enemy unites. The common anti-Semitism does not make all borders between European nations disappear. However, precisely the extreme Right are extreme nationalists and enemies of everything which they perceive as strange/foreign (translation by RW).

<sup>7</sup> See Krzyżanowski and Wodak 2009, Mammone 2009, Richardson and Wodak 2009a, b, Wodak 2007, 2011b, c, Harrison and Bruter 2011 and Delanty et al. 2011.

<sup>8</sup> See Billig 2006, Gingrich and Banks 2006, and Wodak and Köhler 2010.

Holz is certainly right in stating that a typical kind of traditional, national and simultaneously transnational anti-Semitism continues to unify radical right-wing populist parties, in spite of seeming to be paradoxical. However, as Holz argues very plausibly, the alleged transnational influence presupposes the old stereotype of the so-called world conspiracy, whereas on a national level, Jews are perceived as foreigners and thus as threatening the alleged homogenous national identity. Moreover, the patterns of antisemitic prejudice are recontextualized – as a kind of archetype of hatred and prejudice – onto other ethnic and marginalized groups, such as Roma, Muslims and so forth. In some countries, anti-Muslim prejudice and stereotypes seem to have replaced, or at least backgrounded, antisemitic rhetoric (e.g. in the United Kingdom and in Germany); in other countries, both traditional antisemitic and anti-Muslim attitudes are explicitly combined (e.g. in Austria); and in the Eastern European countries, both sets of prejudices are vibrant but do not always occur simultaneously. Of course, there are more and other possible combinations, such as in Sweden<sup>9</sup> and in France (see the chapter by Beauzamy (Ch. 12) in this volume).

Currently, in all European countries, there is considerable evidence of a *normalization* of – even explicit – ‘othering’ in political discourse in the public sphere, and there is much to indicate that this is occurring at all levels of society, ranging from the media, political parties and institutions to everyday life interactions (KhosraviNik 2009, 2010, Krzyzanowski & Wodak 2012).

Extensive research illustrates that radical right-wing populist parties across Europe and beyond draw on different *political imaginaries*<sup>10</sup> and different traditions, evoke (and construct) different nationalist pasts in the form of *identity narratives* and emphasize a range of different issues in everyday politics (Bar-on 2008, Peunova 2008, Bustikova 2009): some parties gain support via an ambivalent relationship with *fascist* and *Nazi* pasts (e.g. in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Romania and France); some parties, on the other hand, focus primarily on a *perceived threat from Islam* (e.g. in the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland); some parties restrict their propaganda to a *perceived danger to their national identities* from ethnic minorities (e.g. in Hungary, Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom); and some parties primarily endorse a *traditional Christian (fundamentalist) conservative-reactionary agenda* (e.g. in the United States). Of course, most parties integrate several features at once, depending on the specific audience and context; thus the above-mentioned distinctions are, of course, primarily analytical (see also Wodak, forthcoming):

1. All of these parties instrumentalize some kind of ethnic/religious/linguistic/political minority as a *scapegoat* for all current woes and subsequently construe

<sup>9</sup> In Sweden, for example, many antisemitic incidents are reported in some big cities, such as Malmö, which seem to be reactions to Israeli governmental policies but directed against Swedish Jews. The Sweden Democrats, however, are not openly antisemitic but are publicly more focused on their anti-immigrant rhetoric (see also the chapter by Oja and Mral (Ch. 19) in this volume).

<sup>10</sup> *Political imaginaries* are defined as being in a ‘landscape of power as a space of political action signified in visual and iconographic practices and objects as well as in the literary-textual field that depicts the political scene, its structure, and its stakes’ (Bob Jessop, personal communication, 10 February 2010).

the latter as dangerous and a threat ‘to us’; this phenomenon manifests itself as ‘discourses of fear’.

2. All of these parties seem to endorse – what I label as – the ‘arrogance of ignorance’; appeals to common-sense and anti-intellectualism mark a return to pre-modernist or pre-Enlightenment thinking.

Current right-wing populist rhetoric manifests common characteristics, which may be combined with different content to achieve distinctive context-dependent discourses, figures and texts (oral, written and visual, that is, *semiosis*). These resonate with their respective national audiences, thus reducing instances of seemingly incomprehensible complexity in typically simplistic and seductive ways.

In this chapter, I will first present some typical characteristics and rhetorical patterns of right-wing populist parties in a range of national contexts. Here, I will also focus on their *habitus* and *performance* as acceptable mainstream media-savvy politicians. Secondly, I will illustrate two salient rhetorical and persuasive strategies: ‘*calculated ambivalence*’ and the *strategy of ‘systematic provocation’* (see also: Engel & Wodak 2009, 2012, Köhler & Wodak 2012) which such parties employ extensively and successfully in their attempts to dominate the political agenda and media reporting.

### Constructing a ‘politics of fear’

Below, I briefly list nine features which are, I claim, common to all or most radical right-wing populist parties (see also Wodak, forthcoming).

First, it is important to emphasize that right-wing populism<sup>11</sup> (RWP) is a *political style* which can relate to various ideologies, not just to one (Taguieff 2003: 8). Overall, we find left-wing and right-wing populist parties; the difference relates to the *political imaginaries* which they put forward as well as to the structures of the parties and their recruitment patterns. Secondly, RWP cuts across the traditional left-right cleavage and constructs *new social cleavages*, frequently related to many, often legitimate and justified, fears about globalization and the subsequent rise of nationalism/chauvinism, the failure of current mainstream parties to address acute social problems, like the financial crisis, and so forth (Azmanova 2009, Judd 2010).

Thirdly, RWP parties’ success also depends on *performance strategies* in modern *media democracies* (Wodak 2011a). This implies extensive use of the media (press and TV, new media such as comics, homepages, websites, Facebook, Twitter and so forth). Moreover, RWP politicians are usually well-trained as media personalities, and have frequently transformed a ‘thug-like’ appearance to that of a quite ‘slick’ mainstream politician’s appearance: they exhibit youth, they are handsome, fit, well dressed. In short, they assume the *habitus* of serious statesmen and stateswomen.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> I prefer the term right-wing populism to both radical and extreme right-wing populism, as these superlatives/attributes are a question of relative scale and perception.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, <www.hestrache.at> [accessed 2 May 2011].

Fourthly, the *personalization* and *commodification* of current politics and politicians leads to a focus on 'charismatic' leaders; RWP parties usually have a hierarchical structure with (male) leaders who exploit modern trends of the political profession to perfection.<sup>13</sup> Recently, female leaders have also come to the fore (in France, Denmark, Norway and the United States).

Moreover, fifthly, leading populist politicians employ *front-stage performance* techniques which are also linked to popular *celebrity culture* (well-known from the tabloids and sensationalist media reporting): 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, adapted to mainstream values, but only on the front stage. As Gingrich (2002) states, such leaders can dress and behave like 'a man/woman for all seasons'. Hence, such politicians carefully prepare their *appearance/performance*s for different audiences; their rhetoric and programmatic proposals are heavily *context-dependent*. This implies a specific selection of meeting places (beer tents, pubs, stages, market places, discos, and the so-called tea-parties in the United States), the clothes they wear (from suits to casual leather jackets, t-shirts or folklore dress), their selection of spin-doctors and accompanying 'performers' on stage, the music, posters and logos on display, and so forth (Goffman 1959, Wodak 2011a).

Sixthly, RWP usually correlates with strong *anti-intellectualism* and, as a result, with the aforementioned *arrogance of ignorance* (Wodak, forthcoming). Appeals to common-sense and traditional (conservative) values linked to aggressive exclusionary rhetoric are, for example, particularly apparent in some parts of the US *tea party* movement, performed and instrumentalized almost 'perfectly' by Sarah Palin or Michelle Bachman. Seventhly, linked to anti-Muslim rhetoric and campaigns, RWP parties currently seem to endorse pseudo-emanipatory *gender policies* which, on second view, are extremely contradictory; in this vein, the US Republicans claim, for example, to support a so-called right-wing feminism which supports feminist values linked to traditional family values and campaign against pro-choice movements.<sup>14</sup> Thus, on the one hand, traditional family values are emphasized (which position women primarily as mothers, caring for children and their families); on the other hand, though freedom for women is proposed, this refers solely to Muslim women, who are depicted as wearing headscarves or being veiled. In this way, gender becomes instrumentalized in very specific ways (see Pedwell 2007) and linked to a rhetoric of exclusion, for example, to the exclusion of Turkish migrants who form the third largest ethnic minority in the city of Vienna. Moreover, the 'freedom' of women is contrasted with fundamentalist Islam, implying that every woman wearing a headscarf is potentially dangerous. In this way, the theme of security is linked to the so-called freedom of women.

<sup>13</sup> Silvio Berlusconi is/was, of course, an obvious case in point, due to his ownership of almost all the relevant Italian media.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, <<http://dailycaller.com/2012/02/16/what-are-women-for/>> or <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/21134540/vp/46523668#46523668>> [both accessed 26 February 2012]

Eighthly, there is a distinct difference between populist styles and rhetoric in *opposition* and in *government*. Few right-wing populist parties survive if elected into government because they lack the necessary programmes, strategies and skills (Grande 2000). This is why many scholars suggest that the coalition government between conservatives and RWP failed in Austria in 2006 (Reisigl 2007). Thus, it is also not surprising that the FPÖ managed to grow very quickly again after 2006, as a party in opposition. In the Netherlands, the extreme right also lost once they formed part of the second chamber in the Dutch government (2002–6) after the assassination of Pim Fortuyn on 6 May 2002.

Finally, I claim that RWP is based on a generalized and salient claim to represent 'THE (*homogenous*) people' (based on nativist ideologies). The construction of these groups is thus contingent on many historical, national and sociopolitical factors. Their claims are accompanied by a *revisionist view of history* (see above; Engel & Wodak 2009). In this way, the rhetoric of exclusion has become part and parcel of a much more general discourse about migrants and migration, with the overall motto: 'We' (i.e. the Occident or Europe) have to defend 'Ourselves' against 'Them' (i.e. the 'Orient': Roma, Jews, Muslims). RWP movements are – as already indicated above – based on a specific understanding of the 'demos/people': the complexity within a society is denied. These parties continuously position and discursively construct themselves as the 'saviours of the Occident', who defend the man/woman on the street against 'those up there' and 'the Turks/Barbarians' who might take away 'British (Dutch, Belgian, Italian) jobs from British (Dutch, Belgian, Italian) workers' and who 'do not want to integrate and adapt to "our" culture', or similar.

RWP parties are thus primarily defined by the construction of common enemies: 'They' are foreigners, defined by 'race, religion or language. 'They' are élites not only within the country but also on the European ('Brussels') and global level ('Financial Capital'). Cleavages within a society are neglected, such as class, caste, religion, gender and so forth, or are interpreted as the result of 'elitist conspiracies'. The discursive strategies of 'victim-perpetrator reversal', 'scapegoating' and the 'construction of conspiracy theories' thus belong to the necessary toolkit of RWP rhetoric (Wodak 2010b, 2011b). Two brief examples, below, illustrate typical applications.

### 'The Austrian press and a European crisis'

Exclusionary discursive strategies become obvious if one follows the debates in spring 2011 about Tunisian refugees trying to reach the Italian coast by boat. The then Italian Berlusconi government decided to issue Schengen visas to the refugees so that they could cross the borders into other European countries – a measure supported by the European Union (EU) Commissioner Cecilia Malmström. The then Italian minister for Interior Affairs, Roberto Maroni, officially requested support and solidarity from neighbouring EU member states. The latter, however, did not want to comply: in a press conference on 26 April 2011, the then French President Nicolas Sarkozy and former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi emphasized that the Schengen borders should be closed again, even though this would contradict EU policy. Many national media supported this campaign for 'Fortress Europe'.

On 11 April 2011, for example, the conservative Austrian broadsheet *Die Presse* stated in bold letters: 'Italy washes its hands [of Tunisian refugees]' (*Italien putzt sich ab*). Below this headline, the then Minister of Interior Affairs from the conservative People's Party (ÖVP), Maria Fekter, claimed that these Schengen visas would have an 'enormous vacuum effect' (*Staubsaugereffekt*). Austria should thus also consider closing its borders again.<sup>15</sup> Such headlines and utterances are characteristic of – a relatively coded and metaphorical – exclusionary rhetoric in several ways: first, refugees are *indirectly* depicted as being dirty, relating to the metaphorical meaning of 'cleaning up'. Attributing 'dirt' to specific groups immediately evokes a very old stereotype, traditionally ascribed to Roma or Jews. Dirty people are not civilized, and thus not welcome and expendable. Secondly, the Tunisian refugees are dehumanized, that is, they are not talked about as human beings but only referred to metonymically via the documents they might carry (Schengen visas). Thirdly, the metaphorical use of 'vacuum' implies that large numbers of refugees will inevitably be expected; thus it is further implied that other countries (like Austria) will have to *defend themselves* against this quasi-causal 'effect' by necessarily and legitimately closing their borders.

Nowhere do we read about the plight of these refugees; we are also not informed about the reasons why they have fled their home country; and no concrete numbers are mentioned which might substantiate the *implied threat* for EU countries. Moreover, the distinction between migrants and refugees is neglected: in the third paragraph of this article, the minister claims that 'this is new illegal migration . . . although our [Austrian] asylum system is stable in relation to its level [in numbers], illegal migration presents a mega-problem'. Hence, the Tunisians fleeing conflict suddenly mutate into *illegal migrants*, that is, people who have left their country voluntarily and who pose a *mega-problem*. Conflating two categories into one, namely 'migrants' and 'refugees' into 'illegal migrants', allows the construction of one threatening 'other': in this way, the different legal statuses of asylum seekers and migrants is not accounted for. The overall implied meaning becomes apparent: any foreigner entering the EU from Africa is, per se, illegal. No evidence seems necessary for this claim. (see Baker et al. 2008, KhosraviNik 2008, 2010, KhosraviNik et al. 2012).

Further, below, other politicians are quoted as stating that 'illegal streams of refugees [*Flüchtlingsströme*] will cost Europe even more'. Here, another typical rhetorical device is employed: exaggeration. Europe is thus confronted with a 'mega-problem'; not only will 'streams' flow into Europe, but 'masses of floods' will also, a metaphor indicating a natural catastrophe defying control. The article concludes by quoting the German and Swiss Interior Ministers, Simonetta Sommaruga and Hans-Peter Friedrich, who agree with the papers' overall assessment of this 'mega-problem'.

This example illustrates how mainstream politics and politicians have increasingly appropriated arguments, metaphors, idioms, symbols and images from the far right. They believe, quite wrongly, that by implementing proposals from the extreme right wing that they will be able to win new voters, or at least keep their existing voters.

<sup>15</sup> <<https://diepresse.com/home/panorama/welt/649385/Fluechtlinge-Italien-putzt-sich-ab>> [accessed 15 April 2011].

### 'Strangers' and 'barbarians'

Leaders of right-wing populist parties tend to express exclusionary ideology far more directly and explicitly: For example, on 25 March 2011, the Dutch populist right-wing politician Geert Wilders delivered a speech, in Rome, in which he claimed that 'The failure to defend our own culture has turned immigration into the most dangerous threat that can be used against the West. Multiculturalism has made us so tolerant that we tolerate the intolerant!'<sup>16</sup>

He then refers to the end of the Roman Empire, thus drawing a very tenuous analogy to current immigration flows from North Africa (Tunisia), Turkey and the Middle East:

Rome did not fall overnight. Rome fell gradually. The Romans scarcely noticed what was happening. They did not perceive the immigration of the Barbarians as a threat until it was too late. . . . People came to find a better life which their own culture could not provide. But then, on December 31st in the year 406, the Rhine froze and tens of thousands of Germanic Barbarians crossed the river, flooded the Empire and went on a rampage, destroying every city they passed. In 410, Rome was sacked.

Wilders emphatically presents the fall of the Roman Empire as an unavoidable consequence of the mass migration of barbarians to Roman provinces. In fact, as the historian Walter Pohl has indicated, it is highly unlikely that systematically keeping the Germanic tribes (i.e. the so-called barbarians) from crossing the frontiers could have prevented the defeat of Rome in 406–7.

Due to space restrictions, I cannot demonstrate in detail why Wilders' historical argument does not work (see Pohl & Wodak 2012, Pohl forthcoming for details). This speech illustrates that many debates on migration explicitly or implicitly rely on historical arguments (*topos of history*, condensing the warrant: 'if X happened in the past, Y will happen now (again or in a similar way)').<sup>17</sup> Moreover, metaphors of fluidity are a familiar part of it; migrants first trickle in, then turn into streams and finally flood a peaceful country and drown it in mayhem and general destruction. Unlike the 'parasite metaphor', liquidity does not even belong to the realm of living beings. Thus, Wilders would need to explain why peaceful migration would necessarily lead to violent destruction. Yet, there is no historical evidence for this, just a well-worn

<sup>16</sup> <[www.pi-news.org/2011/03/speech-geert-wilders-rome-25-march-2011](http://www.pi-news.org/2011/03/speech-geert-wilders-rome-25-march-2011)> [accessed 22 April 2011].

<sup>17</sup> Within argumentation theory, *topoi* can be described as parts of argumentation, which belong to the required premises. They are the formal or content-related *warrants* or conclusion rules, which connect the argument(s) with the conclusion, the claim (Manfred Kienpointner 1996: 194). The warrant can always be made explicitly conditional, such as 'if x, then y' or 'y, because x'. There are, of course, many meanings associated with the concept of *topos* (see van Eemeren 2010, Wodak 2011a). Moreover, the distinction between *topos* and fallacy is also frequently blurred; as Reisigl and Wodak (2009: 102) admit, it is not always easy to distinguish precisely, without contextual knowledge, whether an argumentation scheme has been employed as reason-able, tense or as fallacy.

stereotype. The historical disciplines have done much in recent decades to deconstruct these old ideologically charged images. But even liberal quality media still reproduce the old stereotypes, as our research suggests (Baker et al. 2008).

Be that as it may, it becomes apparent that both mainstream and right-wing populist politicians endorse similar concerns and objectives, albeit with different discursive strategies and levels of explicitness: to keep 'them' out of Europe. In debates about immigration and religious difference, or in media reporting, speakers/writers will often employ arguments of 'culture', depicting it as an essentially bounded entity whose integrity is threatened by the presence of residents supposedly belonging to a different 'culture', and thus not willing to learn and adopt 'our' conventions and norms, that is, to assimilate; in these argumentative sequences, deictic elements acquire salience.

### Calculated ambivalence and discursive provocation

The rise of right-wing populist movements in recent years would not have been possible without massive media support. This does not, of course, imply that all newspapers share the same positions, although some tabloids, of course, do. For example, the former leader of the FPÖ, Jörg Haider, frequently appeared on the cover of weekly magazines such as *News* or *Profil*, thereby ensuring higher sales for these publications and adding to his visibility in the public sphere. The Austrian tabloid *Neue Kronenzeitung*, similar to the *Sun* or the *Daily Mail* but with a larger reach in relation to the country's population (approx. three million weekend readers in a country of eight million), campaigned explicitly and implicitly for Haider: headlines, editorials, images and letters to the editor were all streamlined to provide support. Leading populist politicians also have to be media savvy: they undergo rhetorical training (such as neurolinguistic programming, NLP), employ qualified spin-doctors and are educated in performance techniques which lead to a 'softer' image, adapted to mainstream values (but, of course, only on the front stage).

On the other hand, they intentionally provoke the media by violating publicly accepted norms (Engel & Wodak 2009, 2012, Köhler & Wodak 2012). In this way, the media are forced into a 'no-win' situation; if they do not report a scandalous racist remark, such as the FPÖ's slogan, as part of the 2010 Viennese election campaign: 'More courage for "Viennese Blood"'. Too much foreignness is not good for anybody!' (*Mehr Mut für Wiener Blut. Zuviel Fremdheit tut niemandem gut*) they might be perceived as endorsing it. If they do write about this, they explicitly reproduce the xenophobic utterance, thereby further disseminating it. A predictable dynamic is triggered which allows right-wing populist parties to set the agenda and distract the media from other important news. This dynamic consists of several stages which can only be briefly summarized at this point and which I label as 'The Right-wing Populist Perpetuum Mobile':

The right-wing populist perpetuum mobile also serves as example for the overall claim of my chapter: 'Anything goes' implies that RWP parties and politicians

phenomena, make false claims sound innocent, allow denying the obvious, say the 'unsayable' and transcend the limits of the permissible. Usually they get away without being sanctioned and, even if they have to apologize, they do so in a calculated and ambivalent way (see below). Rarely do they have to resign, and even if they have to, none of them seem to 'bounce back' quite quickly (see Wodak & Pelinka 2002 for detailed examples). Below, I briefly elaborate the dynamic of the right-wing perpetuum mobile.

First, *scandal* (e.g. the posting of the racist slogan: 'More Courage for "Viennese Blood"'); see Figure 2.1) is intentionally provoked by the FPÖ.<sup>18</sup> Once some evidence for the inherently racist meaning is produced by the opposition, the offensive meaning of the slogan is immediately denied; then the scandal is redefined and equated with entirely different phenomena (by redefining and reformulating the meaning of concepts or by employing analogies and metaphors, or by constructing contrasts or arguing via *topoi* of history); in this case, the FPÖ claimed that they were only quoting the title of a well-known Viennese operetta, '*Wiener Blut*', whose libretto had been written by an Austrian-Jewish author in the nineteenth century. By invoking a Jewish authority, the FPÖ believed that they had established innocence (*topos of authority*: if a Jewish person has said or written X, then X cannot be wrong' which is, of course, fallacious as being Jewish certainly does not guarantee that this person will necessarily be saying/doing/writing/endorsing the right and politically correct view). The FPÖ, however, claimed, that they were thus certainly not referring to any racist/nativist meanings.

In this way, the FPÖ employed the discursive strategy of *calculated ambivalence* and succeeded in conveying a *double-message* – readers could either understand the literal meaning (the operetta whose libretto had been written by a Jewish (sic!) author) or associate the name of the operetta with the insinuated and implied meaning of 'Viennese blood'. In any case, the FPÖ was – they further stated – not responsible for readers' interpretations. Both readings are, of course, possible. The strategy of calculated ambivalence allows multi-addressing while at the same time providing the speaker/writer with an exit strategy via quasi-innocent denial: The FPÖ could claim that they had never considered the second dimension of meaning.

This allows, as a further step, to claim *victimhood* by the respective politician and so the event is *dramatized and exaggerated*, that is, the FPÖ claim to have been wrongly accused of having posted a racist slogan. They also emphasize the right of freedom of speech for themselves, as a *justificatory strategy*: 'Why can one not utter critique?' or 'One must be permitted to criticize Turks, Roma, Muslims, Jews ...!' or 'We dare say what everybody thinks', and so forth. Such utterances, of course, immediately trigger another debate – unrelated to the original scandal – about freedom of speech and political correctness, and thus serve as a distraction and allow evasion of the primary scandalous issue.

Moreover, the accusation is instrumentalized for the construction of a *conspiracy*: 'nobody must be 'pulling the strings' against the original culprit of the scandal and

<sup>18</sup> See Köhler and Wodak 2012 for a detailed analysis of this poster.



Figure 2.1 Poster used by the FPÖ in the Vienna election campaign of 2010: 'More courage for our "Viennese Blood". Too much foreignness is not good for anybody' (translation by the author). © Helge Fahrnberger.

*scapegoats* (foreigners, liberal intellectuals and so forth) are quickly discovered. Once, the accused finally have a chance to present substantial counter-evidence, a *new scandal* is launched. A *'quasi-apology'* might follow in case 'misunderstandings' might have occurred and the entire process begins afresh with a new scandalous utterance, again an instance of calculated ambivalence.

This dynamic implies that right-wing populist parties cleverly manage to frame media debates; other political parties and politicians as well as the media are, in turn, forced to react and respond continuously to ever-new scandals. Few opportunities remain to present other frames, values and counterarguments, or another relevant agenda. As a consequence, mainstream politics moves more and more to the right and the public becomes disillusioned, de-politicized and 'tired' of ever-new scandals; hence, RWP rhetoric becomes more explicit and extreme and continuously attracts further attention.

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