

Political Parties in a Comparative Perspective

Mobilization and Competition

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Last week/this week

Last week, we met with Thomas Paal and Julia Dickfer to discuss different aspects of local politics and (briefly) their relations to political parties.

This week:

- we will briefly review the last session and have some space for general seminar feedback
- talk about how parties compete against each other

Feedback

Before starting with the substantive part of the session, we'll do a short feedback session – both about last week and your feelings about the seminar so far:



Figure: Link to the survey <https://www.menti.com/alp78k6ry3m7>

What matters for voting?

Why do people vote for a party?

What matters for voting?

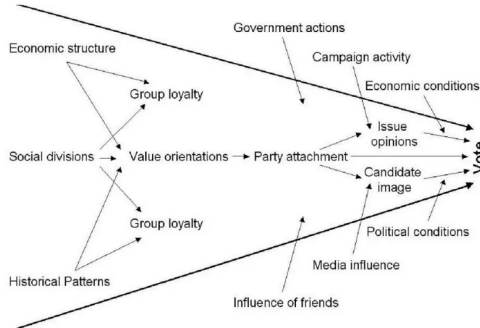


Figure: The funnel of causality; developed by Campbell (1960); [Source of visualization](#)

How parties can compete

- nominating popular candidates
- appealing to social groups
- putting issues on the agenda (*issue salience*)
- adopting winning positions on an issue
- through their actions in government

A new competitor

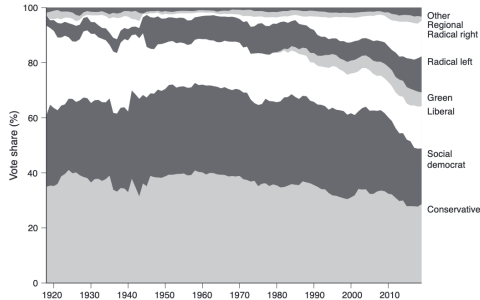


FIGURE 1.1 Vote share by party family

Note: Party vote shares 1918–2019 from Benedetto, Hix, and Mastroiocco, Dataset of Parties and Elections

Figure: Changing power constellations in Western European party politics (Vries and Hobolt 2020, p. 24)

A new competitor

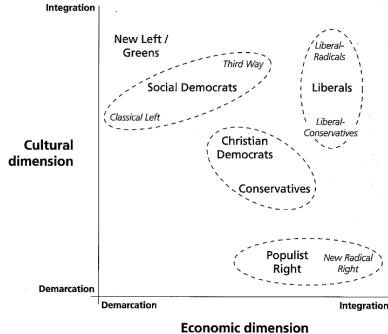


Figure: ...affecting the positional space (Kriesi 2008, p. 15)

Imagine the populist radical right enters the political space, how could mainstream parties react?

How can parties react to challengers?

According to Meguid (2005), there are three strategies, mainstream parties can employ vis-à-vis challengers' issue agenda

1. ignoring (*dismissive strategy*)
2. resisting (*adversarial strategy*)
3. adopting (*accomodating strategy*)

In three groups, why do the strategies work?

Radical Right's Success and Mainstream Parties' Policy Positions

Krause, Cohen, and Abou-Chadi (2023) provide an empirical test of Meguid (2005) argument.

Relevance?

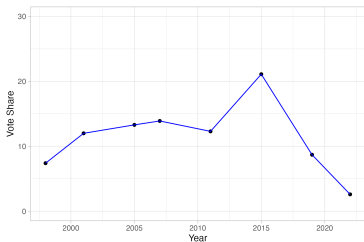


Figure: A change in rhetoric by the German SPD

Argument

Denmark's centre-left set to win election with anti-immigration shift

Social Democrats expected to return to power this week after backing once far-right policies



(a) Danish People's Party Vote Share



The Social Democrat leader, Mette Frederiksen, has defended her party's more hardline stance. Photograph: Henning Bagger/AFP/Getty Images

(b) Guardian Coverage on the Danish Elections 2019

Figure: DPP vote share and Guardian coverage

Argument

Against the argument by Meguid (2005), questioning whether a strategy like the one by the Danish Social Democrats is a successful response in curbing the far-right vote share (you vote for the original, adopting same positions legitimizes discourse)

Data and Methods

They conduct two types of analysis.

Analysis 1:

- examines the macro-level: How did policy shifts of mainstream parties affect radical rights' vote share in a certain election?

Analysis 2:

- scrutinizes the micro-level: Did citizens switch their votes due to mainstream parties' policy shifts?

Data and Methods

Main independent variable: policy shifts

- **data:** Manifesto Project
- **measure:** policy shifts measured through a combination of parties' positions on "National Way of Life" and "Multiculturalism"
- control variables: (1) life cycle of far-right, (2) mainstreaming of far-right over time, (3) cordon sanitaire, (4) other mainstream parties' behavior, (5) party family, (6) immigration salient, (7) parties' past positions

Findings

	ΔRRP vote shares	RRP net transfers	RRP gross gains	RRP gross losses
ΔPosition	0.04 [- 0.30, 0.37]	0.04 [- 0.04, 0.13]	0.08 [0.01, 0.15]	0.04 [- 0.00, 0.09]
Country FE	✓			
Election SE	✓			
σ _{parties*elections}		0.0068	0.0055	0.0042
σ _{countries}		0.0041	0.0042	0.0000
σ _{elections}		0.0040	0.0054	0.0028
σ _{residual}		0.1198	0.0946	0.0726
N _{countries}	13	13	13	13
N _{elections}	108	70	70	70
N _{parties*elections}	351	228	228	228
N _{individuals}		144 545	144 545	144 545
N _{parties*individuals}		468 539	468 539	468 539

Model 1: OLS with country fixed-effects and election-clustered standard errors. Models 2–4: hierarchical linear models with varying intercepts for countries, elections, and party-elections.

Figure: Results of Krause, Cohen, and Abou-Chadi (2023, p. 176)

In substance, what does the table show us?

Findings

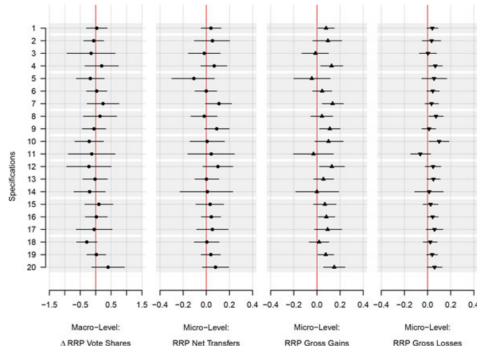


Figure: Alternative specifications and visual presentation of results by Krause, Cohen, and Abou-Chadi (2023, p. 177)

Findings

Implication: Accommodating the far-right on immigration grounds does not work.

And Hjorth/Larsen?

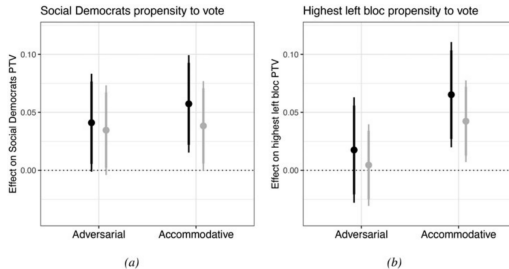


Figure: Main results by Hjorth and Larsen (2022)

To conclude...

- **Research Question:** Does accommodating the far-right reduces their vote share?
- **Main Argument:** Accommodation legitimizes far-right discourse and is not suitable to win back voters.
- **Data and Method:** Micro- and macro-level analysis of policy shifts (Manifesto Project) on vote share
- **Results:** Mainstream parties' convergence with the far-right on migration does not reduce far-right vote share.
- **Implications:** Accommodation (on migration) does not work.

To prepare for the week after next one...

- Next week is the final week before the winter break and the final session on parties' functions: next week on 'parties' in government
- **main reading**
 - **Sagarzazu I and Klüver H (2017)** Coalition Governments and Party Competition: Political Communication Strategies of Coalition Parties. *Political Science Research and Methods* 5 (2), 333–349. ISSN: 2049-8470, 2049-8489. DOI: [10.1017/psrm.2015.56](https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2015.56)
- **complementary readings**

To prepare for the week after next one...

- **Bäck H, Debus M, and Dumont P (2011)** Who Gets What in Coalition Governments? Predictors of Portfolio Allocation in Parliamentary Democracies. *European Journal of Political Research* **50** (4), 441–478. ISSN: 1475-6765. DOI: [10.1111/j.1475-6765.2010.01980.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2010.01980.x)
- **Sprang T (2025)** Radical Weakness—Do Radical Parties Receive Fewer Ministries? *Comparative Political Studies*, 00104140251349670. ISSN: 0010-4140. DOI: [10.1177/00104140251349670](https://doi.org/10.1177/00104140251349670)

Thank you for your attention!
Any further questions?

Literature

-  **Bäck H, Debus M, and Dumont P (2011)** Who Gets What in Coalition Governments? Predictors of Portfolio Allocation in Parliamentary Democracies. *European Journal of Political Research* **50** (4), 441–478.
-  **Campbell A, ed. (1960)** *The American Voter*. 1st Edition. Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1960. 573 pp.
-  **Hjorth F and Larsen MV (2022)** When Does Accommodation Work? Electoral Effects of Mainstream Left Position Taking on Immigration. *British Journal of Political Science* **52** (2), 949–957.
-  **Krause W, Cohen D, and Abou-Chadi T (2023)** Does Accommodation Work? Mainstream Party Strategies and the Success of Radical Right Parties. *Political Science Research and Methods* **11** (1), 172–179.

Literature

-  **Kriesi H (2008)** *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 428 pp.
-  **Meguid BM (2005)** Competition between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success. *American Political Science Review* **99** (03), 347–359.
-  **Powner LC (2014)** *Empirical Research and Writing: A Political Science Student's Practical Guide*. CQ Press, 2014. 321 pp.
Google Books: [a1IvBQAAQBAJ](#).
-  **Sagarzazu I and Klüver H (2017)** Coalition Governments and Party Competition: Political Communication Strategies of Coalition Parties. *Political Science Research and Methods* **5** (2), 333–349.

Literature



Sprang T (2025) Radical Weakness—Do Radical Parties Receive Fewer Ministries? *Comparative Political Studies*, 00104140251349670.



Vries CE and Hobolt SB (2020) *Political Entrepreneurs: The Rise of Challenger Parties in Europe*. Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020. 314 pp.