Hans-Georg Betz

Abstract

The Vlaams Blok in Belgium is one of the most successful examples of a new type of right-wing populist party, which during the 1990s emerged as one of the most significant new political forces in Western Europe and other liberal capitalist democracies. Initially dismissed as a fleeting phenomenon, which would soon fade away, the radical right has managed to establish itself firmly as a serious contender for votes and, increasingly, for political offices (e.g., in Austria and Italy). The growing acceptance of radical right-wing parties as serious and legitimate contenders for political power raises important questions about the nature and objectives of these parties. In recent years, there has been a great deal of scholarship devoted to explaining their rise and electoral success. Much of this scholarship has focused on the search for structural factors and developments that might help explain the remarkable surge in popular support for the radical right in the 1990s. At the same time, there has been relatively little serious comparative analysis of the political doctrines espoused by these parties, their ideological foundations and ideological justification.
Exclusionary Populism in Western Europe in the 1990s and Beyond: A Threat to Democracy and Civil Rights? Hans-Georg Betz.

In recent years, exclusionary populism has gone beyond xenophobia, turning into a new form of cultural nativism, which seeks to distance itself from and disavow traditional forms of racism. Exclusionary populism in western Europe in the 1990s and beyond: a threat to democracy and civil rights? Hans-Georg Betz. France’s electoral system, the party managed to fill only one seat in the National Assembly in 1997. Besides, modern western democracies have always been tempted with homogeneity and normalization, perhaps perceiving themselves as communities of fellows (“communautés de semblables”[8]) more than as societies of equals. Today the exclusionary public discourse in Europe on the strangers, the others, the migrants is an easy substitute for questioning Islam, despite the fact that Islam already became an European and American religion – as a research published recently by Nadia Marzouky demonstrates[20] – in a double sense: first through...
the strategies of recognition adopted by Muslims and second through the performance of Islam.