What was the role of Austria in the Eastern Enlargement of the European Union?

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1. Introduction

The eastern Enlargement was undoubtedly one of the most significant developments in European affairs in recent times. The political balance both on the continent and within the European Union was profoundly altered. Entrenched historical tensions were largely overcome. The cultural perception of Europe among European and the world was changed. While the new central and eastern European states officially became members overnight on the 1st of May 2004 and the 1st of January 2007, the process towards membership encompassed more than a decade of debates, negotiations and reforms. Disentangling these occurrences can reveal states’ interests, behaviours and perceptions which in turn can reveal a lot about a country’s position in the EU not only back then but also today.

Austria is geographically as well as historically in the heart of Europe. Apart from sharing borders with as many Eastern European as Western European countries, the shared history of the Habsburg Empire with a many of the new member states implies a cultural and political connection. During the Cold War Austria held the special position of neutrality between East and West as negotiated in the State Treaty in 1955. While being culturally influenced mainly by the West in the latter half of the 20th century, Austria retained a positive relationship with the East. Because of its neutrality status, Austria was the site of numerous Cold War summits and conferences as well as being chosen as host for one of the UN main offices and the headquarters of the OSCE. Throughout the Cold War, Austria acted as a mediator, a bridge between East and West\(^1\). It would seem logical that the country would seek to take up the same role when it came to EU enlargement after the fall of the Berlin wall.

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This paper will examine the enlargement process starting at the beginning of the 1990s leading to the enlargements of 2004. The enlargement process will be considered as one for both the 2004 accession and the countries that joined in 2007. The only reason Bulgaria and Romania joined later was because the two countries did not yet completely fulfil the economic and acquis communautaire requirements. The paper will only examine the developments up to 2004 as those were the defining years for the way the enlargement was conducted and for EU member states bargaining and negotiating over accession of Eastern Europe. The rules and practices that were set before 2004 applied to 2007 in the same way.

Furthermore, considering the limited scope of this paper the focus will be primarily on the plans, actions and policies of the Austrian government rather than on the role of the private sector or the population. While a consideration of all these aspects would certainly be fascinating, it would go beyond what is possible in this study.

What is revealed through this research is an early case study of a tension that has become prevalent in contemporary politics. The Austrian government, particularly the Schüssel government between 2000-2004 was torn between a pro-European establishment party (ÖVP) and a Eurosceptic populist party (FPÖ). The establishment party acted in exactly the way international relations theory would predict, while the populist party defies theoretical prediction in the same way populist parties do today. The result of these two forces pulling in opposite directions was the lack of a coherent and affirmative foreign policy and thus relative inaction. This is an early example of this tension which the US faces today in a slightly different manner – the tension between an establishment bureaucracy and a populist president as well as

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the anonymous New York Times op-ed\textsuperscript{3} showed. Examining the early Austrian case may give leads to a comprehensive explanation of this phenomenon that goes beyond attributing it to specific recent events.

2. Theories of European Integration

Before discussing the role, actions and motivation of Austria specifically, it is beneficial to examine the theoretical frameworks the guide the analysis of European integration in general. The two most widely cited explanations are rooted in a rationalist and constructivist approach.

The rationalist arguments to explain accession are rooted in the economic benefits that membership brings for all parties and the bargaining processes of the Union to promote cost sharing. There is no debate about the major benefits enlarging the single market brings to the block as a whole. However, there are relative differences in the distribution of those benefits and the enlargement associated costs. It is not surprising that the countries that have to most to gain economically, like Austria or Germany, should also most in favour of enlargement (Schimmelfennig 2001, pp. 50-51), than the countries which don’t benefit as much, e.g. France or those who might lose financial transfers, e.g. Spain, Portugal and Greece (Schimmelfennig 2001, pp.52).

From this premise, Schimmelfennig goes on to argue that the accession “driver” countries shamed “breakmen” countries with “pan-European community” rhetoric into submission. However, it is Moravscik & Vachudover’s in-depth rationalist approach that better explains this conundrum. Rather than bullying, the “driver” countries had to make concessions to “breakmen” countries in EU treaties and agreements. One example of this process in action is

that in the Nice Treaty Germany agreed to remain underrepresented in the Council of the European Union to preserve parity with France, even though, according to population size, Germany should have received a higher proportion of voting power (Leech 2002, pp. 437).

The constructivists would argue that the EU as an organisation has never been a purely rationalist organisation. It was built on ideas and hopes that have become important European norms. While Central European countries may not have primarily felt European in the 1990s, there was certainly a desire to “return to Europe” (Szcerbiak 2002, pp. 1) synonymous with a rejection of the communist past. Why else would these countries that have lived under hegemony for the last four decades accept a renewed loss of sovereignty as well as the significant costs of EU reforms. It is likely that this eagerness to adopt “European-ness” is the X-factor.

Moravscik & Vachudova point out that it is easy to make “rhetorical idealist” arguments when the situation is already favourable, but, even if it is assumed that the governments of both Western and Eastern European countries were perfectly rational with only long-term best interests of their country at heart, it is not necessarily the case that those constructivist and rationalist arguments are not of equal importance to the people making them.

Both rationalist and constructivist theories would suggest that Austria should be very supportive of the enlargement. From a constructivist point of view, this is because Austria itself only recently joined the EU which is certainly indicative of the country’s desire to become part of and build a united Europe. However, as the rationalist approach points out, it is easy to make rhetorical arguments if the country already stands to gain from the situation. Here again Austria is expected to be in favour of enlargement. Austrian has a border with Eastern European
candidate countries that is over 1000km long\(^4\). This proximity gives the potential for enormous gains from economic links. Furthermore, Austria had already started to build economic ties with the East during the Cold War as it was one of the largest holders of Eastern European debt\(^5\). These already existing ties gave Austria an even higher potential to harness the economic benefits of including the East in the single market. The theory, regardless through which particular lens, seems to suggest that Austria should be very supportive of the enlargement. However, in reality the situation was more complicated.

3. Austria’s accession to the EU

As Austria lies in the heart of Europe, it is often forgotten that the country itself only recently joined the European Union in 1995. The reason for this late membership lies in the tensions of the Cold War.

Austria viewed itself as part of the West throughout the Cold War period. Even though the country was divided by the allies in 1945, Austria as a whole grew closer to the west. The post-war Socialist government installed by Stalin had no desire to establish a Soviet-inspired state. In the summer of 1945 Socialist chancellor Karl Renner pushed Stalin to allow elections to take place in November, which Stalin granted because he expected the communist party to perform very well influenced by the successes of the communist parties in Italy and France\(^6\). Stalin’s expectations did not come true. The communist party performed exceptionally poorly receiving

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5.4%. The christian-democrat ÖVP won, Renner stepped down and a functional democracy was established. Under the ÖVP government the country clearly aligned itself with the West. In 1948 Austria started to receive Marshall Plan aid from the US. However, Stalin had not given up entirely on making Austria a Soviet state. It was only Stalin’s death in 1953 and the following “Khrushchev thaw” allowed Austria to take on a role as neutral ground, which it would occupy for the next four decades.

Capitalising on Nikita Khrushchev’s change in rhetoric Austria was able to negotiate the Austrian state treaty in 1955 which marked the end of allied occupation and in return it declared an independent country what would remain neutral between East and West, thus barring it from joining NATO or any other defence agreement. This negotiated neutrality is the reason Austria could not take part in European integration earlier. While Austria was undoubtedly closer to the West throughout the Cold War, not endangering its position of neutrality had important advantages for the country. On the one hand, by not aligning itself with a side officially the country guarded itself against Soviet political interference and aggression. On the other hand, neutrality conferred large international significance on an otherwise small country. As the site of numerous US-USSR summits, e.g. Kennedy-Khrushchev in 1961 and Carter-Brezhnev in 1979, and conferences, like the Conventional Force Reduction Talks, Austria regularly made international headlines. Furthermore, Austria was chosen to host one of the main UN offices as well as the OSCE headquarters, adding to the country’s international prestige.

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8 Stalin sent a control commission to assess Soviet performance in Austria in 1951, that led to a restructuring of the Soviet occupation apparatus. This underlines that Stalin was not willing to show any sign of weakness in the standoff with the US and that he would try to take advantage of all the options available to him. For details see Barbara Stelzl-Marx, Stalins Soldaten in Österreich: Die Innensicht der sowjetischen Besatzung 1945-1955, 1. Auflage/edition (Wien : München: Böhlau Wien, 2011).
10 Bischof, ‘Austrian-American From Cold War to Post Cold War’.
Austrian accession to the EU

Only when it became clear that the Cold War would be coming to an end in 1989, did Austria become seriously engaged in European integration. While the country was one of the European Free Trade Agreement founders in 1960\textsuperscript{11}, economic ties were the only official links to the West until 1989. Austrian foreign minister Alois Mock submitted the country’s candidacy in July of that year\textsuperscript{12}. Unsurprisingly, the Soviet Union expressed strong disapproval\textsuperscript{13}, however, with the fall of the Berlin wall only three months later, Austria’s accession to the EU was, for obvious reasons, no longer a critical concern for the USSR. However, the EU was similarly concerned about Austria’s applications, especially about the compatibility of neutrality and EU plans for a common foreign and defence policy. This is why the European Commission took extraordinarily long, until 1991, to publish an Avis about Austrian membership\textsuperscript{14}. Official membership negotiations began on February 1, 1993\textsuperscript{15}. The main topics of the negotiations reflected the main issues of Austrian accession, neutrality, transit traffic and agriculture\textsuperscript{16}. Regarding neutrality, a compromise was reached, meaning that Austria would remain formally neutral but join and actively participate in EU common foreign and security policy (CSFP) following the doctrine “solidarity within the EU, neutrality outside the EU.”\textsuperscript{17} Following a referendum on accession in June 1994, Austria officially became a member on January 1, 1995.

Eastern enlargement before Austria joined the EU

As Austria joined the EU, very early negotiations with central and eastern European countries about EU membership had already begun. Immediately following the collapse of the Soviet

\textsuperscript{14} Hummer and Obwexer, \textit{10 Jahre EU-Mitgliedschaft Österreichs}. 563
\textsuperscript{15} Hummer and Obwexer. 569
\textsuperscript{16} Hummer and Obwexer. 569
\textsuperscript{17} Hummer and Obwexer. 606, 615
satellite regimes in Eastern Europe, many of the countries new leaders expressed the desire to re-join Europe and began a process of extensive economic and political reforms, mainly to revive the economy, however, likely also with an eye towards the EU. Starting in 1989 the EU established PHARE, an “initiative which provides grant finance to support its partner countries to the stage where they are ready to assume the obligations of membership of the European Union”\(^1\)\(^8\). Initially this programme was designed to aid only Hungary and Poland, but it was quickly expanded to include also the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania\(^1\)!\(^9\).

In 1991 the trade relationship between the European Union and Eastern European countries was expanded further with the Europe Agreements. These agreements called for the establishment of a free trade zone within ten years breaking down trade barriers even faster. However, coal and steel as well as agriculture and textiles were still not included in the agreement. Furthermore, movement of workers remained strictly controlled with the agreements. This somewhat mixed outcome of greater integration with many caveats was the result of differing interests of the involved parties. Eastern European countries sought membership and the European Commission was increasingly in favour of enlargement. However, the EU member states were reluctant to let Eastern European countries join fast and thus put the brakes on the commission promising trade liberalisation too quickly\(^2\)!\(^0\).


\(^{20}\) Dan Marek and Michael Baun, *The Czech Republic and the European Union* (Routledge, 2010). 12-14
This changed in June 1993 at the Copenhagen summit. The European Council, that is the heads of state of all EU members, defined three criteria that need to be fulfilled to qualify for membership.

1. “Stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities;
2. A functioning market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU;
3. Ability to take on the obligations of membership, including the capacity to effectively implement the rules, standards and policies that make up the body of EU law (the 'acquis'), and adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.”

By formulating these criteria, the EU signalled to Eastern Europe that membership is a real option. Furthermore, they provided a guideline for how to achieve this goal.

All of this occurred before Austria became a member of the European Union, thus Austria could not shape these negotiations in any way. Furthermore, Poland and Hungary had already issued their formal accession applications in 199422, thus Austrian officials were aware that Eastern Enlargement was more or less inevitable, i.e. that they would join an EU that was in the process of expanding. Several scholars argue that Austria was welcomed into the EU with the expectation that it would play an active, positive role in the Eastern enlargement23, that it would continue to act as a bridge between East and West24. The reality turned out to be somewhat more complicated.

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4. Austria in the Eastern enlargement process

The rest of the Eastern European countries submitted their applications in 1995 and 1996. Contrary to the expectations of the EU when it admitted Austria in 1995, the first 5 years of EU membership were politically uneventful from the Austrian side. The expectations that Austria would play a proactive role in the enlargement did not come to pass, however, Austria also did not impede the process.

Austria’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union 1998

In the second half of 1998, Austria first assumed an active role in the EU, when it was the country’s turn to take over the presidency of the council. During the presidency, Austria reviewed the implementation of the acquis in the candidate countries and oversaw the continued negotiations. Additionally, Austria spearheaded EU policy on nuclear power plants in the candidate countries, forcing them to close down first-generation Soviet reactors. While the Austrian government wanted to not just be a part of the enlargement negotiations but actively shape them in various areas beyond nuclear power, this was made difficult by the fact that the Austrian population as well as a large portion of the political opposition was sceptical of enlargement. In October 1998 only 30% of the population supported accession of the current candidate countries. Both the right-wing FPÖ as well as the left-wing greens opposed the

27 Schüssel, ‘Die Erweiterung Der Europäischen Union’.
28 Gehler, Österreichs Aussenpolitik der Zweiten Republik, 827
enlargement policy of the grand coalition government. This dilemma would remain the central theme of Austrian enlargement policy becoming even further exacerbated in 2000.

The Sanctions

After elections in October 1999, the winning SPÖ failed to negotiate another grand coalition government, so the ÖVP ended up forming a government with the Eurosceptic FPÖ. The coalition was one of necessity rather than one of choice. Wolfgang Schüssel, the ÖVP chancellor was very much pro-European. He was one of the main negotiators during the Austrian accession process and became foreign minister in 1995. FPÖ leader Jörg Haider, on the other hand, was deeply EU sceptic, anti-immigrant and worryingly comfortable with Nazi ideology. His controversial statements had made headlines across Europe thus it is no surprise that the new government was met with outrage from European partners.

The European Parliament urged the Commission to suspend Austrian membership should any integral EU principles be violated. The Belgian foreign minister was quoted saying that Europe “didn’t need” Austria. France and Denmark cancelled events with Austrian representatives.

Haider becoming part of the government led the 14 other EU members to bilaterally impose sanctions against Austria. These sanctions were a shock both to the Austrian government and the public. The Austrian public which was already fairly Eurosceptic, grew more hostile towards the EU. In October 1999, 42% viewed EU membership as a good thing, while only 18% viewed it negatively. In April 2000, only 33% still viewed it as a good thing, while 25%...
viewed it as a bad thing\textsuperscript{35}. The government reacted to the sanctions by emphasising its commitment the European integration and EU enlargement in its governing programme\textsuperscript{36}. Furthermore, Jörg Haider declined to accept a cabinet position in the new government, due to the criticism, though he retained his position as governor of Carinthia, one of the federal states\textsuperscript{37}.

The Sanctions were lifted in September 2000, but their impact had been and continued to be considerable. In the realm of foreign policy, the isolation from its Western European partners led Austria to turn eastward.

\textit{The Regional Partnership}

Without the EU Austria did not have any regional alliances like the Scandinavian countries or the Visegrad states do, so foreign minister Ferrero-Waldner sought to establish such a group by reaching out to Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia to form a “regional partnership”. The official goals of the group were to prepare for EU enlargement, incentivise greater cooperation and share experiences\textsuperscript{38}. Ideally the partnership countries would meet twice a year before the end summits of each EU council presidency\textsuperscript{39}. Initially starting with a successful conference of foreign ministers in June 2001, Austrian expectations were quickly disappointed. The Eastern European partner countries were not in favour of

\textsuperscript{36} Regina Pöll, “‘Europa Gegen Österreich. Österreich Gegen Europa.” Der Innenpolitische Europadiskurs Der ÖVP-FPÖ-Regierungsperiode Schüssel I Am Beispiel Der “Sanktionen” Der EU14 Und Der Bevorstehenden EU-Erweiterung” (Universität Salzburg, 2004).
\textsuperscript{39} Pöll.
institutionalising the group and emphasised that cooperation of the Visigrad group should suffer because of the new initiative\(^40\).

The lack of enthusiasm from the East is not particularly surprising considering the main goal of these states at the time was to gain EU membership. Thus, it was more beneficial to build relationships with major EU countries, rather than one that had been shunned by the rest of the group\(^41\). The initiative was further complicated by divisions within the government as well as the population. This time it was not the opposition that viewed “regional partnership” with scepticism, but the coalition partner, the FPÖ\(^42\). Additionally, the Austrian population retained its critical opinion of any kind of cooperation with the east. The ÖVP and the foreign ministry made significant efforts to present connections with the East and enlargement in a positive light. Erhard Busek, a former Vice-Chancellor, was named as Special Representative for EU-Enlargement. However, due to the growing divisions between the coalition he was unable to do any meaningful work\(^43\). A second attempt of the foreign ministry to promote enlargement was the “Austria Platform” project started in 2001, which was an attempt to inform and win the population over on Eastern enlargement. The platform launched a media and internet campaign as well as a telephone information hotline\(^44\). How successful the platform actually was, is unclear. While the Eurobarometer in 2004 shows that the Austrian population is among the most informed about enlargement (48% felt well informed – 3\(^{rd}\) best in the EU), it remained sceptical (52% against enlargement)\(^45\).

\(^{40}\) Gehler, österreichs Aussenpolitik der Zweiten Republik.
\(^{41}\) Gehler, 965
\(^{43}\) Pöll.
\(^{44}\) Pöll.
\(^{45}\) ‘Eurobarometer 61 (Spring 2004) - European Commission’, n.d.
Breakdown of the coalition

All attempts to put enlargement in a positive light only served to further fracture the already fragile ÖVP-FPÖ coalition. The death blow for the coalition came 2002 at a FPÖ party conference. Becoming known as the Knittelfeld Putsch, named after the town where the conference took place, FPÖ party members decided that the government had gone too far against their interests and symbolically tore up a coalition compromise. This led the FPÖ vice chancellor, finance minister and chair of the party to resign which forced early elections.

The two years of ÖVP-FPÖ coalition marked a tumultuous time in Austrian politics, particularly with a regard to its Europe policy. Deeply ideologically torn between pro-European and Eurosceptic, the government was only briefly able to follow a coherent Europe policy before this exact policy ripped the coalition apart. Ironically, it was the government that through FPÖ participation might arguably considered the most Eurosceptic since joining the EU, was also the one that most actively engaged on the European level and proactively sought European cooperation, be it by necessity outside the EU.

Renewed ÖVP-FPÖ coalition

The snap elections in 2002 yielded a major victory for the ÖVP, who entered in coalition negotiations with the SPÖ and the green party. However, after months with no success, Schüssel decided to once again form a government with the FPÖ. The prolonged negotiations meant that Schüssel was only sworn in as chancellor at the end of February 2003. In April 2003 the treaty of accession for the first ten Eastern European states to join on May 1, 2004 was signed.

It is difficult to ascertain how the ÖVP-FPÖ government acted in Brussels and in EU Council meeting behind closed doors between 2000 and 2004. Considering how split the government was internally, it seems unlikely that the more pro-European ÖVP was able to dominate in
Brussels, not the least because the Austrian population more aligned with the FPÖ position on EU enlargement. Furthermore, the sanctions left Austria isolated in Brussels. Any suggestions the country made would have been treated with suspicion by the 14 other EU members. There is no evidence, no positive mention of Austria by other EU members or media reports about Austria’s role, that Austria took the same proactive role in enlargement in Brussels as it did in its relations with the East. Lack of evidence is not proof but taken together with the internal split of the government and the insolation from the sanctions, it seems most likely that Austria took a reserved stance in Brussels.

In 2004, Schüssel released a paper\textsuperscript{46} detailing the challenges and opportunities the enlargement presents for Austria. Emphasising particularly the economic benefits, e.g. increased trade, better opportunities for foreign direct investment, as well as the economic challenges, e.g. the wealth inequality between Austria and the new members, the main argument of this paper is, that while there are undoubtedly challenges, Austria is ready for the enlargement and that enlargement will be positive for the country. This is also one of the few documents detailing Austria’s concrete actions in the EU negotiations. However, as it is written by a chancellor in office it will certainly present the government in the most flattering light possible. Beyond Austria’s involvement in defining nuclear energy policy towards Eastern European countries, Austria is also cited as having had considerable influence in legislation on communal water waste and in setting transition periods for the implementation of the environment acquis\textsuperscript{47}. While these efforts are not to be dismissed, it is unlikely that this level of involvement is all that Austria would have been capable of and what the EU hoped for from the country.

5. Analysis and Conclusion

\textsuperscript{46} Schüssel, ‘Die Erweiterung Der Europäischen Union’.

\textsuperscript{47} Schüssel.
The most widely discussed general theories about European integration all suggest that Austria should have played a very supportive role in the EU enlargement. In addition to the economic benefits and moral convictions that should draw Austria towards enlargement, the historic and cultural ties the country shares with the region would also lead one to believe that Austria should have taken a proactive role in the matter.

The heart of the discrepancy between what the theory expects and what actually occurred is the impact of internal affairs on a state’s foreign policy. The majority party in government, the ÖVP, actually did have the position the theory would suggest Austria would take. Consistently speaking out in favour of enlargement, underlining the economic benefits and proactively attempting to build a closer relationship with the East, the policy fits with the academic model. The antithetical behaviour comes from the FPÖ, the minor coalition party, which firmly opposed the enlargement and was Eurosceptic in general as well as suspicious of the East. The FPÖ in the early 2000s was a case of populism before it became “popular”. Austria’s ability to act as a single entity with a single voice on the enlargement question was impeded by major internal divisions in the government. The lack of a coherent and affirmative foreign policy in turn led to relative inaction on the international stage. Being unable to agree on a position on crucial enlargement questions, the Austrian government’s most significant contributions became the smallest common denominator, nuclear energy policy (which Austria as a whole firmly opposes) and communal water waste management.

The tension between establishment and populism that the Schüssel government faced in the early 2000s, appears to be very similar to the phenomenon that appears throughout the West today. In the US a recent anonymous op-ed48 in the New York Times has shown that this tension

is present between an establishment bureaucracy and a populist president. US Russia policy is
a prime example of this tension at work. President Trump’s rhetoric and actions are very
amicable towards Russia, allowing meetings without American translators being present,
questioning his own intelligence service or refusing to acknowledge Russian interference in the
presidential election. The bureaucracy behind the president, however, pushes for a critical
stance towards Russia, convincing the President to expel 60 Russian diplomats after the Skripal
poisoning.

Current international relations theory about populism considers populism a largely new
phenomenon and identifies recent developments as culprits. Adding the Austrian case study
from the early 2000s is an opportunity to better understand the phenomenon as a whole.
Inglehart & Norris’\textsuperscript{49} theory, which views economic insecurity as the root of populism, could
be extended to examine the impact of the dot-com bubble on Austria and the implications for
its political system. Similarly, Greskovits’ argument\textsuperscript{50}, which ascribes support for populism to
the middle class being disappointed with the transformation of their country, may apply
considering that Austria had lost its important international position with the fall of the Soviet
Union. Examining examples of populism, that predate current theories of populism, may be a
valuable tool to better understand the phenomenon by comparing which aspects remain constant
as well as showing whether populism changes throughout time.

Furthermore, the study of Europe policy in the Schüssel government is particularly fascinating
at this point in time, because Austria again has a ÖVP-FPÖ coalition government. While the
basic principles of the two parties have remained the same, the coalition today is not torn over
European issues but follows a clear and proactive strategy. The new chancellor Kurz has

\textsuperscript{49} Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, ‘Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in

\textsuperscript{50} Béla Greskovits, ‘Economic Woes and Political Disaffection’, \textit{Journal of Democracy} 18, no. 4 (1 November
developed an EU policy that makes a simplistic populist argument for the EU to the population (e.g. EU cooperation is good to control migration and borders), while also keeping seemingly good relations with other EU member states and EU leaders. With the population this strategy is very popular so far, considering 34% would vote for him if elections took place today\(^5\). The success on the international level is more difficult to determine as only minimal political action has taken place and the policies that have been enacted cannot necessarily be traced back to Austrian initiative, e.g. adding 10 000 new Frontex officials is a policy that was first proposed by Commissioner Oettinger\(^5\). The topic of political impact will have to be revisited at the end of the Austrian European council presidency, which will, undoubtedly, show if Austria’s role in the EU has truly been altered.

Examining the role of Austria in the EU Eastern Enlargement has revealed an interesting example of the effects of domestic politics on a country’s actions on the international stage as well as showing an early instance of the establishment vs. populism tension that is widely spread today. There are numerous avenues to further explore starting from situating the case study in contemporary populism research, tracing EU policy throughout the 23 years of membership for common trends all the way to comparing the Europe policy of the current ÖVP-FPÖ government after the EU Council presidency. For now, it is clear that the story of European integration is not quite as straightforward as the theory makes it out to be. Internal political ideas and perceptions have a major influence on international positions and, in this case, shape entirely Austria’s role in the enlargement.


Bibliography


