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How Effective Is The Cordon Sanitaire?
Lessons from Efforts to Contain the Far Right in Belgium, France, Denmark and Norway*

Political scientists with research interests in Europe's far right often shy away from the question, "What is to be done?" As a discipline we tend to be much more comfortable as empiricists trying to explain the relative success of various extremist parties and identifying the traits of their supporters than we are of venturing prescriptions for how to contain and roll back the far right. It is clear, however, that if we are to avoid the extant literature's penchant for virtuous yet ineffective one-size-fits-all solutions, then systematic cross-national analysis of the successes and failures of responses by mainstream political parties to the presence of far-right parties in legislatures is necessary. It is to that end that this article aims (1) to describe and classify alternative strategic responses to successful extremist parties and (2) to draw inferences about the relative success of alternative anti-extremist strategies from the experiences of four European countries. While it is evident that no single strategy holds the key to combating the far right, the evidence from Belgium, France, Denmark and Norway suggests that so-called "constructive engagement" strategies rather than "clean hands" strategies have led—and therefore can lead—to greater success. "Doing the right thing," by erecting a cordon sanitaire around a far right party—as has been done most dramatically in Antwerp—may be politically correct, it may adhere to the advice of most anti-racism groups, and it may give mainstream politicians the ability to present their clean hands to the voters; however, doing the right thing often yields unintended and undesired consequences.

1. Europe's "New Radical Right"

Europe's "new radical right" appears ever firmly entrenched. Familiar are examples from France's municipal councils, regional parliaments, and National Assembly where the anti-foreigner National Front (Front National, FN) has earned institutional arenas in which to espouse its policies of state-funded racial preferences, Holocaust denial, and immigrant repatriation (Declair 1999; Downs 1998b). Elsewhere, and perhaps less familiar, is Belgium's xenophobic, separatist Flemish Bloc (Vlaams Blok, VB), which at the end of 2001 stood as the single largest political party in the city of Antwerp, held 22 of the 118 seats in the Flemish Parliament, sent 15 members to the national Chamber of Representatives, and occupied two of Belgium's 25 seats in the European Parliament. How, we should ask, have Belgium's moderate conservative parties reacted? Likewise, and still more under-researched, has been the rise of Norway's anti-system, anti-foreigner Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet, FrP) and its entry into the country's municipal, county, and national assemblies. The Norwegian Progress Party, like its namesake in Denmark (Fremskridspartiet, FrP), captures headlines for its controversial approach to immigration policy and draws an increasingly large share of seats (14.7% of the 2001 national vote and 26 seats in the Storting). In Denmark the People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF) of Pia Kjærsgaard has captured seats at local, national and European levels and consistently parlays its anti-immigration, welfare-chauvinist message into 15% support in the public opinion polls. How, we should thus ask, have moderate-conservative parties in these countries reacted? Have they found it better to ignore the far right and their issues and hope that in isolation they will just disappear, or to oppose with conviction the policies of the pariah and thus appeal to voters at the center and even at the left of center (thus conceding considerable numbers of votes to the extremists), or to embrace the issues of the pariah and undermine its ability to mobilize voters who have deserted the moderate right?

The political science literature has by no means ignored these developments. The New Radical Right's (NRR) breakthrough into representative institutions is indeed the subject of an important and burgeoning body of research (cf., Hainsworth 2000b; Anderson 1996; Mudd 1996; von Beyme 1988). Scholars have, unfortunately, restricted their increasingly sophisticated investigations to the "demand side" of the phenomenon—e. g., the socio-psychological characteristics of supporters, as well as the structural characteristics of national and local economies as windows of opportunity for the NRR. To his great credit, Kitschelt (1995) identified the strategic choices of mainstream parties as unwittingly contributing to the construction of a "political space" or opening for entrepreneurial extremist leaders to exploit. Yet Kitschelt

like most others contributing to the extant literature asks only "Why have parties of the new radical right emerged, and why have they done so at this particular time?" Largely left unexplored and thus unanswered are the equally important "how?' questions: "How do democratic parties react to the presence of non-democratic variants?" and "How effective are moderate-conservative parties in their efforts to disarm and discredit the non-democratic far right once it has won seats in a democratic assembly?" For those seeking answers to the more pointed "What is to be done?" question, these queries are absolute prerequisites.

To ask, "What is to be done?" is considerably more contentious than might initially be expected. At issue are variable targets, instruments, and objectives. What is to be done to whom, by whom, and with what ultimate aim? It is not necessarily clear, for example, whether those seeking to combat the far right can and should target only the far right in its partisan, legislative form (i. e., in councils and assemblies at all levels to which it gains entry) or whether the net can and should be cast wider to encompass extremism in its many extra-parliamentary guises. The ease and vigor with which some can condemn the purveyors of hate and intolerance as voiced via the increasingly popular Internet medium may be tempered when confronted by an adversary freely and fairly elected to a representative assembly by 10–15% of the country's eligible voters. Likewise, it is not necessarily clear whether the same strategic calculus will be at work for re-election minded politicians and parties—as the instruments combating the far rightas—will be for anti-extremism governmental and non-governmental watchdog and advocacy groups. Finally, it is not necessarily clear whether the objective of any campaign against the extreme right can and should be electoral defeat of the far right or a more comprehensive elimination of the socio-economic conditions that bred its success. In short, the answer to "What is to be done?" is likely to vary. That being recognized, it is important to note that the following analysis focuses primarily on partisan manifestations of the extreme right in legislative assemblies and on the efforts of more mainstream partisan actors whose strategic horizons are often short-term rather than long-term.

2. Pay Offs and Risks of Divergent Strategic Responses

Existing democratic parties—i. e., the mainstream "establishment"— face a fundamental choice upon the entry of a radical party into any representative assembly: disengage (Strategy 1, S1) or engage (Strategy 2, S2):

Figure 1: Alternative Strategies for Responding to Far Right
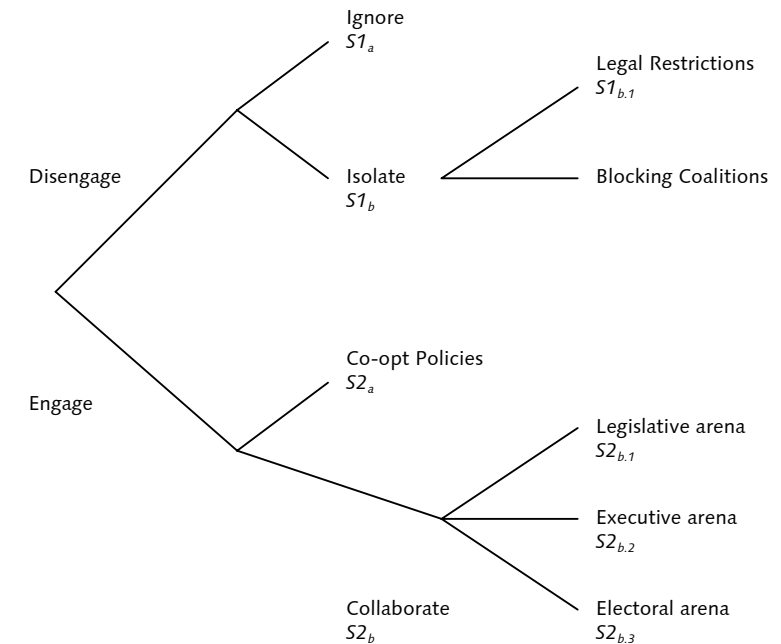
3. Ignore It and It Will Go Away

Figure 1 envisions the conventional party confronted by the presence of a publicly branded pariah party from the extremist right. The established party can choose to keep "clean hands" by disengaging completely from the far-right pariah through a "do nothing" strategy (S1a). By ignoring the extremists, moderates may seek to deprive the pariah of any sense of legitimacy or importance to be gained purely by becoming the subject of attention. If the media serve as unwitting instruments for entrepreneurial extremist party leaders, then why feed the beast by talking about it in the daily papers, on the nightly news,

and along the campaign trail? Starved of both power and publicity, the logic goes, the far right's allure would soon wither and fade. There is ample evidence across Europe of such a strategy of avoiding a self-fulfilling prophecy by simply shying away from the issue: For example, in the United Kingdom, at least before recent street clashes in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, the Conservative and Labour parties could hide behind the security of a majoritarian electoral system and thus regard the National Front (NF) and British National Party (BNP) as little more than pesky nuisances unworthy of their energies.

A variant of this strategy finds moderate parties stepping back and ignoring—or at least quietly tolerating—the far right's presence precisely because incumbency will give the pariah the rope with which it will ultimately hang itself. This approach is best articulated by George H. Hallett, Jr. who, writing in 1940, insisted "the best way to discredit a fool is to hire him a hall. And if, as sometimes happens, a "faddist" or "extremist" turns out to be not a fool but a wise man ahead of his time, then too the best thing to do is to hire him a hall." (Hallett 1940, 84) Speaking directly to the opportunities provided extremists by proportional electoral systems, Hallett (1940, 83) extended his argument: "P. R. [proportional representation] is often objected to on the ground that it will help extreme parties or groups with particular fads that might not otherwise have had a chance of electing anyone. That P. R. may give representation to such groups is not to be denied. But it will not do so unless they have a substantial part of the votes ... If an extremist group does have a substantial part of the votes, denying it representation is as silly as an ostrich's sticking his head in the sand."

This approach finds—perhaps surprisingly—some contemporary support from Lipset (1998, 257) who reassures: "There seems little possibility that right-wing backlash movements will re-emerge as major threats to the democratic process in developed societies in the absence of severe economic crisis or major international challenges to national security ... And no matter how the politics of the various New Rights is evaluated, their supporters can rarely be accused of engaging in extremist tactics, small groups of neo-fascists and terrorists apart."

To be sure, however, this "do nothing" strategy entails significant risks on multiple levels. While the preferred payoff is the far right's demise, it is possible that failure to address the sources of the threatening party's success will do little to stem the defection of voters away from moderate parties (as illustrated by the 16.4% garnered by the BNP in Oldham West at the June 7, 2001 UK parliamentary elections). Failure of moderate parties to co-ordinate strategy within the assembly may likewise result in the extremist pariah becoming a kingmaker, wooed by party groups across the political spectrum for support in achieving majority status or legislative victory. Finally, the "do nothing" strategy runs the risk of having the members of an established party system appear to their constituents, the media, their central party headquarters, and the international community as derelict in their "democratic duties." The dangers of complacency are especially poignant in Europe, where the memory remains of National Socialists gaining power in Germany not through the abortive revolution of 1923 but on the back of a decade's worth of electoral successes (32 Reichstag seats in 1924, 12 in 1928, 107 in 1930, 230 and 196 in the 1932 elections).

4. Legal and Political Isolation

A second disengagement strategy is to isolate (S1b) the party whose democratic credentials appear dubious. Instead of doing nothing, established parties either individually or collectively recognize the far-right party as a potential threat (either to democratic standards or to their own continued electoral success) and seek to implement a policy of containment through active isolation. Containment through isolation can be achieved by way of legal or political means. A strategy of placing legal restrictions on pariah parties (S1b.1) can manifest itself in numerous forms: outlawing the party completely, raising thresholds for representation in electoral laws, denying state subsidies for campaigns, and restricting voice are among the options available. Such is the clear and preferred strategy of many anti-racism, anti-extremism watchdog groups, with the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia illustrating the point by asserting that "Legislation to combat racism and xenophobia forms the bedrock upon which policy and action can be developed."[1] Seeking legal recourse to mute a party that gains voice for its anti-system message through institutionalized channels of participation and representation, however, may itself be seen as being of dubious democratic merit and so risks further alienating a portion of the electorate already suspicious of the establishment. Indeed,

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[1] EUMC Annual Report 1999, p. 51.

Harris (1994, 209)—drawing from the work of Parekh—observes that such an approach stands to produce "A new breed of professional martyrs who go around drawing attention to themselves, presenting the left as authoritarian and intolerant using the political opportunity … [to] give the impression of the extreme right as the voice of some kind of uncomfortable truth which society and the political establishment conspire to ignore or suppress."

Thus, while avoiding the charges of democratic dereliction associated with the "Do nothing" strategy, parties and politicians opting for containment through legal isolation can find that "doing the right thing" nevertheless can produce deleterious consequences.

Alternatively, containment can be achieved through political isolation (S1b.2)—i. e., a political cordon sanitaire. The formation of broad anti-extremist "blocking" or "grand" coalitions among most or all of the established parties to exclude the far right from any share of executive authority is a frequent tactic (Downs 1998a). Grand coalitions produce the immediate payoff of forming a clear democratic front in opposition to extremism. When, for example, electoral mathematics suggested in 1992 the possibility of a governing coalition with the far-right Republikaner Party in Germany's Baden-Württemberg Landtag, the moderate conservative Christian Democrats opted instead for Große Koalition with their chief rivals in the Social Democratic Party. The inherent risk in any such alliance among normal combatants is, of course, that there is little to unite the disparate parties except their opposition to the extremist pariah. Agreeing on distribution of executive portfolios, budgets, social policy and the range of daily necessities of governance becomes difficult for parties that know all too well that at the next election they will go out and bash each other over the head. If as a consequence the effort to combat the far right through blocking coalitions yields policy gridlock and partisan infighting, then such a strategy may only serve to feed the perception of governing elites as detached, non-responsive and ineffective; thus, the populist appeal of the far right will expand.

5. Co-optation
If the established democratic party instead decides to engage the far right directly (S2), then there are again multiple options that entail differential payoffs and risks. Co-optation of the policy positions that won the far-right party its seats (S2a) is one option. This is, after all, the classic Downsian (1957) rational calculation—parties advance policies to win elections, rather than win elections in order to advance policies. Expanding the party's programmatic agenda rightward to more directly address the issues (e. g., immigration, taxes, welfare, culture, crime) that provided fodder for the far right will, the logic proceeds, woo back those voters who drifted to the fringe to voice their protest. This would indeed seem plausible if, as Kitschelt (1995, 17) has argued: "Convergence of Social Democratic and moderate Conservative parties [toward the median], together with an extended period of government participation by the moderate conservatives thus creates the electoral opening for the authoritarian Right that induces voters to abandon their loyalty to established conservative parties."

In retreating rightward from the centrist quest for the median voter, however, the moderate party opens itself up to charges of extremism and stands to lose core constituents. It is, in the lexicon of spatial models of multiparty competition, this shift from "office-maximizing" to "vote-maximizing" strategies that draws the ire of external monitoring groups. The EUMC, for example, calls upon politicians in all EU member states to "include anti-racist policies in election programmes and to condemn racist exploitation of issues such as immigration and asylum for electoral purposes" emphasis added. [2]

6. Collaboration
Most dramatically, the established party can overtly collaborate with the pariah (S2b). Collaboration can occur in one or more arenas: legislative, executive, and electoral. Legislative collaboration (S2b.1) takes place normally on an ad hoc basis, with mainstream parties voting together with the radical right either in support of or against particular pieces of legislation. Co-operative engagement may spill over into the executive arena, with moderate parties agreeing to govern in coalition with the radical right (S2b.2). If collaboration in the legislative and/or executive arenas yields payoffs, then the relationship can spill over further into the electoral arena with moderate parties establishing cartels to jointly contest elections with the party once deemed an untouchable. Clearly, this strategy may register immediate positive gains; still, the risk for the moderate party is that in making electoral, legislative, or executive gains the electorate views the party as selling out its

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[2] EUMC Annual Report 1999, p. 98.

agenda to the exigencies of gaining power. Moreover, fallout from the party group deciding in one institutional arena to coalesce in some fashion with the pariah party stands to affect party fortunes at other levels of the polity. Subnational decisions to collaborate with radical parties, therefore, are often subject to disciplinary action by central party headquarters.

7. The Far Right in Belgium, Norway, Denmark and France: What Is Being Done?

In selecting Belgium, Norway, Denmark and France for comparison, we focus on five extreme right-wing parties (one each in Belgium, France, and Norway; two in the case of Denmark) that are no strangers to their respective systems (four of the five having contested elections for at least two decades). However, in examining the Belgian Vlaams Blok, the Norwegian Progress Party, Danish People's Party and Progress Party, and French Front National, we have examples of parties that recently and dramatically expanded their programmatic appeals beyond anti-statist populism to include xenophobic, anti-immigrant messages. The grafting of xenophobia onto pre-existing secessionist (Vlaams Blok), nationalist (FN) or anti-tax, anti-bureaucracy (Norwegian and Danish Progress parties), anti-EU (Danish People's Party) platforms has coincided in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s with impressive electoral gains by these parties. It is the "radicalization of the racist or ethnocentrist discourse which tends to transgress the boundaries of legitimate discourse and action" (Minkenberg 1998, 9). Such transgressions have, in many public quarters, earned each of these parties the label "pariah."

Our task is to identify and assess the actual efforts undertaken in Belgium, Norway, Denmark, and France. Inspection will reveal that of the four cases, Belgium stands out as the most aggressive in attempting to ostracize the far right. However, because Belgium's version of the far right—the Vlaams Blok—continues to actually increase its electoral base, the effectiveness of a cordon sanitaire policy adopted in Antwerp and elsewhere is seriously questioned.

7.1 Belgium

Belgium's democratic establishment has clearly chosen to adopt a strategy of political isolation vis-à-vis the Vlaams Blok. In Antwerp, for example, an uncomfortable amalgam of Socialists, Liberals, Christian Democrats and ecologists maintains a broad, anti-VB blocking coalition in the city government. A systematic policy of excluding the VB at all costs has, however, made no dent in the Blok's ability to retain its voters. Indeed, "the stability of the VB's support at successive elections is remarkable" (Swyngedouw 2000, 139). Thus, while eagerly presenting their clean hands to the voters, the mainstream governing establishment has proven largely ineffective in coping with immigration, law and order, environmental issues, and urban planning policy. This paradox (i. e., scoring high on democratic purity but low on governing effectiveness) leads many to conclude: "Despite—or perhaps because of—its ostracism by all the mainstream Belgian parties, [the Vlaams Blok's] share of the vote continues to go up relentlessly [B]y dismissing the Blok as little more than a bunch of Nazis the Belgian political establishment has talked itself into a corner. Co-operation with such a force is inconceivable. But ostracism means that building governing coalitions is becoming even harder, while confirming the Blok in its ways, and in its criticism of the political establishment as a cosy, self-serving and corrupt monopoly."[3]

To supplement efforts at political isolation, Belgium's party establishment has sought ways to legally isolate the VB. The 1981 Act on the Suppression of Racism (provides sanctions against persons or groups who publicly state an intention to practice racial discrimination) and 1995 Act to "crack down on the denial, belittling, justification or commendation of the genocide committed by the Germany national-socialist regime during the Second World War" are among the measures taken to restrict the traditional voice of the far right. More directly related to our concerns is an Act of February 12th 1999 stipulating that any political party that "shows manifestly and through several corroborating indications its hostility towards the rights and freedoms granted by the European Convention on Human Rights" may be deprived of all or part of its public funding. A subsequent Act (May 7th 1999) gives judges power to impose further penalties of forfeiture of select political rights—to include eligibility for office—for conviction of first offense under the February 1999 Act. Often considered ineffective because they are so underutilized, such legal measures have taken on new urgency since the filming of Flanders' interior minister Johan Sauwens attending a May 2001 meeting of Belgian veterans of Hitler's Waffen

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[3] "Belgium: A Worrying European Paradox," The Economist, July 7, 2001, p. 48.

SS and members of the Vlaams Blok. Sauwens, from the Volksunie party, resigned amid calls for the government of Guy Verhofstadt (VLD) to clamp down on the far right.

7.2 France

France stands as something of a contrasting example to that of Belgium. With nearly two decades having passed since the FN's breakthrough electoral success in Dreux, there is now ample evidence to examine regarding the reactive strategies adopted by mainstream French parties. At the national level the electoral rules of the game have largely precluded any substantial FN representation in parliament (Mitterrand's self-serving 1986 experiment with PR aside), so the pressures on UDF and RPR deputies to deal with a FN contingent in Paris have largely been absent. The two-round electoral system and the logic of party competition have, nevertheless, often put the FN in the enviable position of selling its support in the second round to the highest bidder—the message to UDF and RPR candidates being, "Begin to adopt our policy positions or grant us some other prize if you want our voters to help you defeat the left." While this process has brought significant discomfort to the more moderate right and has yielded some co-optation by the UDF-RPR of FN positions on immigration (e. g., Charles Pasqua's efforts to introduce restrictive immigration measures), it has produced few formal alliances at national level.

Importantly, however, the mainstream French parties have erected no cordon sanitaire against the FN outside of Paris. Quite to the contrary, they have on occasion collaborated with the FN to secure majorities in the periphery. Since direct elections to France's regional assemblies were established in 1986, the FN has frequently found itself strategically located in between contesting parties on the left and right and therefore able to play the role of kingmaker. In return for the FN's support to elect a regional president, the UDF and RPR have often rewarded Le Pen's forces with coveted vice presidencies, seats on executive bureaus, and other important portfolios. Stark has been the image of Jacques Chirac in Paris, who for years accused the Socialists of unholy alliances with the Communists, busying himself with the task of publicly denouncing the Front National and its "simplistic, anti-immigrant, pro-guillotine stances" while turning a blind eye to Languedoc-Roussillon, Aquitaine, Franche-Comté, Haute-Normandie, Picardie and elsewhere where deals have been cut after the 1986, 1992, and 1998 elections. By entering into explicit or tacit alliances with the main-stream right in a handful of regions, the FN has been able to claim a giant leap forward in its quest for national legitimacy.

While the strategies of limited collaboration and co-optation with the FN have imposed costs on the UDF and RPR, so too has incumbency imposed costs on the extreme right. The moderating pressures of governing responsibility and the allure of gaining more power by working through the system rather than by railing against it have sewn the seeds of discord in the FN. Clearly, no monocausal explanation for the party's recent schism is appropriate, but part of the explanation does lie in Bruno Mégret's desire to "repackage the French extreme right" via "some form of tactical, mutually advantageous arrangement with the mainstream right to help the FN win more votes and translate these into tangible gains (i. e. seats)" (Hainsworth 2000a, 30). Le Pen, alternatively, is said to be less sanguine about softening the FN's message in order to be gobbled up as the junior member in an alliance with the Gaullists. Although personality clashes and a host of other factors have certainly contributed to the creation of the National Republican Movement and its consequent siphoning of support away from the FN, the division over whether to become part of a more moderate "pluralist right" is vital. Perhaps unwittingly, the 1980s-1990s decisions by conservative party groups at regional and local levels to tolerate FN participation in governing bureaus have helped breed the internal divisions that "now threaten to return the French extreme right to the more familiar patterns of the past" (Hainsworth 2000a, 30)—i. e., fragmentation and disunity.

7.3 Denmark

Examined over the course of the last quarter century, the Danish far right—at least with respect to its unity—resembles the recent turmoil of its counterparts in France. Like Le Pen's Front National, Mogens Glistrup's Progress Party now faces the possibility of its own collapse with the emergence of the splinter Dansk Folkeparti. If dividing the far right is one step toward conquering it, then anti-extremist forces in Denmark can derive some measure of satisfaction from the splintering process that has already taken place. The salient question, though, is whether the far-right's apparent balkanization is in any way attributable to the strategic choices made by the country's mainstream parties.

Denmark's mainstream parties expended little if any effort in the early 1970s to erect a cordon sanitaire against Glistrup's party. Granted, when the FrP first entered parliament in 1973 it had not yet

embraced many of its most extreme, xenophobic positions; nevertheless, conservative parties did actively seek to preempt further inroads by the radicals by incorporating some of the Progress Party's core policy priorities. Such action "contributed to the ensuing decline of the new challengers in the following years up to about 1985 …[and] subsequent elections showed that the right-wing challenge could be contained by selective incorporation of its demands into government policy" (Kitschelt 1995, 156–158). Deprived of some voice by such selective usurpation of its policy positions, the Progress Party fell into fratricidal conflict. Without the martyrdom incited by the ostracism of the traditional party establishment to help maintain internal discipline, "there was a conflict between the adherents of Glistrup's expressive radicalism and adherents of a more conventional line—a conflict between "slackeners" and "tighteners," which continued until Glistrup left the party" (Andersen and Bjørklund 2000, 201). Of course, Glistrup's own problems as the target of legal action had opened the door for many of these challenges—jailed for tax evasion in the early 1980s, Glistrup returned in an even more extremist guise to his Folketing seat in 1987, and he continues to find himself in court (receiving a 20-day suspended sentence in August 2000 for his 1999 televised comments in which he contended that Muslims are international criminals who are invading Denmark in order to kill off the local population—the statement is covered by Article 266b of the Danish constitution, which prohibits certain forms of racially discriminatory speech). The party that once rocked the Danish party establishment now worries about passing Denmark's 2% electoral threshold for parliamentary representation.

The Progress Party's apparent successor, the People's Party, attracts the public scorn of Denmark's party establishment, but efforts to isolate it have already proven difficult to coordinate and often backfire. Atop the political system, Social Democrat Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen has dismissed the DF as "not houseclean." According to Kjærsgaard, however, each time the mainstream party elites call the DF "unfit," it "[gives] us a tremendous leap in the opinion polls and increased membership of the party."[4] Speaking in June 2001 about Denmark's upcoming general election, Bishop Kjeld Holm, chairman of the Board for Ethnic Equality, called for "a sober election campaign, free from racist and xenophobic propaganda"—Prime Minister Rasmussen concurred: "It is a right and proper proposal, and one which best serves the interests of both Denmark and Danish politics."[5] Yet, such rhetoric plays into the hands of Kjærsgaard, especially in the aftermath of Europe's collective boycott of Austria following the entry of Haider's Freedom Party into government. Some Danish voters, frequently sensitive to the plight of small entities bullied by larger groups, are receptive to Kjærsgaard's response that the Danish elite are infringing on their freedom of speech: "Who does Kjeld Holm think he is— God?" Kjærsgaard asks. "It is the voters and the voters alone who should decide how the parties run their campaigns."[6] Popular perceptions of an overzealous penchant for political correctness would seem only to fuel the far right.

The Danish response to far-right extremism is marked by inconsistency. One the one hand, there are limited efforts to contain the Danish far right through legal means, as with the case of Glistrup; on the other hand, neo-Nazi organizations are not banned in Denmark, unlike in neighboring Germany, thus inducing many German neo-Nazis to enter Denmark to print and distribute their materials. On the one hand, the Social Democratic premier and a host of party elites roundly condemn the People's Party; on the other hand, Karen Jesperson, the Social Democratic interior minister publicly admits policy preferences that share considerable affinity with the DF manifesto, namely that asylum-seekers should be sent to an isolated desert island, that the development of immigrant communities should be monitored and that Muslim culture should not be considered the equal of Danish culture. On the one hand, local branches of mainstream Danish parties talk of isolating the DF; on the other hand, the Radikale Venstre (radical left), for example, in June 2001 ended its boycott of Kjærsgaard's party in Copenhagen county and indeed invited the People's Party to make an agreement regarding cooperation after the next election. Radikale Venstre had lost important posts in Copenhagen after the last election upon rejecting cooperation with the DF.

7.4 Norway
In late 2000 the Norwegian Progress Party's popularity in the opinion polls swelled such that it was not uncommon to hear prognosticators discussing the possibility of Carl Hagen becoming prime minister after

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[4] "DF Deportation Demands" Copenhagen Post, (June 26, 2001).

[5] "Bishop appeals for non-racist election" Copenhagen Post, (June 13, 2001).
[6] Ibid.

the 2001 general election. Since that time, however, internal scandal and challenges to Hagen's grip on the party have combined to diminish the chances of the FrP's great leap into government. Nevertheless, the story of Norway's far right is much more similar to that of Denmark and France than of Belgium; in short, the mainstream parties have not sought clean hands at any expense. Instead, they largely tolerate the FrP's presence in the Storting and even enter into power-sharing alliances in local government. While largely failing to address the root causes that prompt Norwegian voters to support the Progress Party, the moderate parties seek to cope with the challenge from the right through tactics of selective engagement. They then watch as the far-right pariah, once admitted into the halls of power, attempts its own self-destruction.

Competitive, multiparty politics is often as much about strategic learning as it is about ideological stasis and change. Memories certainly linger of the bourgeois minority government in 1985–86 that refused to honor the then small Progress Party's selective parliamentary support of the government with policy concessions. In return, Progress withdrew its support, and the government fell in 1986. Later, in 1989, Hagen's Progress Party almost quadrupled its electorate in the national election, with almost all of its new voters shed by the bourgeois parties (Kitschelt 1995, 157).

Little more than a decade later, Hagen is positioning the party for alliance with the moderate party establishment: "We combine the best from social democratic thinking and the best from conservative thinking," Hagen contends.[7] He believes the Christian Democrats may be forced to negotiate with him if the Progress Party wins enough votes. "If the Progress Party's election results are strong enough it will be difficult for the Christian Democrats to avoid negotiating with us."[8] For his part, Christian Democrat leader Kjell Magne Bondevik has so far rejected the idea of a coalition. While Hagen calculates the odds of wooing a coalition partner, his party's internal unity erodes. Not only has sex scandal brought down Hagen's heir apparent, but also other challengers have emerged. The leader of the Progress Party's Oslo branch, Dag Danielsen, received a suspension from the party for 30

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[7] "Power in prospect for Norway's far right" Manchester Guardian Weekly, October 18, 2000, p. 7.
[8] "Hagen hopes for negotiations with Christian Democrats" Aftenposten, July 27, 2001.

months along with several other Oslo board members considered disloyal to the party leadership. Danielsen has said that the decision by the Progress Party's central board was "an attempt at political execution." Just at the moment power is within its sights the FrP, not blatantly ostracized by the Norwegian party establishment, has picked up that rope with which it may ultimately fashion a noose.

8. Conclusions: What Is To Be Done?

Political parties espousing xenophobic, exclusionary policies and engaging in anti-egalitarian rhetoric persist throughout Europe. Electoral successes by parties ranging from Jörg Haider's Freedom Party in Austria to Christoph Blocher's Swiss People's Party in Switzerland have brought renewed attention to the potent combination of populist nationalism and racial chauvinism. Clearly, there is a vast and expanding literature that seeks to explain why such parties emerge and succeed. Indeed, extant work on the electoral sociology of voters who support such parties is quite effective at capturing the characteristics of the respective clienteles of the French Front National, the Danish People's Party, the German Republikaner, and others. We have suggested, however, that one timely area of research concerns the largely underexplored questions of how established democratic parties can, do, and should react to the presence of putatively non-democratic variants once they enter into representative assemblies.

In seeking initial answers to these questions, the paper has outlined a range of strategic options available to mainstream political parties confronted by far-right pariahs in their midst. Numerous testable propositions at the individual-, party-, and system-levels can be derived from our schema. While testing these hypotheses is beyond the scope of this study,[9] we have conducted a broader survey of the apparent covariation between far-right success and the strategies adopted by moderate parties in the respective countries. This, we have suggested, is a prerequisite for answering the 'What is to be done?' question. While sharing Kitschelt's conviction that "Politically, we find the preoccupation with the extreme Right in Western Europe thoroughly distasteful," it is important to note as he does that "At the same time, we have been driven by theoretical, political, and professional motivations" (Kitschelt 1995, ix). Therefore, while this

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[9] For these tests see Downs (2001).

study ends by addressing the lessons offered by four European countries in their efforts to cope with the far right, it is done in a manner that is not so much the activist's call to arms, but rather the social scientist's observations of causal relationships and interpretation of trends. To be sure, these relationships are imperfect, and cross-national generalizations are indeed elusive. There are no silver bullets, no panaceas. Variation in institutional configuration makes it difficult to isolate causal relationships. Moreover, the empirical conclusions may be unpalatable to many who deride the far right.

So, then, what is to be done? It is clear that many of the prescriptions offered by non-governmental organizations, private foundations, and EU-level institutions must be adopted. Vigilance, monitoring, and a vigorous grassroots campaign to cultivate tolerance of diversity are staples of any anti-extremism campaign. Fysh and Wolfreys (1998) as well as Taguieff (1995) speak of waging an "intellectual war"—a "new anti-racism"—to drain the far right of electoral support from disgruntled voters "by addressing the social and economic ills engendered by globalization, in particular insecurity, unemployment and exclusion."[10] Informational campaigns, education, infusion of civic values and respect for traditional parties and the political system all constitute means of such an indirect struggle against the far right. These are vital approaches, the results of which, however, take considerable time to materialize.

By way of a more direct, political struggle against the far right it is actually clearer what should not be done rather than what should. A cross-sectional assessment of the far-right's current fortunes cannot help but suggest initially that where the far right is flourishing most (e. g., Belgium and, to a lesser extent, Denmark in the case of the DPP), the mainstream parties have largely sought to boycott, isolate, ostracize and outlaw the far-right parties. It would seem that "doing the right thing" often yields unintended consequences. The cordon sanitaire satisfies "democratic responsibilities," especially for reelection-minded politicians. It is, to use the contemporary parlance, "politically correct." Still, the perception of parties of the putatively democratic "establishment" allying to deny voice to a party or parties they deem illegitimate can ultimately serve to fuel the far-right's populist appeal.

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[10] Council of Europe, "Threat Posed to Democracy by Extremist Parties and Movements in Europe" (Political Affairs Committee Report, January, 3, 2000).

This is the story most clearly illustrated by Antwerp, which somewhat paradoxically presents itself now as a model not to be emulated.

Conversely, where the far right is beginning to languish (e. g., France, Norway, and the Danish Progress Party), the mainstream parties have—either by design or by chance—sewn the seeds of the extremist party's undoing by granting them a taste of incumbency at local levels.

Where the far-right juggernaut seems at least for the moment to be unraveling is where it is self-destructing, succumbing to internal divisions, scandals, and schisms. Where the mainstream parties can divide, they may also be able to conquer. This possibility brings to mind the old dictum that two deputies, only one of whom is a revolutionary, are likely to have more in common than two revolutionaries, only one of whom is a deputy. The moderating effects of incumbency are real enough to embolden elements within far-right parties—hungry for greater legitimacy and a real role in governing—to challenge their respective party's hard line. This phenomenon is certainly not unique to the far right, but finds evidence among Europe's green parties as with the fundis vs. realos tensions of the German Greens.

The prescription suggested here is by no means to simply welcome far right parties into legislative assemblies and to then let them run roughshod over process and policy. Democracies should allow entry to party representatives legally chosen by voters in free and fair elections, regardless of how unsavory their message—indeed, European polities must avoid the Algerian model! While 2% or 5% thresholds are justifiable for democracies wishing to minimize the representation of fringe parties, electoral systems that systematically exclude those parties consistently gaining 10–15% of the vote will likely cultivate resentment and thus prove counterproductive. Democracies can, though, manage the far right message as well as its messengers by holding them strictly to the rules of legislative and constitutional order, by holding them to public account and intensive scrutiny and exposure, by addressing (rather than sanitizing) pressing policy problems embraced by the far right without necessarily co-opting the far-right's solutions, by creating grand coalitions of parties to govern without the far-right pariah (but only when such is a viable vehicle for something other than simply blocking the far right; i. e., the grand coalition should have real policy-making capacity), and by mobilizing popular demonstrations against the far right when necessary. It is a painful paradox that democracies must tolerate the intolerant. Such need not be accomplished, however,

in a naïve manner; to the contrary, an aggressive intellectual/educational campaign coupled with vigilant rather than knee-jerk strategies by mainstream parties may provide the most successful route to containing the far right.

Clearly, much more work remains to be done in this area. More questions should be posed regarding the interplay of electoral constraints and party preferences. More cases need to be added to allow for investigation into how the timing and the proportionality of elections can shape party strategy vis-à-vis far-right pariahs. The addition of cases should also facilitate investigation into how the fragmentation of moderate conservative parties constrains the options of the right in dealing with extremism on its flank. Ultimately, we also need to further test the relative success of different strategies in dealing with the extremist threat. Such a research agenda stands to make important contributions to our understanding of this timely dimension of representative democracy in Europe.

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Themenschwerpunkt „Rechtsextremismus"