



The Politics and Metapolitics of Left-Wing Decline and Revival

M. Jouke Huijzer*

Department of Political Science, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

Conventional studies on left-wing decline focus primarily on the electoral losses of left-wing parties. This contribution argues that left wing decline should not only be understood in terms of support, but also in terms of ideological positioning. The Left may be in decline because of electoral support or because left-wing parties cease to be Left. More fundamentally the Left may be in decline because left-wing ideologies no longer inform public policy or shape political conflict, which points to a more metapolitical shift in “hegemonic ideology”. Taking this into account has important implications for understanding Left decline (and eventual revival). As will be demonstrated in six different scenarios, the Left may decline because of electoral shifts to the right or because parties reposition themselves to the right. Reviving the Left therefore not only implies that Left-wing parties win back voters, but it can also be achieved on a so-called metapolitical level: by shifting ideological positions or even hegemonic ideology to the Left. It is argued that especially with regard to shifting ideological positions, smaller parties in the political margins play a crucial role. The article concludes by discussing the implications and challenges for different political parties as well as the way in which political scientists can more comprehensively assess Left decline.

OPEN ACCESS

Edited by:

Davide Vittori,
Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

Reviewed by:

Sorina Soare,
University of Florence, Italy
Anna Brigevidch,
Norwegian University of Science and
Technology, Norway

*Correspondence:

M. Jouke Huijzer
jouke.huijzer@vub.be

Specialty section:

This article was submitted to
Elections and Representation,
a section of the journal
Frontiers in Political Science

Received: 09 February 2022

Accepted: 25 April 2022

Published: 26 May 2022

Citation:

Huijzer MJ (2022) The Politics and
Metapolitics of Left-Wing Decline and
Revival. *Front. Polit. Sci.* 4:872771.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2022.872771

Keywords: metapolitics, ideology, hegemony, Left decline, left-right

INTRODUCTION

The dominant strand of literature in political science tends to understand the decline of the Left primarily in electoral terms: do left-wing parties win or lose elections. Following this line of reasoning left-wing decline mainly results from incongruencies between voter demand and party supply. It follows the Downsian assumption that parties and politicians are primarily motivated by the desire for “power, prestige and income” (Downs, 1957, p. 30). In Western liberal democracies, satisfying those desires requires them to advocate policies that respond to the demands of voters, which will in (re)turn cast their vote for that party. Yet if the policy positions do not adequately correspond to voter demands, voters may turn their back on those left-wing parties so that they lose elections and likely see their chances to participate in government decreasing. As left-wing voters do either stay home or support right-wing parties, the gravity point of politics shifts to the right while the Left is in decline.

This article argues to complement or even substitute this narrow focus on electoral performance with a more “metapolitical” perspective that *also* takes ideological positions and hegemonic transformations into account. Those ideological positions may be part of individual parties but can also apply to politics as a whole: in that case there is not a mere shift in party ideology but a transformation of the “hegemonic ideology”. Resultingly the Left is not only in decline when it loses electoral support, but also if parties shift to the right or right-wing ideologies become hegemonic

(and are hardly challenged anymore). By accounting for those metapolitical factors this article renders a more comprehensive assessment of left-wing decline, which also has different implications for attempts to revive the Left.

If left-wing success or decline is only understood in electoral terms the main question for the Left is how the most sizable (nominally) left-wing parties should reposition itself ideologically to win back voters. In this case ideology remains instrumental to electoral performance. If, by contrast, changing the dominant ideology in itself can already contribute to left-wing revival then the hegemonic or metapolitical “struggle of ideas” becomes at least as important. This shifts attention away from the electoral heavyweights to the smaller parties in the political margins that play a key role in bringing new issues to the political agenda and challenge hegemonic ideologies. Thus, it inverts the relationship between ideology and electoral performance: ideology is not used to win votes, but even a small electoral basis can be used to challenge or change the hegemonic ideology when engaging in a form of “parliamentary metapolitics”. This dynamic will further be elaborated on in the final sections of this paper.

For now, the article proceeds as follows: First, I outline the dominant model that understands left-wing decline primarily in electoral terms (as a mismatch between voter demand and party supply). Subsequently this model is contrasted with a metapolitical model that tries to understand left-wing decline by focussing on the dominance (hegemony) of left-wing ideology and whether left-wing issues continue to dominate the political agenda. Having identified the political and metapolitical factors contributing to left-wing decline, the following section relates the metapolitical domain to the left-right continuum, which is commonly used to represent ideological differences in political science. The next section, then, outlines 6 scenarios of left wing-decline using a fictional example which resembles many real-world instances of the past decades. This is followed by two sections that discuss the dynamics and implications that become relevant if one seeks to reverse the trends toward further left-wing decline. The final section also reflects upon the implications for political sciences and outlines some avenues for future research.

THE POLITICS OF VOTER DEMAND AND PARTY SUPPLY

As stated in the introduction the dominant strand of literature in political science understands left-wing decline following the analogy of the electoral marketplace once outlined by Downs (1957). In this model politicians and parties are primarily motivated by obtaining “power, prestige and income” which in electoral democracies requires them to advocate policies that will maximize their votes and/or enable them to join a government coalition (Downs, 1957; p. 30–31). If there is, however, incongruence between voter demands and the policies advocated by parties or politicians, voters may turn their back on parties which leads to a decline in support. Alternatively, if the parties take too radical positions, they may become less

attractive as coalition partner (Budge and Laver, 1986; Strøm, 1990). Political parties will therefore seek a “winning formula” of policy positions that increases their vote-share and enables them to participate in government. If they fail to do so they will lose support, likely decrease chances of participating in governments, and thus experience decline.

In the literature on left-wing decline that follows the analogy of the electoral marketplace there are two dominant narratives. The first holds that parties need to adjust to transformations in society such as deindustrialization and the emergence of post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1971). This argument was particularly popular in the 1980s and 1990s when many Communist parties, which represented the “materialist” industrial proletariat saw their support plummeting, while “post-materialist” Green parties gained increasing support. First, Przeworski and Sprague (1986) argued that Socialist parties needed to focus more on mobilizing the middle classes (or “the nation”) to retain support as the working class was rapidly in decline. A more sophisticated account by Kitschelt (1994) argued that social-democratic parties needed to shift their position that was primarily based on one side of the “old” class-cleavage, to a position that also catered to more post-materialist (or libertarian) values and policies. In both cases, the existing party structures and connections to the extra-parliamentary organizations (or social movements) such as workers unions were mostly considered a liability, as they kept the parties tied to their traditional class-based positions and limited the scope of maneuver. Only after breaking ties with civil society, socialist and labor parties managed to adopt a more “libertarian” course (Kitschelt, 1994).

The second line of thinking, which gained increasing prominence since the 2010s, is not that left-wing parties did not keep up with social transformations, but rather that voters did not keep up with political parties. Stated differently, that left-wing parties have abandoned their traditional class-base by focusing more on libertarian and post-materialist values and policies. As a result, voters have become politically alienated from their traditional parties and currently either abstain or seek political refuge with other political parties (Eatwell and Goodwin, 2018). Consequently, it is often claimed that the decline of the Left and the concurrent rise of the far-right is the result of working-class voters that changed parties; a claim for which fairly limited empirical evidence exists (Abou-Chadi et al., 2021). Following this reasoning not deindustrialization or the rise of post-materialism, but processes associated with globalization such as “immigration” and the outsourcing of production are considered to be the driving forces of left-wing decline (cf. Kriesi et al., 2012).

Regardless of which of those developments most accurately explains the declining electoral support for left-wing parties, the political implication is fairly straightforward: left parties will need to reposition themselves ideologically in order to reconnect to other voters (cf. Abou-Chadi and Wagner, 2020). In addition, but on this point more discussion exists, reconnecting to civil society organizations such as workers unions may help to win back voters that currently support other parties or abstain (Martin et al., 2020). In either case, the goal for left-wing parties is to reverse

decline by ideologically repositioning a party in order to increase the support-base.

THE METAPOLITICS OF IDEOLOGICAL HEGEMONY

A problem with the model of party supply and voter demand is that it implicitly assumes that left-wing parties are primarily vote-maximizing or office-seeking and remain blind about eventual effects of changes in political positions (beyond the question of whether they result in electoral gains). The Left then declines only when (nominally) left-wing parties fail to meet their objectives of vote-maximization, regardless of whether they either move more to the center or to the left while doing so. A metapolitical approach that is centered on shifts in political ideologies, by contrast, has less concern for electoral performance, but more so, for how programmatic and ideological changes challenge or reinforce the dominant ideology.

This means that left-wing decline can be understood as resulting from electoral losses, but also from decreasing ideological dominance. If some or all parties shift to the political right or when left-wing ideas or ideologies hardly determine what is on the political agenda or deemed acceptable, then the gravity point of politics will also shift to the right (even if support remains unchanged). Stated differently, if a left-wing party ceases to promote left-wing policies, then the Left will also be in decline regardless of whether support changes for that party. To fully comprehend left-wing decline, it is therefore at least as important to study the metapolitical dimension of ideological changes and what is on the political agenda.

Some approaches in political science and theory do focus on changes in ideology. For instance, ideological transformation is at the heart of approaches taken by scholars working from a Gramscian paradigm such as Mudge (2018) and Bandau (2021). For Mudge (2018) the question was not whether or how left-wing parties (such as Social Democrats) managed to retain electoral support or won office. Instead, her goal was to understand how and why social democrats adopted ideologies compatible with neoliberalism so that historically left-wing actors increasingly came to implement right-wing policies—often at the cost of historically marginalized groups (Brown, 2015). Left-wing decline, then, is not determined by decline in support but by intensity or the “leftness” of political parties. And this ideological transformation had set-in already in the 1990s when parties abandoned socialist and other left-wing ideologies in favor of more (neo)liberal ones—not when electoral support plummeted during in the 2010s.

While, Mudge (2018) her account focuses on one party family, the changes may also be studied for politics as a whole. Just as Mudge (2018) observed how the social-democratic parties embraced a form of neoliberalism, other political theorists have observed how neoliberalism came to be the hegemonic political ideology for virtually all parties in Western Europe (Hall, 2011; Ali, 2018). Scholars that have mapped this ascendance in more detail, have in particular found how intellectuals, think tanks and politicians that used to operate in the political

fringes, managed to permeate establishment actors with their ideas and ideologies (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2009; Plehwe et al., 2018). It is demonstrated how such think tanks and intellectuals ultimately managed to shift the recently much-discussed “Overton window”—the window that encompasses all widely accepted and legitimate policy options in society (Mackinac Center for Public Policy, 2022)—to the political right. Think tanks and intellectuals as well as politicians and sometimes even parties at the political fringes managed to make neoliberal policy acceptable while discrediting formerly hegemonic Keynesian policies.

The French *Nouvelle Droite*, which is of key inspiration to far-right parties, have used the label of “metapolitics” to describe their efforts to change hegemonic ideas (Bar-On, 2001; Casadio, 2014). Although more oriented toward breaking with the dominant consensus surrounding post-racialism and cultural egalitarianism, they shared the objective of changing “what politics is about” with the accounts mentioned above. In doing so they (very partially) drew inspiration from Gramsci’s (1971) writings on hegemony who, in his time, sought to break with the hegemonic bourgeois and reactionary ideologies. But while Gramsci (or the Left) never managed to win hegemony for his communist ideas, far-right parties did manage to achieve a certain degree of hegemony at least when it comes to the topic of immigration (Yilmaz, 2012). Moreover, their ideas increasingly permeate the mainstream (Mondon, 2013; Mudde, 2019); just as neoliberalism started as a marginal idea and only became hegemonic over the course of several decades¹.

In political science Gramsci’s writings have mainly entered the discipline *via* the work of Lukes (1974) and his “third dimension of power”. Following his argument, oppressed groups may not even be aware of their subordinated position because dominant or hegemonic ideologies may preclude them from coming to such self-understanding. Becoming aware of ones structurally subordinated position is thus a first step in the process of emancipation. Metapolitics refers exactly to this struggle of how people understand themselves and the world around them. As such, metapolitics can be emancipatory (or counter-hegemonic) when it attempts to raise a certain self-awareness, but it can also be hegemonic when it attempts to impose the worldview or ideology of dominant groups.

A final element implied in the concept of metapolitics, is the notion of a “dominant conflict” in politics or a distinction between a “we” and a “them”. Lievens (2013), for instance, employs the concept of metapolitics when discussing Schmitt’s (1996) work on “the political” (cf. Zienkowski, 2019). The political, according to Schmitt, was ultimately about friend/enemy relations, just as the ethical and the aesthetic are,

¹Also many critical or radical scholars (Rancière, 1999; Badiou, 2005; Fraser, 2009) have deployed the term “metapolitics” in various ways but an agreed upon definition does not exist (Spitzer, 2020). What most of those accounts on metapolitics have in common is that they do recognize that the existing political order entails certain biases as they only account for a limited number of subjects, while (forcefully) marginalizing, subordinating or simply miscounting others. Metapolitical changes, then, consist in the emancipation of marginalized social groups and political subjects that become accounted for become able to voice their concerns.

respectively, about good/evil and beauty/ugliness distinctions. Following these several accounts, metapolitical goals are not only about challenging or reinforcing a dominant ideology, but also about (re)shaping the dominant conflict while suppressing alternative conflicts².

PARLIAMENTARY METAPOLITICS

What follows from the several accounts of ideological shifts, hegemonic transformations, metapolitics or the “Overton-window” is a fundamental recognition that “what politics is about” can be subject to change and such changes can be fostered by different actors. Combining the various accounts leads to the definition of metapolitics (or metapolitical practice) as *practices aimed at (re)shaping the dominant conflict in politics by bringing new issues, ideas, and ideologies on the political agenda to the benefit of certain social groups in society*. Hegemonic and reactionary metapolitical practices are renewing hegemonic ideologies that benefit dominant groups and classes in society, whereas counter-hegemonic metapolitics voice the ideologies and concerns of marginalized, oppressed or priorly un(der)represented social groups or classes.

Along with the metapolitical practices, one may discern an analytical sphere or a *domain of metapolitics* that enables one to analyze how these practices either successfully or unsuccessfully change the dominant political conflicts and hegemonic ideologies (just as “politics” refers both to a practice and a particular domain). Such a metapolitical domain studies the struggle of ideas and ideological change beyond a narrow focus on the institutions that are typically associated with politics (e.g., parties, elections, parliaments, governments, etc.). Ideology, then, is not only understood as a worldview that “cements” various social groups together in a hegemonic or counter-hegemonic social formation (or “historic bloc” as Gramsci, 1971 called it). Ideology ultimately also defines political priorities, informs public policies, and can thereby cognitively capture views of governing elites on both sides of a political conflict (Hall, 1993). Resultingly, ideology or the “struggle of ideas” is not a mere instrument that, if carefully articulated, renders political parties a great deal of support, but also something that has an effect of itself.

Interestingly, most scholars locate metapolitical practices emphatically outside, or on the fringes of the party-political realm (Badiou, 2005). The political system by itself is seen as inherently biased so that metapolitical questions can only be raised if one transcends the political institutions within which certain problems need to be solved (Fraser, 2009). Similarly, the

“Overton-window” initially referred to endeavors by think tanks. Even the *Nouvelle Droit* considers its metapolitical practices mostly as complementary to parliamentary behavior (Faye, 2011).

Only in recent years there is an increasing recognition that also political parties can play an important role in changing hegemonic ideologies so that one can speak of *parliamentary metapolitics*. Zienkowski (2019 p. 140) is on to this when he writes that:

“Through metapolitics, politics can act upon itself and upon the political. It is a politics about politics, but not a politics beyond politics. It is not a mode of politics that is merely ‘added to’ everyday politicking but refers to the actions and processes that make a particular mode of politics possible in the first place.”

Parliamentary metapolitics differs not strongly from other metapolitical practices but they take place within the domain of (parliamentary) politics. Usually, parties and politicians that engage in metapolitical practice are in opposition so there is no need to compromise with other coalition parties (though this is no hard criterion). While parties and politicians that engage in some form of parliamentary metapolitics may not have much direct influence on government policies, they do have a significant effect on shifting the political agenda, the hegemonic ideology or “what politics is about” either to the left or the right. The next sections demonstrate the effects of electoral and ideological shifts in party positions on the degree to which politics shifts left or right. The subsequent sections explore the dynamics beyond “simple” ideological positions.

METAPOLITICS AND THE LEFT-RIGHT CONTINUUM

What follows from the previous two sections is that left-wing decline is not only determined by *how popular* left-wing parties are, but also by *how left* political parties are. The strength of the left may thus depend on at least two factors: (1) electoral support and (2) left-wing intensity. This opens-up a variety of scenarios of Left decline of which decreasing party support is but one. The Left not only declines if left-wing parties lose support to the Right, but also if parties reposition themselves more to the Right. And even if parties do not reposition, a relative balance in the internal distribution of support in the left-wing or right-wing block—e.g., a shifts from radical to more moderate left parties—may result in a shift to the right. Finally, even if the distribution remains unchanged, but virtually all parties adopt a new (right-wing) ideology or policy paradigm, it may still be possible to speak of left-wing decline.

We could formalize this argument in a simple formula which holds that for each party, the degree to which it contributes to either the strength of the Left or the Right is determined by its ideological position and the level of support for that party—i.e., intensity × support. This makes it possible to illustrate the various scenarios of left-wing decline on a left-right continuum as is done in the fictional example illustrated in **Figure 1** below. Before doing so, it is important to have a closer look at how the

²Determining the “conflict of conflicts” is also a central element to Schattschneider’s (1960) critique of the biases present in existing institutions. Yet for Schattschneider, putting issues on the political agenda and (re)shaping conflict is instrumental to winning elections (just as in the party-voter congruency model). The focus is less on what agenda-setting implies for historically marginalized groups or the degree to which it shifts politics to the left or the right. In that sense, Schattschneider’s work occupies a middle-ground between political (voter-party congruency) accounts and metapolitical accounts that are more focused on “what is politics about”.

left-right continuum relates to the metapolitical domain as well as to various individual issues and topics.

In the metapolitical domain, it is here assumed that the left-right continuum reflects the dominant conflict which is (initially) between a *hegemonic* and a *counter-hegemonic* ideological project, whereby the latter challenges the former. This counter-hegemonic project may entail different social struggles tied to various ideologies or issues: it may consist in feminist groups challenging patriarchy, sexual minorities demanding LGBTQIAP+-rights, pacifists calling for disarmament, environmentalists fighting the ecological catastrophe, workers that seek protection from capitalist exploitation, ethnic, religious, cultural, or racialized minorities that rally against racism or a combination of those social forces. If those various social forces organize themselves into parties and manage to win seats in parliament, their metapolitical endeavors enter the political domain of electoral politics, parliamentary representation and coalition formation.

The ideologies and parties that are hegemonic consist in the prevailing ideas, meanings and practices at a certain point in time. Those may relate to all kinds of social relations—economic, ecological, sexual, religious, ethnic, “racial”, etc.—that have become naturalized and regarded as “normal” or common-sensical. Since what (or who) is hegemonic at a certain moment in time is often the result of various social, political, or ideological struggles, hegemony is permanently subject to change and redefinition.

Within and sometimes opposed to the hegemonic formation one could also discern a reactionary category of parties that stand opposed to most changes that (even) the hegemonic formation allows for³. Reactionary forces fiercely defend the status quo or even long for social relations and privileges of the past. For that reason, they are often placed at the far-right end of the left-right continuum although, as will be discussed below, their positions on the dominant conflict can sometimes be blurry (especially when the dominant conflict is about economic issues; see Rovny, 2013).

In the rather simple representation in **Figure 1**, the parties A, B, and C initially partake with different intensities in a counter-hegemonic project and are placed at the left side of the left-right continuum. The parties representing hegemonic groups (D and E) are placed on the right with one small reactionary party (F) at the far-right end. The squares indicate the distribution of a hundred parliamentary seats in the initial situation. The weighted average or “gravity point” which indicates how left-wing or right-wing politics is in general is indicated at the bottom. The rectangles indicate the weighted average of each likely coalition—majority coalitions between parties that are at most 3 points away from one another. It is, for now, assumed that each party prefers a majority coalition with neighboring parties for which the weighted average is the most proximate to its own

³Eventually also the counterhegemonic category can be further divided in, for instance, a category of parties that are revolutionary and that are more reformist. Yet since the revolutionary parties are virtually absent in Western Europe, it is irrelevant to further categorize parties.

position (Riker, 1962); the most likely coalition is indicated with a checkmark.

Structuring the political conflict by placing parties somewhere along a single left-right continuum comes with certain limitations. For long it was assumed by theorists of spatial voting models that ideological stances of parties could be structured along one dimension (Downs, 1957). Parties benefit from taking a position somewhere along the continuum where most voters are positioned since it was assumed that they vote for the party most proximate to them⁴.

A longstanding strand of criticism, however, holds that politics is not structured along a single left-right dimension, but by two or more issue dimensions. Most thoroughly it is argued that party competition is much more determined by single issue-dimensions or so-called *valence issues* (Stokes, 1963; Green, 2007; Green-Pedersen, 2007). If one such a (single) issue-dimension becomes salient this typically benefits one specific party that is deemed most competent on handling the issue while other parties may also be ordered and evaluated along that same dimension. Parties that are deemed more competent on other issue-dimensions will have a tendency to blur their position at the most salient or “dominant” dimension (Rovny, 2012). Following this argument, the left-right dimension—especially when only understood in economic terms—is but one of the many possible issue-dimensions that may or may not be relevant in structuring politics.

To some degree the models that hold party competition is about multiple issue-dimensions can be integrated with the unidimensional perspective. That is to say, the left-right continuum is a “dominant dimension” that is subject to change and redefinition each time different issues become (and remain) salient. Although certain issues may stand orthogonal to the dominant left-right dimension when emerging, there is a tendency that they integrate into the dominant dimension and change its meaning (De Vries et al., 2013). Moreover, party competition in multi-party systems has a tendency to become unidimensional (Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009) and there is some evidence that if the relevance of certain valence issues increases, also left-right polarization increases (Zakharova and Warwick, 2014). Lastly it may be added that, despite its limitations, the fact that “left” and “right” are still used to designate parties indicates that the left-right continuum still has currency. Though the central focus of this paper is on the relation between relative political positions (here indicated on a left-right continuum) and the metapolitical domain, a more sophisticated model could also relate multiple issue dimensions to structure party positions to the metapolitical domain.

⁴An alternative so-called *directional perspective* holds that voters rather tend to vote for parties that take clear stances on either side of a particular (or the dominant) issue-dimension as long as they remain within a “region of acceptability” (Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989). Following the directional model, parties are not just ordered along a single continuum but take a clear stance on either side of a dominant conflict. This argument somewhat resembles the aforementioned theory of Schmitt (1996) that the political is about a conflict between friend/enemy relations. It is to some degree integrated in the representations in **Figure 1**.

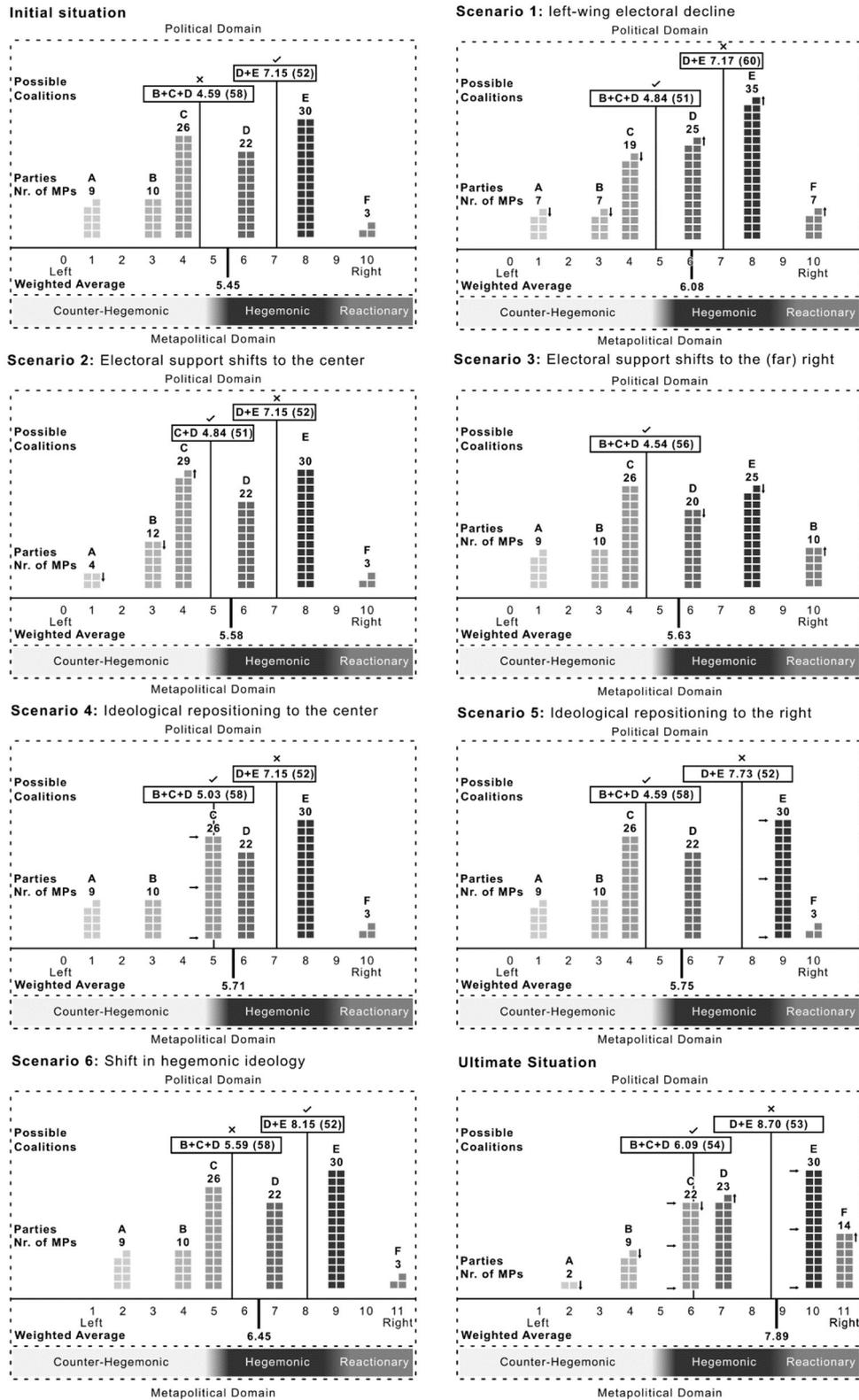


FIGURE 1 | Scenarios of left-wing decline.

SCENARIOS OF LEFT DECLINE

The various representations in **Figure 1** map the ways in which the Left can decline if both electoral support and changes in ideology are taken into account. The top left figure represents the distribution in the initial situation (at point t), while the six scenarios represent a distribution after a single election (at point $t+1$). The metapolitical domain indicates how the parties as well as the left-right continuum as a whole relates to the hegemonic, counter-hegemonic and reactionary ideologies.

While each of the possible scenario's entails a form of left-wing decline since the gravity point of politics (the weighted average) shifts to the right, only in scenario 1 the vote-share of left-wing parties in total decreases. This is how left-wing decline is most commonly understood in political science (Benedetto et al., 2020). This scenario resonates most strongly with the various instances of "pasokification" in the 2010s, when many European social-democratic parties lost support; in most countries other left-wing parties could not compensate for their losses.

As scenario 2 indicates, left-wing decline may also result from the fact that support shifts from more radical, to more center-left political parties. And even if the distribution on the left remains the same, there can still be left-wing decline if voters move from center-right to far-right parties (scenario 3). Such types of left-wing decline were mostly experienced in the 1980s, when many Communist parties lost support, while the more center-left Greens or Social Democrats gained electoral support. Meanwhile, in increasingly many countries, far-right parties emerged or experienced an electoral breakthrough since the 1980s, evidencing the type of left-wing decline (or shift to the right) demonstrated in scenario 3.

Also when parties on the left or the right ideologically reposition themselves to the right of where they are at point t , then the gravitation point shifts to the right, even if party support for (nominally) left-wing parties remains unchanged (or would even increase) as in scenario 4 and 5. Such shifts could mainly be observed in the 1990s when many social democratic parties moved to the political center or the *Neue Mitte* (Blair and Schröder, 2000), thereby seeking a Third Way between the "old" socialist (or Keynesian) steering of the economy and neoliberal *laissez faire* economy. Similarly, the recent adoption of far-right or reactionary doctrines by mainstream right political parties (Mondon, 2013; Mudde, 2019) suggests a repositioning of the right that corresponds to scenario 5. In either scenario, the gravitation point of politics shifts to the right.

Finally, there may be a scenario, where a certain ideology becomes hegemonic and comes to inform political positions of virtually all (mainstream) parties. For instance, when certain strands of left-wing (or counter-hegemonic) ideas become hegemonic and parties are coopted into a hegemonic alliance, the hegemonic ideology may shift. This might also happen if reactionary positions become more acceptable, potentially (re)shaping the conflict to one between the reactionary and other ideologies. In such cases, even when the relative positions and distribution of seats remains completely the same, the underlying continuum may shift, resulting in more a dramatic shift of the gravity point of politics. Seen from a metapolitical point of view,

the Left-Right continuum has shifted as a whole and now covers different ideological positions. Compared to the positions of the initial situation the continuum has shifted so that it now runs from 1 to 11; what used to be "left" has become "extreme left" and what used to be "right" has become "centrist"⁵. This latter instance is a form of what call a change in hegemonic ideology: it does not entail a political shift, but a metapolitical one. An example of this, as many critics have argued, is that this type of "hegemonic shift" has been observed in Western Europe from the 1980s until at least the 2010s (Hall, 2011), with all mainstream parties adhering to a certain form of neoliberalism (Ali, 2018).

It may be added that many of those scenarios are not independent from one another but are often interrelated processes that either closely follow one another or develop at the same time. For instance, it can be argued that a repositioning of a mainstream party to the right as in scenario 4 and 5, enables and perhaps even contributes to the hegemonic shifts in scenario 6. The bottom right figure represents the "ultimate situation" in which all of the scenario's have taken place at the same time. As the reactionary parties are almost the same magnitude as left-wing parties were in the initial situation, it is likely that not only hegemonic ideas, but also the dominant conflict shifts. It is much less between counterhegemonic vs. hegemonic positions, but between the hegemonic and the reactionary positions (or eventually some form of a tripolar conflict emerges; cf. Oesch and Rennwald, 2018).

Another noteworthy element is that that the office-seeking dynamics of individual parties differ from the dynamics fostering left-wing decline. Each scenario independently increases the chance that a center-left government is formed as long as party D opts for the alternative with a weighted average that is closest to its own position. Of course, the example is only fictional and if a so-called directional logic is applied—where parties almost always prefer coalition partners at their side of the dominant conflict—than the right-wing coalition of party D and E is more likely to emerge whenever possible. But what becomes clear here, is also relevant in many real-world instances: a more left-wing orientation of the parties on the Left does not immediately increase their chances of governing; even small electoral gains sometimes decrease rather than increase chances of governing.

THE DYNAMICS OF LEFT DECLINE AND REVIVAL

The scenarios of left-wing decline carry important insights of how to reverse recent trends, but at the same time they leave certain important questions unaddressed: for instance, it tells little about the dynamics of Left decline. Why do parties end up at a particular end of the left-right continuum and why do they reposition? What factors drive or enable such repositioning or "hegemonic shifts" and how does this relate to political or

⁵This scenario also indicates where existing empirical data or indicators such as expert or voter perception surveys fall short of explaining political shifts. Such surveys only indicate the relative position of parties on the left-right continuum, but do not recalibrate and thereby account for the shifts of the (meaning of the) left-right continuum itself.

metapolitical practices? To understand these transformations, it is relevant to explore beyond the simple ideological positions and focus on the political and metapolitical objectives that parties pursue and the dynamics it generates.

First it is important to highlight an observation regarding the earlier scenarios: the only parties that seemed to have a chance of governing were the four parties at the center (Party B, C, D, and E). Unless there would be significant electoral shocks, the more radical parties can simply be ignored. For long, the dominant strand on party research has therefore considered the smaller parties in the margins of the political spectrum as less relevant and if they were considered, they were often examined through the same lens as the centrist (mainstream) parties⁶.

But while the centrist parties have more influence on whether a (center-)left or right government will be formed, the parties on the flanks that have most influence on the shifts of politics as a whole. For instance, if the party positioned at the extreme right (Party F) wins a seat, this gain has 5 times more impact on shifting the weighted average to the right compared to when the center-right party (Party D) wins a seat. Thus, the mere emergence or disappearance of far-left or far-right parties already significantly influences whether a country is perceived to “swing” to the right or the left from one election to another.

Yet beyond representing the views of more radical or extreme right or left constituents, there is a growing attention for the indirect influence of the parties in the political margins. Small parties (or “niche” parties) are not merely “waiting in the wings” (Krouwel and Lucardie, 2008), but have significant direct and indirect effects on the political agenda and on the positions of other parties. A party that successfully mobilizes on one issue, may force other parties to take a clear stance on that issue (Niezing, 1963; Harmel and Svåsand, 1997; Van de Wardt, 2015; Abou-Chadi et al., 2020). Moreover, if mainstream parties feel electorally threatened by the “newcomer” it may adopt some of its stances (Meguid, 2005; Otjes, 2012). In addition, even from opposition small parties can have significant influence on the political agenda and enhance the policy alternatives that were hitherto available (Krouwel and Lucardie, 2008).

In this sense one could understand the aims and practices of the parties in the political margins not (only) as political, but to a large degree also as metapolitical. Although their direct influence on policies is limited, they can have significant impact on shifting the Overton window or, more broadly, the hegemonic ideology. Parties pursuing metapolitical objectives are less constrained by factors that parties and politicians are taking into account when attempting to maximize votes or for parties with office-seeking motives. Mainstream parties are often constrained by public opinion and cannot take positions that go against commonsensical discourses which emanate from hegemonic ideology. The smaller parties at the margins, by contrast, need to take these aspects much less into account: their goal is rather to change or challenge hegemonic ideology, than to navigate existing hegemonic discourses and ideology. Moreover, there is little need

TABLE 1 | Summary of the focus in strategies for left-wing revival.

Type of party	Mainstream or in the center	Niche or in the margin
Practices and objectives	Political	Metapolitical
Main instrument	Maximizing votes	Agenda-setting
Ultimate goal	Winning office	Changing hegemonic ideology
Strategy	Ideology is instrumental to change support	Support is instrumental to change ideology

for the smaller parties to moderate their positions and remain a viable coalitions partner, since joining a government is highly unlikely anyway.

The difference between the two type of parties—larger mainstream parties and smaller parties in the margin—are summarized in **Table 1**. While the objectives of mainstream parties are consistent with many dominant assumptions in political science, this is less so for the smaller parties in the margins. To fully comprehend their behavior and motivations, it is crucial to take a metapolitical dimension into account. For those parties and the social groups they represent, ideology is not something that yields votes, but has intrinsic value. Since hegemonic ideology typically benefits certain social groups while marginalizing others, efforts at changing the hegemonic ideology can be an existential goal for parties at the margins of the political spectrum. While chances of governing are relatively small, voicing the concerns of marginalized or subordinated political subjects and by putting their demands on the political agenda can have effects by itself. In that sense their (often small) support base is more of an instrument to change hegemonic ideology, than that party ideologies serve to generate support.

What is important to note with regard to Left decline, is that metapolitical practices and objectives can be pursued by both left-wing and right-wing parties. Thus, a metapolitical shift in hegemonic ideology can either be the result of a successful strategy by right-wing parties (and other actors) to change commonsensical notions, or because left-wing parties neglect metapolitical aims and practices. If left-wing parties only pursue political objectives such as joining a coalition, the result may be that right-wing (or reactionary) parties will seize the opportunity to give voice to different subjects and bring different issues to the political agenda. Vice versa if the Left engages in metapolitical practices, it can also be right-wing (mainstream) parties that need to respond. This dynamic will be central to the next section.

REVIVING THE LEFT

The previous sections have demonstrated that left-wing decline can result from political and metapolitical shifts. Any attempt to revive the Left should take political and metapolitical objectives into account. As has been discussed each of those objectives is tied to particular actors: while mainstream parties attempt to win (or maximize) votes

⁶Duverger (1954), for instance, considered small parties primarily as “makeweights[...], whether in office or opposition they have to be content with a few ministerial back seats or with platonic criticism”.

in order to ultimately become part of a coalition, smaller parties in the political margins are more after metapolitical shifts in hegemonic ideology. This does, however, not mean that political or metapolitical concerns are completely irrelevant to, respectively, marginal and mainstream parties. Completely disregarding either the metapolitical or the political dimension to political practice can also result in left-wing decline. This section therefore identifies some major challenges and potential pitfalls that come with any attempt to revive the Left.

For mainstream left-wing parties that pursue a strategy of matching voter demand with party supply, a major pitfall is that they move too much to the political center, so that even increasing the support does not lead to left-wing revival (as they are no longer left-wing). Since mainstream parties are not strongly anchored to a political ideology, the desire for participating in government may render them more prone to compromise than other parties. This is essentially what was demonstrated in scenario 4 where center-left parties had moved to the political center, resembling their adoption of Third Way doctrines since the 1990s. As many studies have indicated, this shift was ultimately motivated by office-seeking party objectives (Green-Pedersen and van Kersbergen, 2002; Keman, 2011). While only in some instances this move to the center temporarily boosted their vote-share this contributed arguably more to an electoral upswing of the political center, than of the Left.

The reverse may also be true. If a mainstream party follows the examples of the parties in the margins and become permeated by relatively obscure or unknown ideologies, they may alienate traditional electorates that no longer feel at home at the party.

One probably needs to go back to the 1970s to find examples where the mainstream left “overplayed its hand” by moving too far to the left. It is, however, relevant to note that especially mainstream parties are not the most ideologically flexible organizations (Hooghe and Marks, 2018)⁷. More important, it often takes time to introduce and disseminate new (left-wing) ideologies before they become part of common-sense and determine public opinion to a large degree. Any mainstream party that dedicates itself too much to articulating new issues and ideologies may potentially alienate its traditional support base. Thus, what may be gained in shifting politics to the left by introducing new political issues and ideologies, may be lost in terms of electoral support. Of course there may be good, normative reasons for changing positions or bringing new issues to the political agenda, but this requires careful consideration.

With regard to the smaller parties in the political margins, the challenges and pitfalls are in many respects inverse. Needless to say, also the smaller parties risk to become electorally

unattractive and to lose their small support base (this often happens when mainstream parties adopt their positions). But a much more common threat is that they moderate their positions and replace their metapolitical objectives with political ones such as office seeking or increasing the vote share. This trajectory is common to many parties, because for most politicians, commenting from the sideline is less attractive than being in power.

In his classic account on political parties, Panebianco (1988) observed how parties often comprise of believers and careerist, with the latter becoming more dominant as parties age. Along with this process, one might add, is that the metapolitical objectives of bringing new issues to the agenda, changing the terms of the debate and thereby challenging hegemonic ideology are subordinated to more political objectives of ‘winning office or maximizing votes’. This trajectory is common to many parties, especially on the Left. In the early days of Social Democracy the decision or attempts to participate in governments was often the source of internal splits between reformists and revolutionaries. But also some of the most successful Communist parties in Western Europe went through these internal struggles. Most renowned is the Italian Communist Party (PCI) that joined government by engaging in a “historic compromise” with the Christian Democrats. More recently, these types of controversies are central in the German *Die Linke* or the Dutch SP. Finally, the question of whether to moderate positions to become a more viable coalition partner was also central to the so-called *realo-fundi* controversies in many Western European Green parties (Doherty, 1992).

Most left-wing parties have ultimately shifted from a more fundamentalist or revolutionary position to a more compromise-oriented, realist and reformist position. Often those parties have been rewarded with significant policy influence by joining a government coalition. What is relevant with regard to left-wing decline, however, is that in shifting their orientation to the political objectives of winning votes and seeking office, the metapolitical objectives got somewhat neglected. That is to say, most left-wing parties have moderated their positions and moved closer to the political center and thereby moved away from reshaping political conflict by giving voice to marginalized political subjects and bringing new issues to the political agenda. If political goals prevail over metapolitical goals, emolliating conflict becomes more important than (re)shaping conflict. The result can be that left-wing parties do manage to get in power, but that “on the whole” political conflict and debate shifts to the right since only right-wing parties—most likely the Far Right—pursues metapolitical objectives.

Recognizing that ideological shifts are at least as important as winning elections and participating in government for Left revival, gives reason to re-appreciate metapolitical practices. Even if this means that political parties will mostly operate from at the sideline and remain in opposition. Ultimately, the causes of left-wing or counter-hegemonic social groups and political subjects are better catered to if the Right feels compelled to respond to their demands, then when the Left is in power but implements policies of the Right.

⁷It was often claimed that this was the case with the British Labor Party at the 2019 election when critics stated that the party had become too radical under Jeremy Corbyn. Although a more plausible explanation for his electoral loss was (among other things) the relatively vague stance on the rather central issue of ‘Brexit’ during that election (Prosser, 2021) and perhaps a hostile media environment, the claim that too radical politics of mainstream parties may be less popular with a traditionally more moderate base is not completely ill-founded.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The dominant strand of literature on Left decline primarily focuses on the electoral support for left-wing parties. This article has argued why it is crucial to also take the ideological positions of political parties into account. This relates to the ideology of individual parties, but also to the aggregated positions of all parties—i.e., the question of which ideology or ideas are dominant or hegemonic. Which issues and ideas inform public policy and shape political conflict and debate? I have argued that whereas the electoral aspects are most relevant to mainstream parties, especially the “smaller” parties in the political margin play a crucial role in fostering hegemonic ideological change.

Recognizing the crucial role of ideology when one seeks to make an assessment of left-wing decline has significant impact for pleas that are aimed at reversing Left decline. While most work that focuses on “reviving the left” considers ideology primarily as instrumental to increasing political support, this article holds that changing ideology is an aim in itself. Even if electoral support remains unchanged, then ideological repositioning, by itself, can already contribute to Left revival.

More fundamentally, this article has not only implications for left-wing politics but also for political science. Focusing on the metapolitical dimension enables one to not only scrutinize the relative shifts and positions of political parties, but also how these positions relate to absolute changes in (hegemonic) ideology. Future work could also examine how, through and beyond party competition, different social groups and political subjects manage to impose their worldview on society, while others become marginalized by such hegemonic shifts.

REFERENCES

- Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschieer, S., Frey, T. (2012). *West European Politics in an Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Abou-Chadi, T., Green-Pedersen, C., and Mortensen, P. B. (2020). ‘Parties’ policy adjustments in response to changes in issue saliency. *West Eur. Politics*. 43, 749–771. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2019.1609296
- Abou-Chadi, T., Mitteregger, R. and Mudde, C. (2021). *Left Behind by the Working Class? Social Democracy’s Electoral Crisis and the Rise of the Radical Right, Empirical Social Research*. Berlin: Division for Analysis, Planning and Consulting.
- Abou-Chadi, T., and Wagner, M. (2020). Electoral fortunes of social democratic parties: do second dimension positions matter? *J. Eur. Public Policy*. 27, 246–272. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2019.1701532
- Ali, T. (2018). *The Extreme Center: A Warning*. London: Verso.
- Badiou, A. (2005). *Metapolitics*. London; New York, NY: Verso.
- Bandau, F. (2021). The electoral crisis of social democracy: postindustrial dilemmas or neoliberal contamination?. *Polit. Stud. Rev.* 1–11. doi: 10.1177/14789299211032461
- Bar-On, T. (2001). The ambiguities of the nouvelle droite, 1968–1999. *Eur. Legacy* 6, 333–351. doi: 10.1080/713665584
- Benedetto, G., Hix, S., and Mastrococco, N. (2020). The rise and fall of social democracy, 1918–2017. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 114, 928–939. doi: 10.1017/S0003055420000234
- Blair, T., and Schröder, G. (2000). *Europe: The Third Way/Die Neue Mitte*. Dissent, 47, 51–65.
- Brown, W. (2015). *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s stealth revolution*. New York, NY: Zone Books.

This contribution has attempted to develop a conceptual framework that enables political scientists to anchor relative political differences and changes in more absolute ideological positions. In this study the still quite abstract categories of “hegemonic,” “counter-hegemonic,” and “reactionary” positions were used to describe various stances in political conflicts that were represented along a single continuum. Needless to say, this model is merely one representation that is open to further development. For instance, by adding more dimensions or further disaggregate the categories of hegemony and counter-hegemony.

Finally, the study calls for more empirical scrutiny to the dynamics of shifting hegemonic ideologies and reshaping conflicts. This study has relied on a fictional example to clarify the conceptual distinction between the metapolitical dimension and the tools that are commonly used to study party-political dynamics (electoral support and left-right placements). Studying the metapolitical dimension, may require new and different tools since also expert placements or voter-perception surveys on ideological positions of political parties may only indicate relative positions and not account for absolute shifts. The present conceptual distinction already provides a theoretical basis to further empirically examine political and ideological developments beyond the relative differences between parties.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

- Budge, I., and Laver, M. (1986). Office seeking and policy pursuit in coalition theory. *Legisl. Stud. Quart.* 11, 485–506. doi: 10.2307/439930
- Casadio, M. C. (2014). The new right and metapolitics in France and Italy. *J. Study Radical*. 8, 45–86. doi: 10.14321/jstudradi.8.1.0045
- De Vries, C. E., Hakhverdian, A., and Lancee, B. (2013). The dynamics of voters’ left/right identification: the role of economic and cultural attitudes. *Polit. Sci. Res. Methods*. 1, 223–238. doi: 10.1017/psrm.2013.4
- Doherty, B. (1992). The Fundi-Realo controversy: an analysis of four European green parties. *Environ. Polit.* 1, 95–120. doi: 10.1080/09644019208414010
- Downs, A. (1957). *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers.
- Duverger, M. (1954). *Political Parties*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Eatwell, R., and Goodwin, M. J. (2018). *National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy*. London: Pelican.
- Faye, G. (2011). *Why We Fight*. Mumbai, Arktos.
- Fraser, N. (2009). *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, eds Q. Hoare and G. N. Smith (New York, NY: International Publishers).
- Green, J. (2007). When voters and parties agree: valence issues and party competition. *Polit. Stud.* 55, 629–655. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.2007.00671.x
- Green-Pedersen, C. (2007). The growing importance of issue competition: the changing nature of party competition in Western Europe. *Polit. Stud.* 55, 607–628. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.2007.00686.x
- Green-Pedersen, C., and van Kersbergen, K. (2002). The politics of the ‘third way’. *Party Polit.* 8, 507–524. doi: 10.1177/1354068802008005001
- Hall, P. A. (1993). Policy paradigms, social learning, and the state: the case of economic policymaking in Britain. *Comp. Polit.* 25, 275. doi: 10.2307/422246

- Hall, S. (2011). The neo-liberal revolution. *Soundings*. 48, 9–27. doi: 10.3898/136266211797146828
- Harmel, R., and Svåsand, L. (1997). ‘The influence of new parties on old parties’ platforms: the cases of the progress parties and conservative parties of Denmark and Norway. *Party Polit.* 3, 315–340. doi: 10.1177/1354068897003003003
- Hooghe, L., and Marks, G. (2018). Cleavage theory meets Europe’s crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *J. Eur. Public Policy*, 25, 109–135. doi: 10.1080/13501763.2017.1310279
- Inglehart, R. (1971). The silent revolution in Europe: intergenerational change in post-industrial societies. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 65, 991–1017. doi: 10.2307/1953494
- Keman, H. (2011). Third ways and social democracy: the right way to go? *Br. J. Polit. Sci.* 41, 671–680. doi: 10.1017/S0007123410000475
- Kitschelt, H. (1994). *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Krouwel, A., and Lucardie, P. (2008). Waiting in the wings: new parties in the Netherlands. *Acta Polit.* 43, 278–307. doi: 10.1057/ap.2008.9
- Lievens, M. (2013). Carl Schmitt’s metapolitics. *Constellations* 20, 121–137. doi: 10.1111/cons.12022
- Lukes, S. (1974). *Power: A Radical View*. London: Red Globe Press.
- Mackinac Center for Public Policy (2022). *The Overton Window*. Available online at: <https://www.mackinac.org/OvertonWindow> (accessed February 9, 2022).
- Martin, N., de Lange, S. L., and van der Brug, W. (2020). Holding on to voters in volatile times: bonding voters through party links with civil society. *Party Polit.* 28, 354–364. doi: 10.1177/1354068820980304
- Meguid, B. M. (2005). Competition between unequals : the role of mainstream party strategy in niche party success. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 99, 347–359. doi: 10.1017/S0003055405051701
- Mirowski, P., and Plehwe, D. (2009). *The Road From Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mondon, A. (2013). Nicolas Sarkozy’s legitimization of the front national: background and perspectives. *Patterns Prejud.* 47, 37–41. doi: 10.1080/0031322X.2012.735128
- Mudde, C. (2019). *The Far Right Today*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mudge, S. L. (2018). *Leftism Reinvented: Western Parties from Socialism to Neoliberalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Niezing, J. (1963). De kleine partij - enkele hypothesen. *Sociologische Gids* 10, 264–272.
- Oesch, D., and Rennwald, L. (2018). Electoral competition in Europe’s new tripolar political space: class voting for the left, centre-right and radical right. *Eur. J. Polit. Res.* 57, 783–807. doi: 10.1111/1475-6765.12259
- Otjes, S. (2012). *Imitating the Newcomer. How, When and Why Established Political Parties Imitate the Policy Positions and Issue Attention of New Political Parties in the Electoral and Parliamentary Arena: The Case of the Netherlands*. Leiden: Leiden University Press. Available online at: <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/20075> (accessed February 9, 2022).
- Panebianco, A. (1988). *Political Parties: Organization and Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Plehwe, D., Neujeffski, M., and Krämer, W. (2018). Saving the dangerous idea: austerity think tank networks in the european union. *Policy Soc.* 37, 188–205. doi: 10.1080/14494035.2018.1427602
- Prosser, C. (2021). The end of the EU affair: the UK general election of 2019. *West Eur. Polit.* 44, 450–461. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2020.1773640
- Przeworski, A., and Sprague, J. (1986). *Paper Stones. A History of Electoral Socialism*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.
- Rabinowitz, G., and Macdonald, S. E. (1989). A directional theory of issue voting. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 83, 93–121. doi: 10.2307/1956436
- Rancière, J. (1999). *Dis-Agreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Riker, W. H. (1962). *The Theory of Political Coalitions*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Rovny, J. (2012). Who emphasizes and who blurs? Party strategies in multidimensional competition. *Eur. Union Polit.* 13, 269–292. doi: 10.1177/1465116511435822
- Rovny, J. (2013). Where do radical right parties stand? Position blurring in multidimensional competition. *Eur. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 5, 1–26. doi: 10.1017/S1755773911000282
- Schattschneider, E. E. (1960). *The Semi-Sovereign People*. New York: Dryden Press.
- Schmitt, C. (1996). *The Concept of the Political, The Concept of the Political*, eds G. Schwab, T. B. Strong, and L. Strauss (Chicago, IL; London: The University of Chicago Press).
- Spitzer, A. J. (2020). *The Metapolitics of Settler Colonialism*. Bergen: University of Bergen.
- Stokes, D. E. (1963). Spatial models of party competition. *Am. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 57, 368–377. doi: 10.2307/1952828
- Strøm, K. (1990). A behavioral theory of competitive political parties. *Am. J. Polit. Sci.* 34, 565–598. doi: 10.2307/2111461
- Van de Wardt, M. (2015). Desperate needs, desperate deeds: why mainstream parties respond to the issues of niche parties. *West Eur. Polit.* 38, 93–122. doi: 10.1080/01402382.2014.945247
- Van der Brug, W., and Van Spanje, J. (2009). Immigration, Europe and the “new” cultural dimension. *Eur. J. Polit. Res.* 48, 309–334. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.00841.x
- Yilmaz, F. (2012). Right-wing hegemony and immigration: how the populist far-right achieved hegemony through the immigration debate in Europe. *Curr. Sociol.* 60, 368–381. doi: 10.1177/0011392111426192
- Zakharova, M., and Warwick, P. V. (2014). The sources of valence judgments: the role of policy distance and the structure of the left–right spectrum. *Comp. Polit. Stud.* 47, 2000–2025. doi: 10.1177/0010414013516928
- Zienkowski, J. (2019). Politics and the political in critical discourse studies: state of the art and a call for an intensified focus on the metapolitical dimension of discursive practice. *Crit. Discourse Stud.* 16, 131–148. doi: 10.1080/17405904.2018.1535988

Conflict of Interest: The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher’s Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

Copyright © 2022 Huijzer. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.