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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Right-wing populism against diploma democracy. The evolution of parliamentary elites in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland

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Abstract

Are the sociological profiles of radical right-wing populist parties' (RRPPs) representatives really unlike those of their counterparts in mainstream parties? Once RRPPs occupy positions of legislative power for an extended period, do their MPs' profiles increasingly converge with those of more mainstream parties? This paper examines three right-wing parties in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland (FPÖ, LEGA, and SVP), and shows how RRPPs' MPs persistently contrast the "diploma democracy", that is the increasingly dominant high-educated trend in political representation. Inspired by the current scholarship's diachronic and comparative perspectives of political elites and MPs, the analysis focuses trends since the 1980s.

Zusammenfassung

Unterscheiden sich die soziologischen Profile der Abgeordneten rechtspopulistischer Parteien (RRPPs) wirklich von denen ihrer Kollegen aus traditionellen Parteien? Nähern sich die Profile der Abgeordneten von RRPPs, die über einen längeren Zeitraum die gesetzgebende Gewalt innehaben, zunehmend denen der historisch dominierenden Parteien an? Verkörpern die RRPPs-Parlamentarier eine neue Art von politischer Elite? Dieser Artikel untersucht drei rechte Parteien in Österreich, Italien und der Schweiz: FPÖ, Lega und SVP, und zeigt wie sich die RRPPs nachhaltig von der "Diplomdemokratie" distanzieren. Inspiriert durch die diachronische und vergleichende Perspektive der aktuellen Forschung zu politischen Eliten und Parlamentariern, konzentriert sich die Analyse auf die Entwicklung seit den 1980er Jahren.

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Résumé
Les profils sociologiques des parlementaires des partis de la droite populiste (RRPPs) sont-ils vraiment différents de ceux de leurs homologues des partis traditionnels? Une fois que les RRPPs occupent le pouvoir législatif pendant une période prolongée, les profils de leurs députés convergent-ils de plus en plus avec ceux des partis historiquement dominants? Est-ce que les parlementaires des RRPPs incarnent un nouveau type d'élite politique? Cet article examine les trois partis de droite en Autriche, en Italie et en Suisse: le FPÖ, la Lega et l'UDC, et montre en quoi les RRPPs se démarquent durablement de la « démocratie du diplôme ». Inspirée par les perspectives diachroniques et comparatives de la recherche actuelle sur les élites politiques et les parlementaires, l'analyse se focalise sur l'évolution depuis les années 1980.

KEYWORDS
education, parliamentary elites, populism, radical right-wing parties, Western Europe

The electoral success of radical right-wing populist parties (RRPPs) in Western Europe has posed a challenge to many party systems. When RRPPs are successful over a long period, their strength is not limited to their achievements at the ballot box. For instance, there has been growing academic interest in how RRPPs gain institutional power and influence policymaking (e.g., Heinisch, 2003; Akkermann et al., 2016; Biard et al., 2019). However, research on RRPPs, especially from a comparative perspective, has not adequately considered that holding power in contemporary democracies implies, above all, electing a group of MPs who represent the party and its constituency within the legislative branch. To understand RRPPs' relevance to democratic institutions, as well as ties to society, this contribution argues in favor of analyzing their elected representatives. In so doing, we will look at the scholarship on representative recruitment in European parliaments (Best & Cotta, 2000; Cotta & Best, 2007; Vogel et al., 2018). Scholars have examined how West European RRPPs contrast from mainstream parties in terms of ideology, voting support, and policy orientation, but it is still unclear to what extent discrepancy occurs among MPs.

Many aspects can distinguish MPs from a sociological point of view. However, more than in the past, higher education seems to be the increasingly dominant trait characterizing political elites in contemporary democratic regimes. A recent literature has analyzed this transformation using the concept of "diploma democracy" (Bovens & Wille, 2017; Noordzij et al., 2021; Van Herpen, 2021; Stoesz, 2022). By contrast, RRPPs are often supported by voters with a comparatively lower level of education (e.g. Rooduijn, 2018; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Ivaldi, 2021), and these parties' discourse has been molded in an anti-intellectual and anti-scientific environment (e.g., Merkley, 2020; Eslen-Ziya & Giorgi, 2022). Thus, our main research question will be: To what extent do the educational profiles of West European RRPPs' MPs diverge from their counterparts in the mainstream, and how does this divergence evolve? Once RRPPs occupy legislative power for an extended period, do their MPs' profiles increasingly converge with those of the mainstream or do they maintain their peculiarity within parliament? As we will show, our empirical analysis on three relevant parties confirms that the MPs of enduring West European RRPPs clearly diverge from their mainstream counterparts over time.

This paper is organized as follows: First, we will develop our theoretical argument and hypotheses. Second, we will consider the evolution of the profile of RRPPs' MPs in three party systems

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over the past 30 years and pay particular attention to Italy's League (previously the Northern League), the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), and the Swiss People's Party (SVP). Precisely because our focus is evolutionary, we select West European RRPPs that have been involved in many electoral races for parliamentary elections, endured, and proved successful.

POPULISM AND PARLIAMENTARY ELITES

As the theoretical aim of our contribution is to bridge populism and the study of representative elites in European democracies, we begin with one of the key puzzles in current scholarship on populism (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Anselmi, 2018). According to the literature, taking an anti-elitist stance is one of the typical traits of populism in terms of both communication and populist strategies (e.g., Weyland, 2001; Aslanidis, 2016). While there is a large consensus that RRPPs are – or should be – somewhat different from mainstream parties (e.g., Barr, 2009; Abedi, 2004), research on them remains circumscribed, on the one hand, by ideological stances, discourses, claims, and agendas and, on the other hand, by voting behavior, party leadership, organizational features, and policy influence.

However, one of the most relevant features of successful RRPPs is the election of a large group of representatives to parliament. Surprisingly, little has been said about the consequences of RRPPs' success in terms of getting elected representatives into political institutions – in particular MPs, who embody the first important step to gaining power within representative democracies (but see Aaldering, 2017). European comparative research shows that the line between populism and the mainstream is often thin: either because successful RRPPs in power moderate their original demands (Heinisch, 2003), since mainstream parties follow some policy orientation promoted by the RRPPs (Biard et al., 2019), or because RRPPs become a junior or dominant partner in government coalitions (Albertazzi & Mueller, 2013; Fallend & Heinisch, 2016). Similarly, a populist style is not exclusive to leaders of parties usually labeled as populist (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Schwörer, 2021). One might also examine the extent to which enduring and successful RRPPs become less distinct from mainstream parties or the latter are influenced by the profiles of the RRPPs' MPs. The puzzle is in line with populist parties' ambivalence toward representative democracy, as suggested by Margaret Canovan (1981) and Mény and Surel (2002). While populist parties and leaders rail against representative democracy and denounce the alleged betrayal of popular sovereignty, the same populist parties compete within a representative democracy, namely by putting forward people willing to enter representative institutions.

At the same time, what the literature on populism leaves out of the theoretical reflection and empirical analysis, albeit with some exceptions (e.g., Jankowski & Marcinkiewicz, 2018; Borri & Verzichelli, 2021), is who the RRPPs' representatives are. This lack of interest is likely due to the dominant view in scholarship that populism is expressed in the discourse, ideology, and styles of the main leader and their followers (i.e., the top leader, activists, and voters). Nevertheless, power is exercised by successful populist parties through a large number of people beyond the top leader(s) in contexts where, as in parliamentary democracies, legislative power and MPs play crucial roles in both the electoral and policymaking arenas. Thus, the extent to which the political representatives of RRPPs develop an anti-establishment discourse and ideology, as well as the traits of their supporters, forms but two parts of the issue.

Regarding the evolution of MPs' sociological profiles, several scholars have highlighted how the social background of national parliament members changed and/or endured between the 19th and 21st centuries and also link parliamentary recruitment with the socio-cultural transformations of European democracies (Best & Cotta, 2000; Cotta & Best, 2007; Best & Vogel, 2018). Using comparative and historical perspectives, these studies share a focus on personal characteristics, especially professional and educational background. While European parliamentary repre-

sentatives vary with respect to their background and profile among parties and national legislatures over time (Best & Cotta, 2000; Cotta & Best, 2007), some crucial trends emerge across parliaments and, more generally, elected bodies in contemporary democracies. Two trends – namely, toward professionalization and democratization (i.e., a growing proportion of political professionals and the greater openness of parliaments to accept new social groups) – characterize the evolution of representatives in major European democracies. To some extent, there is a tension between these two trends: on the one hand, being able to select representatives of new social demands and, on the other hand, recruiting MPs who have experience dealing with public administration, the welfare state, and the professionalization of politics (Borchert, 2008), all of which are becoming more and more relevant.

Thus, a broad trend is the increasing importance of having highly educated MPs in line with the thesis of diploma democracy from the traditional right to the left (Aaldering, 2017; Bovens & Wille, 2017, chap. 7). The level of education has traditionally been a basic criterion for political representatives in contemporary democracies (Putnam, 1976, p. 27; Cotta & Best, 2007). Having a high level of education conveys three different meanings. First of all, it expresses access to leading roles in society and the possibility of assuming roles of responsibility in political institutions; second, it embodies the skills relevant to parliamentary work; and third, it expresses a peculiar link with an electoral constituency. From the point of view of a protest or populist party, having a high level of education is one of the main symbols of the "establishment"; at the same time, skills derived from having such a background might be crucial to achieving results in parliamentary decision-making. Thus, a high level of education might be a trait that MPs use to represent either their "distance" from or "closeness" to voters, thus reflecting a more or less "vertical integration" (e.g., Hoffmann-Lange, 2018).

It is possible to assume that one of the keys to success for RRPPs is precisely the profiles of representatives whose interests correspond, according to a logic of descriptive representation (e.g. Pitkin, 1967), to those of their voters. As an ideology, a discourse or communication style, populism is a demand for people's empowerment and a criticism of the current elites. Moreover, populists present themselves as the true representatives because they are "closer" to the people (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). This claim seems consistent with significant trends in voting behavior in the sense that RRPPs tend to receive less support from the educational and economic elite. There are many possible explanations for RRPPs' electoral success, but the literature has frequently highlighted how these parties (and not only in Western Europe) receive significantly higher support among voters with a low level of education or, at least, without a tertiary education – that is, working-class and small-business voters (Arzheimer, 2018; Rooduijn, 2018; Ivaldi, 2021). Thus, one might wonder whether and to what extent the RRPPs' closeness to their constituencies is reflected in their MPs' educational traits.

Of course, there is nothing historically new about protest parties including MPs without a high level of education. With the extension of suffrage and the rise of socialist and communist parties supported by the working class, less educated politicians were elected to many European parliaments (Gaxie & Godmer, 2007, p. 111). In the past few decades, along with their integration into the institutional game and a gradual shift in the electorate, social democratic parties have increasingly represented the new intellectual, highly educated middle class in parliament. The growing salience of being highly educated has been enhanced by the transformation of "outsider" left-wing parties into the "establishment" (Gaxie & Godmer, 2007, p. 128).

While a traditionally left-wing ideology has attributed an emancipation value to having a high level of education, different patterns seem to emerge in the current right-wing populists: "Once regarded as an instrument of social progress and individual emancipation, the expansion of higher education is now seen by populists as having opened up a new divide, alongside the widening gulf between 'haves' and 'have-nots' in economic terms, between 'haves' and have-nots' in terms of educational level" (Scott, 2021, p. 49–50). In fact, right-wing populism entails an anti-intellectual claim, where the elite are (also) defined as those with a high and privileged

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cultural background (Harris, 2010; Merkley, 2020). This would be consistent with Norris and Inglehart's cultural backlash thesis, as it indicates a rejection of all forms of progressive and cosmopolitan knowledge in favor of an anti-liberal and traditionalist cultural and reactionary view (Norris & Inglehart, 2019), along with a producerist ideology that sees workers and small-entrepreneurs as models of an ethic of hard work and true contributors to economic prosperity (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019; Abts et al., 2021).

BETWEEN HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL INTEGRATION

However, it is unclear to what extent RRPPs pose a challenge in terms of their parliamentary representatives' educational background. In other words, the question is whether (and to what extent) successful RRPPs are clearly distinct from the mainstream or whether, by contrast, there is an integration of the RRPPs' representatives with those of the mainstream over time. Regarding the elected representatives' sociological profile (i.e., their social, cultural, and professional backgrounds), two paths are possible from a theoretical point of view. On both paths, the time the RRPPs spend within the party system plays a crucial role. Convergence or divergence from the mainstream is not a matter of a single moment – for instance, when the RRPPs enter the party system – but a diachronic process in which parliamentary recruitment is involved over legislatures.

On the first path, the RRPPs express persistent anti-establishment stances while tending to "institutionalize their parliamentary personnel in an attempt to produce alternative elites" (Verzichelli, 2019, p. 104). Historically, the most extreme examples of alternative elites are the Italian National Fascist Party and the Italian Socialist Party in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as partially communist parties, which represent classic examples of the "Paretian circulation of elites: the displacement of an aging and stable political elite by outsiders" who are "not part of a process of more or less continuous elite renewal, but often represent the sudden massive entry of total newcomers" (Linz et al., 2007, p. 321). This path provides a high degree of "vertical" integration, namely a strong correspondence between elites and voters based on descriptive representation (Hoffmann-Lange, 2018). By contrast, the second path is "horizontally" integrative: As the RRPPs are part of established Western democracies when they have enduring success in terms of parliamentary representation and incumbency, they provide a convergent sociological profile with mainstream parties and, thus, enhance their integration as part of the established parliamentary elite.

Thus, we posit two complementary hypotheses about the evolution of the profiles of West European RRPPs' MPs. Our first hypothesis is that enduring and successful parties tend to recruit MPs with a relatively low level of education, and this level tends to maintain over time. In other terms, we postulate a strong pattern of high vertical integration. While the consolidation of socialist and communist parties in Europe between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century opened the door to workers and trade union members (and, more recently, civil servants and the new intellectual middle class), RRPPs' success over the past few decades appears to have boosted the presence of MPs from the private sector, the middle class, and the business sectors which tend to be linked to low and middle level of education (Linz et al. 2007; Pilotti 2017). Our first hypothesis is in line with some available research on MPs concerning successful RRPPs in Europe in recent decades. For instance, in Italy, the League stood out from the rest of the parties in parliament because of its strong concentration of representatives from the lower middle class and the world of crafts and entrepreneurship (Passarelli & Tuorto, 2012, p. 151). Moreover, the percentage of graduates in the League was lower than the average for parliament (Passarelli & Tuorto, 2018, p. 43). There has been a similar trend in Switzerland, where small-business owners and representatives with a lower level of education are overrepresented among the SVP's MPs (Pilotti, 2017, p. 214ff.). Our second hypothesis posits

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a persistent distance from mainstream parties over time especially. In other terms, we expect a low horizontal integration regarding the proportion of high-educated MPs. This path would be particularly consistent with RRPPs that have experience in government coalitions and engage in bargaining and institutional work (Heinisch, 2003; Akkermann et al., 2016).

Meanwhile, we assume that MPs of successful parties are rarely sociologically homogenous, and not all of the RRPPs' MPs have a low or middle level of education. While they might have lower formal education than their counterparts in the more mainstream parties, parliamentary work also requires specialized skills, that is, a high level of education as part of the professionalization of politics (Borchert, 2003, 2008; Gaxie & Godmer, 2007). Thus, our third hypothesis is that, to the extent that a minority of elected members of the RRPPs have a higher education, they do not necessarily have training profiles similar to those of mainstream parties. In other terms, we assume also a low horizontal integration regarding the subgroup of the highly educated MPs. As previous research has shown, we can assume that a certain proportion of "extreme-right" representatives have a legal background, which is crucial in parliamentary decision-making, although their numbers have been in decline in West European parliaments (Best & Cotta, 2000; Linz et al., 2007, p. 342 ff.). While successful in the medium term, RRPPs need MPs with a higher level of education and specialized skills who can make decisions within the institutions where they have to prove themselves capable against competitors and partners and negotiate with them. Moreover, assuming that RRPPs are characterized by an ideology oriented toward producers and business, one can expect to find profiles linked to this ideology among their MPs. We assume RRPPs converge to some extent with the lower proportion of MPs who have a law degree and by replacing them with MPs who have a university degree in "public administration, economics, sometimes other social sciences, or humanities," which has been observed in the second part of the 20th century in many West European parliaments (Gaxie & Godmer, 2007, p. 119; Pilotti, 2017). This trend may be ascribed to the increasing reputational value of new university titles but may also be a way to acquire the skills required by the complex environment in which parties and MPs operate. Therefore, our hypothesis posits that the educational profile of RRPPs' MPs differs by a larger share of economics graduates than their mainstream counterparts. In other words, we can postulate that there is also a contribution to vertical integration throughout a small group of high educated MPs, relevant traits of electoral support, and the centrality of producerist ideology of party supply.

AUSTRIA, ITALY, AND SWITZERLAND

To test our hypotheses, it is crucial to select longstanding parties with significant groups of representatives in national parliaments. Therefore, we select three party systems in Western Europe where RRPPs have been present in national parliaments and part of the government for several years. Linking to our research question and diachronic approach, we select RRPPs with a relatively large number of MPs (at least 10) and an enduring presence in parliament (i.e., uninterrupted since the 1980s). The main RRPPs included in our analysis are the Freedom Party of Austria, the League, and the Swiss People's Party. The distribution of seats in the lower chambers of the three countries under consideration over the past 40 years shows that the growth in RRPPs varies among the three countries (see Appendix Table 1). As parties with a few parliamentary representatives introduce statistical bias into the analysis of MPs' sociological profiles, we exclude parties without a relevant presence in the national parliament, like France's National Front (renamed the National Rally in 2018) until recently, from our analysis. We do not consider fascist or extreme-right parties headed by "intellectuals" or journalists (Linz et al., 2007, p. 320), nor do we examine peculiar "memberless" parties, like the Dutch Freedom Party, whose candidates for MP are exclusively selected by the party leader (Mazzoleni & Voerman, 2017).

The selected parties in our analysis all experienced a form of populist radicalization between the 1980s and 1990s and have had a significant role in their respective party systems since

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then. Austria (Pelinka, 2005, 2019; Luther, 2008; Heinisch et al., 2019), Italy (e.g. Blokker & Anselmi, 2021), and Switzerland (Kriesi et al., 2005; Mazzoleni, 2018) have different political systems, all of which have been challenged by successful RRPPs. The Italian party system was one of the most stable in Western Europe between 1946 and 1990 before becoming one of the most unstable. With the end of the so-called First Republic in the early 1990s, a long period ended in which mass parties – Christian Democracy, the Italian Communist Party, and the Italian Socialist Party – had occupied the political space, communicating with their electoral basis through systems of territorial control. The mainstream parties' failure ignited three decades of birth and competition of new parties along the pathway of populist protest: from the ethno-regionalism of the early Northern League and Berlusconi's telepopulism to the Five Star Movement's online populism and the national right-wing populism of the latest League led by Matteo Salvini. The League has experienced significant ups and downs in its electoral outcomes since the 1990s – from 8.7% of seats in the lower chamber in 1992 and 4.8% in 2001 to 19.8% in the most recent national elections in 2018 (Ieraci, 2019).

Unlike its Italian counterpart, the Swiss political system has been one of the most stable in Western Europe over the past few decades. Major government parties, such as the Liberal Party, the Christian Democratic Party (the two main parties of the center-right), and the Socialist Party, have formed a sort of coalition that has lasted for decades without interruption. The Swiss People's Party (SVP), founded in 1971 as the successor to the small agrarian party that had been part of the national government since the late 1920s, forms part of this coalition as well. Since the 1990s, the SVP has experienced unprecedented populist radicalization and growing success and has become the first party group in the lower chamber of the Swiss Parliament since 2003. Despite the SVP's success and due to the bicameral system (the party has not been successful in the upper chamber) and the peculiar system of government election in the country, the Swiss party system remains relatively stable. From 12.5% of seats in 1991, the SVP grew to 32.5% in 2015.

As an intermediate case between Italy and Switzerland, the Austrian system in the first few decades after the Second World War had a limited number of political parties. The two dominant parties have historically been the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), which is a conservative, Christian democratic party, and the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ). In addition to these two, which have alternated in power in the Austrian government since the end of the 1940s, there has also been the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), initially a national-conservative then a radical-right-wing populist party, which used to secure no more than 5% to 7% of the seats in the lower chamber (*Nationalrat*) until the 1980s (Pelinka & Plasser, 2019). Since then, the FPÖ has experienced uninterrupted growth from 6% of seats in the *Nationalrat* in 1979 to 28.4% in 1999 (i.e., the same share as the ÖVP). However, the first decade of the 2000s was marked by a huge crisis for the FPÖ, despite its role as a member of the national government coalition, with a consequent loss of consensus (9.8% in 2002 and 11.5% in 2006). Competition has increased among several RRPPs in recent years, in particular with the creation of the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ) in 2005 and the Team Stronach for Austria (STRONACH), which was founded by businessman Franz Stronach and is an example of entrepreneurial right-wing populism.

Considering the evolution of the RRPPs in the three countries, the selected parties all share the characteristic of populist radicalization and an enduring presence in power from the 1990s to the 2010s. However, while the League and the FPÖ have had a period of uncertainty and electoral decline, the SVP consolidated its successful path in the 2000s and 2010s. Despite the party experiencing its first significant decline (from 32.5% to 26.5%) in the most recent election in 2019, it remains the largest party group in the lower chamber. This is probably because the SVP has been less confronted with ideologically closer competitors than the League and the FPÖ.

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TABLE 1 Percentage of MPs without a university degree in the lower chambers in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland (1980–2018).

Austrian *Nationalrat*	**1980**	**2000**	**2010**	**2016**
All Austrian MPs	62.2 (113)	54.3 (100)	61.4 (113)	55.6 (104)
Austrian Mainstream Parties	63.8 (109)	52.7 (69)	58.1 (76)	51.4 (72)
FPÖ	36.4 (4)	58.5 (31)	63.8 (23)	64.1 (25)
BZÖ	-	-	77.8 (14)	-
STRONACH	-	-	-	100.0 (6)
Italian *Camera dei Deputati*	**1994**	**2001**	**2008**	**2018**
All Italian MPs	33.4 (210)	29.2 (184)	32.7 (206)	31.2 (197)
Italian Mainstream Parties	31.9 (118)	29.3 (165)	30.6 (170)	28.2 (68)
Northern League/League	38.5 (45)	30.0 (9)	53.3 (32)	42.7 (53)
MSI/Brothers of Italy	33.4 (35)	-	-	37.5 (12)
Swiss *Nationalrat*	**1980**	**2000**	**2010**	**2016**
All Swiss MPs	33.8 (68)	38.4 (78)	42.4 (86)	43.0 (86)
Swiss Mainstream Parties	32.9 (55)	26.7 (39)	31.9 (44)	32.0 (41)
SVP	39.1 (9)	70.5 (31)	67.2 (39)	61.5 (40)

Source: Authors' elaboration from www.parliament.gv.at (Austria); Centre for the Study of Political Change, University of Siena and authors' elaboration from www.camera.it/leg18/28 for 2018 (Italy); Swiss Elite Observatory, University of Lausanne (Switzerland).

AN ENDURING GAP

Depending on data availability, our empirical focus includes all members of the lower chambers in three countries (*Camera dei Deputati* in Italy and *Nationalrat* in Austria and Switzerland) for three cohorts – a total of 4,055 MPs[1] between the 1980s and the 2010s. According to our analysis, despite the different partisan pathways of Austria, Italy, and Switzerland, the recent evolution of the parliamentary representation of RRPPs is converging as far as high-education skills are concerned. Table 1 shows all three parties at stake have a strong proportion of MPs with low or middle educational levels (with the sole exception of the FPÖ in 1980). This confirms our first hypothesis and their enduring high vertical integration.

In Switzerland, among the SVP deputies, the percentage of members without a degree increased steadily between 1980 and 2016, from 39.1% to 61.5%. This fits with the evolution of the importance of having a professional and business background. From being a party of farmers with a center-right orientation and having different agronomist engineers among its members elected between 1970 and 1980, the party moved toward positions of the populist right and in support of the financial world, recruiting a significant part of its deputies from among the heads of medium and small businesses (from 4 in 1980 to 22 in 2016), as well as executives from private companies (from 1 in 1980 to 12 in 2016) (Pilotti, 2017, p. 358). As far as the Austrian case is concerned, we notice that the evolution of the FPÖ is not very different from that of the SVP in Switzerland. The Austrian nationalist right-wing party had a minority share of non-graduates in its small parliamentary group in 1980 (4 MPs out of 11 without a university education, or 36.4%). Over the past 30 years, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of non-graduates in the FPÖ (from 36.4% in 1980 to 64.1% in 2016). However, the professional profile of the FPÖ is characterized by a very limited presence and growth of the heads of medium and small businesses (from 2 in 1980

[1] Data for three cohorts of Italian MPs (1994, 2001, and 2008) was provided by the Centre for the Study of Political Change at the University of Siena (www.circap.unisi.it). The authors collected the data for 2018 from the Italian Parliament website (www.camera.it/leg18/28). The data for Austria was collected from the Austrian Parliament website (www.parlament.gv.at/WWER/PARL/J1918/), and the Swiss data was provided courtesy of the Swiss Elite Observatory at the University of Lausanne (www.unil.ch/obelis/en/home.html).

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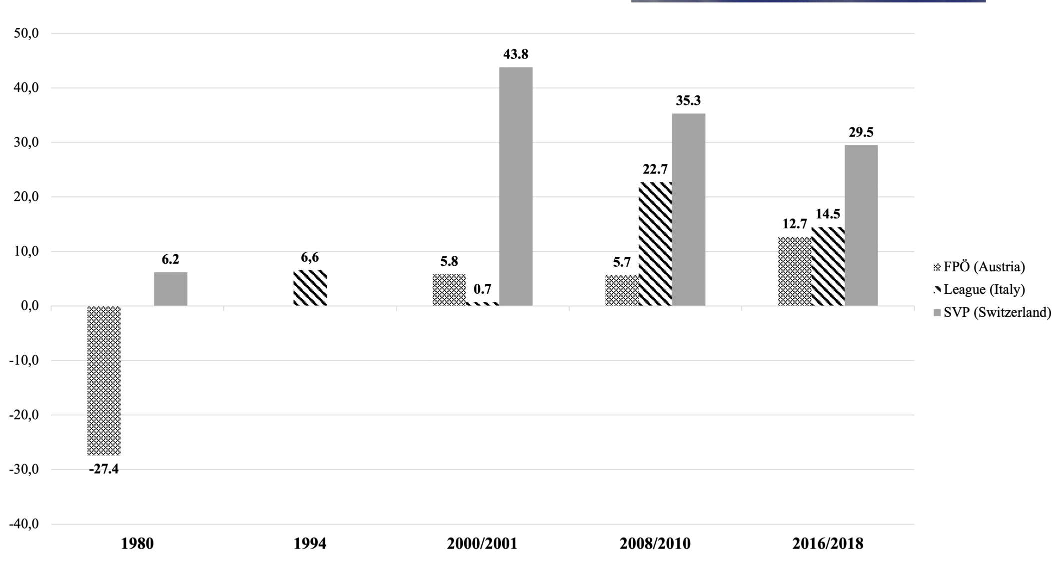

FIGURE 1 Educational distance between RRPPs and mainstream parties in the lower chambers in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland (1980–2018), in percentages points. *Source*: See table 1.
Note: The positive value means that MPs without university degree are more present among the RRPPs' elected representatives than the rate measured for the MPs of other parties; a negative value means that they are less present. Example of reading: In 2000, the rate of MPs without university degree among SVP elected representatives was 43.8 percentage points higher than that of all elected representatives of mainstream parties (70.5% vs 26.7%).

to 4 in 2016), as well as executives from private companies (from 0 to 2). By contrast, the share of liberal professions (e.g., lawyers, independent consultants) and professional MPs remains stable and important over time (between 27% and 31%). The percentage of MPs without high education has increased among the League from the 1990s, although the evolution is not linear. In the first period of presence in the national parliament (1994 and 2001), the gap with the mainstream parties is significant but smaller, while it has grown significantly between 2008 and 2018.

Overall, our second hypothesis concerning a persistent low horizontal integration is confirmed (Figure 1). The distance between RRPPs and the mainstream parties[2] is significantly persistent between the 1990s and 2010s, although the trend has been decreasing in the past decade for the SVP and the League. If we consider the average of the mainstream Swiss parties, we observe that the percentage of non-graduates has remained stable over time (around one-third) and lower than the one measured among the SVP deputies, even more so since the 2000s. In Italy's League, the share of MPs without a university degree remains higher than in mainstream parties. During the party's first years in parliament, the gap with the mainstream parties was smaller, but it increased significantly between 2008 and 2018. Within the FPÖ the percentage of non-graduates was much lower than the mainstream parties in 1980 (Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, 36.4% vs 63.8%). Between 1980 and 2016, in the Austrian mainstream parties, the proportion of MPs without a university education has decreased (from 63.8% to 51.4%) whilst that of the MPs of the FPÖ has increased.[3]

[2]In our analysis, in Austria, we consider "mainstream parties" as follows: Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, Greens (2000, 2010 and 2016), and Liberals (NEOS, 2016). For Italy: Social Democratic Party (1994), Green Party, Left radical parties (communists) (1994, 2001, 2018), Democratic Party of the Left (1994, 2001), Forza Italia (1994, 2001, 2018), Democratic Party (2008, 2018), and Christian-democratic parties. For Switzerland: Free Democratic Party, Liberal Party (1980 and 2000), The Liberals (2010 and 2016), Christian Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, Alliance of Independents (1980), Green Party, and Green Liberal Party (2010 and 2016).

[3]In 2010, the BZÖ, which emerged from a split in the FPÖ, had an even higher proportion of MPs without a university education (77.8%); in 2016, even Team Stronach had only non-graduate MPs.

The analysis confirms also our third hypothesis. Figures 2A, 2B and 2C highlight the distance (regarding high-education profiles) between the MPs of the RRPPs and those of mainstream parties. In contrast to the mainstream parties, law and economics graduates dominate among RRPPs representatives. RRPPs are characterized by a significantly lower rate of graduates in the humanities and social sciences in the three different national contexts. Between the 2000s and the 2010s, the SVP in Switzerland and the League in Italy had a higher proportion of economics graduates than mainstream parties, while the FPÖ in Austria was almost always characterized by a higher proportion of graduates in law and other study disciplines (technical or natural sciences). However, in the case of the FPÖ, the negative gap in economic degree from the mainstream parties in 2000 and 2010 has narrowed, illustrating the growing importance of this specific profile for the Austrian party. Thus, our third hypothesis, regarding the peculiar profile of the RRPPs also among highly educated MPs, is soundly confirmed (see also Appendix Table 2).

VARIATIONS OVER TIME

According to our analysis, the three enduring RRPPs seem to consolidate an alternative elite in terms of educational background. The RRPPs break with the dominant trend that makes parliamentary representation a quasi-monopoly of university elites, which is in keeping with the relevance of the party voters' (low and medium) level of education.[4] Meanwhile, despite persistent trends in the 2000s and 2010s, some variations over time have emerged, especially concerning the share of highly educated MPs with respect to their mainstream counterparts. These variations tend to correspond to their experiences in government coalitions. While our selected parties were molded in a form of populist radicalization between the 1980s and the 1990s, they have had different kinds of government participation in the further decades.

For each party, we can distinguish three phases. In the case of the FPÖ in Austria, the first, in the early 1980s, is characterized by a significantly lower share of non-graduates than in the mainstream parties. This was a period before the populist radicalization of the party (Pelinka, 2005, 2019; Luther, 2008). During the second phase in the 2000s, the party was involved in a significant ideological transformation and the share of non-graduate MPs remained stable and higher, albeit to a fairly "moderate" extent compared with the Christian Democrats (ÖVP) and Social Democrats (SPD) (we note that the party was part of the two governing coalitions with the Christian Democrats from 1999 to 2005, under the leadership of Wolfgang Schüssel). The third phase is the 2010s, during which the gap has grown, more than doubling in 2018 compared with 2010 (from 5.3% to 13.1%) as the FPÖ was again in a coalition government with the ÖVP led by Sebastian Kurz (2017 to 2019). As for the League in Italy (unfortunately, data availability is limited in the 1980s), between the mid-1990s and the early 2000s, the gap in the share of non-graduates in parliament compared with mainstream Italian parties is small and even decreases, although the proportion of economic degrees is significantly higher; then, in 2008 and 2018, the distance is greater (no less than 14%). The latter development can probably be explained by persistent features of the League, as an enduring anti-establishment party molded by strong ideological roots despite its participation in government coalitions (Albertazzi & Vampa, 2021).

In the case of the SVP in Switzerland, we can also identify three phases, but the evolution is not the same as that of the FPÖ or the League. At the beginning of the 1980s, when the SVP was a moderate conservative party, the rate of MPs without a university degree was not much higher than that of the mainstream parties. In the second phase, after the strong radicalization of the party, the educational distance between the two sides increased sharply. In the third phase

[4]One could interpret the persistence of high proportions of MPs with a low level of education as a by-product of higher turnover. Although this issue merits further investigation, the data for Switzerland seem to contradict such a hypothesis since the SVP has been characterized by the notable parliamentary longevity of their MPs, sometimes even more than the other parties (Pilotti 2017, p. 258ff.), since the 1990s.

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(2010s), while remaining very clear, the gap has diminished. We observe the biggest difference at the beginning of the 2000s, when, after having been Switzerland's fourth-largest party for many decades, the SVP became the leading national party (Mazzoleni, 2018). Subsequently, the party strengthened its supremacy and also consolidated its continued position as part of the national government. In some ways, we can interpret this development as a kind of partial "normaliza-

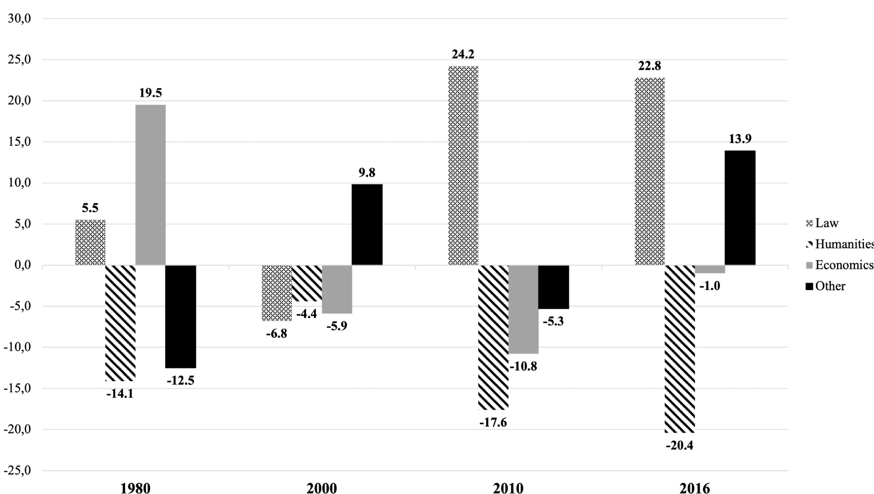

FIGURE 2A Difference between FPÖ and Austrian mainstream parties regarding university degree of MPs in Law, Humanities, Economics and other disciplines, in percentages points (Lower Chamber 1980–2016). *Source*: See table 1.
Example of reading: In 2010, the rate of MPs from FPÖ with a university degree in Law was 24.2 percentage points higher than that of all elected representatives of mainstream parties (53.8% vs 29.6%).

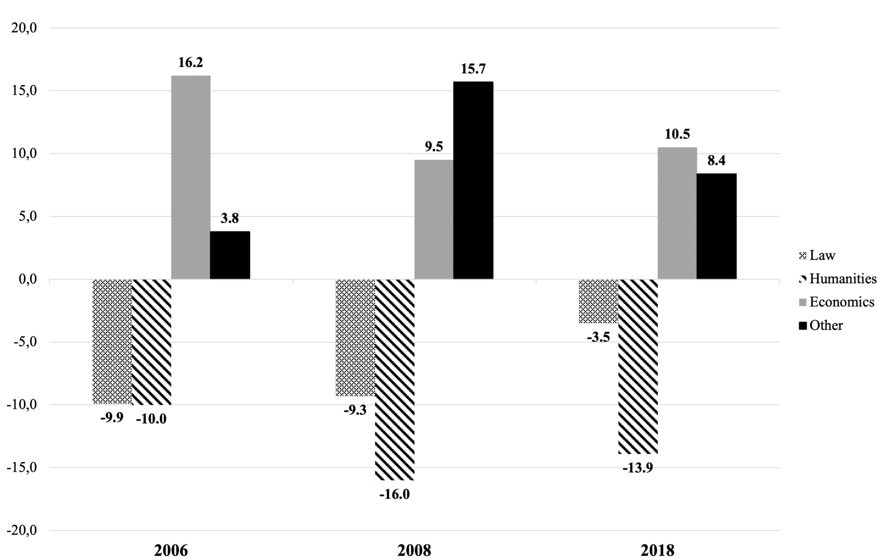

FIGURE 2B Difference between the League and Italian mainstream parties regarding university degree of MPs in Law, Humanities, Economics and other disciplines, in percentages points (Lower Chamber 2006–2018). *Source*: See table 1.
Note: For the Italian case, data for 1994 is only available for law graduates and not for each field of study. Therefore, we refrain from presenting them in the Figure. However, data since 2006 is available in full.

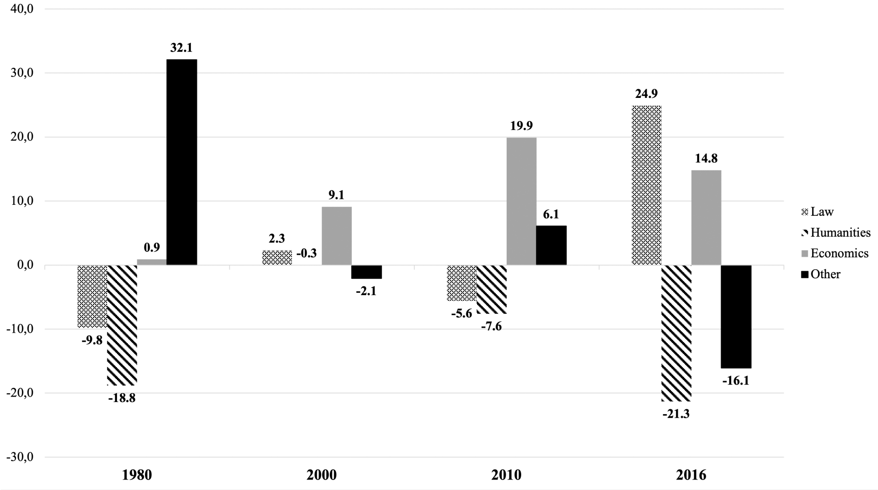

FIGURE 2C Difference between the Swiss People's Party and Swiss mainstream parties regarding university degree of MPs in Law, Humanities, Economics and other disciplines, in percentages points (Lower Chamber 1980–2016). *Source*: See table 1.

tion" reflected in the smaller distance vis-à-vis the other governmental parties in the 2000s and 2010s, although the gap in terms of high-education skills remains significant.

CONCLUSION

Some European radical right-wing populist parties (RRPPs) have been part of parliamentary bodies for decades. While populism is a way of criticizing representative democracy through anti-elitist stances, political parties seeking power engage with representative institutions. Thus, the more RRPPs compete in parliamentary elections and integrate with institutions over time, the more trade-offs they have to make. Can the RRPPs maintain their profiles as political outsiders even when they enter parliament and end up becoming established actors, specifically, in terms of the educational background of their MPs? To answer this question, our study focused on some of the parties in three West European countries: Italy, Austria, and Switzerland. Despite variations in their electoral success and the proportion of seats gained, our results confirm the dominant profile of the three RRPPs we selected (i.e., the League, the FPÖ, and the SVP) between the 1990s and the 2010s. On the one hand, these parties are clearly distinct from the mainstream parties in terms of their representatives' educational background, especially those that are less involved in government coalitions; on the other hand, they do not lack MPs with a university degree, but they also distinguish themselves again from mainstream parties: These RRPPs tend to have a greater share of representatives with law and economics degrees.

Although our research has been devoted to a limited set of West European RRPPs, the profiles of MP groups elected to national parliaments reflect the populist reaction of these parties against the political establishment as opposition to diploma democracy (Bovens & Wille, 2017; Noordzij et al., 2021; Van Herpen, 2021; see also Piketty, 2020). The overrepresentation of MPs with a low or medium level of education, as well as representatives with business-related backgrounds, gives additional insights. Prioritizing anti-elitist and utilitarian skills fits the discourse favoring small business and entrepreneurship, which are assumed to be drivers of the "producerism" and "makers-oriented" ideology expressed by these parties (Ivaldi & Mazzoleni, 2019; Rathgeb, 2021). In line with this ideological supply, the same parties consolidate a political representation capable of proximity to their sociological basis (with low education) while simultaneously connecting

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through representatives expressing economics-oriented values and consistently oriented toward anti-elitist intellectualism. In this regard, the background of the RRPPs' MPs enhances the implication of cultural backlash expressed by the populist challenge (Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

Our results signal a need for new research avenues in populist studies. The recruitment of politicians to parliament should be taken more seriously in populist studies. Breaking with the established pattern of parliamentary recruitment takes on particular significance in the current context of socio-economic and political transformation. Although the proportion of highly educated MPs was already strong, two challenges have arisen since 2000: The first is the so-called revolution in education, namely the growing number of people who have access to university education, and the second is economic globalization, which has favored high-education skills as a condition for having a successful professional career. Both these challenges fit with the rise of a social and political meritocracy based on university diplomas in society, economics, and politics (Bovens & Wille, 2017). According to this view, people without high-education skills have been more marginalized in recent decades, and this marginalization has been increasingly analyzed in terms of voting behavior (Stubager, 2010; Kriesi et al., 2012; Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Zingher, 2022). In this context, the differentiation of RRPPs in parliaments from mainstream parties takes on new importance. As far as the representation profile is concerned, the break with the "establishment" appears to reinforce the populist strategy that legitimizes itself based on the idea that the RRPPs are closer to the "people" than their mainstream counterparts.

This study calls for closer attention to the link between populism and the theory of political elites (e.g., Higley & Burton, 2006; Korosenyi, 2018). According to the classic theory of the circulation of elites as developed by Vilfredo Pareto, each elite follows a trend of climbing, consolidation, and decline; however, this trajectory is constantly under threat from other elites. A horizontal process exists exclusively in relation to the elected group of government and consists of the entrance and exit of some components. A second process, more similar to Gaetano Mosca's shift of the political class, concerns the entrance and exit of members belonging to either lower groups on the rise or upper groups in decline – namely, a real replacement of the political representatives. Thus, the question is whether the RRPPs' differentiation from the mainstream parties heralds not only a "disunited" elite, which is not an original or a new trend, but also a "quasi-replacement circulation" of political elites, which might be regarded as a challenge within and for contemporary representative democracies (Higley & Pakulski, 2011). To the extent long-running RRPPs have different forms of parliamentary recruitment that do not correspond to the main trend in diploma democracy, they introduce a significant divide within political elites. More broadly, the emergence of new "anti-elite" elites might contribute to boosting uncertainty in democratic systems (Verzichelli, 2018, p. 588).

Of course, our explorative research also requires further steps, as we do not assume that all RRPPs necessarily correspond to our findings in terms of educational skills. It would be relevant to enlarge the comparative analysis across European countries. To generalize empirical conclusions, a comparison with other cases should be made, especially with RRPPs that have been part of political institutions for an extended period. Moreover, as high education is substituted with other types of qualification, other characteristics of MPs' profiles should be more systematically taken into account, such as militant skills, the proportion of newcomers and incumbents, and the "cursus honorum". As parties fighting the political establishment and supranational economic powers, RRPPs have to know whether their party elites reflect this strategic aim in terms of not only their ideological supply but also the sociological and political profiles of their representatives.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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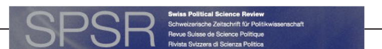

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APPENDIX

TABLE 1 Distribution of seats by party in the lower chamber in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland (1979-2019).

	Austrian *Nationalrat*												
	1979	**1983**	**1986**	**1990**	**1994**	**1995**	**1999**	**2002**	**2006**	**2008**	**2013**	**2017**	**2019**
People's Party (ÖVP)	42.1 (77)	44.3 (81)	42.1 (77)	32.8 (60)	28.4 (52)	28.4 (52)	28.4 (52)	43.3 (79)	36.1 (66)	27.9 (51)	25.7 (47)	33.9 (62)	38.8 (71)
Social Democratic Party (SPÖ)	51.9 (95)	49.2 (90)	43.7 (80)	43.7 (80)	35.5 (65)	38.8 (71)	35.5 (65)	37.7 (69)	37.2 (68)	31.1 (57)	28.4 (52)	28.4 (52)	21.9 (40)
Freedom Party (FPÖ)	6.0 (11)	6.6 (12)	9.8 (18)	18.0 (33)	23.0 (42)	22.4 (41)	28.4 (52)	9.8 (18)	11.5 (21)	18.6 (34)	21.9 (40)	27.9 (51)	16.9 (31)
Green Party			4.4 (8)	5.5 (10)	7.1 (13)	4.9 (9)	7.7 (14)	9.3 (17)	11.5 (21)	10.9 (20)	13.1 (24)		14.2 (26)
Alliance for the Future (BZÖ)									3.8 (7)	11.5 (21)			
Team Stronach											6.0 (11)		
Liberal Forum (LIF)/New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS)					6.0 (11)	5.5 (10)					4.9 (9)	5.5 (10)	8.2 (15)
Jetzt-Liste Pilz												4.4 (8)	

	Italian *Camera dei Deputati*										
	1979	**1983**	**1987**	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**2001**	**2006**	**2008**	**2013**	**2018**
Social Movement (MSI)/National Alliance (AN)/Brothers of Italy (FdI)	4.8 (30)	6.7 (42)	5.6 (35)	5.4 (34)	17.3 (109)	14.8 (93)	16.0 (99)	11.4 (72)		1.4 (9)	5.1 (32)
Forza Italia (FI)					21.1 (133)	19.5 (123)	29.1 (180)	21.3 (134)			16.5 (104)
Northern League (Lega Nord)			0.2 (1)	8.7 (55)	18.7 (118)	9.4 (59)	4.8 (30)	3.7 (23)	9.5 (60)	2.9 (18)	19.8 (125)
People of Freedom (PdL)									43.8 (276)	15.6 (98)	

(Continues)

SPSR Swiss Political Science Review
Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft
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Rivista Svizzera di Scienza Politica

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TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Italian *Camera dei Deputati*										
	1979	**1983**	**1987**	**1992**	**1994**	**1996**	**2001**	**2006**	**2008**	**2013**	**2018**
Social Democratic Parties (PSI & PSD/PDS/DS/PD)	13.0 (82)	15.2 (96)	17.6 (111)	34.1 (215)	20.8 (131)	27.0 (170)	22.1 (137)	34.6 (218)	34.4 (217)	47.1 (297)	17.8 (112)
Communist Party (PC)/ Communists/ Left Radical Parties	31.9 (201)	31.4 (198)	28.1 (177)	5.6 (35)	6.2 (39)	5.6 (35)	3.1 (19)	9.0 (57)		5.9 (37)	2.2 (14)
Republican Party	2.5 (16)	4.6 (29)	3.3 (21)	4.3 (27)							
Radical Party	2.9 (18)	1.7 (11)	2.1 (13)					2.9 (18)			
Green Party			2.1 (13)	2.5 (16)	1.7 (11)	2.2 (14)	2.7 (17)	2.5 (16)			
Other Left Parties	1.0 (6)	1.1 (7)	1.3 (8)	1.9 (12)	3.8 (24)	0.8 (5)					
Christian Democracy (DC)/Christian Democrats Parties	41.6 (262)	35.7 (225)	37.1 (234)	32.7 (206)	8.6 (54)	15.7 (99)	20.5 (127)	8.4 (53)	5.7 (36)	2.2 (14)	1.0 (6)
Five Stars (M5S)										17.3 (109)	35.9 (226)
Liberal Party/ Liberals	1.4 (9)	2.5 (16)	1.7 (11)	2.7 (17)		4.1 (26)		3.2 (20)	4.6 (29)	6.2 (39)	0.6 (4)
Other Parties	1.0 (6)	1.0 (6)	1.0 (6)	2.1 (13)	1.7 (11)	1.0 (6)	1.6 (10)	3.0 (19)	1.9 (12)	1.4 (9)	1.1 (7)

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TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Swiss *Nationalrat*										
	1979	**1983**	**1987**	**1991**	**1995**	**1999**	**2003**	**2007**	**2011**	**2015**	**2019**
Free Democratic Party/The Liberals (FDP)	25.5 (51)	27.0 (54)	25.5 (51)	22.0 (44)	22.5 (45)	21.5 (43)	18.0 (36)	15.5 (31)	15.0 (30)	16.5 (33)	14.5 (29)
Liberal Party	4.0 (8)	4.0 (8)	4.5 (9)	5.0 (10)	3.5 (7)	3.0 (6)	2.0 (4)	2.0 (4)			
Christian Democratic Party (CVP)	22.0 (44)	21.0 (42)	21.0 (42)	17.5 (35)	17.0 (34)	17.5 (35)	14.0 (28)	15.5 (31)	14.0 (28)	13.5 (27)	12.5 (25)
Swiss People's Party (SVP)	11.5 (23)	11.5 (23)	12.5 (25)	12.5 (25)	14.5 (29)	22.0 (44)	27.5 (55)	31.0 (62)	27.0 (54)	32.5 (65)	26.5 (53)
Social Democratic Party (SP)	25.5 (51)	23.5 (47)	20.5 (41)	20.5 (41)	27.0 (54)	25.5 (51)	26.0 (52)	21.5 (43)	23.0 (46)	21.5 (43)	19.5 (39)
Green Party	0.5 (1)	1.5 (3)	4.5 (9)	7.0 (14)	4.5 (9)	4.5 (9)	7.0 (14)	10.0 (20)	7.5 (15)	5.5 (11)	14.0 (28)
Alliance of Independents (LdU)	4.0 (8)	4.0 (8)	4.0 (8)	2.5 (5)	1.5 (3)	0.5 (1)					
Conservative Democratic Party (BDP)									4.5 (9)	3.5 (7)	1.5 (3)
Green Liberal Party (GLP)								1.5 (3)	6.0 (12)	3.5 (7)	8.0 (16)
Small Nationalist/ Regionalist Parties	1.5 (3)	2.5 (5)	2.5 (5)	7.5 (15)	5.5 (11)	1.5 (3)	1.0 (2)	0.5 (1)	1.5 (3)	1.5 (3)	0.5 (1)
Small Radical Left Parties	3.0 (6)	2.5 (5)	3.0 (6)	2.0 (4)	2.0 (4)	1.5 (3)	1.5 (3)	0.5 (1)		0.5 (1)	1.0 (2)
Other Parties	2.5 (5)	2.5 (5)	2.0 (4)	3.5 (7)	2.0 (4)	2.5 (5)	3.0 (6)	2.0 (4)	1.5 (3)	1.5 (3)	2.0 (4)

Source: authors' elaboration from http://legislature.camera.it (Italy); Bundesblatt, different years (Switzerland); https://www.bmi.gv.at/412/Nationalratswahlen (Austria).

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TABLE 2 Percentage of MPs graduates in the lower chambers in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland (1980–2018) by field of study.

	1980				1980					
	All Austrian MPs	Other Austrian Parties	FPÖ		All Swiss MPs	Other Swiss Parties	SVP			
Law	52.1 (37)	51.6 (33)	57.1 (4)		43.6 (58)	44.5 (53)	35.7 (5)			
Humanities	12.7 (9)	14.1 (9)	0.0		15.8 (21)	17.6 (21)	0.0			
Economics	25.4 (18)	23.4 (15)	42.9 (3)		20.3 (27)	20.2 (24)	21.4 (3)			
Other	11.3 (8)	12.5 (8)	0.0		22.6 (31)	20.2 (24)	50.0 (7)			
	2000				**2000**			**2006**		
	All Austrian MPs	**Other Austrian Parties**	**FPÖ**		**All Swiss MPs**	**Other Swiss Parties**	**SVP**	**All Italian MPs**	**Other Italian Parties**	**League**
Law	36.9 (31)	38.6 (27)	31.8 (7)		44.0 (55)	43.8 (49)	46.2 (6)	38.4 (161)	40.7 (154)	30.8 (4)
Humanities	28.6 (24)	27.1 (19)	22.7 (5)		24.0 (30)	24.1 (27)	23.1 (3)	32.5 (136)	25.4 (134)	15.4 (2)
Economics	25.0 (21)	28.6 (20)	22.7 (5)		16.0 (20)	15.2 (17)	23.1 (3)	12.0 (50)	14.6 (46)	30.8 (4)
Other	15.5 (13)	12.9 (9)	22.7 (5)		24.0 (30)	23.2 (26)	23.1 (3)	17.2 (72)	19.3 (69)	23.1 (3)
	2010				**2010**			**2008**		
	All Austrian MPs	**Other Austrian Parties**	**FPÖ**	**BZÖ**	**All Swiss MPs**	**Other Swiss Parties**	**SVP**	**All Italian MPs**	**Other Italian Parties**	**League**
Law	33.8 (24)	29.6 (16)	53.8 (7)	25.0 (1)	35.9 (42)	36.7 (36)	31.6 (6)	40.8 (173)	41.4 (164)	32.1 (9)
Humanities	36.6 (26)	40.7 (22)	23.1 (3)	25.0 (1)	29.1 (34)	30.9 (30)	21.1 (4)	29.2 (124)	30.3 (120)	14.3 (4)
Economics	16.9 (12)	18.5 (10)	7.7 (1)	25.0 (1)	14.5 (17)	11.2 (11)	31.6 (6)	12.5 (53)	11.9 (47)	21.4 (6)
Other	15.5 (11)	13.0 (7)	23.1 (3)	25.0 (1)	25.6 (30)	24.5 (24)	31.6 (6)	17.5 (74)	16.4 (65)	32.1 (9)

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TABLE 2 (Continued)

	2016				2016			2018			
	All Austrian MPs	**Other Austrian Parties**	**FPÖ**		**All Swiss MPs**	**Other Swiss Parties**	**SVP**	**All Italian MPs**	**Other Italian Parties**	**League**	**FdI**
Law	38.6 (32)	34.8 (24)	57.1 (8)		45.6 (52)	40.4 (36)	64.0 (16)	32.0 (139)	30.5 (105)	31.0 (22)	60.0 (12)
Humanities	37.4 (31)	40.6 (28)	21.4 (3)		26.3 (30)	30.3 (27)	12.0 (3)	32.9 (143)	34.6 (119)	25.4 (18)	30.0 (6)
Economics	21.7 (18)	21.7 (15)	21.4 (3)		12.3 (14)	9.0 (8)	24.0 (6)	16.1 (70)	14.5 (50)	25.4 (18)	10.0 (2)
Other	10.8 (9)	8.7 (6)	21.4 (3)		20.2 (23)	23.6 (21)	8.0 (2)	20.2 (88)	20.9 (72)	19.7 (14)	10.0 (2)

Source: Authors' elaboration from www.parliament.gv.at (Austria); Centre for the Study of Political Change, University of Siena and authors' elaboration from www.camera.it/leg18/28 for 2018 (Italy); Swiss Elite Observatory, University of Lausanne (Switzerland).
Note: Percentages are calculated on all graduates for each group of MPs.

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