

# Jörg Haider and His Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs

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## 1. Introduction

The first three decades of Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) history can, on the one hand, be described a time of (German) nationalism with strong remnants of national socialism, and, on the other hand, as a time of liberalism. Most of the time, though, liberalism was not very distinctive.

The FPÖ was founded in 1955. Its predecessor was the Federation of Independents (Verband der Unabhängigen, VdU), a political party founded in 1949 as a platform for post-war-soldiers and the so called *Minderbelasteten* (less implicated; former low ranking NSDAP members) who were entitled to vote for the first time in 1949. The FPÖ's link to National Socialism can be illustrated by the fact that Anton Reinthaller, first leader of FPÖ (1956-1958), and Friedrich Peter, second leader of the FPÖ (1958-1978) had been SS and NSDAP members. Reinthaller had joined the NSDAP in the late 1920s already. After 1945 he was, first, sentenced to imprisonment and, second, pardoned in the early 1950s.

Friedrich Peter had been member (*Obersturmführer*) of an SS combat group (*Infanteriebrigade*). Though his combat group had committed various war crimes, Peter had always pointed out that he had not been personally involved in any of them:

“Peter’s official biography stated that he had discharged his ‘duty’ ‘at the front’ during the World War II. In 1975, Simon Wiesenthal showed that the SS unit in which Peter served was mainly concerned with large-scale slaughter mostly of Jewish civilians behind the front. Yet, Peter continued to be Party chair. His most prominent defender at that time was SPÖ leader Bruno Kreisky who, while protecting Peter, launched harsh and personal attacks against Wiesenthal”<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A. PELINKA, *SPÖ, ÖVP and the ‘Ehemaligen’*, p. 253.

As pointed out already, the FPÖ had two ideological wings: on the one hand, it was (German) nationalist and lacking any serious distance to National Socialism. Many former NSDAP supporters found a new political home country in the VdU and FPÖ. The difference between VdU and FPÖ was not so much substance but emphasis, wrote Riedelsperger: “Most VdU adherents shifted their support to the new party, although cofounder Kraus resigned, issuing a bitter statement accusing the new Party of trying ‘to create a new political platform for the once tumbled greats of the National Socialist regime’”<sup>2</sup>. Among the FPÖ clientele were many former Nazis and German-Nationalists who were “causing the center of gravity of the FPÖ to shift to the Right”<sup>3</sup>.

On the other hand, the FPÖ had liberal roots—but it became more and more obvious that there was not really much space left for liberalism at all.

This started to change for a short period of time in the 1970s. A group of younger FPÖ officials (members who formed the so called *Atterseekreis*) tried to push liberal ideas within the FPÖ. In the early 1970s it became obvious that the FPÖ was more and more seen as a serious political (coalition)partner: As the Social Democratic Party of Austria (Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs, SPÖ) got the relative majority of seats in the newly elected parliament in 1970, the FPÖ supported the SPÖ minority government. And in the political and social awakening of the 1970s there seemed to be more support for liberal ideas than for Nazi and nationalist ones (at least as far as the new generation of FPÖ supporters was concerned).

This development culminated in the SPÖ-FPÖ coalition in the 1980s (1983-1986/7). Bruno Kreisky’s SPÖ lost the absolute majority of seats in the 1983 election. Kreisky’s successor was the former Minister of Education Fred Sinowatz. He formed a coalition government between SPÖ and FPÖ which he led as chancellor. The new Vice Chancellor Norbert Steger (FPÖ) got the most important political office FPÖ had to staff so far. But the liberal era lasted for a short timespan only: during these years in power, the new FPÖ-shooting star Jörg Haider started his campaign to overthrow the liberals for good and in September 1986 he cropped the harvest and replaced Steger as FPÖ-chair.

<sup>2</sup> M. RIEDELSPERGER, *FPÖ: Liberal or Nazi?*, p. 260.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 261.

## 2. Jörg Haider: *The early years*

Jörg Haider was born on January 26, 1950 into a stout German nationalist family in Bad Goisern/Upper Austria. Both, his father Robert and his mother Dorothea had been convinced National Socialists, his father being one of the so called “illegals” (*Illegale*—NSDAP Members in the time from the ban in 1933 until the Anschluss in 1938) and member of the Österreichische Legion (an SA formation of Austrian Nazis in Germany prior to the Anschluss). Haider’s mother had been a leading member of BDM (Bund deutscher Mädel).

Haider started his political career within the Austrian Students’ Association (Österreichische Hochschülerschaft, ÖH) in the 1970s, representing the FPÖ’s student party (Ring Freiheitlicher Studenten, RFS). The RFS has always been (and still is) dominated by right wing and right wing extremist student fraternities.

In 1976, he became FPÖ-party secretary in Carinthia and in 1979 member of the Austrian National Council. When the FPÖ formed a coalition government with the SPÖ in 1983, Haider was not part of the government but started to criticize the liberal FPÖ members of the coalition. According to polls, the FPÖ was losing support among voters in these years and so it was not really surprising that in September 1986 Haider could replace Norbert Steger as party leader in a crucial vote. Later on, Steger called this a “Putsch der Burschenschafter” (coup of right wing student fraternities)<sup>4</sup>. The take-over was carefully planned by a group of hard-core nationalist within the FPÖ (the so called Lorenzener Kreis), who met just a few days before the Innsbruck convention. Finally, 263 delegates voted for Haider and 179 for Steger: “The howling Haider supporters recalled memories of fascist demonstrations, Steger was labelled a Jew and threatened with execution or gassing. Both the mood and the policies of the party were changing”<sup>5</sup>.

It was obvious that the liberal era within the FPÖ was over: there was no more space for liberalism in the future and the stout right wing fraction had taken full command of the party. Consistently, many of

<sup>4</sup> H.H. SCHARSACH, *Strache*, p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> R. GÄRTNER, *The Development of FPÖ*, p. 84, and B. BAILER - W. NEUGEBAUER, *Die FPÖ*, p. 370.

the former more or less liberal FPÖ party activists left the party or withdrew from political activity immediately (e.g. Volker Kier) or within the next years (e.g. Helmut Krünes). The final elimination of liberal elements was the founding of the Liberal Forum (Liberales Forum, LiF) and the withdrawal of FPÖ from the Liberal International (1993) just before being expelled because of its shift to the right. Five FPÖ MPs founded LiF in February 1993. They had left the party shortly after the FPÖ had carried out its anti-foreigner popular petition (*Volksbegehren*).

The liberal Steger-era was replaced by the right wing populist era of Jörg Haider. During this time Haider's FPÖ did not only act like other right wing populist parties but revitalized its continuity to German nationalism and to a rhetoric which relativized National Socialism: "Since 1986 the FPÖ and especially Haider were inclined to bring back to life an FPÖ tradition and continuity which included their remembrance to National Socialism"<sup>6</sup>. The FPÖ's German Nationalist ideology can be illustrated by the attitude towards an Austrian nation. In 1958, Friedrich Peter pointed out, that it would be outrageous that expressions like "Austrian Nation" were used in Austrian textbooks. This would be a distortion of history and against common historical knowledge; Otto Scrinzi, FPÖ hardliner and candidate for presidency in 1986 called an Austrian Nation a test-tube baby hardly able to survive and Haider called the Austrian nation a miscarriage<sup>7</sup>.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s hardliners within the FPÖ—like Andreas Mölzer or Kriemhild Trattinig—became stronger and stronger. But Haider also gave power and influence to a group of younger men (*Buberlpartei*) who were not ideologically grounded.

Between 1993 and 1995, Haider's interest in the hardliners and in German nationalism faded away. The main reason for this was party strategy. Haider and FPÖ started the way to become a catch all party, so they had to cut off the sharp and extreme edges—at least superficially.

The German nationalist clientele, though, was still of some importance for FPÖ's future success. So Haider didn't hesitate to give them clear signals at other occasions. One of these signals was the so called "Krumpendorf Affair". At a meeting of former members of the Waffen-SS, Haider

<sup>6</sup> *Die FPÖ in der vergleichenden Parteienforschung*, pp. 287-288.

<sup>7</sup> H.-H. SCHARSACH, *Haiders Kampf*.

enthusiastically praised the crowd: Waffen-SS members were, for Haider and the likes, respectable, strong-minded men who in times of adversity stuck to their convictions. Though FPÖ was not in the majority at the moment, “we’re still mentally superior to the rest”<sup>8</sup>.

We find many examples that the FPÖ of Haider’s time still had not distanced itself from the extreme right. The most important issue, though, became the FPÖ’s anti-immigrant policy, its xenophobia. In addition, this issue has been of utmost importance for the FPÖ until today. Haider’s anti-immigration policy began in the late 1980s. Even before the transformation of the until then communist countries in Europa and the growing mobility of the people of these countries, the FPÖ had been warning against *Überfremdung* (foreign domination) and too much influence of foreigners in Austria.

3. Electoral success

In the time in which Haider started as FPÖ-chairperson the FPÖ was, according to surveys, relatively weak. Even before, from its beginning in the 1950s up to 1983, the FPÖ got 7.7% only as a maximum (1959).

Table 1: *The FPÖ in National Council elections*

|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| year | 1956 | 1959 | 1962 | 1966 | 1970 | 1971 | 1975 | 1979 | 1983 |      |
| %    | 6.5  | 7.7  | 7.1  | 5.4  | 5.5  | 5.5  | 5.4  | 6.1  | 5.0  |      |
| year | 1986 | 1990 | 1994 | 1995 | 1999 | 2002 | 2006 | 2008 | 2013 | 2017 |
| %    | 9.7  | 16.6 | 22.5 | 21.9 | 26.9 | 10.0 | 11.0 | 17.5 | 20.5 | 26   |

Source: author’s own compilation based on interior ministry data

<sup>8</sup> See “Die Zeit”, Februar 17, 2000; [http://www.zeit.de/2000/08/200008.reden\\_tabelle\\_2\\_.xml](http://www.zeit.de/2000/08/200008.reden_tabelle_2_.xml): “Dass es in dieser regen Zeit, wo es noch anständige Menschen gibt, die einen Charakter haben und die auch bei größtem Gegenwind zu ihrer Überzeugung stehen und ihrer Überzeugung bis heute treu geblieben sind. Und das ist eine Basis, meine lieben Freunde, die auch an uns Junge weitergegeben wird. Und ein Volk, das seine Vorfahren nicht in Ehren hält, ist sowieso zum Untergang verurteilt. Nachdem wir aber eine Zukunft haben wollen, werden wir jenen Menschen, den politisch Korrekten, beibringen, dass wir nicht umzubringen sind und dass sich Anständigkeit in unserer Welt allemal noch lohnt, und auch wenn wir momentan nicht mehrheitsfähig sind, aber wir sind den anderen geistig überlegen”.

This was to change rapidly within the next years: In 1986, the FPÖ got 9.7% of the votes cast, in 1999 a remarkable 26.9%. But this was not only due to the newly established political style of (right wing) populism; it was also due to fundamental changes within Austria's structure of political camps. Up to the mid 1980s, Austrians were part of one of the three political camps—social democrat, catholic-conservative, or German national. The political camps ad been established in the First Republic already. In these years, the camps were very much isolated from each other but involved in various acts of violence against each other (e.g. Schattendorf 1927; burning of the Palace of Justice (*Justizpalastbrand*) 1927; civil war 1934; NSDAP putsch 1934). Until the 1980s, these political camps still had to a certain extent identification power for parts of the Austrian population.

But these orientations had begun to lose their identifying power in the late 1980s and so the voters' mobility grew considerably. Voters were no longer (emotionally) aligned to a certain political party but became floating voters. Until 1999, Haider was very successful in attracting these new groups of voters. He was even more successful in Carinthia, the new FPÖ stronghold, where he was governor from 1989-1991 and from 1999 until his death in 2008.

Table 2: *The FPÖ: elections in Carinthia*

| year | 1956 | 1960 | 1965 | 1970 | 1975 | 1979 | 1984 | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 | 2004 |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| %    | 15.7 | 14.9 | 13.4 | 12.1 | 11.8 | 11.7 | 16.0 | 29.0 | 33.3 | 42.1 | 42.4 |

Source: author's own compilation based on Carinthia election commission data

In the general elections of 1999, the FPÖ got 26.91%, thus 415 votes more than the ÖVP. So the FPÖ was the stronger party in the newly formed ÖVP-FPÖ coalition in 2000. Despite this fact, the FPÖ could neither occupy the Chancellor's office nor could Haider himself be part of the new government. Haider's right wing populist strategy was one reason for Haider's electoral success and that of the FPÖ. But it was achieved at the cost of a possible chancellorship. No political contender was—at that time—willing to make a Chancellor Haider possible. So his lifelong dream faded away despite the electoral success.

#### 4. *Who is number one, who is number two?*

Consequently, Haider had to clear the way for a new number one in the party. This number one was Susanne Riess-Passer. Riess-Passer had been a long time confidant of Haider's (nickname *king cobra*) and now she seemed to be the one who could replace Haider and continue his ideological strategies. Haider's sentimental words "Susanne, it's your turn to lead!"<sup>9</sup> indicated Haider's future role as number two. But he would not have been Jörg Haider if he would have been content with this position. Haider stood in Carinthia but he was neither able nor willing to keep quiet. He torpedoed the FPÖ cabinet; he performed a policy of opposition and was never really willing to cooperate with representatives of the party he had built up in recent years.

While he led the party, Haider had not accepted anybody but himself at the top of the party. Thus, the FPÖ did not have a considerable amount of people who were really able to lead the party or even to successfully lead a ministry. The fluctuation within the FPÖ cabinet was extraordinary. When Haider noticed serious electoral losses of the FPÖ (Vienna, Styria, or Burgenland), he began openly criticizing the cabinet. Finally, on September 7, 2002, he staged a coup widely known as the "Knittelfeld Putsch". Result of this "implosion of the FPÖ"<sup>10</sup> was the resignation of Riess-Passer and the rest of the FPÖ top management:

"Jörg Haider lockte am 7.9.2002 seine Getreuen in die steirische Bezirkshauptstadt Knittelfeld, um der von ihm nicht mehr wohlgeleiteten FPÖ-Regierungsmannschaft den Marsch zu blasen. Das Ergebnis war für die Freiheitlichen fatal. Obfrau Susanne Riess-Passer ging am nächsten Tag, Klubchef Peter Westenthaler zog den Hut und sagte Adieu und Finanzminister Karl-Heinz Grasser ward fortan nur noch in der ÖVP gesehen. Ein historisches Wahldebakel folgte. Der sogenannte Knittelfelder Putsch hatte eine lange Vorgeschichte. Schon bald nachdem Haider im Jahr 2000 im Zuge der Regierungsbildung der Freiheitlichen den FPÖ-Vorsitz an Riess-Passer abgegeben hatte, begann sich das Verhältnis zwischen den langjährigen Weggefährten einzutrüben. Sticheleien aus Klagenfurt gehörten zum Alltag der blauen Regierungsmannschaft in Wien. Krisensitzung jagte Krisensitzung, oft nächtelang. In die Luft ging das blaue Regierungsexperiment schließlich wegen der Verschiebung der Steuerreform infolge einer Hochwasserkatastrophe. Angeführt unter anderem von Ewald Stadler rüsteten

<sup>9</sup> "Susanne, geh' Du voran".

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.nachrichten.at/nachrichten/ticker/10-Jahre-Knittelfeld-Jahrestag-der-freiheitlichen-Implosion;art449,959883>.

FPÖ-ler vor allem aus der zweiten Reihe für einen Sonderparteitag, was Riess-Passer mit einer Rücktrittsdrohung beantwortete”<sup>11</sup>.

Chancellor Schüssel threw the FPÖ out of the cabinet and new elections were scheduled for November 2002. Riess-Passer resigned and Herbert Haupt became the new party chair (after a very short interregnum of Matthias Reichhold). The elections proved to be a real disaster for the FPÖ: From 26.91% in 1999 the FPÖ fell to a measly 10% in 2002 and it was not before 2013 that the FPÖ could reach 20% again.

Haider’s undisputed position as number one was challenged more and more, though, within the party in the next years. He saw himself confronted with a new jumped-up man, Heinz Christian Strache. In 2004, Strache succeeded Hilmar Kabas as FPÖ leader in Vienna and in the first months of 2005 it was debated within the FPÖ whether Strache or Haider should be elected as new party leader. As it became more and more visible that Strache would challenge Haider in a crucial vote in the next convention, Haider left the FPÖ and founded a new political party, Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, BZÖ). The FPÖ no longer seemed to be the area in which Haider could act without contradiction.

## 5. *Haider and the BZÖ*

In April 2005, Haider and some of his supporters left the FPÖ and founded a new political party called the BZÖ. In 1993 already, five FPÖ MPs had left the FPÖ to found the Liberal Forum (Liberales Forum, LiF)—at that time, it was because of Haider’s fierce xenophobic and anti-immigration policy. This time it was Haider himself who no longer saw any personal political future within the FPÖ. The FPÖ was still part of the government and though the majority of the FPÖ MPs decided to defect to the BZÖ, some of them still remained within the FPÖ (e.g. Böhmdorfer and Rosenkranz).

Carinthia was the only state, in which the BZÖ could successfully gain seats in the country parliament because Carinthia had been an FPÖ stronghold since the mid 1980 and because Haider had been governor from 1989-1991 and from 1999 until his death in 2008. So this result was not really surprising.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



Table 3: *The BZÖ: election results*

|                                    |       |        |
|------------------------------------|-------|--------|
| National Council elections 2006    | 4.1%  |        |
| National Council elections 2008    | 10.7% | +6.6%  |
| National Council elections 2013    | 3.5%  | -7.2%  |
| Carinthian state election 2009     | 44.9% |        |
| Carinthian state election 2013*    | 6.4%  |        |
| Carinthian state election 2013 FPK | 16.8% | -28.1% |
| EU 2009                            | 4.6%  |        |
| EU 2014                            | 0.5%  | -4.1%  |

\* In 2013 both the FPK and the BZÖ ran for election in Carinthia; the former leaders of the BZÖ had changed to FPK late in 2009. Despite this, a separate BZÖ list ran for seats as well.

Source: author’s own compilation based on interior ministry and Carinthia election commission data

The main question for the BZÖ in 2006 was whether or not it would get seats in the *Nationalrat*. To get seats, a party has to win at least one seat in one of 39 regional constituencies or it has to get at least 4% nationwide. The BZÖ could not win a seat in a regional constituency, but it got 4.1% nationwide and thus seven seats (out of 183). In the next general elections in 2008, Haider presented himself as reputable political leader—in contrast to the coarse Strache. Haider was omnipresent, and on October 1, the BZÖ scored a remarkable win with 10.7% of the votes cast.

Haider, though, died only a few days later, on October 11.

October 10 is Carinthia’s very important state holiday. On October 10, 1920, the voters in the southern part of Carinthia had to decide in a plebiscite whether they wanted to remain part of Austria or to become part of Yugoslavia. A considerable majority voted for staying in Austria (59%). Thus, on October 10, there are celebrations throughout the country and it is not surprising that Haider as governor took part in many of these events. This might to a certain extent explain the fact that he was seriously drunk in the early hours of October 11 and in this state drove his car all too fast and died in a terrible accident.

## 6. *Right-wing extremism*

There are uncountable instances that show that Haider had no fear of contact with the extreme right at all<sup>12</sup>. On the contrary, there is a close connection between Haider's political career and right wing extremism in Austria.

From its beginning, the FPÖ was a party of old Nazis and German nationalists. Beside a short liberal era from about 1970 until 1986, this vigorous right wing faction was dominant within the FPÖ until the 1990s. And Haider himself was, as pointed out before, socialized within this ideology. Bailer and Neugebauer<sup>13</sup> see a clear “shift towards racism and right-wing-extremism” beginning in 1986, the elimination of the remnants of liberalism and the “restructuring of FPÖ from a members’ party to an authoritarian movement under Haider’s diktat”.

But Haider was too much a strategist to overlook that a party of old Nazis could simply not gain an adequate majority in Austria. So he slowly changed to what is now called right wing populism.

According to National Socialism, Haider was a master of downplaying and relativization. And many of his supporters within FPÖ were acting the same way<sup>14</sup>.

In the first election for the European Parliament in Austria (1996), FPÖ got some 28% of the votes cast. Bailer and Neugebauer comment on this as follows:

“Haider’s FPÖ has established itself as the most successful, extremely right-wing party in Europe, thus becoming a model for the far right in the other states of the European Community. Even if one does not agree with our estimation of the FPÖ as an extremely right-wing party threatening the contemporary political system, but maintains that it is a populist movement of the right striving to gain power by mobilizing as many voters as possible in order to enforce profound political change, there is little disagreement about the content and style of the policies of the FPÖ at the moment”<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> B. BAILER - W. NEUGEBAUER, *Die FPÖ*; R. GÄRTNER, *FPÖ*; A. PELINKA - R. WODAK, *The Haider Phenomenon*; H. SCHARSACH, *Haider's Kampf*; G. TRIBUTSCH (ed.), *Schlagwort Haider*.

<sup>13</sup> B. BEIBER - W. NEUGEBAUER, *The FPÖ of Jörg Haider*.

<sup>14</sup> M. AHTISAARI - J. FROWEIN - M. OREJA, *Weisenbericht*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>15</sup> B. BAILER - W. NEUGEBAUER, *The FPÖ of Jörg Haider*, p. 172.

Other EU members and countries like Israel heavily criticized the ÖVP-FPÖ government that was built in February 2000. One of the reasons for this was the fact that for the first time a right-wing populist party took governmental responsibility in a EU-country. Another reason for the criticism was the fact that FPÖ had never seriously distanced itself from NS-ideology. A clear condemnation of NS-crimes also came only on demand. Finally, in September 2000 a *Weisenbericht* (report of wise men) was presented in which the authors made clear that the FPÖ could be characterized as a right-wing populist party with radical elements, using racist and xenophobic language and at times undertones reminiscent of NS-phraseology.

### 7. *The end—What is left of the politician Jörg Haider*

Haider died on October 11, 2008, at the age of 58. In the parliamentary elections of November 1986, the FPÖ got 9.7% of the votes. This was Haider's first election as FPÖ chair. In 2002, the FPÖ got 10%. In the next parliamentary elections (2006), Haider ran as head of the BZÖ already. In between, the FPÖ got a remarkable 26.9% (parliamentary elections 1999) nationwide or even 28% (EU-parliamentary elections 1996). The FPÖ had become a serious contender to both the ÖVP and SPÖ, but Haider had not been successful in building a team able to govern. Thus in 2000, the political flight came to a sudden end. The fluctuations within the FPÖ's government team were relatively intense (e.g. Krüger, Sickl, Schmid, Forstinger) and the showdown of Knittelfeld proved that Haider was never really able (or willing) to accept being runner-up.

In 2005, Haider saw himself confronted with a new contender, Heinz Christian Strache, who seriously questioned Haider's role as the FPÖ's number one. Haider did not even try to compete with Strache in a crucial vote but left the party for good.

Haider's last election campaign was for the parliamentary election of 2008. In this campaign, Haider presented himself as the one and only head of the BZÖ. In an outstanding way, he was omnipresent—no one knew about the local or regional candidates of the BZÖ, it was Haider who was on the posters, in the leaflets, and the shining star of party events around Austria. A result of this was the BZÖ's success of 10.7%.

In the elections held in Lower Austria in the same year, the BZÖ got only 0.72% (7,250 votes) while the BZÖ share in the parliamentary elections in Lower Austria was at 6.35% (65,851 votes)—almost ten times as many. The same had happened in the Tyrol with 9.7%. In the elections held in June 2008, the BZÖ did not even run for candidacy.

It was similar in Upper Austria (2.8% compared to 9.9% in the 2008 elections), Vorarlberg (1.2% and 12.8% respectively), and Salzburg (3.7% and 12.2%).

After Haider's death, the Haider nostalgia lasted a bit longer only in Carinthia, where the BZÖ got 44.9% in 2009 (with 38.5% in the parliamentary elections in 2008). But at the end of 2009, the BZÖ was replaced by the newly formed Freiheitliche Partei Kärntens, FPK. And in 2013, the BZÖ faded away for good.

Haider left a shattered FPÖ. However, his successor Strache has had some success in bringing the FPÖ back to life again. In the parliamentary elections of 2008 and 2013, the FPÖ got 17.7% and 20.5% respectively; in 2015 in Vienna 30.8%, in Styria 26.8%, and in Upper Austria 30.4%. In Burgenland (2015), the FPÖ got 15% only—but formed a coalition government with SPÖ.

And in 2016, the FPÖ candidate for presidency, Norbert Hofer, got 35% and thus reached the runoff against Alexander van der Bellen. Regardless of the final result (the first runoff from May 2016 was cancelled by the constitutional court and so a second runoff was held in December 2016; the winner van der Bellen got 54%, Hofer 46%), it was the first time an FPÖ candidate reached the runoff. The maximum, which an FPÖ candidate had gotten so far in presidential elections, was Wilfried Gredler's 16.9% in 1980.

Twice, in 1983 and in 2000, the FPÖ had become part of a coalition government. Twice this happened without Jörg Haider. In 1983, he was too young and in 2000 it was obvious that chancellor Schüssel and the ÖVP could not legitimize a Haider-chancellery among their European partners. So Haider's dream of leading Austria as chancellor had come to an end in the late days of 1999 and the early ones of the year 2000. What Haider did, though, also twice—from 1983-1986 and from 2000-2002—was attack his party and his party's cabinet members. Apparently, Haider could not stand seeing anybody in his party above him.

Haider had been of some importance in Austrian politics in the early 1980s already and during his time as FPÖ leader. Summing up, one can say, though, that Haider was far from being a political genius. He had been a successful party chair, his success was relativized by himself and his egomania.

In his last years, he could only watch from the sidelines that a newcomer had overtaken his party and that his, Haider's, image had faded away.

## 8. *The FPÖ after Haider*

In 2005, Haider left his FPÖ. At that time, it was not clear whether or not the FPÖ would and could stand up to the new challenger BZÖ. After Haider's death in October 2008, it was obvious that the BZÖ would be the loser in this match. Beside the general elections of 2006 and 2008, the only elections between 2005 and 2008 were held in Lower Austria and Tyrol. Neither in Lower Austria nor in Tyrol could the BZÖ win seats in the regional parliaments, and both general elections made it clear that there was not much room left on the national level either. Under its new leader Strache, the FPÖ made its way back and eventually it got the votes back that had been temporarily lent to the FPÖ.

Strache managed to repeat what Haider had achieved in the 1980s and 1990s: the FPÖ was expanding again. The elections in Burgenland, Vienna, and Styria in 2005 were held in October and the time until then was too short for Strache to gain ground. Carinthia was a special case with the BZÖ - FPÖ controversy and the losses in Lower Austria and Tyrol in 2013 were comparatively moderate. Beside these results, the FPÖ was successful in all other regional elections. Outstanding results were the wins in Upper Austria and Styria in 2015. In Vienna, Strache lost the mayor-match against Michael Häupl and the FPÖ did not come off as successful as expected (SPÖ 39.6%; FPÖ 30.8%), but it seems possible that Strache might become Austria's first FPÖ-Chancellor—a position Haider dreamt about but could never reach.

Table 4: *FPÖ results in regional elections 2005-2016*

|               | 2005             | 2008             | 2009              | 2010              | 2013             | 2014            | 2015              |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Burgenland    | 5.7%<br>(-6.9%)  |                  |                   | 9.0%<br>(+3.2%)   |                  |                 | 15.0%<br>(+6.1%)  |
| Carinthia     |                  |                  | BZÖ 44.9%         |                   | 16.8%<br>(-28%)  |                 |                   |
| Lower Austria |                  | 10.5%<br>(+6.0%) |                   |                   | 8.2%<br>(-2.3%)  |                 |                   |
| Upper Austria |                  |                  | 15.3%<br>(+6.9%)  |                   |                  |                 | 30.4%<br>(+15.1%) |
| Salzburg      |                  |                  | 13.0%<br>(+4.3%)  |                   | 17.0%<br>(+4.0%) |                 |                   |
| Styria        | 4.6%<br>(-7.8%)  |                  |                   | 10.7%<br>(+6.1%)  |                  |                 | 26.7%<br>(+16.1%) |
| Tyrol         |                  | 12.4%<br>(+4.4%) |                   |                   | 9.3%<br>(-3.1%)  |                 |                   |
| Vorarlberg    |                  |                  | 25.1%<br>(+12.1%) |                   |                  | 23.4%<br>(1.7%) |                   |
| Vienna        | 14.8%<br>(-5.3%) |                  |                   | 25.8%<br>(+10.9%) |                  |                 | 30.8%<br>(+5.0%)  |

Source: author's own compilation

Finally, in the 2017 elections the FPÖ finished third with 26% (ÖVP 31.5% and SPÖ 26.9%). Nonetheless, Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP) built a coalition with the FPÖ—and since December 18, 2017, the FPÖ is in government again.

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