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# Anti-Immigration Propaganda in the Northern League and the Freedom Party of Austria: Discursive Changes with Reference to Gender, Muslim Migrants, Ethnicity and Class

## ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, populist-radical parties of Western Europe arguably revised their propaganda towards the rejection of Muslim migrants with gender-sensitive arguments. Among these parties, the Northern League (LN) and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) achieved their electoral breakthrough thanks to their anti-migration campaigns, which, *inter alia*, aligned peculiar gender perspectives with long-term attitudes towards ethnicity, welfare and Islam. Drawing on the LN's and FPÖ's election programmes, visuals and leader statements from the early 2000s, the present article discusses the common assumptions regarding the populist radical right's discursive changes towards anti-Islamism. The paper argues that the two parties in the mentioned period forged their propaganda against the rejection of Muslim migrants in religious and gender-sensitive terms, but their ethnic and class-oriented exclusions equally remained. The documents in question also revealed that these parties recently softened their attitudes towards migrant caregivers to preserve traditional gender images in Austria and Italy. The LN's and FPÖ's long-term preoccupations with Italian and Austrian women's roles in worklife, family and reproduction are likely to bring about changes in the conceptions of female migrants in the care sector. The question still remains whether the parties began to tolerate Muslim female workers, since their propaganda, in contrast to the literature, did not suggest the acknowledgement of Muslims in any of the labour fields.

*Keywords: populist radical right; gender; Muslim migrants; Freedom Party of Austria; Northern League; election campaigns*

## Introduction

In the face of the religiously-motivated terrorist attacks in the Western world, increasing migration from Muslim countries and Turkey's EU membership bid, populist radical-right parties have come to modify their migration discourses towards anti-Islamism since the early 2000s. British Sociologist Gerard Delanty noted as early as 2008 that terrorism and economic crises traumatised Europe and intensified the common anxiety of Europeans as well as "the currents of xenophobia".<sup>1</sup> Most of the populist radical right parties of Western Europe then spoke to this growing anxiety and channelled it into hatred and fear of Muslims.<sup>2</sup> Gender became particular element of their exclusionary propaganda: populist radical right parties increasingly targeted the female representation in Islam, in an attempt to prove Muslim migrants' incompatibility with gender equality in Western societies. These parties, most of which were known for their support for patriarchal culture in their countries, turned out to be defenders of women's rights against Muslims. A large number of publications locate this 'gender turn' in the statements of party elites<sup>3</sup> but only few studies discussed it in relation to election campaigns.

Recent publications on the far-right oppositions' last two decades converge on three assumptions: populist radical-right parties increasingly centred their propaganda on the rejections of Islam and Muslim migrants, they stereotyped certain gender roles as e.g. 'victimised' Muslim women and 'criminal' Muslim men, and they instrumentalised these images of supposed victims to 'save' Muslim women and integrate them into the national labour market. The present article discusses the validity of these three assumptions with the propaganda (programmes, visuals and leader statements) of the Northern League (LN) and Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) from the early 2000s. A broad discussion of these assumptions, in the following, contextualises how the populist radical right camps of Western Europe have recently come to terms with gender equality, in particular women's rights, in their oppositions to Muslim migrants. The article then discusses the LN's and FPÖ's official propaganda and orients them *vis-à-vis* the salient points of the given three arguments, namely ethnic, gender-protective and class-oriented conceptualisations of Muslim migrants.

- 1 Gerard Delanty: Fear of Others: Social Exclusion and the European Crisis of Solidarity, in: *Social Policy & Administration* 42:6 (2008), pp. 676–690.
- 2 Filip Milačić/Ivan Vuković: The Rise of the Politics of National Identity: New Evidence from Western Europe, in: *Ethnopolitics* 17:5 (2017), pp. 443–460.
- 3 Oliver Geden: Diskursstrategien im Rechtspopulismus: Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs und Schweizerische Volkspartei zwischen Opposition und Regierungsbeteiligung, Wiesbaden 2006, pp. 74–77; Roger Brubaker: Between Nationalism and Civilizationism: The European Populist Moment in Comparative Perspective, in: *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40:8 (2017), pp. 1191–1226.

Attitudes of populist radical right parties towards migration are neither irrelevant to each other, nor are they independent from the evolution of European politics and economy. Populism, defined as a ‘thin ideology’ that creates moral binaries between ‘the people’ and ‘others’, often borrows themes and arguments from mainstream ideologies such as nationalism or liberalism.<sup>4</sup> Against the changing conception of migration in Western Europe, populist radical right parties accordingly revised their oppositions. On the one hand, globalising economic activities and communication promoted international norms and institutions concerned with migration and made it an uncontested fact and need for skilled workers.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, populist radical right movements could not reject outsiders convincingly in terms of the working class and welfare protectionism.<sup>6</sup> Instead, they raised cultural conflicts, stereotyped non-EU migrants as inherently ‘unintegrated’ people inclined towards crime, and stipulated criteria for their ‘civic integration’ into society.<sup>7</sup> With the presence of globally increasing religious conflicts, they turned to rejecting some migrant communities in seemingly liberal and secular terms.<sup>8</sup> Far-right parties and movements of Western Europe thus represented Islam as the arch-enemy of European and national cultures and at the same time maintained their protective emphasis on ethnicity from the early 2000s.<sup>9</sup>

- 4 Cas Mudde/Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser: *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*, New York 2017, p. 6; Jan-Werner Müller: *What is Populism?*, Philadelphia 2016, pp. 24f.
- 5 Randall Hansen: *Globalization, Embedded Realism, and Path Dependence: The Other Immigrants to Europe*, in: *Comparative Political Studies* 35:3 (2002), pp. 259–283; Robert Ford/Will Jennings/Will Somerville: *Public Opinion, Responsiveness and Constraint: Britain’s Three Immigration Policy Regimes*, in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 41:9 (2005), pp. 1391–1411; Emmanuel Comte: *The History of the European Migration Regime: Germany’s Strategic Hegemony*, Abingdon and New York 2018, p. 182.
- 6 Ferruh Yilmaz: *How the Workers Became Muslims: Immigration, Culture, and Hegemonic Transformation in Europe*, Ann Arbor 2016.
- 7 Marc Morjé Howard: *The Impact of the Far Right on Citizenship Policy in Europe: Explaining Continuity and Change*, in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36:5 (2010), pp. 735–751; Andrej Zaslove: *Closing the door? The ideology and impact of radical right populism on immigration policy in Austria and Italy*, in: *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9:1 (2004), pp. 99–118, p. 113.
- 8 Magnus E. Marsdal: *Loud Values, Muffled Interests: Third Way Social Democracy and Right-Wing Populism*, in: Ruth Wodak/Majid Khosravinik/Brigitte Mral (eds.): *Right Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, London 2013, pp. 39–55, p. 52; Jan W. Duyverdak/Menno Hurenkamp/Evelien Tonkens: *Culturalization of Citizenship in the Netherlands*, in: Ariane Chebel d’Appollonia/Simon Reich (eds.): *Diversity after 9/11: Integration, Security and Civil Liberties in Transatlantic Perspective*, New Brunswick 2010, pp. 233–253, p. 233.
- 9 John E. Richardson/Monica Colombo: *Continuity and Change in Anti-immigrant Discourse in Italy: An Analysis of the Visual Propaganda of the Lega Nord*, in: *Journal of Language and Politics* 12:2 (2013), pp. 180–202; Alberto Spektorowski: *Ethnoregionalism: The Intellectual New Right and the Lega Nord*, in: *Ethnopolitics* 2:3 (2003), p. 56.

In marginalising Muslim communities as threats against liberal and stable European communities, these camps in fact sought to justify the superiority of their perceived national culture.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of the cultural oppositions to migration, populist radical right parties came to repudiate Muslim migrants with gender equality. In anti-immigration discourses the native woman emerged as a 'civil' individual encumbered with production, sexuality and bearing and transmitting ethnic culture.<sup>11</sup> Muslim men were in return represented as uncivil aggressors against the national women, and Muslim women remained the victims, who had to be freed from male domination and Islamic patriarchy. In contrast to the marginalisation of Muslim men, the integration of Muslim female migrants into society became a much-debated issue. Several scholars led by Sara Farris and Francesca Scrinzi accordingly note that conservative and radical right camps in the Western World began to argue for Muslim women's integration and in favour of their employment in low-paid sectors, such as care work in public and in the home.<sup>12</sup> All in all, in the last two decades, secular rejections of migrants from Muslim countries were entangled with terms related to ethnicity, class, and gender in a Western Europe impacted by globalisation and religious conflicts.<sup>13</sup>

- 10 Martina Avanza: The Northern League and its 'Innocuous' Xenophobia, in: Andrea Mammone/Giuseppe A. Veltri (eds.): *Italy Today: The Sick Man of Europe*, London 2010, pp. 131–142; Merijn Oudenampsen: Explaining the Swing to the Right: The Dutch Debate on the Rise of Right-Wing Populism, in: Ruth Wodak/Majid Khosravini/Brigitte Mral (eds.): *Right-Wing Populism in Europe: Politics and Discourse*, London 2013, pp. 191–209; Catherine Kinnvall: Borders and Fear: Insecurity, Gender and the Far Right in Europe, in: *Journal of Contemporary European Studies* 23:4 (2015), pp. 514–529; Ulrike M. Vieten: Far Right Populism and Women: The Normalization of Gendered anti-Muslim Racism and Gendered Culturalism in the Netherlands, in: *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37:6 (2016), pp. 621–636.
- 11 Floya Anthias: Transactional Mobilities, Migration Research and Intersectionality, in: *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 2:2 (2012), pp. 102–110; Joan Wallach Scott: *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York 1988, p. 55.
- 12 Sara R. Farris/Francesca Scrinzi: 'Subaltern Victims' or 'Useful Resources'? Migrant Women in the Lega Nord Ideology and Politics, in: Jon Mulholland/Nicola Montagna/Erin Sanders-McDonagh (eds.): *Gendering Nationalism: Intersections of Nation, Gender and Sexuality in the 21st Century*, Cham 2018, pp. 241–257; Sara R. Farris: Femonationalism and the "Regular" Army of Labor Called Migrant Women, in: *History of the Present* 2:2 (2012), pp. 184–199; Sara R. Farris: *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*, Durham 2018.
- 13 Roger Brubaker: Between Nationalism and Civilizationism, pp. 1191–1226; Aurelien Mondon/Aaron Winter: Articulations of Islamophobia: From the Extreme to the Mainstream?, in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 40:13 (2017), pp. 2151–2179; Francesca Scrinzi: A 'New' National Front? Gender, Religion, Secularism and the French Populist Radical Right, in: Michaela Köttig/Renate Bitzan/Andrea Petö (eds.): *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, New York 2017, pp. 127–140.

In regard to this discursive change, three assumptions emerge in recent literature. First, over the past two decades, the populist radical parties of Western Europe increasingly built their discourses against migration on the rejection of Islam; second, they came to criminalise Muslim men and to present Muslim women as the victims of Islam's 'patriarchal culture'; third, they tend to internalise Muslim women to national labour markets and low-paid industries. These three arguments in return respectively suggest changes in party propaganda regarding religious, ethnic, gender-based and class-oriented exclusions of migrants.

Textual and visual propaganda of the Northern League and the Freedom Party of Austria constitute significant cases contextualising the literature tropes given above. First, the two parties were exceptional among the populist radical right parties of Western Europe in the sense that they respectively participated in governmental politics during the 2000s. They represented part of the public opinion and played significant roles in shaping national migration policies.<sup>14</sup> Second, the two parties resorted to gender-sensitive arguments against Muslim migrants mainly for electoral interests<sup>15</sup>, but how their election campaigns (including election programmes and visuals) changed has so far not attracted sufficient research interest. Third, although both parties recently masked their racist attitudes to enlarge their voter bases, their propaganda still revealed particular examples of ethnic exclusions of migrants.<sup>16</sup> How ethnic references remained in their oppositions to Muslim migrants thus demands attention. Finally, the LN and FPÖ had protective attitudes towards national labour markets in the early 2000s: they partook in the governments forging migration and integration laws in 2002, which sought to curb migration of semi-skilled and unskilled workers.<sup>17</sup> Despite these attempts, a debate emerged in the literature about whether these parties showed exceptional tolerance towards migration in particular sectors: the FPÖ accordingly called for further regulations to facilitate employment of foreign seasonal workers in the agricultural and service sectors during the 2000s, whereas the LN was

14 Andrej Zaslove: *Closing the door?*, pp. 99–118.

15 Leila Hadj-Abdou: 'Gender(ed) nationalism' of the populist radical right: An extreme typicality, in: Gregor Fitzl/Juergen Mackert/Bryan Turner (eds.): *Populism and the Crisis of Democracy*, New York 2019, pp. 94–110.

16 Tjitske Akkerman: *Gender and the radical right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis of Policy Agendas*, in: *Patterns of Prejudice* 49:1–2 (2015), pp. 37–60; Valerio Renzi: *La politica della ruspa: La Lega di Salvini e le nuove destre europee*, Rome 2015.

17 Gabriele Abbondanza: *Italy's Migration Policies Combating Irregular Immigration: from the Early Days to the Present Times*, in: *The International Spectator* 52:4 (2017), pp. 76–92; Paola Bonizzoni: *Looking for the Best and Brightest? Deservingness Regimes in Italian Labour Migration Management*, in: *International Migration* 56:4 (2018), pp. 47–62; Andrej Zaslove: *Closing the door?*, pp. 99–118.

part of the coalitionary government enacting amnesty to illegal care workers in 2008.<sup>18</sup> Despite these exceptions in specific fields, their attitudes towards the employment of Muslim migrants and particularly Muslim female workers remain unclear. A comparative approach to the LN's and FPÖ's contemporary history and their propaganda devised for the elections held in the last two decades thus provides insight into the shifting relevance of religion to ethnic, gender-based, and class-oriented exclusions.<sup>19</sup>

## Religious and Ethnic Exclusions of Muslim Migrants

Founded in 1991 as an electoral confederation of some regionalist movements in Northern Italy, the Northern League, under Umberto Bossi, first and foremost called for local autonomy and tax reform for the region, which the party called Padania. Its policy was then essentially characterised by ethnic nationalism regarding the region, as the party targeted the Italian governments and the 'corrupt' South, on the one hand, and immigrants to Northern Italy, especially the Roma people, on the other. During the mid-1990s, this policy was radicalised towards separation from the motherland.<sup>20</sup> Despite its separationist ideology, the LN chose to participate in coalitionary politics

- 18 Michael Samers: *Strange Castle Walls and Courtyards: Explaining the Political Economy of Undocumented Immigration and Undeclared Employment*, in: Georg Menz/Alexander Caviedes (eds.): *Labour Migration in Europe*, Basingstoke 2010, pp. 221f.; Kenneth Horvath: *Securitisation, Economisation and the Political Constitution of Temporary Migration: The Making of the Austrian Seasonal Workers Scheme*, in: *Migration Letters* 11:2 (2014), pp. 154–170.
- 19 A large group of publications discussed the national gender roles emerging from far-right parties or their critics in detail. Floya Anthias: *Transactional Mobilities, Migration Research and Intersectionality*, pp. 102–110; Marion Löffler: *Maskulinismus: Der ganz normale "Gender-Wahnsinn"*, in: Brigitte Bargetz/Eva Kreisky/Gundula Ludwig (eds.): *Dauerkämpfe: Feministische Zeitdiagnosen und Strategien*, Frankfurt am Main and New York 2017, pp. 185–194; Carina Klammer: *Imaginationen des Untergangs: zur Konstruktion antimuslimischer Fremdbilder im Rahmen der Identitätspolitik der FPÖ*, Münster 2013, pp. 91f.; Edma Ajanovic/Stefanie Mayer: *Mann, oh Mann... Wenn der Schutz ‚unserer Frauen‘ die Antwort ist, was war noch mal die Frage?*, in: Brigitte Bargetz/Eva Kreisky/Gundula Ludwig (eds.): *Dauerkämpfe: Feministische Zeitdiagnosen und Strategien*, Frankfurt am Main and New York 2017, pp. 195–204; Gabriella Hauch: *Politik mit der Geschlechterkarte: Historische Ambivalenzen in Frauenfreund-Konjunkturen*, in: Brigitte Bargetz/Eva Kreisky/Gundula Ludwig (eds.): *Dauerkämpfe: Feministische Zeitdiagnosen und Strategien*, Frankfurt am Main 2017, pp. 27–37, pp. 32f.; Carina Klammer/Judith Goetz: *Between German Nationalism and Anti-Muslim Racism: Representations of Gender in the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)*, in: Michaela Köttig/Renate Bitzan/Andrea Petö (eds.): *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, New York 2016, pp.79–93. They addressed gender roles attributed to Muslim migrants only to a certain extent.
- 20 Frida Bordon: *Lega Nord im politischen System Italiens*, Wiesbaden 1997, p. 195

between 2001 and 2006 and later between 2008 and 2011, maintaining its emphasis on the region's security and economic protection.<sup>21</sup> In the face of the 9/11 attacks in the United States and Turkey's emerging EU bid, the LN's migration policy began to target migrants from Muslim countries.<sup>22</sup> During the first governmental period, the party intended to introduce a harsh immigration law and other constitutional reforms granting new powers to local authorities, which were jointly rejected in the 2006 referendum.<sup>23</sup> The LN held onto power through another coalitionary government in 2008, and its member Roberto Maroni, interior minister of the period, managed to enact restrictions against non-EU migrants and Roma people who mostly dwelled in the Northern regions.<sup>24</sup>

The LN's propaganda during the 2000s increasingly targeted Muslim migrants, Roma people and refugees from Africa. Before of the 2009 European elections, the party promised to reject refugee boats, establish camps for nomads or request referenda for the foundation of local mosques.<sup>25</sup> Their election posters correspondingly were aimed at mobilising the public against Muslim and Roma migrants and featured anti-Islamic and racist representations. One of these election visuals was notorious, as it depicted a vessel full of people shot from above, implying a massive group of refugees arriving by sea, and was captioned "we stopped the invasion".<sup>26</sup> Posters such as

- 21 Lega Nord: *Cronistoria Della Lega Nord Dalle Origini ad Oggi, Sesta Parte (History of the Northern League From Its Origins until Today, Chapter Six)*, 2001, , at: [https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia\\_ln/06\\_lega\\_nord\\_storia2001.pdf](https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia_ln/06_lega_nord_storia2001.pdf) (accessed on 9 March 2021), p. 40); *Cronistoria Della Lega Nord Dalle Origini ad Oggi Capitolo 10 (History of the Northern League From Its Origins until Today, Chapter 10)*, 2005–2006, at: [https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia\\_ln/10\\_lega\\_nord\\_storia2005.pdf](https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia_ln/10_lega_nord_storia2005.pdf) (accessed on 9 March 2021), p. 15.
- 22 Sara R. Farris/Francesca Scrinzi: 'Subaltern Victims' or 'Useful Resources?', pp. 241–257; John E. Richardson/Monica Colombo: Continuity and Change in Anti-immigrant Discourse in Italy: An Analysis of the Visual Propaganda of the Lega Nord, in: *Journal of Language and Politics* 12:2 (2013), pp. 180–202; Danielle Albertazzi/Duncan McDonnell: The Lega Nord Back in Government, in: *West European Politics* 33:6 (2010), pp. 1318–1340; Chiara Volpato/Federica Durante/Alessandro Gabbiadini/Luca Andrighetto/Silvia Mari: Picturing the Other: Targets of Delegitimization across Time, in: *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 4:2 (2010), pp. 269–287.
- 23 Daniele Albertazzi: Addressing 'the People': A Comparative Study of the Lega Nord's and Lega dei Ticinesi's Political Rhetoric and Styles of Propaganda, in: *Modern Italy* 12:3 (2007), p. 330.
- 24 Shannon Woodcock: Gender as Catalyst for Violence against Roma in Contemporary Italy, in: *Patterns of Prejudice* 44:5 (2010), pp. 477–478.
- 25 Danielle Albertazzi/Duncan McDonnell: The Lega Nord Back in Government, p. 1326.
- 26 For the mentioned visual, see the party's official webpage: <https://www.leganord.org/component/phocagallery/15-i-manifesti-lega-nord-2009/detail/894-i-manifesti-lega-nord-2009?tmpl=component&Itemid=1> (accessed on 15 September 2020).

the one described in return became the subject of harsh criticism in European politics. Donata Gottardi, former member of the European Parliament, raised a written question for the European Commission, asking whether it would take measures against the Northern League's election posters, since they were "clearly racist and xenophobic and spark(ed) fear among citizens concerning the immigration of people from third countries and European ethnic minorities".<sup>27</sup>

Matteo Salvini assumed leadership of the party in 2013, one year after Bossi's resignation, and reoriented the LN towards Italian nationalism, as he sought to mobilise voters in the entire country through propaganda against Muslim and African migrants.<sup>28</sup> The party's election documents from 2013 thus intensified the discourse criminalising non-EU migrants and refugees from Africa.<sup>29</sup> For example, before the European elections in 2015, Salvini promised to demolish Roma camps in Italy and offered his "final solution", namely razing them with bulldozers.<sup>30</sup> Since then, he has been using the metaphors "final solution" and "bulldozer" often in targeting not only Roma people but also refugees from Africa.<sup>31</sup> As another example, a poster devised for the 2019 local election in Tuscany featured two frames with Italians and their 'antithesis'. The first frame depicted a family of light complexion with the overlaid text "our Tuscany thinks of the Italians first", whereas the other showed seven Africans just sitting and talking cheerfully in a park, with the caption "the left Tuscany thinks of

- 27 Donata Gottardi: Written Question (PSE) to the Commission (E-3471/09), European Parliament, 12.05.2009, at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2009-3471+0+DOC+XML+V0//IT> (accessed on 9 March 2021).
- 28 Ulrike M. Vieten/Scott Poynting: Contemporary Far-Right Racist Populism in Europe, in: *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37:6 (2016), pp. 538–539; Daniele Albertazzi/Arianna Giovannini/Antonella Seddone: "No regionalism please, we are Leghisti!" The transformation of the Italian Lega Nord under the leadership of Matteo Salvini, in: *Regional & Federal Studies* 28:5 (2018), pp. 645–671; Michael Samers: Strange Castle Walls and Courtyards, pp. 221f.; Laura Cervi/Santiago Tejedor: Framing "The Gypsy Problem": Populist Electoral Use of Romaphobia in Italy (2014–2019), in: *Social Sciences* 9 (2020), pp. 1–17.
- 29 Lega Nord: Programma elettorale Europee 2014, pp. 8–9, at: <https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/elezioni/europee/Programma%20elettorale%20europee%202014.pdf> (accessed on 9 March 2021); Lega Nord: Elezioni politiche 4 Marzo 2018. Salvini Premier La Rivoluzione del Buonsenso, at: <https://leganord.org/component/phocadownload/category/5-elezioni?download=1514:programma-lega-salvini-premier-2018> (accessed on 9 March 2021), p. 6, 8, pp. 22–23.
- 30 Bianca Terracciano: Il linguaggio della paura: la strategia social mediale di Matteo Salvini, in: *Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio* 13:2 (2019), pp. 165–181; Laura Cervi/Santiago Tejedor: Framing "The Gypsy Problem": Populist Electoral Use of Romaphobia in Italy (2014–2019), in: *Social Sciences*, *The Global Rise of the Extreme Right*, 9:6 (2020), pp. 1–17.
- 31 Ibid.



immigrants first”.<sup>32</sup> The poster intended to criminalise male migrants, but did nothing to make any allegation. Its concern was the existence of Africans in the social sphere, where Italians were supposed to be. The party’s election promises against Africans materialised for a short while. Before the general elections of 2018, the LN proposed taking legal measures against rescue ships arriving with refugees.<sup>33</sup> After their victory in the election, the party joined a coalitionary government, which closed Italy’s ports to migrant rescue ships.

To counter the accusations of racism directed against the Northern League, party elites also sought to disguise their racist tones and to reframe their migration policy with references to security. It was, for example, a common argument within the party to compare African migrants to animals, as senator Roberto Calderoli publicly stated that Italy’s first African minister “look[ed] like an orangutan”.<sup>34</sup> To prevent such blunders and potential erosion to the image of the party, in 2014, Salvini authorised an immigrant with African migration history, Senator Toni Iwobi, to re-draft the party’s anti-migrant policy. Iwobi then headed the group drafting the party’s migration guidelines and sought to justify the LN’s stance against migration with the country’s welfare and security.<sup>35</sup> To summarise, in addition to growing opposition to Muslims, racial discrimination remained at the centre of the party’s propaganda against migration.

The FPÖ underwent a comparable transition from the complete and staunch rejection of migration towards detailed propaganda directed exclusively against Muslim migrants.<sup>36</sup> From its foundation in 1956 until Jörg Heider’s chairmanship in 1986, the party was an advocate of pan-Germanism. Heider then replaced German nationalism with what he called “Austrian patriotism” and represented the country as a historical union based on language, cultural freedom, and the nation’s cultural self-determina-

- 32 Huffington Post: Lega, lo spot in Toscana: “Prima agli italiani”, ma usano la foto di una famiglia americana, 08.01.2019, [www.huffingtonpost.it/2019/01/08/lega-lo-spot-la-nostra-toscana-pensa-prima-agli-italiani-ma-usano-la-foto-di-una-famiglia-americana\\_a\\_23637264/](http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2019/01/08/lega-lo-spot-la-nostra-toscana-pensa-prima-agli-italiani-ma-usano-la-foto-di-una-famiglia-americana_a_23637264/) (accessed on 4 October 2020).
- 33 Lega Nord: Elezioni politiche 4 Marzo 2018, p. 7.
- 34 Die Welt: Italien: Politiker vergleicht Ministerin mit Orang-Utan, Welt Online 14.07.2013, [www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article118036913/Politiker-vergleicht-Ministerin-mit-Orang-Utan.html](http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article118036913/Politiker-vergleicht-Ministerin-mit-Orang-Utan.html) (accessed on 12 September 2020).
- 35 Giorgia Bulli/Sorina Christina Soare: Immigration and Crisis in a New Immigration Country: The Case of Italy, in: Hrvatska i komparativna javna uprava: časopis za teoriju i praksu javne uprave 18:1 (2018), pp. 127–156, pp. 141f.
- 36 Michal Krzyżanowski: From Anti-immigration and Nationalist Revisionism to Islamophobia: Continuities and Shifts in Recent Discourses and Patterns of Political Communication of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), in: Ruth Wodak/Majid KhosraviNik/Brigitte Mral (eds.): Right-Wing Populism in Europe, London and New York 2013, pp. 135–148, pp. 135f.

tion.<sup>37</sup> His conception of cultural self-determination still included xenophobic and anti-Semitic sentiments, and it eminently involved the right to exclude migrants from the country since they were not compatible with Austrian core cultural values.<sup>38</sup> In the early 1990s, when unemployment in specific sectors rose alarmingly in Austria, the FPÖ under Haider began to channel workers' fears into anti-immigration attitudes, attacked the central government and bluntly stood against the EU's enlargements.<sup>39</sup> This zero migration policy was indicative of changes in the 1999 and 2002 elections, in which the party began to accept limited migration from Austria's cultural hinterland excluding Muslims.<sup>40</sup>

Heinz-Christian Strache took over leadership of the party in 2004 and further added to its anti-migrant attitudes by placing security concerns at the core of his political campaigns.<sup>41</sup> He drastically turned the focus of the party's anti-migrant campaigns against Muslim migrants. Whereas the 2002 national election programme solely targeted the concept of 'migration', the programme for the first national election under Strache, in 2006, instead repudiated Muslim migration and 'any form of Islam'.<sup>42</sup> From that time on, the FPÖ increasingly set detailed, repetitive campaigns against Muslim migrants, rather than only speaking to security concerns of the local people.<sup>43</sup> The party launched campaigns for the national and local elections of 2008 and 2009

- 37 Thomas Fillitz: Being the Native's Friend Does not Make You the Foreigner's enemy! Neo-nationalism, the Freedom Party and Jorg Haider in Austria, in: André Gingrich/Marcus Banks (eds.): *Neo-nationalism in Europe and Beyond: Perspectives from Social Anthropology*, New York 2006, pp. 149–156; Farid Hafez: *Anas Schakfeh: Das österreichische Gesicht des Islams*, Wien 2012, pp. 53–55; Leila Hadj-Abdou: 'Gender(ed) nationalism' of the populist radical right, p. 97.
- 38 Birgit Sauer/Edma Ajanovic: *Hegemonic Discourses of Difference and Inequality: Right-Wing Organisations in Austria*, in: Gabriella Lazaridis/Giovanna Campani/Annie Benveniste (eds.): *The Rise of the Far Right in Europe Populist Shifts and 'Othering'*, Basingstoke 2016, pp. 81–108, p. 87, p. 94; Reinhard Heinisch: *Austria: The Structure and Agency of Austrian Populism*, in: Danielle Albertazzi/Duncan McDonnell (eds.): *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, Basingstoke 2008, pp. 67–83; Walter Manoschek: *FPÖ, ÖVP, and Austria's Nazi Past*, in: Ruth Wodak/Anton Pelinka (eds.): *The Haider Phenomenon in Austria*, New Brunswick 2002, pp. 1–16.
- 39 Farid Hafez: *Anas Schakfeh: Das österreichische Gesicht des Islams*
- 40 Fraser Duncan: *Immigration and integration policy and the Austrian radical right in office: the FPÖ/BZÖ, 2000–2006*, in: *Contemporary Politics* 16:4 (2010), pp. 337–354, p. 342; Oliver Geden: *Diskursstrategien im Rechtspopulismus*, pp. 77–79.
- 41 Oliver Geden: *Diskursstrategien im Rechtspopulismus*, pp. 200–220.
- 42 *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs: Wahlprogramm der FPÖ, Nationalratswahl 2006*, p. 10.
- 43 Ruth Wodak: *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*, London 2015, p. 191; Michal Krzyżanowski: *From Anti-immigration and Nationalist Revisionism to Islamophobia*, pp. 135–148; Oliver Geden: *Diskursstrategien im Rechtspopulismus*, p. 151, pp. 200f.

with the mottos “At Home instead of Islam” or “Away from Mosques and Minarets”.<sup>44</sup> In 2010, before the local elections in the Steiermark, the party launched a scandalous online game entitled “Moschee Baba”, in which the players were tasked to shoot the minarets of mosques and their muezzins to score points.<sup>45</sup> As a sequel of the charges against mosques and minarets, the following year, Strache and his counterparts from the European Parliament visited Israel and sought an alliance with the Jewish conservatives against Muslim migrants. The FPÖ’s elites were arguably referring to the Arab-Israeli conflicts and declaring Israel to be at the forefront of the so-called war against ‘Muslim invasion’.<sup>46</sup> The anti-Semitism known with Heider had apparently disappeared from Strache’s arguments.<sup>47</sup>

Ethnic stereotypes against Muslims, however, remained part of the election propaganda. The party programme adopted in 2011 contained a hazy conception of who could be Austrian: the ‘integrated’ immigrants, who accepted Austrian values and laws and “set aside their cultural roots”.<sup>48</sup> This reference obviously targeted Muslim migrants, but the vocabulary used in the previous and later elections also implied a certain Austrian ethnicity. The campaigns for the local elections of 2010 and 2012 were thus launched with the mottos “More courage for our Viennese blood. too many foreigners does no one any good” or “Love of the country instead of Moroccan thieves”.<sup>49</sup> Several election posters devised for the national election of 2013 were captioned “High time for ‘brotherly love’”, depicting white women from older and younger generations.<sup>50</sup> Overall the party’s election propaganda promoted the ethnic unity of Austrians and marginalised Muslim migrants, not only in religious but also in racial terms.<sup>51</sup>

- 44 Michal Krzyżanowski: From Anti-immigration and Nationalist Revisionism to Islamophobia, p. 135.
- 45 Elisalex Henckel: Österreich über islamfeindliches FPÖ-Spiel empört, in: Die Welt, 02.09.2010.
- 46 Lorenz Jäger: Reise nach Jerusalem, in: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 13.12.2020.
- 47 Omran Shroufi: The Gates of Jerusalem: European Revisionism and the Populist Radical Right, in: *Race & Class* 57:2 (2015), pp. 24–42, p. 33.
- 48 “Österreich zuerst”, Parteiprogram der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (passed by the Federal Party Congress of the Austrian Freedom Party on 17 July 2011 in Graz. Translated by the author.
- 49 Angela Köckritz: Bundespräsidentenwahl: Wiener Blut, in: Die Zeit 50, 01.12.2016; Die Welt Online: FPÖ wirbt mit „Heimatliebe statt Marokkaner-Diebe“, 02.04.2012, [www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article106148765/FPoe-wirbt-mit-Heimatliebe-statt-Marokkaner-Diebe.html](http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article106148765/FPoe-wirbt-mit-Heimatliebe-statt-Marokkaner-Diebe.html) (accessed on 10 September 2020). Translated by the author.
- 50 Franziska Marquart/Jörg Matthes: Campaigning subtle exclusionism: The effects of right-wing populist positive ads on attitudes toward foreigners in Austria, in: *Studies in Communication and Media (SCM)* 5:2 (2016), pp. 223–239, p. 231.
- 51 Franziska Marquart: Rechtspopulismus im Wandel. Wahlplakate der FPÖ von 1978–2008, in: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft (ÖZP)* 42:4 (2013), pp. 353–371.

In summary, the election campaigns of the LN and FPÖ from the 2000s suggest a growing emphasis on Islam and attempts to mobilise voters against migrants from Islamic countries. Although secular rejections of Islam remained at the surface of the campaigns directed against Muslims, election posters also carried references to ethnic differences. These religious and ethnic emphases in turn underpinned many visuals, the below section argues, that pigeonhole Muslim gender groups and thus constitute intersecting religious and gender images.

## Religious and Gender-sensitive Exclusions

The emerging trope in the literature, namely that national populism in Western Europe differentiates migrant gender identities into criminal men and victimised women does not only concern Muslims. In her commentary, that “Gender and ethnicity are the twin constitutive discourses of modern European society, and racialized subjects are necessarily gendered”, Shannon Woodcock pointed to the Italian government, which, in 2008, was poised to enact a security package against Roma people.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, during the discussions of this amendment, Berlusconi’s media sought to legitimize security measures with the images of Roma people committing sexual crimes against Italian women. Criminalising Muslim gender identities is the continuation of this racist state of affairs and can be traced in the LN’s and FPÖ’s election campaigns.

During the 2000s, LN campaigns against Muslim migrants already included posters that stereotyped migrants according to gender groups. One recruitment poster released in 2005 by the Young Padanian Movement, the youth organisation of LN, depicted a woman in a burqa and read: “Now or never. Stop the Islamic invasion! Respect our laws or return to your own country. Defend your country, join the Young Padanians!”<sup>53</sup> A year later, the party reiterated its uncompromising attitude against Turkey’s EU membership and published a poster showing two frames respectively featuring two Italian and one supposedly Turkish woman. The first frame depicted two white-skinned and black-haired women with some papers, supposedly high-skilled employees working on a project, with the overlay text reading: “we”. The second frame showed a veiled woman behind bars, supposedly screaming or crying in the dark, with the overlay text: “they”. The overlay text was: “Are you willing to risk it? No to Turkey in Europe”. In 2006, at a time when Turkey commenced membership negotiations with the EU with its justified reform performance towards democratisation, this

52 Shannon Woodcock: *Gender as Catalyst for Violence against Roma in Contemporary Italy*, p. 469.

53 Damian Spruce: *Empire and Counter-Empire in the Italian Far Right Conflicting Nationalisms and the Split between the Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale on Immigration*, in: *Theory, Culture & Society* 24:5 (2007), pp. 99–126, p. 122.

poster suggested the stiff opposition of the Northern League to the candidate on the grounds of migration and Islamic persecution of women.<sup>54</sup>

With the growing influx of refugees into Europe, the Northern League differentiated its existing gender-based stereotypes. Muslim migrant women, on the one hand, remained the victims of Islamic persecution in the election campaigns and visuals. On the other hand, the party propaganda more systematically estranged Islam and Muslim migrants and visualised male migrants as persons of colour and as responsible for crime and sexual assaults on Italian women. The election documents thus began to depict encounters between Italian native women and Muslim male migrants. A poster released ahead of the presidential elections in 2013 similarly called for ‘women’s security’ with the caption ‘theft and violence just happening’, and showed a dark-skinned, armed male who waits around a corner to attack two white-skinned women walking towards the corner from the other side.<sup>55</sup> Before the regional elections in Seregno in 2015, the party released an electronic poster on Twitter, which featured three immigrants disguised in far-Eastern and African costumes, as well as another female immigrant holding an infant. The foreigners were dark and yellow-skinned, and one had a knife in hand. They waited in a queue before a door and hampered one white-skinned, aged, supposedly Italian male and one Italian child to move forward. The poster was captioned as: ‘Guess who is last? For rights of homes, work and health’.<sup>56</sup> It thus reflected the party’s official viewpoint, which marginalises non-European migrants, in religious, ethnic, gender and class-based terms, assuming them responsible for destabilising social wellbeing that the government should provide for the Italians in need.

A similar transition was visible in the Freedom Party, which, from the beginning of Strache’s term, created anti-migrant campaigns against Muslim migrants that increasingly focussed on gender groups.<sup>57</sup> The FPÖ’s early campaigns equally attacked Turkey’s EU bid, and its election programmes and visuals mirrored those of the Northern League discussed above. A very striking example for the party’s propaganda addressing both gender and migration was a public campaign devised in 2004. Reminiscent of its Italian version, one FPÖ poster depicted a white-skinned woman covered in a hijab made of the EU’s flag and was captioned: ‘Should that be our future? Austrians

54 Chiara Bonfiglioli: *Intersections of Racism and Sexism in Contemporary Italy: A Critical Cartography of Recent Feminist Debates*, in: *Darkmatter: In the Ruins of Imperial Culture* 6 (2010).

55 *Il Secolo XIX: Armato e di colore: ecco il manifesto della Lega*, 19.02.2013 [www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/italia/2013/02/19/AP2rS8mE-armato\\_manifesto\\_colore.shtml](http://www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/italia/2013/02/19/AP2rS8mE-armato_manifesto_colore.shtml) (accessed on 12 July 2020).

56 *Lega Nord Seregno: Indovina chi è l’ultimo nell’Italia del PD. Prima la nostra gente! Il 31 Maggio anche a Seregno vota Lega Nord!*, 28.05.2015, at: <https://twitter.com/LegaNordSeregno/status/603885690116579328> (accessed on 11 March 2021).

57 Michal Krzyżanowski: *From Anti-immigration and Nationalist Revisionism to Islamophobia*, pp. 135f.

say NO! Austria remains Free!’<sup>58</sup> With the influx of refugees, the FPÖ’s anti-migrant campaigns, similar to those of the LN, came to describe Muslim men with stereotypes of gender persecution and migrant criminality.<sup>59</sup> The campaigns increasingly attributed crime such as drug trafficking or theft to male migrants from African and Middle Eastern countries.<sup>60</sup> A poster for Innsbruck, for example, read: ‘Love of the country instead of Moroccan thieves’.<sup>61</sup> The FPÖ’s visuals additionally depicted Muslim migrants as sexual criminals poised to harass Austrian women. In its official programme for the 2017 elections, the party attributed gender inequality in Austria to migrants from Muslim countries: “a new problem of women’s discrimination emerges from the immigration of people from patriarchal cultures”.<sup>62</sup> Relevant election visuals featured Austrian women, dressed in traditional or urban-modern costumes, to enjoy both their traditions and modern lives. In doing so, they were depicted as standing against Islamisation. One suggestive example is a poster made for the party’s youth organisation. It depicted four young, white-skinned women in rural and urban costumes, who condemningly stared at the audience and made either defensive postures or ‘stop’ gestures with arms and hands. The caption, Hands off! Our women are not fair game, was written overhead in German and Arabic, targeting supposedly sexually aggressive Muslim migrants.<sup>63</sup> In brief, the FPÖ’s election campaigns, reminiscent of the LN’s propaganda, blamed Muslim men for sexual harassment against Austria’s native, beautiful women.<sup>64</sup>

In summary, election campaigns in both parties evolved to differentiate Muslim migrants into gender groups, namely criminal men on the one hand and female victims of Islamic culture, on the other. Ethnic references to national and migrant gender groups notably remained visible in the visual examples. In the following, the LN’s and FPÖ’s propaganda partially reveal how these religious and gender-based stereotypes relate to the class-based exclusions of migrants.

58 Leila Hadj-Abdou/Birte Siim/Sawitri Saharso: The Limits of Populism: Accommodative Headscarf Policies in Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands, in: Sieglinde Rosenberger/Birgit Sauer (eds.): *Politics, Religion and Gender: Framing and Regulating the Veil*, New York 2012, pp. 132–149, p. 138.

59 Ruth Wodak: *The Politics of Fear*.

60 FPÖ: Österreich im Wort, Auswahl und Zusammenfassung inhaltlicher Ziele der Freiheitlichen Partei sterreichs für die neue Legislaturperiode, FPÖ Wahlprogramm 2008, p. 7; Franziska Marquart: *Rechtspopulismus im Wandel*, pp. 367–369.

61 Die Welt Online: FPÖ wirbt mit „Heimatliebe statt Marokkaner-Diebe“.

62 FPÖ: Österreicher verdienen Fairness, Freiheitliches Wahlprogramm zur Nationalratswahl 2017, p. 12.

63 Plattform Radikale Linke: Just another tag on the wall? Rechte Symbole auf Wiens Straßen (Broschüre der Antifa 15), June 2017.

64 Edma Ajanovic/Stefanie Mayer: Mann, oh Mann... Wenn der Schutz ‚unserer Frauen‘ die Antwort ist, was war noch mal die Frage?, p. 200. Translated by the author.

## Religious and Class-based Exclusions

The third trope in the literature builds on the above-mentioned migrant gender images. Radical right parties today demonise Muslim men and represent female migrants as victims of Islamic culture and patriarchy. Furthermore, as Sara Farris and Francesca Scrinzi have argued, conservative camps today use these categories not only to exclude Muslim men but also to integrate Muslim women into Western society and especially into labour-intensive economic fields.<sup>65</sup> The perception of care workers thus presents an emerging field for populism studies. Publications point to the legal and cultural landscape favouring cheap migrant labour in the Italian care sector, especially in domestic life, and note strict protectionism in Austria.<sup>66</sup> Research on far-right attitudes towards Muslim migrant caregivers is rather limited.

Until 2008, the Northern League uncompromisingly stood against unauthorised labour migration. During its participation in the coalitionary government until 2006, it objected to attempts by its bigger ally, Forza Italia, to legitimise illegal migrant labour and sought to enact exclusionary migration laws.<sup>67</sup> The famous ‘Bossi-Fini Law’, partially tabled by the LN’s leader Umberto Bossi, dramatically restricted migration from outside the EU and strengthened controls over the quota for semi-skilled labour.<sup>68</sup> The party’s involvement in the coalitionary government between 2008 and 2011, however, demonstrated dramatic shifts in their coming to terms with migrant care workers. The party, which had previously blocked attempts to change the law on illegal migration, began to seek solutions for illegal workers in the care sector. LN member and the then minister of the interior, Roberto Maroni, stated in 2008: “there cannot be an amnesty for those who entered the country illegally, for those who rape women or rob a villa; but we will naturally consider those cases with strong social impacts, such as the case of caregivers”.<sup>69</sup> The following year, the government indeed

65 Sara R. Farris: *Femonationalism and the “Regular” Army of Labor Called Migrant Women*, pp. 184–199; Sara R. Farris/Francesca Scrinzi: ‘Subaltern Victims’ or ‘Useful Resources’?, pp. 241–257; Sara R. Farris: *In the Name of Women’s Rights*.

66 Antje Eichler: *Zum Deutungswandel im konservativen Wohlfahrtsstaat – Eine wissenschaftliche und wissenssoziologische Analyse der Diskurse um die Legalisierung der ausländischen Pflegekräfte in Österreich*, Trier 2014.

67 Michael Samers: *Strange Castle Walls and Courtyards*, pp. 221f.

68 Asher Colombo/Giuseppe Sciortino/Elisa Craveri: *The Bossi-Fini Law: Explicit Fanaticism, Implicit Moderation, and Poisoned Fruits*, in: *Italian Politics* 18 (2002), pp. 162–179; Andrej Zaslove: *Closing the door?*, pp. 99–118.

69 *la Repubblica*: Maroni: “No sanatorie immigrati”. Poi frena: “Sulle badanti, vedremo”, 17.05.2018, [www.repubblica.it/2008/05/sezioni/cronaca/sicurezza-politica4/bossi-spagna/bossi-spagna.html](http://www.repubblica.it/2008/05/sezioni/cronaca/sicurezza-politica4/bossi-spagna/bossi-spagna.html) (accessed on 15 August 2020), translated by the author.

granted an amnesty only for illegal migrants working as caregivers and domestic workers, a field in which domestic labour was not sufficient.<sup>70</sup>

The LN decision to grant amnesty to illegal care workers could seem puzzling in the beginning. Nevertheless, the party's traditional view of woman as the backbone of family and provider of care for children and the elderly was the main impetus for such a populist radical party to tolerate migrant labour in this field.<sup>71</sup> In Northern Italy, especially in the Northern League's electoral base consisting of middle class and lower-class workers, women were expected to fulfil both work and family commitments. The party thus promoted women's work commitments, as well as their traditional role in patriarchal Italian families.<sup>72</sup> A recent example is a flyer distributed in Crotona for the 2019 women's day, which argued that Italian women's natural role and source of dignity was support for their family.<sup>73</sup> Although the Northern League partially pointed to gender equality and securitised women's problems in social life, its political campaigns still revealed the traditional concept of women in Italian society as the anchor of family and demographic reproduction. Migrant care-workers could play a role in the survival of this patriarchal tradition and potentially contribute to the native women's productivity in working and family lives.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, the pertinent amnesty and the underlying tolerance of migrant care-giving workers constituted a noteworthy exception to the party's overall attitude towards migration.

The question yet remains whether the Northern League also explicitly tolerates the Muslim female care workers in Italy. So far, only few studies have referred to Italian families' preference to hire Christian, if not Catholic, migrant caregivers.<sup>75</sup> Concepts of caregivers within the LN attest that the class-based representations of migrants

70 Michael Samers: *Strange Castle Walls and Courtyards*, pp. 209–231; Sara R. Farris: *Femotionalism and the "Regular" Army of Labor Called Migrant Women*, p. 13.

71 Sara R. Farris/Francesca Scrinzi: 'Subaltern Victims' or 'Useful Resources?', pp. 241–257; Marta Cordini/Costanzo Ranci: *Legitimising the care market: the social recognition of migrant care workers in Italy*, in: *Journal of Social Policy* 46:1 (2017), pp. 91–108.

72 Sara R. Farris/Francesca Scrinzi: 'Subaltern Victims' or 'Useful Resources?', p. 248.

73 Giuseppe Gaetano: 8 marzo, il volantino della Lega di Crotona: "Offende le donne che rivendica l'autodeterminazione", in: *Corriere Della Sera*, 06.03.2019, [https://www.corriere.it/politica/19\\_marzo\\_06/8-marzo-volantino-lega-crotona-offende-donne-chi-ne-rivendica-l-autodeterminazione-b354a986-3ff7-11e9-bb83-aca868a1eb53.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/politica/19_marzo_06/8-marzo-volantino-lega-crotona-offende-donne-chi-ne-rivendica-l-autodeterminazione-b354a986-3ff7-11e9-bb83-aca868a1eb53.shtml) (accessed on 10 April 2020).

74 Similar views were shared by the National Industrial Association's 2016 report, which noted that domestic caregivers help Italian women to create more time for their work life. *Centro Studi Confindustria: Immigrati: da emergenza a opportunità. Dimensione, effetti economici, politiche*, Roma 2016, p. 7

75 Franca van Hooren/Birgit Apitzsch/Clémence Ledoux: *The Politics of Care Work and Migration*, in: Agnieszka Weinar/Saskia Bonjour/Lyubov Zhyznomirska (eds.): *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of Migration in Europe*, London 2019, pp. 263–373; Sara R. Farris/Francesca Scrinzi: 'Subaltern Victims' or 'Useful Resources?', pp. 254–256.



could change on specific grounds, but the situation of Muslims in employment requires further research at the party level.

The Freedom Party of Austria has been struggling with illegal immigration since the 1990s and has also sought to curb it with temporal migration in those fields that require a cheap workforce.<sup>76</sup> In 2002, the FPÖ, during its coalition with the Austrian People's Party, managed to amend the Alien Act and Asylum Law and partially curbed labour migration. Through a bill named 'Integrationsvertrag' (covenant/contract for integration), a number of changes in Austria's migration regime thus abolished the quota for semi-skilled workers from outside the EU and instead facilitated the influx of seasonal workers.<sup>77</sup> The party maintained its emphasis on temporary labour and presented it as an alternative to non-skilled and semi-skilled migration. The handbook released by the FPÖ for its party representatives in 2013 and the programme devised for the national elections of the same year similarly promised the status of guest-worker to non-European migrants, who would work in Austria temporarily, without social benefits and without a right to family reunification.<sup>78</sup> Migrant caregivers also remained a taboo, as for the party, at least until the mid-2000s, care-taking primarily entailed labour provided within the Austrian nation.<sup>79</sup> With the EU's expansion to include Eastern countries and female migrants from Central and South-Eastern Europe moving into relevant positions, the coalition between the Social Democratic Party and Austrian People's Party granted amnesty to illegal care workers (now European citizens) in 2007, and the FPÖ did not oppose the decision strongly.<sup>80</sup>

The party has recently been exhibiting signs of change in its attitudes towards non-EU caregivers.<sup>81</sup> Before the breaking of the coalitionary government between the FPÖ and the Austrian People's Party, in an interview, Strache spoke of their plans to

76 Tjitske Akkerman: Comparing Radical Right Parties in Government: Immigration and Integration Policies in Nine Countries (1996–2010), in: *West European Politics* 35:3, pp. 511–529. Kenneth Horvath: Securitisation, Economisation and the Political Constitution of Temporary Migration, pp. 154–170.

77 Andrej Zaslove: Closing the door?, pp. 99–118.

78 FPÖ Bildungsinstitut: Handbuch freiheitlicher Politik. Ein Leitfaden für Führungsfunktionäre und Mandatsträger der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs (4th edition), 2013, p. 37; Karl Ettinger: Programmanalyse: „Arbeitslose raus“ nicht umsetzbar, in: *Die Presse* (print edition), 16.08.2013.

79 Wahlprogramm der Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs FPÖ, Nationalratswahl 2006, pp. 2f; Almut Bachinger: Der irreguläre Pflegearbeitsmarkt. Zum Transformationsprozess von unbezahlter in bezahlte Arbeit durch die 24-Stunden-Pflege, Unpublished Dissertation, Vienna 2009, pp. 116–118.

80 Eva Fleischer: Migrant Care Work in Austrian Families – a Win-Win-Situation for Everyone?, in: Belachew Gebrewold/Andreas Th. Müller/Johanna Kostenzer (eds.): *Human Trafficking and Exploitation. Lessons from Europe*, London 2017, pp. 112–128, p.117.

81 Tina Olteanu: Gender Relations and the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), in: *Perspective Politice* 10:1 (2017), pp. 75–81.

legitimise illegal migrant care workers from outside the EU with five-year contracts.<sup>82</sup> A propaganda book endorsed by the party featured clues on the reasons behind this toleration, as it pointed out the relationship between the FPÖ's patriarchal concept of family and the need for immigrant care workers. Michael Howanietz wrote and Norbert Hofer, former minister in the Austrian government, edited *For a Free Austria*, a semi-official collection of party politics, whose section on the social state gives essential evidence regarding the FPÖ's future attitude towards immigrant care workers. The book argues that communities depend on "the quality of families", stresses the importance of demographic reproduction and calls any other alternative disloyal.<sup>83</sup> Howanietz straightforwardly argues:

woman, redefining herself from a feminist deconstructionist ambition to a self-proclaimed birth mother, longs for a complete guy who gives her all the emotional and economic security a young mother needs to turn to the offspring with carefree dedication. Both longings are not fulfilled.<sup>84</sup>

The book thus only favours childcare by mothers. Nevertheless, if it facilitated Austrian women's role in the family and demographic reproduction, some care work by the migrants could be allowed. "The continuous mass immigration", Howanietz admitted, was likely to overcome the shortage for caregivers for early childcare.<sup>85</sup>

The LN's and FPÖ's recent attitudes towards migrant care workers and debates over authorising illegal labour in this field suggest changes in the interplays between ethnic and class-based discrimination against migrants. Both parties, willing to save the traditional concept of family, became more tolerant towards migrant caregivers, especially since, in their opinion, migrant labour could help Austrian and Italian women to fulfil both their work and family commitments. The question to what extent religious discrimination remain effective in labour perceptions, however, requires further research into the caregiving sector.

82 ORF News: FPÖ will nicht in Regierung, 20.09.2019, [https://news.v1.orf.at/060818-2953/?href=https%3A%2F%2Fnews.v1.orf.at%2F060818-2953%2F2954txt\\_story.html](https://news.v1.orf.at/060818-2953/?href=https%3A%2F%2Fnews.v1.orf.at%2F060818-2953%2F2954txt_story.html) (accessed on 20 September 2020).

83 Michael Howanietz: *Für ein freies Österreich* (Editor: Norbert Hofer), Vienna 2013, pp. 30f.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 31, translated by the author.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

## Conclusion

Since the early 2000s, populist-radical parties of Western Europe increasingly turned to the rejection of Islam and Muslim migrants through gender-sensitive propaganda. A growing number of publications addressing this period argue that far-right camps do not only increasingly target Muslim minorities but also differentiate between migrant gender images and even instrumentalise female representations for integration. The question remains how these religious, gender-sensitive, ethnic, and class-based aspects are reflected by political parties in their written and visual propaganda. Delving into election campaigns and tracing the shifting relevance between various categories of exclusion provides historical insight into these arguments.

Ethnic, gender and class-based attitudes towards Muslim migrants in the given propaganda material support the first mentioned trope in literature and the orientation of far-right discourses towards anti-Islamism. They also suggest that ethnic references to migrants never disappeared in the far-right oppositions to Muslim migrants. Although Turkey's EU bid remained a common theme for the parties, the LN chose to frame its propaganda in a way that allowed it to attack African refugees and Roma people, whereas the FPÖ focused on Turkish and Arabic minorities in Austria. Concerning the second assumption regarding the differentiation of Muslim migrants into gender groups, election campaigns indeed evolved into representations of criminal men and female victims. In summary, over the past two decades, the LN's and FPÖ's propaganda changed to target African, Arab, and Turkish migrants and create contrasts between (criminal) Muslim male and (persecuted) female migrants.

The question of the connection between Muslim stereotypes and the class-based exclusions of migrants in FPÖ and LN materials remains unanswered. According to the third assumption of the literature, emancipating Muslim women from Islam serves to integrate them into the production fields that need cheap labour.<sup>86</sup> The party propaganda under consideration did not suggest such an argument. However, one can still point out changing attitudes towards migrant caregivers and draw inferences regarding their meaning for traditional gender images in FPÖ and LN materials. Party attitudes towards female roles in the family and in the working life underpin an emerging tolerance towards the employment of migrant women in the care sector. The long-term preoccupation with Italian and Austrian women's efficiency in their working lives and family lives, as well as demographic production, are likely to bring about functional shifts in the communicated roles and concepts of migrants. Never-

86 Sara R. Farris: *Femonationalism and the "Regular" Army of Labor Called Migrant Women*, pp. 184–199.

theless, the attitudes towards Muslim migrant workers in the care sector require further empirical research addressing the extent to which minorities' religious identities are relevant for their employment.

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