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## **Austria between Felt Permanent Neutrality and Practised European Engagement**

Austrian Case

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This contribution covers the development of the foreign and security policy of the Second Austrian Republic since 1945 on the way from permanent neutrality to a strong European Engagement. It reflects in which way political parties have steered and how public opinion has accompanied this process and what it meant for the development of the Austrian army, the Bundesheer.

## 1. Austria in Europe until World War II

After the Austrian Emperor Franz II had laid down the crown as German Emperor under the pressure of Napoleon in 1806, the Austrian Empire (K.u.K.-monarchy) was one of the five important players in the European Concert for a whole century. The territory, which was ruled from Vienna, extended from today's Czech Republic in the North to Milan (Italy) and today's Croatia in the South, from the Swiss border in the West to parts of today's Ukraine in the East. From 1815-1866 the German states and the core territory of the Austrian Empire formed a weak community, the so called "Deutscher Bund". This period ended with the battle of Königgrätz in 1866, the beginning of a fratricidal war between Prussia and Austria. In the next half century, both Austria and Germany, which had been unified in 1871, went their own ways. However, in 1914, after the assassination of the Austrian heir in Sarajevo the German Empire marched side by side with the Austrian into World War I with the result of substantial human and territorial losses for both in 1918. When Austria at the end of this war was shrunken back to its core territory, it assumed the name "Deutsch-Österreich" favouring an affiliation to the new German Republic. This name as well as the aim of an affiliation was forbidden by the treaty of Saint-Germain (1919), but it remained an important position in the political spectrum during the following years. Therefore, when Adolf Hitler, a former Austrian private, but meanwhile German dictator, marched with German troops to Vienna in 1938 and declared the affiliation on March 13, 1938, it was relatively widely accepted in the public.

## 2. The Time of Active Neutrality<sup>1</sup>

After World War II, the Allies USA, Soviet Union, Great Britain, and France divided Austria as well as Germany into four zones. But contrary to the German case, it was immediately possible to reinstall the Austrian Republic within the borders from January 1, 1938 under the auspices of an Allied Council. In this situation and in the uprising East-West-Conflict, Austrian politicians saw neutrality and abstention from any attempt of a political or economic unification with Germany as well as the acceptance of some restrictions of armament as the only way to get back full sovereignty over their whole

1 For this part see Berthold Meyer, Sind fünfzig Jahre eine Ewigkeit? Österreichs langer Abschied von der „immerwährenden Neutralität“, HSFK-Report 6/2005, Frankfurt a. M. 2005, pp. 4ff.

country. Neutrality was reached in long and difficult negotiations between the Austrian and the Soviet government the result of which was also accepted by the western allies, who knew that a broad majority of the Austrian politicians and people interpreted this only as military neutrality but not as a socio-political equidistance.<sup>2</sup> Thus, Austria was able to get the status of “permanent neutrality” on October, 26, 1955, when the fundamental State Treaty (“Staatsvertrag”) and the basic law of neutrality came into effect.

In the war-weary time after World War II and in a situation in which the small country feared to be jammed between the two great blocs, this status was highly accepted in political circles as well as in the broader public. Another reason for acceptance was that in the “Memorandum from Moscow” from April 15, 1955, neutrality was qualified “as it is handled by Switzerland”. Because this small neighbour country had had good experience with its neutrality against Germany’s expansionist policy and the so caused World War just before, it seemed to be a good example. This also suited the quickly growing Austrian self-image of having been the first target of the German expansion and to the oblivion that important parts of the Austrian political elite were involved in the preparation of this in the years before 1938.

Unlike the more or less self-isolating Switzerland, Austria started its policy of “active neutrality” very early. As the constitutional law of neutrality only stipulated to abstain from military alliances, a high degree of engagement in international organizations including the deployment of military personnel was possible. Austria immediately became a member of the United Nations and, in 1956, of the Council of Europe. In 1960, it joined the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Since 1960, Austria has sent between 60 and 70.000 soldiers<sup>3</sup> as UN-Blue Helmets to several long term missions (Kongo 1960, Cyprus since 1972, Golan-Heights since 1974, etc.). The Austrian diplomat Kurt Waldheim was Secretary General of the UN over two election periods from 1971 to 1981. At the end of this time, in 1979, Vienna became the third UN-City in the world after New York and Geneva.

Under the chancellorship of Bruno Kreisky<sup>4</sup> (SPÖ) (1970-1983) Austria began to play a mediating role on the international political stage which allowed its people to overlook that their country was no longer one of Europe’s leading powers but only a small country. This was quite important during the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), especially during the phase of the development of the CSCE-process and the later institutionalization of the OSCE, which consequentially has been seated in Vienna. Kreisky also tried to take a mediating part in the Middle East Conflict (1973-76) and to take influence in the North-South Dialogue (Cancun 1981). Altogether, this bright side of neutrality was very important for the enormous sympathy of this international status in the public opinion, which still lasts up to now. Oliver Rathkolb remarks that it only seems

2 Oliver Rathkolb remarks in this connection that the fact that the Federal Republic of Germany had joined NATO in 1954 was an essential precondition for the U.S. to accept the Austrian neutrality, see Oliver Rathkolb, *Die paradoxe Republik. Österreich 1945 bis 2005*, Wien 2005, p. 275.

3 Bundesminister für Landesverteidigung Günther Platter, 09.07.2004 (73/NRSITZ.GP (p.39f.))

4 See Andreas P. Pittler: Bruno Kreisky, Reinbek 1996.

like a contradiction that the national consciousness and pride of the Austrians was particularly growing during Kreisky's era of active foreign policy, when Internationalism was *en vogue*. The global recognition and reputation strengthened the identity of the small state, although this did not extract the "poison fangs" of provincialism and permanent overestimation of the Austrians themselves,<sup>5</sup> which the author calls later in his book "Solipsismus" (solipsism).<sup>6</sup>

To keep neutrality in cases of threat and to deny military interventions or marching through, a small country needs to have an excellent-trained and well-equipped army. Therefore, conscription was introduced in Austria in 1955 right before neutrality came into effect. Thereby, the active part of the army should incorporate 60.000 men. During the Cold War, the Austrian Bundesheer had to be able to mobilize 300.000 men in case of alert, which is a very high quota for a population of 8 millions. Conscious objectors have the possibility to take part in an alternative civil service.

The introduction of a conscription army has been favoured by most politicians since 1945 for historical reasons:<sup>7</sup> Austria had a long conscription tradition with components of militia in the Tyrolean Army Constitution. However, already after World War I, in the Treaty of Saint Germain, 1919, Austria was only allowed to install a professional army of 30.000 men. In the short but momentous civil war in February 1934, the artillery of this army was decisive for the defeat of the "Schutzbund"-Militia of the forbidden Social Democrats (SPÖ). Therefore, when the SPÖ was reborn in 1945, its politicians favoured a conscription army to prevent any such situation in which Austrians fight against each other. The new Christian and conservative Party, the Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP) had a similar position and also the "Verband der Unabhängigen" (Union of Independents), which became the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) in 1953, favoured a conscription mass army with a small professional core. Yet, in the first years after the war the Allied Council interdicted "any military activities" by the Second Republic and later only accepted a small "B-Gendarmerie" with 6.500 men.

Twice during the East-West-conflict the Austrian Bundesheer could prove that it was well prepared to play the expected role of denying Soviet troops the entrance to the country (1956 during the insurgence in Hungary and 1978 when Czechoslovakia was occupied by troops of the Warsaw Treaty). However, if one of the sides of the East-West-conflict would have tried to conquer Austria or to march through it in a case of war, the Bundesheer would have been too weak to deny this for long. After 1990 there was another alarm situation during the short war on the independence of Slovenia.

With the end of the Cold War neutrality lost its immediate function as security protection, although in 1999 the Austrian Federal President Thomas Klestil (who has the supreme command of the armed forces) used neutrality as an argument against NATO and US aircrafts overflights during the Kosovo war, arguing that the NATO intervention

5 Oliver Rathkolb 2005, p.22.

6 Ibid. p. 24.

7 See Franz Kernic / JeanM. Callaghan, Politische Identität und allgemeine Wehrpflicht in Österreich, in: Karl W. Haltiner / Paul Klein (eds.): Europas Armeen im Umbruch, Baden-Baden 2002, pp. 187ff.

was not mandated by the UN. In contrast, when the NATO-led KFOR troops were installed after the war by a mandate of the UNSC, Austrian military personnel took part.<sup>8</sup> Also in respect on the Iraq war Austria tried to keep a neutral position and argued that a mandate of the UNSC would be necessary to legitimize a military intervention.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Neutrality and the Europeanization of Austria after 1990<sup>10</sup>

After the end of the Cold War Austria saw a chance to modify its neutrality. It now seemed possible to become a full member of the successful economic European Community, which changed into the European Union just before Austria was affiliated. While Austria prepared for membership, the question was to be answered if such a step would be compatible with the status of permanent neutrality being the core of the State Treaty (“Staatsvertrag”) from 1955. International lawyers then argued this would be no real problem because the EC/EU unlike NATO was not a military pact. Also Russia as a signatory state of the State Treaty was asked and signaled to accept an EC/EU membership. However, during the 1990s the European Union changed its character. It started to develop a Common Foreign- and Security Policy (CFSP) and to build up the material preconditions for a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), which was supposed to be able to send abroad battle contingents independent from NATO’s decisions.

On June 12, 1994 a majority of 67 % of the Austrian people voted for EU-membership in a referendum. At the same time and later on, too, strong majorities continued to favour neutrality. When there was a discussion on the possibility of a NATO-membership in the late 1990s, a series of opinion polls show about 70 % who favour neutrality for the time between October 1996 and March 1998. Only in October 1998 this position fell to 59 %.<sup>11</sup> However, when in spring 1999 the Kosovo war occurred, the majority of neutralists rose again to 81 %. Also after 9/11 the Austrians followed their “well-proven concepts of an active peace policy. In a poll, 72 % answered that Austria should be neutral in the US-war-on- terror. Only 20 % said that their country should stand side by side with the US.”<sup>12</sup>

8 See Gustav E. Gustenau, Die gemeinsame Außen- und Sicherheitspolitik – eine Herausforderung für die „Post-Neutralen“. Eine Einschätzung aus österreichischer Sicht, in: ÖMZ 1/2000, p. 33.

9 See Walter Feichtinger, Strategische Rahmenbedingungen des Irak-Krieges 2003, in: Walter Feichtinger (ed.), Irak 2003, Aspekte eines Umbruchs, Wien 2003, p. 14.

10 For this part see Meyer, op. cit. 2005, pp. 9ff.

11 See Meinungswandel zur Sicherheitspolitik. Neutralität verliert an Attraktivität, [www.bmlv.gv.at/archiv/a1998/archiv\\_981211.pdf](http://www.bmlv.gv.at/archiv/a1998/archiv_981211.pdf)

12 Thomas Roithner, Die Herausforderungen und Möglichkeiten der Friedensbewegung im Spannungsfeld traditioneller Strukturen und dem Prozess der Sozialforen in Zeiten des „permanenten Krieges“, in: Österreichisches Studienzentrum für Frieden und Konfliktlösung (ed.), Pax Americana und Pax Europaea. Konsens oder Konflikt um eine neue Weltordnungskonzeption, Friedensbericht 2004, Münster 2004, p. 267 (own translation).

Neutrality remains an important national myth in the public as well as in political speeches. Politicians who dare to doubt this pillar of national identity earn protests in the media, in the public and from their colleagues. In April 2004, the vice president of the Parliament, Heinz Fischer (SPÖ), was able to win the presidential election against the then foreign minister Benita Ferrero-Waldner (ÖVP), after he had attacked her ever-changing position in questions of neutrality, while a majority thought that he followed a more transparent line in this crucial question. After the last tv-discussion between the two candidates a questionnaire showed that Fischer with 57 to 21 % was far ahead of Ferrero-Waldner in the question of neutrality.<sup>13</sup> Another poll from the eve of the election came to the result that 76 % of the voters of Fischer stressed the topic “perpetuation of neutrality” as very important. But also 53 % of the voters of Ferrero-Waldner attested to their candidate that “perpetuation of neutrality” belonged to her merits in foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> That shows that neutrality is seen as an important topic on both political sides.

This was also the case during the celebrations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signature of the State Treaty in May 2005 when only commitments to neutrality were to be heard from the politicians. Vice Chancellor Hubert Gorbach from “Bündnis Zukunft Österreich” (BZÖ) (Alliance Future Austria), a group which had separated from the FPÖ, raised a storm in a teacup when he proposed to modify the status of neutrality through a referendum. Two days later he was forced to go back on his proposal.<sup>15</sup>

Obviously, the large majority of the people understands neutrality in the classical meaning of keeping out of conflicts between other states. Yet, the Austrian governments of the different coalitions promote the Europeanization of their country also by actively supporting the development of the CFSP and ESDP since the country entered the EU.

#### 4. The Europeanization of the Bundesheer after 2000

In May 2000, one of the first initiatives of the first “black-blue” coalition between Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP, Austrian People’s Party, conservative) and Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ, Austrian Freedom Party, right wing populist) under Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel (ÖVP) and Minister of Defence Herbert Scheibner (FPÖ) was to install a commission of experts with the aim to create a new security and defence doctrine. The commission argued that during the Gulf War 1991 the majority of Austrian lawyers came to the conclusion that obligations resulting from the UN-charter would have priority against those of neutrality. “Therefore the classical neutrality model of Switzerland is no longer existent for Austria.”<sup>16</sup> The new doctrine was adopted by the government on January, 23, 2001 and by the parliament on June, 12, 2001. Under the headline “From neutrality to solidarity”, the remaining neutrality is interpreted in a way that it suits the changed international situation.

13 See APA0005 5 II 0718 Fr., 16. April 2004.

14 See APA0293 5 II 0225 So., 25. April 2004.

15 See [www.kurier.at/oesterreich/987171.php](http://www.kurier.at/oesterreich/987171.php) and [www.kurier.at/oesterreich/989437.php](http://www.kurier.at/oesterreich/989437.php)

16 Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung, Sicherheits- und Verteidigungsdoktrin von 2001, p. 7.

Moreover, in the discussion on the new doctrine the ÖVP/FPÖ government argued that an Austrian participation in the so-called Petersberg-Tasks of the WEU and in the ESDP would be necessary to become or to remain a fully accepted member of the EU. Obviously the government feared that the small country in the middle of Europe could be marginalized in the EU, if it was not prepared also to take part in deployments of the new “battle groups” of ESDP. Quite important for this anxiety may be that the start of the ÖVP/FPÖ coalition caused some troubles with the – at that time – 14 other members of the EU who saw a danger for the abidance of European values, especially against minorities, refugees and immigrants, in the entrance of the far right populist FPÖ under Jörg Haider into the coalition in February 2000. Therefore, they tried to isolate the Austrian government in Europe for a couple of months. Only after an international commission under the former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari came to the conclusion that the Austrian government observed these values, normality came back into the intra-european relations. But at least since then the Austrian government has strived to the highest degree of European conformity.

Meanwhile, units of the Bundesheer do not only, as mentioned, perform their duty in the framework of the Partnership for Peace arrangements of the NATO-led KFOR troops in Kosovo, but they also take part in the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR) since it was taken over from NATO by EU.

In 2003, a large and pluralistic commission headed by the former major of Vienna, Helmut Zilk (SPÖ), was installed to work out perspectives for a reform of the Bundesheer. Although the commission covered the whole political and societal spectrum of Austria, its work depended on “basis materials” and the expertise from the ministry of defence. Other experts like the director of the Austrian Peace Research Institute (ÖSFK), Gerald Mader, only had the chance to inform the commission as lecturers during the meetings. The results of the work were presented by Helmut Zilk on June 14, 2004. Here, Zilk stressed: “For the first time in the history of the Austrian security policy the Bundesheerreformkommission made it possible to achieve common guidelines of all parliamentary parties for a military reform.”<sup>17</sup>

The report argues that the tasks of the army are influenced by “new risks, dangers and threats” which “also a neutral state like Austria can meet by a growing co-operation in the framework of the international community and solidarity of the EU”.<sup>18</sup> This sentence is the single one in the document in which the word “neutral” is to be found.

The report was presented with a dark blue map of the EU on the front page in which only the silhouette of Austria is highlighted in red-white-red in midst of the European corona of stars. It visualizes what the minister of defence, Günther Platter (ÖVP), stressed in the same context: “The Europeanization of the Bundesheer is at stake.”<sup>19</sup>

17 Helmut Zilk, Kurzfassung. Bericht der Bundesheerreformkommission, in: Österreichisches Jahrbuch für Politik 2004, [www.modernpolitics.or.at/jahrbuch/bisher.php?s=d&titel=1420](http://www.modernpolitics.or.at/jahrbuch/bisher.php?s=d&titel=1420)

18 Bericht der Bundesheerreformkommission „bundesheer 2010“, Wien 2004, p.47.

19 Günther Platter, Österreichische Verteidigungspolitik für Europäische Sicherheit, in: ÖMZ 6/2004, p.679.

The report states that a “classical threat” with conventional arms is not given for Austria in the foreseeable future. “This leads to the clear result that military forces which would only be reasonable for the defence of its own territory could no longer be the single determination of the structure and organization of the Bundesheer.”<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, the “basic materials” also published in the report especially deal with ESDP, NATO and the Partnership for Peace (PfP), the connection between EU, NATO and the crisis management of the UN as well as with the regional dimension of the OSCE crisis management, listed exactly in this order. Although the commission stressed that at the time of its work the draft of the EU constitutional treaty had been adopted neither by the European Council nor by anyone else, the ESDP got highest priority in the report. The commission argued that “the main elements of the constitutional draft will be the essential factors for the further development of the international framework of Austria”.<sup>21</sup> There would be a consensus on central parts of the ESDP, that the “political intention to anchor a guarantee of support and the perspective of a common defence” would “obviously be available”, and that especially a “core element of the structured co-operation, the creation of quickly disposable common military units meanwhile would be realized by the ‘Battle group Concept’”.<sup>22</sup>

About this concept the report firstly states in accordance to the constitutional draft that the participation in a national or multinational Battle Group is open to all member states of the EU “which have the political will and the military capability”.<sup>23</sup> But then it alleges that a country’s decision on participating or not would be “an essential criterion for the classification of a member state under the view of its future weight in the framework of the ESDP and thereby in the EU as a whole.”<sup>24</sup> There are no further hints as to the expected consequences of a military abstention but this hypothesis sounds like that the commission fears for a future loss of the Austrian seat in the EU-commission.

Independent from the work of the Reform Commission, but parallel to it, the government accomplished hard facts on November 11<sup>th</sup> 2003 by preparing KIOP-units (KIOP = Kräfte für internationale Operationen; forces for international operations) with an extent of 1500 soldiers as an “important contribution to the security political planning of the EU”. To find enough soldiers for this job the government created an incentive system for recruiting “KIOP-soldiers”. They were supposed to get additional money during the three years of their commitment: firstly, 322 Euro every month and secondly 200 Euro for every completed month at the end of the time.<sup>25</sup>

Directly planned is a common German-Austrian-Czech Battle Group under German command for 2007. The new article 23f in the Austrian constitution from 1998 allows the

20 „bundesheer 2010“, p. 78f.

21 „bundesheer 2010“, p. 72.

22 „bundesheer 2010“, p. 72.

23 Treaty on a European Constitution, Art. III-310, 1.

24 „bundesheer 2010“, p. 73.

25 See „Die KIOP-Truppe steht“, Press release of the Bundesministerium für Landesverteidigung, [www.bmlv.gv.at/cms/artikel.php?ID=742](http://www.bmlv.gv.at/cms/artikel.php?ID=742)

country to deploy military units in combats even if they are not backed by a UNSC-resolution.

Among other structural topics the commission also had to discuss the question how to handle the system of conscription. The commission decided to propose its perpetuation, only the length of the present service time (Präsenzdienst) of the young recruits should be reduced from eight to six months. This was implemented since January 1, 2006.

The quota of draft recruits was reduced several times before; a consequence of the end of the cold war which allowed also Austria to reduce its army. This was done in several steps combined with some structural reforms and also with a strategic change from a defence concept with combat units spread over the whole territory to their deployment near the borders and to a stronger weight to international deployments. In 1998 the army was opened for women to do voluntary services.

## 5. The Political Parties and their Positions to Security and Defence Questions since 2000

The first cabinet of Wolfgang Schüssel (ÖVP) with the FPÖ started, as mentioned, in February 2000, but in a strange situation: In the elections to the parliament (Nationalrat) from October, 3, 1999, the Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ, Austrian Social Democratic Party, moderate left) had won 33.1 % and thereby the biggest share of seats, namely 65 out of 183, while FPÖ as well as ÖVP won 26.9 %, i.e. 52 seats each, although the FPÖ had 415 more voters. The party Die Grünen (the Greens, ecologic and peace movement) got 7.4 % and 14 seats. Chancellor Viktor Klima (SPÖ) tried to continue the large coalition with the ÖVP but failed. After Federal President Thomas Klestil had refused to give the mandate to form a government to a member of the populist FPÖ it was up to the up to then foreign minister Schüssel (ÖVP) to take over the chancellorship. This was the reason that for the first time a coalition under the leader of the third largest party came about.

Among the reasons for the early collapse of the coalition in autumn 2002 was a conflict inside the FPÖ about the purchase of some Eurofighter aircrafts (see below). This but also some other internal troubles of this party caused that the FPÖ ministers left the cabinet in September 2002. Thereafter the whole government of Chancellor Schüssel announced its demission and early Nationalrat elections were called for, taking place November 24, 2002. The ÖVP won these elections highly with 42.3 % and 79 (1999: 52) from 183 seats. Also the SPÖ raised its share of the votes and got 36.5 % and 69 (65) seats, while the FPÖ only got 10.0 % and fell from 52 to 18 seats. As fourth fraction The Greens won 9.5 % and 16 (14) seats. All other parties were not able to clear the four-percent hurdle for parliamentary representation.

These results would have made it possible for the ÖVP to form a governing coalition with each of the other parties. To build large coalitions between the two catch-all parties ÖVP and SPÖ has a long tradition in Austria. From 1945 to 1966 such coalitions were led

by chancellors of the ÖVP and from 1987 to 2000 by chancellors of the SPÖ. Although the just broken first coalition between ÖVP and FPÖ had the before-mentioned international *malus* and had also brought many troubles to Austria itself, neither Schüssel nor the SPÖ leader Alfred Gusenbauer were prepared to form a large coalition. After coalition talks between the ÖVP and the Greens ended without a result, ÖVP and FPÖ decided after long negotiations to reinstall their old coalition. During the election campaign and in the months of the negotiations it came to a *de facto* schism of the FPÖ. But it took two more years of internal troubles until the former chairman of the FPÖ, Jörg Haider, on April 4, 2005, founded a new “movement”, the Bündnis Zukunft Österreich (BZÖ, Alliance Future Austria, also populist). Afterwards, all ministers of the FPÖ and some MP changed to the BZÖ. Chancellor Schüssel accepted to have a new coalition partner which was only possible because the rest-FPÖ kept still. Anyway, it was necessary to have early elections some months before the regular end of the period.

The recent elections to the Nationalrat took place on October 1, 2006. Both catch-all parties, ÖVP and SPÖ, lost voters, but Gusenbauer’s SPÖ with 35.3 % and 68 seats became the strongest fraction, while Schüssel’s ÖVP lost nine percent and got 34.3 % (66 seats). Greens and FPÖ both achieved 11 % (21 seats), while the secessionist BZÖ cleared the four percent hurdle with just 4.1 % (7 seats). Out of all two-party constellations possible, only a large coalition of SPÖ and ÖVP could reach a majority. But it was very difficult and took until January, 8, 2007 to agree to this coalition led by Chancellor Gusenbauer (SPÖ). The negotiations before were very conflictive and the same issues remained one crucial point of conflict between the two parties also in the first six months of the coalition itself, i. e. the old question of the conditions of the purchase of Eurofighter aircrafts for the Bundesheer (see below).

Before focussing on this conflict and its history in more detail, it is to be shown in the following part of this paper which issues of defence and security policy are viewed differently by the political parties since the beginning of this decade:

#### **a ) The XXI Election Period 2000 - 2002**

During the first period of the ÖVP/FPÖ coalition parliamentary spokesmen of the ÖVP wanted to show that things would work out better than before. But as their party had been in a coalition with the SPÖ and had held the ministry of defence which was now headed by a member of the FPÖ, it was not easy to develop a clear profile. The ÖVP proposed for the Bundesheer:

- raising the budget which had been too small under the SPÖ government , because it was necessary to achieve a turnaround for the Bundesheer;
- the Bundesheer should heighten the subjective public feeling of security;
- the conscription and the milita system are important as “strong pillars of democracy” and as a factors of increase of patriotism/national consciousness and pride;

- successful participation in military missions shows Austria's commitment and dedication in international politics;
- creating a smaller bureaucracy and integrating more budgetary competences into the army;
- purchasing helicopters with the argument "more safety for the soldiers" especially in missions abroad;
- special pay for participation in missions abroad and for services at the Austrian border;
- working out a new security and defence doctrine to fulfil the Petersberg Tasks of the WEU;
- solidarity among EU member states; strategic partnerships; co-operation especially in Central Europe;
- development of the ESDP with equal rights and obligations for all EU member states.

ÖVP spokesmen argued against:

- party political bickering over security questions; still, they blamed the SPÖ for having an "imbalanced relationship" to the national defence;
- "Bundesheer light" as it was under the responsibility of SPÖ ministers of finance.

The FPÖ, which was also the party of the minister of defence Herbert Scheibner, was in an ambivalent situation, as their spokesmen wanted to continue with populist slogans while at the same time having to back the minister's work. They proposed:

- lifting the defence budget while keeping equal attention to the social spendings;
- purchase of armament and other equipment for national defence and missions abroad (inter alia interceptor aircrafts and helicopters) with the aim to strengthen the personal security of the soldiers;
- structural reforms to use synergetic effects in the administration;
- to create a new overall concept and image;
- to formulate a new security and defence doctrine;
- to examine the introduction of a volunteers army;
- to satisfy the security needs of the people.

The FPÖ was against a kind of neutrality which would be only fiction combined with the argument that such a policy would not enable Austria to show the expected solidarity with the European partners. During the 1990s, the FPÖ had argued temporarily for an Austrian membership of NATO.

In this early phase of opposition also the SPÖ had an ambivalent position to the defence policy because the party itself had not been immediately responsible for the Bundesheer as the last minister of defence had been Werner Fasslabend (ÖVP). The SPÖ proposed:

- the Bundesheer should become more efficient; therefore it should have a higher budget, but also precise specifications regarding purchasing, leading structure and military administration;
- an investment plan which secures that the budget for the army does not rise in account of the poor people;
- to formulate a new security and defence doctrine<sup>26</sup>;
- an equivalent between the present service time of the recruits and of the conscientious objectors who have to render civil service;
- maintaining of conscription as a pillar of the defence system;
- socialisation of the army (“Vergesellschaftung des Heeres”) with the aim that the public should be connected with the army emotionally;
- partly acceptance of the amendments of the military law (Wehrgesetz) from 1990, especially in the realm of the rights of women in the army and in regard to temporary career volunteers;
- co-operation between EU, UN and Russia and a stronger engagement in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Especially as a sign of responsibility for the soldiers they proposed:

- better preparation for international missions;
- professionalization of the cadre members;
- psychological training for soldiers and officers, particularly for those who are involved in missions of extreme psychological exposures.

They argued against:

- enlistment of soldiers for missions abroad with higher payment while the wages for the soldiers at the own borders are reduced;
- conscription of women;

<sup>26</sup> In the 23rd session of the Nationalrat on May 11th 2000 the coalition parties as well as the SPÖ introduced own proposals to formulate a new security and defence doctrine, but initiative of the SPÖ failed (see 23/NRSITZ XXI. GP).

- other parts of the amendments of the military law;
- closing barracks;
- transparency deficits and unjustifiable costs in some cases of purchase of armament (e. g. helicopters and later on Eurofighter).

The Green party had never been in government before and remained in opposition. They also applied this in a comprehensive way to the Bundesheer. They argued against

- the army and national defence in general;
- the new security and defence doctrine, especially because they saw it as a first step in the direction of NATO membership;
- other measures which are interpreted as steps into NATO because NATO would like to utilise Austria and NATO membership would be incompatible with neutrality;
- European Security and Defence Politics (ESDP) to which they gave in the German abbreviation ESVP a special meaning: “Europäische Sicherheit Virtuuell und auf dem Papier” (in the English version: **E**uropean **S**ecurity only **D**esire and just on **P**aper);
- purchases of armament (esp. Eurofighter) and Austrian arms industries because they only served corruption, individual enrichment and financing of other political parties;
- transparency deficits in the planning of purchases.

The Green proposed

- a clear separation between tasks of the police and of the military; in this sense organized crime should be fought with means of the constitutional state instead of military force;
- the end of conscription;
- the young Austrians should be “freed”: no army, no soldiers no responsibility for the soldiers;
- modern thinking in security policy instead of old military oriented thinking;
- definition of security and solidarity from a non-military perspective;
- modern peace conceptions for Europe;
- measures of crisis prevention by the UN or the OSCE;
- maintaining neutrality.

## b) The XXII Election Period 2003 – 2006

The second cabinet of ÖVP and FPÖ started under changed international and national conditions. It was the time after 9/11 when the fight against terrorism seemed to be important also for a small and neutral country. Also, it was shortly before the US waged the war against Iraq. Statements on security and defence questions in the years 2003 to 2006 have to be interpreted against this background.

Different from the first cabinet Schüssel, in 2003, the ÖVP took also the ministry of defence and mandated Günther Platter as minister. Moreover, Karl Heinz Grassler remained minister of finance, but he had left the FPÖ prior to the election and had supported the chancellor as an independent politician. Generally, the influence of the FPÖ was strongly reduced by its permanent crises and the later secession of the BZÖ.

Apart from this, the basic positions of the parties did not change very much compared with the time between 2000 and 2002.

In questions of security and defence ÖVP politicians proposed:

- Neutrality as the Austrian self-image (which includes solidarity with European partners and excludes populism as irresponsible);
- Purchase of military means to be able to enforce interests, peace, liberty, democracy and human rights if necessary;
- Strategic regional partnerships with the neighbour states for the security and stability of Austria and Europe;
- CIMIC with a special focus on the troops deployed in South-East-Europe and the Balkans as an Austrian advertisement.
- Arguing for article 23f of the constitution which means that armed sorties would be possible without a resolution of the UNSC in a case of self-defence: “It is left to our own decisions how we fulfil our obligations to support others.”<sup>27</sup>

In the debate on a petition for a referendum “Österreich bleib frei” (Austria keep free)<sup>28</sup> which was initiated in spring 2006 by the chairman of the FPÖ, Christian Strache, and should combine the topics Yes to neutrality, No to the European constitution and No to the EU membership of Turkey, the ÖVP criticised the populist conserving of neutrality and the intention to play Austria off against Europe and vice versa.<sup>29</sup>

As mentioned, the FPÖ was less important for the forming of a government during the XXII election period of the Nationalrat, because the ÖVP also had other options and the

27 Roderich Regler (ÖVP), 21.06.2006, 154/NRSITZ XXII, p. 73.

28 The diction „Österreich bleib frei“ (Austria keep free) ties up to the famous word of Foreign Minister Leopold Figl, when he showed the “Staatsvertrag” on May 15, 1955 from the balcony of the Belvedere Palace to the public: “Österreich ist frei” (Austria is free).

29 Reinhold Lopatka (ÖVP), 21.06.2006, 154/NRSITZ XXII, p. 62ff.

FPÖ was weakened by its own problems. In this time FPÖ politicians argued in security questions for

- supporting those African countries which are stable enough to build up peace-keeping contingents of their own; they were sceptical, however, of the deployment of soldiers with different levels of experiences in multilateral peace-keeping missions;
- looking more for the benefits of security policy for Austria and for Europe.

In addition to that, they argued against a “collectivisation” of the ESDP to avoid a situation “in which Brussels would decide where when and how Austrian citizens are sent into military missions.”<sup>30</sup>

During the XXII election period of the Nationalrat the SPÖ was – for the second time – the large opposition party which meant that they had a more of a distance towards governmental responsibilities. The social democratic politicians argued:

- Neutrality should remain the constitutional secured practise of foreign policy as a protection against demands for participation in every war and as a basis of defence if the international law is infringed;
- EU shall remain a peace project; therefore a comprehensive understanding of security (conflict prevention, crisis management and peace keeping) shall be the basis of the CFSP;
- Article 23f means that it is only possible to use military power without a resolution of the UNSC in a case of self-defence; therefore no deployment of Austrian soldiers without an accepted legal basis;
- Security in form of personnel ordnance should take priority over the purchase of Eurofighters;
- Instead of recruiting the KIOP (=Kräfte für internationale Operationen; forces for international operations) soldiers with “honey” (such as a “deployment bonus”), it is necessary to show responsibility to these young men and inform them about their duties and efforts;
- For all soldiers it is also necessary to let them work and dwell under humane conditions.

During the same period, the party of the Greens had to be the opposition party to the mainstream of security policy once again. Nevertheless their positions were less radical than before:

- They stressed that in the neutrality framework the participation of the Bundesheer in international missions were only allowed in case of a UN mandate;

30 Herbert Scheibner (FPÖ), 11.11.2004 84/NRSITZ XXI, GP 144ff.

- They accepted an Austrian participation in the MONUC mission in Congo and demanded to raise the budget for MONUC, ARTEMIS and other peace keeping missions;
- They argued against the dominance of the military sector over the civilian in the foreign policy;
- They were strictly against any decision of NATO on the deployment of European troops;
- They criticised the increase of the defence budget as being without any security surplus for Austria and the Austrians;
- They criticised the Battle Groups with the argument that in this connection no obligatory political aims were specified,
- They criticised the party political misuse of the referendum in order to frighten the people.

### c) The Eurofighter Affair

Among the current discussions on security and military questions, the Eurofighter affair stands out on the parliamentary as well as on the public level. It is a conflict on the circumstances of the purchase and financing of a number of interceptor aircrafts. This occurred in 2000, when the first cabinet Schüssel decided to acquire 24 EADS Eurofighters for the Bundesheer instead of the Swedish model Gripen. When the cabinet took a definitive decision on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2002, Chancellor Schüssel specified the price of these aircrafts to be 1,791 billions Euro. Although this was more expensive than the price for the Swedish, also the sceptic minister of finance Karl-Heinz Grassler (at this time still a member of the FPÖ) accepted the purchase.

One month later a very small political party, named "Die Demokraten" (The Democrats) started a petition for a referendum against the interceptor with security policy, financial and other arguments. At the end of the week of the collection of votes, on August 5<sup>th</sup>, 624.807 people had signed the petition which is commensurate with 10,65 % of the Austrian eligible voters.<sup>31</sup>

A few days later, Austria had to bear an immense flood on the Danube and her confluents with damages adding up to billions of Euro. Therefore, the government decided on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2002, to reduce the Eurofighter purchase from 24 to 18. But nine months later, on May 16, 2003 the amount of costs for the 18 Eurofighters was fixed by the government with 1,969 billion Euro, although so called countertrades are mentioned with an amount of 4 billion Euro.

In the meantime something important had happened: The FPÖ had demanded a tax reform for 2003 which also had been decided upon by the cabinet before the flood. Under

31 Volksbegehren gegen Abfangjäger, 1291 der Beilagen zu den Stenographischen Protokollen des Nationalrates XXI, GP p. 5.

the necessity to have enough means for reconstruction measures, the reform was cancelled by Chancellor Schüssel (ÖVP) and Vice Chancellor Susanne Riess-Passer (FPÖ). As a result, a wing of the FPÖ led by its former chairman Haider demanded that no money should be spent for the Eurofighter before the tax reform would come into effect. This interior conflict of the FPÖ ended with the resignation of the FPÖ ministers and the call for early elections of the Nationalrat. These were then held on November 24, 2002 with the result of a stronger ÖVP and a weaker FPÖ, but nevertheless with a continuation of the coalition (see above).

Some details of this conflict are thus interesting for the later broader conflict on the purchase of the Eurofighters. In some interviews Haider accused the then minister of finance Grasser and the then Vice Chancellor Riess-Passer of commingling private and political interests – an accusation that stems from this time.<sup>32</sup> At the same time the Senior Vice-President of EADS, Klaus Peter Bergner, said in an interview with the weekly journal Profil that he himself had spoken with Haider about countertrades and that this politician would have been very content with the offer of EADS.<sup>33</sup> The public discussion of the circumstances of the purchase led, as the minister of justice Dieter Böhmdörfer (ÖVP) said on November 14, 2002, to an investigation of the district public prosecution authority of the activities connected with the decision between Gripen and Eurofighter.<sup>34</sup> Minister Grasser argued shortly later that his ministry had favoured a third alternative, the purchase of used US aircrafts of the type F-16.<sup>35</sup>

The following chronology of the next steps of the Eurofighter purchase is based on data from the “Kurier”<sup>36</sup>: On July 1, 2003, the contract between the Austrian Republic and EADS on the Eurofighter was signed. On March 9, 2004, the Austrian Court of Audit attested in one of three audit reports that Eurofighter “was verified as the best tenderer”. In July 2005, Austria started its aerial surveillance with leased Swiss F-SE. At the end of the same year the last Draken aircrafts were placed inactive.

On May 10, 2006 the magazine “News” published parts of the contract which show that a cancellation of the Austrian Eurofighter order after 2007 would cost one billion Euro, this being, the time, when the first Eurofighters were supposed to land in Austria. During the election campaign for the early elections of the Nationalrat, the SPÖ fought under the slogan “No Eurofighters under a Chancellor Gusenbauer” and pleaded for the cancellation of the contract. As mentioned, they won the election on October 1, 2006.

32 See Interview of Jörg Haider in „Kleine Zeitung“, Sunday edition, 20. 10. 2002 There he accuses directly and mainly the industrial entrepreneur Frank Stronach. Haider repeated his accusations in another interview in Profil on 2. 11. 2002. Some days later, on 6. 11. 2002 “news” published a letter from Grasser to Haider in which the minister of finance demands the former leader of the FPÖ to revoke his accusations in public. The midnight news of ORF “zib3” reported on 7. 11. 2002 that also Riess-Passer had authorized an attorney at law to initiate legal measures against the accusations. A week later, on 12.11., the “Kurier” reported that Minister Grasser had said that Haider had revoked the corruption accusations against him.

33 See Profil, 22. 9. 2002.

34 See [www.kleinezeitung.at](http://www.kleinezeitung.at), 14. 11. 2002.

35 See Die Presse, 16. 11. 2002.

36 See [kurier.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/84330.php?from=nachrichten/oesterreich/84837](http://kurier.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/84330.php?from=nachrichten/oesterreich/84837) (found: 06.07.2007)

Four weeks later a majority of SPÖ, FPÖ and Greens installed an Nationalrat enquiry commission. They had tried to do so eleven times before, but had failed because there had been a majority of ÖVP, FPÖ and BZÖ. At the same time, the ministry of defence was called upon to find out the costs of a cancellation. On November 6, 2006, the ministry reported that a cancellation would cost 1,2 billions Euro.

The work of the enquiry commission hindered the coalition talks between SPÖ and ÖVP for several weeks. In the end, in the coalition's program from January 8, 2007, the question of the Eurofighter was nowhere to be found. Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer (SPÖ) instructed the new minister of defence, Norbert Darabos (SPÖ), to negotiate with EADS regarding the possibilities of cancellation or price-reduction. The talks began on January 19, but did not make any progress for months. On April, 15, Eurofighter spokesman Wolfdietrich Hoeveler, said that neither a cancellation nor a reduction of the number of aircrafts were considered. On May, 6, Eurofighter interrupted the negotiations. At the same time, the crisis between the coalition partners becomes worse; speculations on early elections are coming up. On May, 15, the enquiry commission mandates three lawyers for a legal opinion which was supposed to be finished at the end of June. On May, 21, in the Eurofighter plant in Manching (Bavaria) starts the quality inspection of the first aircraft for Austria. On June, 14, Minister Darabos reports in the enquiry commission on a "18-minus-paper" of the General Staff with scenarios on an aerial surveillance with less than 18 aircrafts. On June 21, the Chief of the Task Force Aerial Surveillance, Erwin Jeloschek, says that a surveillance with 12 would be possible. But the defence policy spokesman of the ÖVP, Walter Murauer, insists on 18. Media speculate on 15 as a possible compromise. On June, 22, the leader of the SPÖ fraction, Josef Cap, says that a cancellation of the treaty would "not be legally obligatory". On June, 25, the legal opinion for the enquiry commission is published; it comes to the conclusion that a cancellation of the contract without costs will not be possible. Therefore Minister Darabos expects a reduction of the number of aircrafts. On June, 26, the minister announces the agreement with Eurofighter: instead of 18 interceptors 15 will be bought. In the press release of Eurofighter one can read that "the agreement contains

- the delivery of 15 aircrafts of the last standard of capabilities of the tranche 1,
- a strict adjustment of the equipment of the aircraft for the task of aerial surveillance.
- a price reduction of the already negotiated but not yet signed support service treaty."

"On the basis of customisation of the subject matters of the contract the volume of the contract is actually reduced about 370 millions of Euro."<sup>37</sup>

In the plenary of the Nationalrat Minister Darabos had to defend the decision on July 5, 2007 against heavy attacks from the oppositional parties who introduced a motion of no confidence against him. But this motion was defeated by the members of the coalition, although the chairman of the minister's own party, Josef Cap, said that the purchase

37 [www.presseportal.ch/de/pm/100005744/100537282/eurofighter\\_gmbh](http://www.presseportal.ch/de/pm/100005744/100537282/eurofighter_gmbh) (found on 06.07.2007).

would still become the “greatest wasting of taxes of the Second Republic”.<sup>38</sup> With this day also the work of the enquiry commission ended, but it remains open whether the Eurofighter affair has come to a definitive end.

38 [www.kurier.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/86671](http://www.kurier.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/86671) Artikel vom 06.07.2007.

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