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The Party as Pariah: The Exclusion of Anti-Immigration Parties and its Effect on their Ideological Positions

JOOST VAN SPANJE and WOUTER VAN DER BRUG

During the past three decades, anti-immigration parties have emerged all over Western Europe. Some of them have been treated like any other party by their mainstream opponents and a few have even become members of governing coalitions (e.g., the Austrian FPO). Other such parties have been politically excluded: established parties have refrained from any cooperation with them and in some cases even refused to enter into a political debate with their politicians. This article investigates how the strategy of ostracising anti-immigration parties affects the internal dynamics within these parties. In particular, we assess whether these parties radicalise as a result of this strategy, and, conversely whether it has a moderating effect when these parties are approached more pragmatically. Our analyses, regarding ten parties at several moments in time, show that anti-immigration parties that were not ostracised became more moderate, whereas those that were treated as outcasts continued to be extremist.

Since the 1970s, many Western European countries have witnessed the rise of a particular set of political parties which are often referred to as ‘right-wing populist’ or ‘extreme right’, but which we will call ‘anti-immigration parties’ for the reasons discussed below. These parties have encountered various responses from other parties, ranging from full cooperation at all levels to complete political exclusion. Political exclusion can be assumed to serve three different goals in the three different arenas distinguished by Sjöblom (1968): the parliamentary, electoral and internal.

Concerning the parliamentary arena, the strategy aims at keeping an anti-immigration party from power. In the electoral arena, the mainstream parties seek to de-legitimise anti-immigration parties in the eyes of the voters by denouncing them as ‘extremist’. In addition, the boycotting of anti-immigration parties by the establishment is aimed at preventing citizens from casting a vote for these parties, through emphasising that such votes would be ‘wasted’. Results of research into the electoral consequences of
The Exclusion of Anti-Immigration Parties

Political exclusion have been somewhat mixed (Downs 2002; Van Spanje and Van der Brug 2006).

The exclusion of anti-immigration parties from ‘normal politics’ may also have an effect on internal party dynamics, the so-called internal arena. In particular, it has been argued that the political exclusion – and particularly state repression – of anti-immigration parties can lead to a stronger sense of solidarity and group-think among the activists. A case study of the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), for example, shows that this may have led to its increasing radicalisation (Erb and Minkenberg forthcoming). Some studies exist on the consequences of state repression, but no studies have yet been conducted to assess whether parties radicalise as a consequence of political exclusion. This is quite surprising, since the strategy of exclusion is widely used, and since some scholars have warned against the risk that these parties will radicalise when they are politically excluded (Van der Brug and Fennema 2004). In this analysis, we explore the relationship between political exclusion and radicalisation.

Hypotheses

Our guiding hypotheses are that anti-immigration parties which are ostracised by established parties will radicalise as a result (H1), whereas anti-immigration parties that are not isolated will become more moderate over time (H2). These expectations are derived from the assumption that in order to achieve any of its goals, every party has to cooperate to some extent with other parties. This is certainly true for governing parties, but also for parties in opposition that aim to affect policy outcomes. This requires them to cooperate with other parties in order to seek a majority in parliament. To cooperate with other parties, an anti-immigration party will first have to mellow its tone towards other parties, towards immigrants and towards the political system.

Secondly, any kind of cooperation requires that, despite disagreements, the partners involved have some ground in common. If a party is too radical, it may not pass the ‘threshold of acceptability’. Hence, to be able to cooperate with other parties, an anti-immigration party has an incentive to become more moderate. When such cooperation is hindered by the strategies of exclusion that mainstream parties pursue, there is no incentive to become more moderate.

In addition to these organisational causes leading to the moderating effect that comes about from being treated like a normal party, there is also a possible psychological process at work. If other parties inundate an anti-immigration party with denunciations and stigma, its members or supporters may interpret this as a violation of some of their democratic rights, such as freedom of speech. Those who are already sceptical about parliamentary democracy may thus be reconfirmed in their views. Moreover, the isolation resulting from the strategy of exclusion may lead to
stronger feelings of solidarity within the group and stronger feelings of antagonism towards outsiders, which in turn could lead to radicalisation, as has been argued elsewhere (Erb and Minkenberg forthcoming; Giugni et al. 2005; Husbands 2002; Koopmans 1996; Minkenberg 2006). Although these other studies focus on the consequences of state repression, the strategy of established parties to isolate and stigmatise anti-immigration parties is expected to have similar effects.

If, on the other hand, a party is confronted with more respectful and less emotion-ridden criticism, and if it is allowed the opportunity to express its views in public, it will, to some extent, become part of the system. This may lead the party and its followers to become more moderate towards their political opponents.4 Our hypotheses pertain to the effects of ostracism on extremism. However, we are aware of the fact that the causal relationship between extremism and ostracism could theoretically run both ways. That is, while it is possible for a party to radicalise as a consequence of being ostracised, it is also possible that more extremist parties are more likely to be ostracised than those that are less extreme. Therefore, we will not only explore the relationship between ostracism of parties on the one hand, and their ideological positions on the other by way of cross-sectional analysis only; we will also explore how the ideological positions of parties have changed over time as a function of the ostracism to which they are subjected.

A complicating factor when testing our hypothesis that ostracised parties radicalise (H1), is that anti-immigration parties are likely to take extremist positions. As a result, they may have little margin to become more radical, at least not in terms of the survey items we employ in this study. Non-ostracised anti-immigration parties, on the contrary, have more room to moderate their positions (H2). Therefore, we are more likely to generate support for our second hypothesis than for the first one.

Case Selection

The kind of parties that we study here have sometimes been classified by their position on a left–right dimension (Ignazi 1992; Kitschelt and McGann 1995), and sometimes combined with the qualification ‘populist’ (Betz 1994; Ivarsflaten 2005). We, however, will take Fennema’s (1997) definition of the ‘anti-immigrant party’ as a starting point. In his opinion, these parties are an ideologically mixed bag, and the only thing they have in common is their fierce opposition towards immigration. Since they do not always attack immigrants, but are constantly fiercely opposed to immigration, we prefer to label them anti-immigration parties. In line with Fennema, we define them as political parties that employ the immigration issue as their core political concern in electoral campaigns, or are considered by elites of other parties as doing so.

We focus on Western democracies where (1) anti-immigration parties have participated in national elections, (2) data about their positions can be
obtained from all the data sources we use, and where (3) the data are available for at least two time-points, which is important because our hypotheses pertain to developments over time. Since we employ (among others) the data sets of the European Election Studies 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004, we focus on the countries that were EU member states in those years. In these country–year combinations, we select all the parties for which we have data both on the independent variable (level of exclusion of the anti-immigration party) and on the dependent variable (party radicalisation) and we assess whether each of them should be classified as an ‘anti-immigration party’.

In order to distinguish between anti-immigration and other parties, we examine party attitudes toward immigration, which is highly similar to other operational definitions of anti-immigration parties (Lubbers 2001; Norris 2005). We take advantage of information emanating from an expert survey, which was conducted by Lubbers (2001). Lubbers asked country experts to indicate the positions of all the relevant parties in various Western European countries by 1990 and 2000 on a 0–10 ‘immigration restriction score’. Since we expect parties to radicalise or to become more moderate as a function of ostracism, we included all the anti-immigration parties, which should be classified as anti-immigration parties at the first time-point in our over-time analysis. So, parties that should be classified as anti-immigration parties in 1990 were always selected. In addition we selected parties such as Danish People’s Party (DF), which did not yet exist in 1990, but which should be classified as anti-immigration in 2000. The results of these expert surveys revealed a wide gap between parties that can be labelled as ‘anti-immigration’ (scoring more than 8.5 on the scale) and the other parties (scoring less than 8.0). On this basis we selected the Danish People’s Party and the Progress Party (FrP) in Denmark, the French and Walloon National Fronts (FNs), the former Flemish Bloc (VB), the German Republicans (REP), the Dutch Centre Democrats (CD), the Italian Social Movement (MSI, renamed National Alliance, AN) and Northern League (LN), and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ). Our case selection, including ten parties from eight different political systems, is very similar to that of other studies on anti-immigration parties (e.g., Golder 2003; Van der Brug et al. 2005). It has been shown that attitudes toward the immigration issue were an important predictor of voting for these kinds of parties (Van der Brug et al. 2000). In the following section, we assess for each of the parties under study whether it was ostracised by the other parties at each relevant point in time. We then address the question whether political exclusion is related to radicalisation.

**Party Ostracism: Conceptualisation**

In the relevant literature, the response of all other parties to anti-immigration parties is assumed to be dichotomous. On this view, an
anti-immigration party is perceived by all other parties either as a viable partner with which they can cooperate, or as some kind of evil which they should ignore or even try to isolate politically (De Witte 1997; Downs 2001; Van Donselaar 1995). However, it is only seldom that established parties react en bloc to an anti-immigration party. For the assessment of the effects of these party responses, it is very important whether the responses of individual parties differ, and in what way. For example, just after the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) had renewed its politics of Ausgrenzung (ostracism) towards Haider’s FPÖ in 1999, the People’s Party (ÖVP) invited the FPÖ to join a government coalition (Art 2006). This outcome shows us that it is important to assess the reaction of separate parties. Only then can we assess the situation of each anti-immigration party and categorise each of them as ‘ostracised’ or ‘not ostracised’.

Furthermore, we must take into account that a party can be ostracised at one level, while it is admitted to ‘normal’ politics at another. For example, the Austrian SPÖ officially applied a strict strategy of the Ausgrenzung of the FPÖ at the national level. At other levels, however, this Ausgrenzung was far from complete, since SPÖ and FPÖ colleagues in local and state parliaments cooperated in legislative activities (Art 2006). In this study we focus on the national level, because this is where the strategy of political exclusion is bound to have the greatest impact on the electorate. After all, in the eyes of the voter, national elections are the most important (‘first order’) elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980).

In order to make the concept comparable over time and space, we take as a starting point that any party – operating in any party system – has the choice towards every other party in that system either to politically cooperate with that party to some extent, or to decide not to cooperate with it. As an extreme option, a party can choose to systematically rule out any political cooperation with a specific party. Vice versa, a specific party can be systematically ruled out from any political cooperation by all the other parties in the party system at a specific moment in time. If the party is systematically ruled out from collaboration by a party on principle because it is perceived as anti-democratic, we refer to it as ostracism. We view the extent to which a party is ostracised as running along a continuum. This dimension ranges between two extremes. At the one end, we have a situation in which all the other parties in the system systematically rule out any cooperation with the party on principle – full ostracism, what Downs (2001) would call ‘political isolation’; at the other extreme, there is a situation whereby none of the other parties in the system systematically rules out cooperation with the party (no ostracism at all, or ‘collaboration’).6

Even if ostracism is conceptualised as a continuum, however, the strategy of ostracism is only expected to have an effect if the targeted party is confronted by a broad coalition of other parties. In the case of anti-immigration parties, the participation of the main right-wing party in the party system can be considered as a necessary and sufficient condition for
effective ostracism, since insofar as anti-immigration parties have cooperated with other parties, this has been with other parties from the right. Therefore, each anti-immigration party will be classified as ‘ostracised’ if it was boycotted and denounced as ‘anti-democratic’ by the main right-wing party. If not, then the party was ostracised – if at all – only by a minority, or by a majority which includes all parties of the left, with which it presumably would not want to cooperate anyway because of ideological differences. In either case the anti-immigration party is assumed not to be ostracised in any meaningful way.

Party Ostracism: Caveats

Some objections may be raised against our approach. Firstly, it may sometimes be quite difficult to assess whether a certain party rules out cooperation with a specific other party, and to what extent – especially if the isolation of a party is not merely due to ostracism by other parties, but also partly because of its own strategy. For instance, the Progress Party in Denmark refused to collaborate with other parties for a long period of time. These cases are quite rare, however.

Secondly, it is theoretically possible that established parties do not bother enacting any strategy against an anti-immigration party when it is very small and thus not powerful. In this case the concept of party ostracism would be no more than theoretical. For example, the National Front in Wallonia and the Dutch Centre Democrats have always been on the fringe of their party systems, and the German Republicans have never managed to get their representatives elected to the Bundestag. However, even though these parties are small, they have all received enough media attention to oblige other parties to react in some way to their existence. In many cases, mainstream politicians have denounced anti-immigration parties as ‘anti-democratic’ and/or associated them with Fascism even though these parties do not pose any credible electoral threat to them. For example, when the cordon sanitaire agreement was signed in 1989, the former Flemish Bloc was still quite small, receiving about two per cent of the Flemish vote. The same goes for the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) when Haider took over in 1986 and the Social Democrats (SPÖ) opted for Ausgrenzung, as it gained only five per cent of the Austrian vote in the national elections immediately beforehand.

In addition, we should be aware of the fact that the strategy of ostracism is often part of a broader set of responses in society. So whatever effects we observe regarding political exclusion, they probably also reflect responses from civil society and the media. As a case in point, in the Netherlands ‘antifascist’ committees were formed all over the country after the Centre Party (CP) won a single parliamentary seat in 1982 (Art 2006). In accordance with this response, all the other political parties represented in the Dutch parliament responded to the CP with a strategy of boycotts and denunciation. In Austria, by contrast, there were no large demonstrations or other
signs of widespread indignation in society about Haider’s takeover of the FPÖ in September 1986 – despite his periodically alleged flirtation with Nazism (Lubbers 2001). Like the Austrian public, the Austrian mainstream right-wing party, the ÖVP, did not react strongly to Haider’s coming on stage. It never fully adopted the strategy of Ausgrenzung (Art 2006).

The same pattern can be witnessed regarding the response of the mass media. While in Germany the completely isolated Republicans also encountered strong opposition from the influential tabloid Bild, Austria’s dominant counterpart Krone Zeitung strongly supported the FPÖ from the moment Haider took over in 1986 (Art 2006). So, even though party ostracism is defined in a narrow sense – pertaining to political parties only – the concept could have wider implications.7

**Party Ostracism: Data and Operationalisation**

In order to answer the research questions posed in this study, information about anti-immigration parties was linked to data derived from the European Election Studies 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004. On the basis of a literature review, we classified each of the anti-immigration parties as ‘ostracised’ or ‘not ostracised’ in each of those four years.

We have operationalised the ostracism of anti-immigration parties by examining the response of the largest mainstream right-wing party to the anti-immigration party in the political system. These responses have been divided into two categories: either the established right-wing party ostracised the party, or not. In other words, only if the right denounced the anti-immigration party as a non-democratic party and therefore refrained from any political cooperation or alliance with the anti-immigration party was it classified as ‘ostracised’ at that moment in time. This refusal to cooperate can manifest itself in the electoral and/or in the parliamentary arena. In the electoral arena, the other parties might refuse to collaborate in the form of joint press releases, or to refrain from electoral alliances with these parties. In the parliamentary arena, the other parties may refuse any joint legislative activity with these parties, or deny them a place in administrative or executive positions.

The situation of each anti-immigration party has been assessed for all four points in time.8 See Table 1 for the classification for each of the anti-immigration parties at these different moments in time.

The table shows 28 observations9 concerning the extent to which the ten anti-immigration parties were politically excluded by other parties in 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004. This varied greatly. Five of the ten parties were excluded from all kinds of cooperation by the mainstream right, whereas the other five were not ostracised by the main right-wing party throughout the entire period of study.

The five parties that have been completely isolated on principle are the former Flemish Bloc, the Walloon National Front, the Republicans in
Germany, the Dutch Centre Democrats and the French National Front. In Flanders, all other parties represented in the national parliament reached a formal agreement as early as 1989, committing themselves not to undertake any political agreements or arrangements with the Flemish Bloc – either in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Anti-immigration party</th>
<th>Main right-wing party</th>
<th>Ostracism</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Progress Party (FrP, Denmark)</td>
<td>Conservative People's Party (C)</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>National Front (FN, France)</td>
<td>Rally for the Republic (RPR)</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Republicans (REPs, Germany)</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (CDU-CSU)</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Italian Social Movement (MSI, Italy)</td>
<td>Christian Democracy (DC)</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Flemish Bloc (VB, Flanders)</td>
<td>Flemish Liberals and Democrats (VLD)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>National Front (FN, Wallonia)</td>
<td>Liberal Reformist Party (PRL)</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Progress Party (FrP, Denmark)</td>
<td>Liberal Party (V)</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>National Front (FN, France)</td>
<td>Rally for the Republic (RPR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Republicans (REPs, Germany)</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (CDU-CSU)</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>National Alliance (AN, Italy)</td>
<td>Go Italy (FI)</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Northern League (LN, Italy)</td>
<td>Go Italy (FI)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Centre Democrats (CD, Netherlands)</td>
<td>People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Freedom Party (FPÖ, Austria)</td>
<td>Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Flemish Bloc (VB, Flanders)</td>
<td>Flemish Liberals and Democrats (VLD)</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>National Front (FN, Wallonia)</td>
<td>Liberal Reformist Party (PRL)</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Danish People's Party (DF, Denmark)</td>
<td>Liberal Party (V)</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>National Front (FN, France)</td>
<td>Rally for the Republic (RPR)</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>Republicans (REPs, Germany)</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (CDU-CSU)</td>
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<td>National Alliance (AN, Italy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Centre Democrats (CD, Netherlands)</td>
<td>People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Freedom Party (FPÖ, Austria)</td>
<td>Austrian People's Party (ÖVP)</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Danish People's Party (DF, Denmark)</td>
<td>Liberal Party (V)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>National Front (FN, France)</td>
<td>Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Republicans (REPs, Germany)</td>
<td>Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (CDU-CSU)</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>National Alliance (AN, Italy)</td>
<td>Go Italy (FI)</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>Northern League (LN, Italy)</td>
<td>Go Italy (FI)</td>
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**Source:** relevant literature (see text).
the context of the democratically elected institutes or in the context of the elections for these institutes (Swyngedouw 1998: 72). According to the parties involved, the reason for signing the Protocol was that the VB would not acknowledge the fundamental democratic principles or human rights (Damen, 1999: 6–7). Resolutions repeating the condemnation of the VB were passed in the national parliament in 1992, and again in 1996 (Damen 1999). Although the precise meaning of the Protocol is often disputed (Damen 1999: 11–15) and significant minorities within the mainstream right have opposed the cordon sanitaire (Swyngedouw 1998: 72), collaboration with the VB has remained a taboo for the mainstream right-wing Flemish Liberals and Democrats (VLD) throughout the period of study.

Another anti-immigration party in Belgium, the National Front, has also faced a cordon sanitaire, as cooperation with it is ruled out by all other parties. The ostracism of the FN was formalised in a ‘Democratic Charter’, which was signed by the four largest Walloon parties in 1993 – among which the main right-wing party Liberal Reformist Party (PRL) – and which was renewed five years later (Delwit and De Waele 1998: 238–9).

In 1989, a few members of the German mainstream right Christian Democratic Union-Christian Social Union (CDU-CSU) called for a coalition with the Republicans (Backes and Mudde 2000: 459). All the established parties nonetheless associated the REPs with Nazism, and made it extremely clear that any form of cooperation with the party was unthinkable (Art 2006). Indeed, members of the mainstream parties who violated the policy of Ausgrenzung were immediately banished from their parties (Art 2006). Even representatives of the most right-wing established party, the CDU-CSU, went out of their way to express their rejection of the REPs (Backes and Mudde 2000: 466).

The same applies to the Dutch Centre Democrats. The party, represented in the national parliament until 1998, was boycotted and denounced as antidemocratic by all the other parties in parliament, including the main right-wing People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) (Mudde and Van Holsteyn 2000). Janmaat, the leader of the CD, was usually ignored and never taken seriously by his colleagues in the other parties. If the CD was addressed by mainstream politicians at all, then it was either to ridicule the party, or to express their disgust about it.

In France, the same pattern can be discerned, as all the other parties ostracised the National Front (Hainsworth 2000: 19–20). Since the late 1980s, not only the left, but also the mainstream right parties have stigmatised the FN (Minkenberg and Schain 2003). In the 1997 national election campaign, for example, the mainstream right explicitly ruled out any kind of collaboration with the FN (Givens 2005: 121). Unlike the countries mentioned above, however, France has no proportional representation (PR), but a two-round majoritarian electoral system. This system has often given the FN the opportunity to exchange its electoral support for some kind of policy concessions, the message of the FN to the moderate
right being, in Downs’ (2002: 42) words, ‘[b]egin to adopt our policy positions or grant us some other prize if you want us to help you defeat the Left’. Nonetheless, the message sent by all other parties to the voters is clear: the FN is a party that is a threat to liberal democracy, and it should therefore be kept away from power.

The five parties that were not ostracised through the period of study are the Progress Party, the Danish People’s Party, the Freedom Party of Austria, the Northern League in Italy and the Italian Social Movement/National Alliance. In Denmark, both the Progress Party and its successor party, the Danish People’s Party, have supported minority governments. The FrP emerged as an anti-tax party that rejected deals with the existing parties in the years following its entrance onto the political stage in 1973. Under the leadership of Kjaersgaard, the FrP abandoned its isolationist stance and the centre parties and the right accepted its support for minority governments led by Schlüter (Conservative People’s Party) between 1987 and 1993 (Kritzinger et al. 2004: 16–17).

In 1995, Kjaersgaard founded a new party, the DF, which also managed to avoid being ostracised by the Conservative People’s Party and the Liberal Party, which had taken over the position of the Conservatives as the main right-wing party. Indeed, the leader of the Liberal Party stated in 1999 that he was prepared to make deals with the DF (Rydgren 2004: 496), which was repeated several times before the 2001 national elections (Givens 2005: 146–7). Since these elections, the DF has supported the right-wing minority government including both the Conservative People’s Party and the Liberal Party.

In Austria, Haider’s Freedom Party did not have to face an elaborate strategy of ostracism either (Art 2006; Riedlsporerger 1998: 39). Ever since his takeover of the FPÖ in 1986, the party had been denounced and boycotted by all the main parties except for the Austrian People’s Party. The ÖVP never fully adopted a strategy of Ausgrenzung and often threatened its coalition partner SPÖ that it would switch to the FPÖ instead (Art 2006). Indeed, in 2000 it struck a deal with the FPÖ within only eight days after it had ended its talks on government formation with the SPÖ (Luther 2000: 432–33). The ÖVP–FPÖ coalition was renewed after the 2002 national elections, which underlines the fact that the party was not ostracised.

As in Austria, in Italy, anti-immigration parties have also been invited to join a government coalition. The Northern League joined the right-wing government under the command of media magnate Berlusconi after its leader Bossi had decided to renounce the self-inflicted isolation of his movement in 1993 (Betz 1998: 53; Bull and Newell 1995: 83). Although Bossi subsequently broke down the government coalition with Berlusconi and tried to position his party in the centre of the political spectrum (Betz 1998: 54–5), the alliance with Berlusconi was nonetheless renewed in 2001.

Finally, the Italian Social Movement was treated by all other relevant parties as a pariah until the early 1990s (Ignazi 2003). Officially, this
was due to its neo-fascist ideology, but strategic considerations of the main right-wing DC may also have played a role in this (Newell 2000: 477). The end of the First Republic in the early 1990s provided the MSI with the opportunity to make a fresh start. Under the new name National Alliance, it launched a campaign sponsored and facilitated by Berlusconi, which proved crucial to its acceptance by other parties (Newell 2000). As Statham (1996: 101) puts it: ‘At a time when political legitimacy was a new and potentially fragile resource for the newly formed ex-neofascists, the tactical alliance with [Berlusconi’s] Forza Italia has ensured that the party receives favorable media coverage from the private television networks at a comparatively minuscule cost’. The AN remained an ally of the mainstream right and was invited to join a coalition in 1994 and, again, in 2001.

Party Radicalisation or Moderation: Data and Operationalisation

The dependent variable of this study is party radicalisation versus moderation. Radicalisation or moderation will be measured in terms of party movement along the dominant ideological dimension in contemporary Western European party politics: the left–right divide. Anti-immigration parties are generally described – and sometimes defined – as parties of the radical, extreme or far right. In addition, many of these parties, such as the Italian Social Movement and the French National Front, have a background that is usually referred to as ‘extreme right’. Nevertheless, there are important differences in how ‘extreme’ these parties are.

In order to measure whether the isolation of anti-immigration parties has affected their ideological stances, we investigate whether these parties shifted either to the extreme end of the political spectrum or to a more centrist position on the left/right axis. We employed data from the European Election Studies 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004. These are four of the few data sets that include voters’ perceptions of party positions on a 1–10 left–right dimension. Since the same questions were asked in all surveys, the perceived positions are comparable over time and across countries. In Table 2 we present data on the perceptions of voters regarding left–right positions of anti-immigration parties from these four data sets.

One could, of course, argue that perceptions of party positions may not reflect parties’ ‘true’ positions, because voters may not know where parties stand. However, studies in which perceptions of voters are compared with other indicators of parties’ positions – based on contents of manifestos, roll-call behaviour and perceptions of parliamentarians themselves (Van der Brug 1998; 1999; Van der Brug and Van der Eijk 1999) – show that median perceptions of left/right positions are remarkably accurate. Moreover, we tested our results with expert judgements as well – see the ‘results’ section.

Table 2 reflects 28 observations regarding the perceived positions of the ten anti-immigration parties under study. It turns out that there is quite a wide variety in the perceived positions of anti-immigration parties, ranging
from the most extreme (9.96) placement of the Italian Social Movement in 1989 to the centrist position (5.32) of the Italian Northern League ten years later. The majority of the selected anti-immigration parties were attributed a score higher than 9.0, however.

In view of the differences in the perception of these parties, it could be questioned whether the most frequently used labels, ‘extreme’, ‘radical’ or ‘far right’, are appropriate for these parties. According to the classification by Castles and Mair (1984), for example, six of these ten parties actually fell within the category of ‘moderate right’ at a specific point in time, one of which (the Northern League) was actually placed left of centre in the political spectrum in 1999.

**Results**

Having discussed the selection of cases and how we measured our variables, we now return to our research question. Do parties radicalise when faced with the strategy of exclusion? As a first step in assessing the relationship between party ostracism and radicalisation, we perform a regression analysis with ostracism as the independent variable and party radicalisation as the dependent variable. The extent to which anti-immigration parties were excluded from ‘normal politics’ turns out to have a strong, positive impact on party radicalisation, significant at the p = 0.001 level. Party ostracism explains 40 per cent of the variance in left–right placement regarding the 28 observations. On average, anti-immigration parties that were facing ostracising strategies by other parties were 1.41 points more to the right on a 1–10 left–right scale than those that were not ostracised (9.65 and 8.24). These results were confirmed by analyses on the basis of data derived from various expert surveys (Benoit and Laver 2006; Huber and Inglehart 1995; Lubbers 2001; Marks and Steenbergen 1999).
All the ostracised parties were positioned at least at 8.75 on a 1–10 scale, whereas only two of the other parties were placed so far to the extreme right. The exceptions are the National Alliance in Italy and the Progress Party in Denmark. These are not really outliers, however, as the AN was ostracised until the collapse of the party system of the Italian First Republic, and the FrP adopted an isolationist stance during the 1970s and early 1980s.

In sum, all the parties that are very right-wing were ostracised in the past, or opted for self-imposed isolation, such as the FrP. On the other hand, all anti-immigration parties that have not been ostracised are less radical than those that were ostracised. This shows that political exclusion and the ideological positions of the targeted anti-immigration parties are strongly correlated. Yet at this point we cannot rule out the possibility that the effect runs the other way. Perhaps the most radical parties are ostracised because of their extreme positions. In order to draw valid inferences about the effect of political exclusion, we turn our focus to the development of the ideological positions of individual anti-immigration parties. To this end, we divide the anti-immigration parties into two categories: those anti-immigration parties that were ostracised throughout the period of study, and those that were not. Figure 1 shows how the perceived perceptions of the first group of anti-immigration parties developed, whereas the positions of those parties that were not ostracised are reflected in Figure 2.

The patterns shown in Figures 1 and 2 are rather suggestive. Those anti-immigration parties that have been treated as outcasts throughout the last 15 years have remained more radical than those that were not. This is no evidence, however, for our first hypothesis, stating that the parties that faced ostracism became radicalised. The only party that became more radical in terms of left and right was the former Flemish Bloc, but this outcome could have had more to do with the increasing salience of left and right in Flanders near the end of the 1990s than with a change in the party’s positions (Van der Brug 2001). Rather, the ostracised anti-immigration parties seem to be stuck at the extreme right end of the political spectrum – unwilling, or unable, to resist the pressures of their most radical factions. The Walloon and French National Fronts, the Republicans in Germany and the Dutch Centre Democrats were all positioned well over 9.0 during the whole time period. It would thus seem that these parties were ‘frozen’ into radical right positions. It should be noted, however, that the positions of the ostracised anti-immigration parties were already so extreme that there is hardly any space left for radicalisation. Still, Hypothesis 1 is not confirmed by the empirical data.

Unlike the first hypothesis, the evidence clearly supports our second hypothesis. All of the anti-immigration parties that were not ostracised became more moderate in 1999 and 2004 than they had been in 1989, although they were pushed back and forth from radicalisation to
FIGURE 1
IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS OF OSTRACISED ANTI-IMMIGRATION PARTIES


FIGURE 2
IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS OF NON-OSTRACISED ANTI-IMMIGRATION PARTIES

convergence with other parties. The Italian Social Movement and the Progress Party in Denmark started off at positions similar to the ostracised anti-immigration parties, but showed a steady trend toward more moderate positions. These two parties managed to escape from their isolated positions – either self-imposed or not – and they have been able to reposition themselves towards the political centre since then. Not surprisingly, the starting point of the Danish People’s Party was at a position similar to that of its predecessor, the Progress Party. Finally, the Northern League in Italy and the Freedom Party of Austria may never have been perceived as extreme right-wing by the public at large in the first place. These parties, which have never experienced full ostracism, have always been perceived as more moderate than the other anti-immigration parties as far as these data show.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this paper, we have tested two hypotheses. The first hypothesis (H1) is that anti-immigration parties become radicalised as a result of their exclusion. Our data have not provided evidence that this is the case. All of the ostracised parties were extremist when they were founded, and they did not change in this respect. The second hypothesis (H2) was that anti-immigration parties that were not ostracised would slowly become more moderate. Our analyses provide clear support for this hypothesis. Anti-immigration parties that have been allowed to participate in normal politics have managed to escape from outright extremism, while their ostracised counterparts have not. Lacking any incentive to tone down their rhetoric, the latter parties can be dominated by their most radical factions. This indicates that the positions of anti-immigration parties can be substantially influenced by strategies of the other parties in the political system.

What do these results tell us about the effects of the strategy of ostracism on anti-immigration parties? First of all, we have to keep in mind that the consequences for an ostracised party vary with the arena in which the party operates. One could distinguish the parliamentary, the electoral and the internal arenas (Sjöblom 1968). In the parliamentary arena, anti-immigration parties can be kept from power with this strategy as long as they do not win a majority of seats in the parliamentary arena. In the electoral arena, anti-immigration parties may be damaged by political exclusion. Whether these parties are ostracised or not is only one of the factors that structure their electoral performance, however (Van Spanje and Van der Brug 2006). As the case of the former Flemish Bloc – now called Flemish Interest – shows, it is certainly possible that these parties continue to grow electorally. In the internal arena, ostracism by other parties keeps a targeted party from becoming more moderate.
The implication is therefore that the strategy to ostracise an anti-immigration party is most likely to prevent it from becoming more moderate. In combination with the fact that a *cordon sanitaire* cannot (always) stop the electoral growth of a party, the possible result of this strategy is the presence in the party system of a large extremist party. So, even though party ostracism might be effective at the parliamentary level, the findings of this study suggest that more attention should be paid to its consequences on the internal dynamics within a party.

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**Notes**

1. In Belgium and France this strategy is referred to as the strategy of the *cordon sanitaire*, in German-speaking countries it is called *Ausgrenzung*.
2. Strategies of exclusion have not only been applied to anti-immigration parties, but to various kinds of parties in many established party systems. For example, communist parties were confronted with similar strategies during the cold war.
3. Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989) coined the term ‘region of acceptability’ in the context of electoral research, where it refers to policies that are no longer acceptable to most voters. We use the term here in a different context.
4. Many anarchists refuse to vote for precisely this reason: those who are elected will become ‘encapsulated’ by the system.
5. Of course, asking to indicate the positions of political parties of ten years earlier, as Lubbers (2001) did, is likely to result in major misspecifications. This is not relevant for this paper, however. None of the conclusions of this paper would be different if the 1990 measurements collected by Lubbers were not taken into account. The point here is that there is a wide gap between anti-immigration and other parties, which justifies our classification of parties on the basis of party positioning on the immigration issue.
6. Note that the party ostracism dimension can apply not only to anti-immigration parties, but to any political party operating in any party system at a specific point in time.
7. Another possible critique of the approach is that it is not an interactive model, i.e., it does not account for interplay of actions of the one actor, and reactions of the other. The underlying assumption is that parties react to the existence of a specific (other) party, and following reactions of the ostracised party are of no or less importance. This is in accordance with the situation in Western Europe, however, where responses to anti-immigration parties seem to stem from political culture and tradition in the various...
countries. In any case, they can be safely assumed to be independent of the attitudes of the anti-immigration parties towards the other parties.

8. We restricted ourselves to assessing ‘party ostracism’ only for those party/year combinations for which we have also data on (one of) the dependent variables.

9. The observations are limited to the 28 party/year combinations for which we also have values of the dependent variable at our disposal (see below).


11. We tested our results by using data from a different kind of source: estimations by experts. We also performed the analyses with left–right party placements by experts, using the combined results derived from two different surveys, conducted at different points in time: Huber and Inglehart (1995) with data pertaining to 1994 and Lubbers (2001) on 1999. The conclusions of these analyses turned out to be similar to the findings on the basis of the voters’ perceptions. The variance in left–right party placement was explained for 50% (adjusted R-square = 0.50) by party ostracism. Regarding 15 observations, the difference between the two categories was more than a full point (1.06). Our findings are also in accordance with left–right party placement by experts reported by Marks and Steenbergen (1999) and Benoit and Laver (2006).

12. With the possible exception of the Italian AN by 1999.

References


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