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TEXT

TAGS: PGOV, PREF, PREL, SOCI, AU  
COMBINE: COMPLETE

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN POLLSTERS ANALYZE AUSTRIAN  
ELECTION RESULTS

1. SUMMARY. AT AN OCTOBER 20 WORKING LUNCH, HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR HUNT, FIVE AUSTRIAN PUBLIC OPINION EXPERTS SHARED THEIR THOUGHTS ON WHAT THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS REFLECTED ABOUT CURRENT AUSTRIAN PUBLIC OPINION. THEY SAW THE PRIMARY ELECTION THEMES AS ANTI-PARTY FRUSTRATION, WOMEN IN THE ELECTION AND IN SOCIETY, IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGNERS, AND FREEDOM PARTY CANDIDATE JOERG HAIDER. THEY ALL AGREED THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TELEVISION CAMPAIGN, AS WELL AS VOTING FOR TACTICAL REASONS, WERE NEW PHENOMENA FOR AUSTRIA. WALDHEIM AS THE SYMBOL -- AND IN AUSTRIA AS A VICTIM

STATE DEPT. DECLASSIFICATION REVIEW  
 Retain class'n  
 Declassify after \_\_\_\_\_  
Change/classify to \_\_\_\_\_  
with concurrence of \_\_\_\_\_  
EO 12958, 25X \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 8/29/07  
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-- WAS ALSO DISCUSSED WITH THE POLLSTERS. END  
SUMMARY.

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FIVE LEADING PUBLIC OPINION EXPERTS  
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2. ON OCTOBER 20 AMBASSADOR, DCM AND SEVERAL  
EMBOFFS DISCUSSED THE RECENT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION  
WITH AUSTRIAN PUBLIC OPINION WATCHERS: PROFESSOR  
ANTON PELINKA, INNSBRUCK UNIVERSITY; DR. PETER  
ULRAM, FESSEL AND GFK POLLING INSTITUTE; MS.  
CHRISTINA MATZKA, OGM POLLING INSTITUTE; MS.  
ROSWITHA HASSLINGER, GALLUP INSTITUTE; AND DR.  
GUENTHER OGRIS, INSTITUTE FOR EMPIRICAL SOCIAL  
RESEARCH.

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MAIN ELECTION ISSUES  
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3. ASKED WHAT THE ISSUES IN THE ELECTION WERE, THE  
AUSTRIANS LISTED: AN ANTI-PARTY FEELING; THE  
POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE ELECTION AND SOCIETY;  
IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGNERS; AND JOERG HAIDER, AS A  
PERSON, AS A STRATEGY, AND THE ISSUES HE RAISED.

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ISSUE ONE: ANTI-COALITION FEELING  
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4. THE COALITION PARTIES FAILED TO CAPITALIZE ON  
THE POSITIVE OUTCOME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION  
REFERENDUM LAST JUNE, AFTER WHICH THE FPO WAS AT A  
LOW POINT IN THE POLLS, THE POLLSTERS POINTED OUT.  
AT THE SAME TIME, THE COALITION PARTIES WERE HURT BY  
SCANDALS INVOLVING THE LABOR CHAMBER AND REMARKS BY  
THE CHANCELLOR'S WIFE ABOUT WORKING WOMEN. THESE  
FAILURES, COMBINED WITH THE OTHER FACTORS NOTED  
BELOW, CONTRIBUTED TO AN ANTI-COALITION FEELING.  
MANY VOTERS CAST BALLOTS AS A PROTEST RATHER THAN AS  
A POSITIVE STATEMENT. ONE PARTICIPANT DREW AN  
ANALOGY WITH THE RESULTS IN THE GERMAN ELECTION.  
GERMAN VOTERS ALSO WERE VOTING FOR THE OPPOSITION  
PARTY, SHE NOTED, BUT IN GERMANY THAT HAPPENED TO BE  
THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. IN THE PARTICIPANTS' VIEW,  
THIS MOOD CONTRIBUTED TO THE GOOD SHOWING IN AUSTRIA  
OF THE GREENS AND THE LIBERAL FORUM, AS WELL AS THE  
FPO.

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ISSUE TWO: WOMEN IN THE ELECTION AND SOCIETY  
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5. THE GREENS AND THE LIBERAL FORUM WERE CLEAR  
WINNERS IN THE NEW PHENOMENON OF THE TELEVISION  
CAMPAIGN. (FYI: THIS CAMPAIGN WAS THE FIRST TIME  
IN AUSTRIA THAT PRE-ELECTION ROUND-TABLES WITH  
CANDIDATES WERE SHOWN ON NATIONAL TV FOR SEVERAL

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WEEKS PRIOR TO THE VOTE. END FYI). WHEN ASKED IF THE TV FORUM HAD HELPED THE WOMEN CANDIDATES, THE POLLSTERS ANSWERED WITH A RESOUNDING "YES!" GREENS CANDIDATE PETROVIC WAS CHARACTERIZED AS EXUDING COMPETENCE, AND HER ABILITY TO DEBATE A BROADER RANGE OF TOPICS THAN THE TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES WAS PRAISED.

6. AS PETROVIC WAS BEING PRAISED, CHANCELLOR VRANITSKY WAS BEING CRITICISED FOR HIS DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE TELEVISION DEBATES. HIS TELEVISION AND DEBATE PERFORMANCE WAS VIEWED AS POOR, AND HIS WILLINGNESS TO BE RELEGATED TO THE SAME LEVEL AS HIS OPPONENTS AS UNWISE. IN ADDITION, HE WAS FAULTED FOR NOT COUNTERING THE IMPACT OF HIS WIFE'S HIGHLY-CRITICIZED STATEMENTS REGARDING WOMEN'S ROLES (I.E. THEY SHOULD STAY HOME AND RAISE CHILDREN) WITH A RECITATION OF ALL THAT THE SPO HAD DONE FOR WOMEN IN THE LAST 20 YEARS.

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ISSUE THREE: IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGNERS  
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7. ALTHOUGH REFUGEES WERE NOT CONSIDERED AN ELECTION ISSUE, GENERAL IMMIGRATION ISSUES WERE. ONE ANALYST POINTED OUT THAT AUSTRIA TRADITIONALLY HAD ONE OF THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE RATES OF IMMIGRANTS IN EUROPE, AND THAT THIS HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN A MATTER OF CONCERN. HE ADDED THAT AFTER THE FALL OF THE IRON CURTAIN, THE DRASTIC CHANGES HAD PROVOKED A FEELING OF UNCERTAINTY IN THE AUSTRIAN PEOPLE. ONE RESEARCHER WHO SPECIALIZED IN THE STUDY OF XENOPHOBIA SAID HE "HOPED" THAT THE XENOPHOBIA HAD PEAKED IN 1991-1992, AND THAT THE ELECTION RESULTS WERE JUST MASKING THIS DOWNWARD TREND. THEN HE ADDED THAT HE WAS JUST NOT SURE. THE POLLSTERS DREW A DISTINCTION BETWEEN PHILOSOPHICAL/IDEOLOGICAL XENOPHOBIA, AND THE PHENOMENON IN AUSTRIA WHICH, THEY BELIEVE, TURNS ON ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY AMONG CERTAIN SEGMENTS OF BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS.

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ISSUE FOUR: HAIDER  
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8. IN ADDITION TO A FEELING OF UNCERTAINTY BY THE ELECTORATE, A LACK OF OPTIMISM WAS CITED AS PART OF THE ELECTION MOOD. FEARS, NOT IDEOLOGY, ATTRACTED SOME VOTERS TO THE FPO AND HAIDER, ACCORDING TO THE GROUP. THE FPO WAS VARIOUSLY DESCRIBED AS A "RADICAL RIGHT POPULIST" PARTY AND A "CATCH-ALL" PARTY, WHICH CONTAINED ALL ELEMENTS TO THE RIGHT OF CENTER. HAIDER WAS DESCRIBED AS A MAN WHO "SPEAKS IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE PEOPLE." HE USED THIS SKILL, IN THEIR EYES, TO PLAY ON VOTER FEAR OF FOREIGN

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THINGS AND OF THEIR ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY. QUESTIONED ABOUT HAIDER'S INTENTION TO BECOME CHANCELLOR AFTER THE NEXT ELECTION, ONE POLITICAL SCIENTIST DISMISSED HIS ABILITY TO DO SO. HAIDER WOULD NEED THE SUPPORT OF THE WHOLE AUSTRIAN CONSERVATIVE PARTY, OVP, WHICH THIS ANALYST SAID WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE. IF YOU WERE TO LOOK AT WHAT LEADING POLITICIAN HAD THE BIGGEST NUMBER OF VOTES AGAINST HIM IN THE ELECTORATE, ANOTHER ADDED, IT WOULD BE HAIDER. OF MORE IMMEDIATE INTEREST, CONCLUDED ONE PARTICIPANT, WAS HOW THE SPO WOULD DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF FOREIGNERS IN THE 1996 ELECTION IN THE CITY OF VIENNA.

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THE WALDHEIM ISSUE  
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9. THE ISSUE OF **KURT WALDHEIM** WAS RAISED. WHY, THE GROUP WAS ASKED, IS THIS CASE AGAIN BEING RAISED, ESPECIALLY WHEN AUSTRIA IS TRYING TO IMPROVE ITS TIES WITH ISRAEL? THE GROUP AGREED THAT ONLY FM MOCK, AND SOME OF HIS "DEPENDENTS" IN THE MFA, WERE INTERESTED IN REVIVING THE MATTER. THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THAT VICE CHANCELLOR BUSEK WOULD WANT THE ISSUE RAISED, ALTHOUGH THEY NOTED HE WOULD BE UNABLE TO ARGUE AGAINST IT OPENLY. THEY SAID THAT NO ONE ELSE HAD AN INTEREST IN REHASHING IT, INCLUDING THE PUBLIC. NEVERTHELESS, SEVERAL OF THE ANALYSTS THEN ENGAGED IN A LIVELY DISCUSSION OF WHY WALDHEIM WAS PUT ON THE WATCH LIST, AND GERMANS SUCH AS FORMER PRIME MINISTER KIESINGER WERE NOT ON THE LIST, ALTHOUGH THEY HAD BEEN MEMBERS OF THE NAZI PARTY. SOME EXPRESSED THE OPINION THAT THE DIFFERENCE IN U.S HANDLING OF WALDHEIM WAS THAT "AUSTRIA IS NOT AS IMPORTANT TO THE U.S. AS IS GERMANY." IN ANY CASE, THEY ADDED, THE NAME WALDHEIM IS SYNONYMOUS WITH VICTIM TO MANY AUSTRIANS. "IT MEANS THAT YOU CAN BECOME A VICTIM WITHOUT BEING GUILTY OF ANYTHING."

10. FYI: EMBOFF COUNTERED THIS ARGUMENT BY POINTING OUT THAT THE KIESINGER CASE HAD BEEN WELL-RESEARCHED BY THE U.S. AND THAT THE TWO CASES WERE FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT. AMBASSADOR HUNT NOTED THE IMPORTANCE OF U.S. DOMESTIC POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS--PEOPLE IN DENVER HAVE HEARD OF WALDHEIM WHO IS A SYMBOL OF NAZISM. NONE HAS HEARD OF KIESINGER IN THE U.S. END FYI. HUNT

ADMIN  
END OF MESSAGE

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