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## Citation

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# **The Cartel Party and the Rise of the New Extreme Right**

**Riccardo Pelizzo**

November 2006

Paper No. 12-2006

## The Cartel Party and the Rise of the New Extreme Right<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The cartel party hypothesis states that cartel parties create under-representative party systems in which citizens' political demands are not adequately addressed nor satisfied by parties' political offers. The cartel party hypothesis further argues that the emergence of the new extreme right parties represents a reaction against the under-representativeness of the cartel of parties. The purpose of this paper is to refine this causal argument in the light of the three versions of the cartel party hypothesis identified in the literature. Specifically, it will be suggested that the systemic version of the cartel party hypothesis argues that the rise of the extreme right is a reaction against the increasing similarity in parties' electoral programs, that for the systemic-subjective version of the cartel party hypothesis the emergence of the extreme right represents a reaction against the centripetal convergence of the Social-Democratic (SD) and Moderately-Conservative Parties (MC), while for the subjective version of the cartel party hypothesis the electoral fortunes of the new extreme right reflect the perception of a growing distance between the position of the electorate and that of the party system.

The paper is divided into four parts. The first part reviews the literature on the new extreme right. In doing so three main approaches are identified, the single issue, the socio-psychological and the cultural. Beside exploring the peculiarities of each of these approaches, it is argued that all such approaches are based on an implicit assumption: that the system parties' political offer is unable to satisfy voters' demands, which is exactly what is suggested

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<sup>1</sup> I need to thank Mark Nowacki, Marco Verweij and two anonymous referees for their useful comments. I also need to thank my assistants Mabel Sim and Bernice Ang for their good work.

by the cartel party hypothesis. Building on this discussion, the second part of the paper investigates how the systemic, the systemic-subjective, and the subjective versions of the cartel party hypothesis explain the rise of the new extreme right. In the third part of the paper, I perform some statistical analyses to compare and contrast the explanatory power of the three versions of the cartel party hypothesis. The three variants of the cartel party hypothesis will be tested by using the German and the Dutch.<sup>2</sup> The analysis of the German and the Dutch survey data shows that the subjective version of the cartel party hypothesis has a greater explanatory power than the systemic and the systemic-subjective. The fourth and the final part of the paper provides some tentative conclusions.

### Part One: The Story So Far

Some of the scholars working on extreme right parties have lamented that the study of these parties has not received much attention for most of the post-war era even in those countries, like Italy, where the extreme right enjoyed considerable electoral strength<sup>3</sup>. This lack of interest in the extreme right parties explains why the rise of the extreme right parties “has been totally unexpected by almost all politicians and opinion leaders but, even more, has not

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<sup>2</sup> The choice of cases in comparative analyses can take one of the following two forms. One can select most similar systems and try to explain why, in spite of the many similarities of the two systems, the two systems generated different political outcomes. Alternatively the scholar can choose the most different system approach and explain why a similar political outcome was generated or emerged in two systems that were so different from each other in every other respect. The present paper adopts the second approach and tries to explain why voters confronted with different electoral systems, different number of parties, different levels of party system fragmentation, and, most importantly, different patterns of alternation in government decide to vote parties of the new extreme right.

<sup>3</sup> Piero Ignazi, *Il Polo Escluso. Profilo del Movimento Sociale Italiano*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1989, pp. 9-10; Marco Tarchi, “Le tre vie del radicalismo di destra”, *Trasgressioni*, anno IV, n. 1 (9), Gennaio-Aprile 1989, pp. 3-19; Marco Tarchi, “L’impossibile identità. Il neofascismo fra destra e sinistra”, *Trasgressioni*, anno IV, n. 2 (10), Maggio-Agosto 1989, pp. 3-26.

been taken into account as a possible outcome by scholars of party system change”<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, most party scholars were not interested in the parties of the right and they did not pay much attention to these parties to see whether these parties could become major political actors in the electoral arena. Thus, they were taken by surprise when the extreme right’s upsurge occurred.

The situation has, of course, dramatically changed in the course of the last decade. In the wake of the new right-wing upsurge, shown by the data reported in Table 1, growing attention has been paid to the parties of the right, their ideas, ideals, ideological outlook, organization and electoral performance. This attention, in turn, has generated three schools of literature, which has improved the general understanding of these parties.

Table 1. The Vote for the New Extreme Right in Western Europe. Selected Countries, 1980-2000.

Year	Austria	Belgium	Denmark	France	Germany	Italy	Netherlands	Norway
1980								
1981		3.8	8.9	0.2			0.2	4.5
1982							0.8	
1983	5.0				.20	6.8		
1984			3.6				2.5	
1985		2.5						3.7
1986	9.7			9.8			0.5	
1987		2.0	4.8		.60	6.1		
1988			9.0	9.6				
1989							0.9	13.0
1990	16.6		6.4		2.40			
1991		7.6						
1992						14.0		
1993				12.3				6.3
1994	22.5		6.4		2.00	21.9	2.5	
1995	21.9	10.1						
1996						25.7		
1997				15.4				15.3
1998			9.8		3.30		0.7	
1999	26.9	11.4						
2000								

Note: The data presented in the table refer to the following parties: the FPÖ in Austria, the Vlaams Blok and the Front National in Belgium, the Progress Party and the DFP in Denmark, the National Front in France, the NPD, the DVU and the Republikaner in Germany, the Northern League and the Msi-Dn in Italy, the NVU, CP and CD in the Netherlands, the Progress Party in Norway.

<sup>4</sup> Piero Ignazi, “The silent counter-revolution: Hypotheses on the emergence of the extreme right-wing parties in Europe”, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. XXII, 1992, p. 3-34, the quote is from p. 4.

### Alternative Approaches: Issues, Psychology, Culture

The first approach to the study of the new extreme right parties is what I will call the single issue approach, which identifies the causes of the right wing electoral success in the right wing parties' ability to adopt in their political discourse, and to exploit at the ballot box, certain salient issues such as opposition to immigration. Both the scholarly literature and journalistic accounts of the electoral success of the new extreme right parties have recognized that the parties of what has alternatively been called the extreme right<sup>5</sup>, the new right<sup>6</sup>, the far right, the radical right<sup>7</sup>, radical right wing populism<sup>8</sup> or the neo-fascist right, have certainly benefited from opposing immigration and the system-parties. For example, with regard to immigration, Ignazi noted that "the ability to 'politicize' a hidden issue is generally recognized as the keystone of its success. In one way or another, the same has happened in countries such as Belgium, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, West Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland"<sup>9</sup>.

A second approach, that I will call socio-psychological, identifies the major determinant of extreme right success in the "psychological strain associated with uncertainties

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<sup>5</sup> Piero Ignazi, *L'estrema Destra in Europa*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1994; Aureal Braun and Stephen Scheinberg, *The Extreme Right. Freedom and Security at Risk*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Minkenberg, "The New Right in France and Germany. Nouvelle Droite, Neue Rechte and the New Right Radical Parties", in Peter Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (eds.), *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties*, London-Portland, Frank Cass, 1997, pp. 65-90.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (eds.), *Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right*, Boulder, Westview, 1993; Herbert Kitschelt (in collaboration with Anthony J. McGann), *The Radical Right in Western Europe. A Comparative Analysis*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*, London, MacMillan, 1994; Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right. Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in established Democracies*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> Piero Ignazi, "The silent counter-revolution: Hypotheses on the emergence of the extreme right-wing parties in Europe", *op. cit.*, p. 24.

produced by large-scale socioeconomic and socio-structural change”<sup>10</sup>. Betz suggests a clear causal chain of events that led to the emergence and electoral success of the parties of the new extreme right. The first stage, to which Betz attaches great importance, is represented by the crisis of the Keynesian socioeconomic model that had been hegemonic in the post war era. According to Betz “starting in the mid-1970s, there was a marked decline in productivity (...), real income started to fall in the United States and began to stagnate in Western Europe (...) the gap between rich and the poor started to widen (...), full employment, arguably the most significant achievement of the postwar period, gave way to mass unemployment”<sup>11</sup>. These changes led to the second stage in the causal chain, namely to what Betz called the “secular transformation of the global economy”<sup>12</sup> “from industrial mass production to flexible manufacturing, from labor-intensive production to capital-intensive “lean” production, and, more generally, from an industry-centered to a service-oriented economy”<sup>13</sup>. In short, “virtually all Western societies have experienced a dramatic increase in anxieties, insecurity, and pessimism about the future”<sup>14</sup>, which, along with the vanishing public faith in parties, governments and political institutions and processes, created fertile soil for rise of the new extreme right parties and their propaganda.

The third approach, that I will call cultural, conceives the emergence and the success of the new extreme right parties as a reaction against the post-material values of the New Left.

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<sup>10</sup> Hans-Georg Betz, “Introduction”, in Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right*, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Hans-Georg Betz, “Introduction”, in Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right*, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Hans-Georg Betz, “Introduction”, in Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right*, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Hans-Georg Betz, “Introduction”, in Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right*, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Hans-Georg Betz, “Introduction”, in Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right*, op. cit., p. 7.

According to this school, the transformation in the value system of individuals had a major impact on Western European parties and party systems. The emergence of new issues such as participation, self-realization and environmental concerns along with the declining salience of traditional materialist issues such as economic development, government intervention in the economy, and the reduction of income inequalities, have reshaped the environment in which parties operate. First of all, there has been a decline in the electoral appeal of the traditional platforms, policy proposals and programs of the Left, whose emphasis on material concerns is inherently unappealing for all those voters with post-material concerns. Second, there has been the transformation of the cleavage structure. The traditional economic cleavage has become less divisive, while the cleavage between postmodern and fundamentalist values has become increasingly salient, so that “the once-dominant Left-Right dimension based on social class and religion is increasingly sharing the stage with a Post-modern politics dimension”<sup>15</sup>. These two changes have created the conditions for the emergence of the parties of the so called New Left, which reflect and are the product of this new cleavage line, and also of the new extreme right parties.

This, of course, does not mean that the parties of the new extreme right share the post-material and post-modern concerns. As Ignazi pointed out, the programs, the platforms and the policy proposals of the new extreme right are inconsistent with, but not unrelated to, the post-material value system, because they represent “a reaction to it, a sort of ‘silent counter-revolution’”<sup>16</sup>. The opposition to globalization, to multiculturalism, to multiethnic societies

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<sup>15</sup> Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization. Cultural, Economic and Political Change in 43 Societies*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 248.

<sup>16</sup> Piero Ignazi, “The silent counter-revolution: Hypotheses on the emergence of the extreme right-wing parties in Europe”, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. XXII, 1992, p. 6. In the same vein, Kitschelt suggested that the new extreme right parties “are polar counterparts to the libertarian Left”, see Herbert Kitschelt



and individualism, the (de-legitimizing and, hence, anti-systemic) criticisms of the mechanisms of democratic representation, along with the quest for law and order and traditional values are just different, but related, aspects of the same reaction to the new divisions, conflicts and values of the post-industrial, post-material, post-modern world.

Each of these three approaches to the study of the new extreme right captures some important aspects of this phenomenon. Immigration, new social fears, and the reaction to the post-material values did create the conditions for this unexpected outcome. However, I argue that the existence of fertile soil for the rise of the new extreme right parties represents a necessary yet not sufficient condition for their electoral success. The rise of the new extreme right would not have occurred if the system parties had been able to formulate and provide adequate answers to voters' new political demands. That they were not is testimony to the cartel party hypothesis.

## Part Two: The Cartel of Parties and the Rise of the New Extreme Right

Some critics of the cartel party hypothesis have underlined that the transformation that Western European party systems have undergone in the course of the past three decades falsifies the cartel party hypothesis<sup>17</sup>. The not so implicit assumption of this line of criticism is that the emergence and consolidation of cartel party systems should have frozen Western

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(in collaboration with Anthony J. McGann), *The Radical Right in Western Europe. A Comparative Analysis*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1995, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> Karl-Heinz Nassmacher (ed.), *Foundations for Democracy*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2001, p. 191; Jon Pierre, Lars Svåsand and Anders Widfeldt, "State Subsidies to Political Parties: Confronting Rhetoric with Reality", *West European Politics*, vol. 23, n. 3, (July) 2000, pp. 1-24, Ruud Koole, "Cadre, catch-all or cartel? A comment on the notion of the cartel party?", *Party Politics*, vol. 2, n. 4, 1996, pp. 507-523. Objections against the systemic version of cartel party hypothesis were also raised by Herbert Kitschelt. In fact, and in spite of the fact that Kitschelt had used the notion of a systemic-subjective cartel party system to explain the rise of the new extreme right, he also formulated critical remarks on other studies of cartel party politics. Kitschelt's

European party systems. Yet, in spite of their great rhetorical value, both the assumption and the criticism are not entirely convincing.

There are several reasons why firms may decide to form a cartel. They might want to do so because the “cartel can mitigate the effects of a business downturn”<sup>18</sup>, because it can “cut down on sales costs and promotion costs”<sup>19</sup>, or because it “can reduce price fluctuations”<sup>20</sup> and because, by doing so, the cartel can “maximize joint profits of oligopolistic firms through the restriction of competition”<sup>21</sup>. This means that by increasing the communication and the cooperation between firms, the cartel is expected to facilitate planning and reduce the risks of business enterprise. Hence, the decision to form or join a cartel of firms is in fact associated with the desire to preserve the status quo and the collective survival of the existing firms. But the establishment of a cartel, in the absence of entry barriers, is *per se* insufficient to prevent other firms from entering the market and challenging the status quo. Cartels survive only if they are efficient, while when they are not efficient “they will suffer losses or invite entry just as other inefficient business will. Competition for profit will check the inefficiency of a cartel in the same way that it checks inefficiency in the internal growth of firms”<sup>22</sup>. This has some obvious implications for the cartel party argument. If the cartel in the market does not necessarily freeze the status quo, and if the functioning of the cartel of parties

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arguments can be found in “Citizens, Politicians, and Party Cartelization: Political Representation and State Failure in Post-Industrial Societies”, *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 37, n. 2, 200, pp. 149-179.

<sup>18</sup> Jack High, “Bork’s Paradox: Static vs. Dynamic Efficiency in Antitrust Analysis”, *Contemporary Policy Issues*, 3 (2), Winter 1984-85, pp. 21-32.

<sup>19</sup> Jack High, “Bork’s Paradox”, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> Jack High, “Bork’s Paradox”, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Blyth and Richard S. Katz, “From Catch-all-ism to the Reformation: The Political Economy of the Cartel Party”, European Consortium for Political Research Joint Sessions of Workshops, Grenoble, March 2001, p. 7. A revised version of this argument can be found in Mark Blyth, “The Political Economy of Political Parties: Beyond the Catch-all-ic Church?”, Paper Prepared for the 2002 Meeting of the Council for European Studies, Chicago, Illinois, 14-17 March (2002) and in Mark Blyth and Richard S. Katz, “From Catch-all politics to Cartelisation”, *West European Politics*, vol. 28, n. 1, 2005, pp. 33-60.

<sup>22</sup> Jack High, Bork’s Paradox, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

resembles that of a market cartel, then the cartel of parties will not freeze the party system unless the cartel of parties is efficient. By contrast, if the cartel of parties is inefficient it will create the conditions for the emergence of new, anti-cartel-party parties.

Critics of the cartel party hypothesis have not only overlooked the fact that the existence of a cartel is consistent with change, but they have also overlooked the fact that under certain circumstances (inefficiency), the cartel may be conducive to change. While critics of the cartel party hypothesis have overlooked this causal link, this link has always been emphasized in the cartel party literature.

#### The New Extreme Right and the Cartel

The cartel party literature has generally acknowledged that the cartel of parties creates an under-representative system and that the parties of the new extreme right emerge as a reaction against the under-representativeness of the cartel. Yet, why is the cartel under-representative? There are three answers to this question depending on the approach one adopts. The three approaches are respectively Katz and Mair's systemic approach, Kitschelt's systemic-subjective approach and my subjective approach.

The cartel party studies developed within the systemic approach argue that cartel party systems are objectively under-representative. According to Katz and Mair, cartel party systems are under-representative because parties' electoral programs and platforms have become increasingly similar and these increasingly similar programs fail to respond to voters' demands. In contrast, the under-representativeness of cartel party systems acquires a different meaning within the systemic-subjective approach developed by Kitschelt. According to Kitschelt, party systems are perceived as under-representative because the SD and MC

parties, in order to maximize their electoral returns, have converged centripetally and have thus become increasingly similar. In other words, the under-representativeness of the cartel of parties is associated with a systemic property (similarity of party programs) or with the perception of a systemic property (centripetal convergence).

Both arguments are however somewhat problematic. Let me begin with the systemic approach. Scholars working within the systemic approach argue that increasing similarity of party programs in Western Europe is a sign of the increasing under-representativeness of these parties and party systems. This claim is vitiated by a theoretical problem. This problem is due to the fact that the increasing similarity of parties' electoral programs hypothesized could be a sign of cartelization as Katz and Mair suggested<sup>23</sup>. Yet, it could also reflect a transformation of voters' political demands and/or their increasing similarity. In this case, the increasing similarity of party programs would not reflect parties' growing under-representativeness, but would reflect instead their willingness to adapt to the changing demands of a more homogeneous society. Obviously, if this were the case, competition would not be distorted and Western European party systems would not resemble oligopolistic markets. Hence, in order to assess whether competition is distorted in Western European party systems, it is necessary to know whether changes in political offers were adjustment to changes in demand or not, that is how political offers changed relative to demands.

Kitschelt's systemic-subjective approach is also problematic. According to Kitschelt, voters' subjective perception of the under-representativeness is generated by (objective) systemic factors, that is by the centripetal convergence of SD and MC parties. This argument presents three basic problems. The first problem is that, in spite of all the attention that party

scholars have devoted to developing a method to estimate parties' objective positions in the political space, the objective estimation of parties' spatial positions and movements still remains an unsolved puzzle. The second problem is that even if it were possible to assess parties' objective positions and movements in the political space, voters' perception of parties' positions and movements would be mediated by subjective factors. Hence, the perception of the under-representativeness of the cartel party system would not simply reflect the centripetal convergence of SD and MC, as Kitschelt assumes, but would reflect instead how voters perceive this convergence.

The subjective approach developed here avoids the problems encountered both by the systemic and the systemic-subjective approaches. This subjective approach explains more than the systemic approach because instead of identifying the under-representativeness of the cartel party system in changes of political offer *tout court*, it assesses the under-representativeness of the cartel party system on the basis of the changes in parties' offers relative to changes in the voters' demands. What indicates cartelization, for the subjective approach, is not change in the ideological distance between the parties located at the extreme ends of the spectrum or between the MC and SD parties, but rather the distance of the party system from the position of the voter. My argument in this respect is very straightforward. The voter votes for a party of the extreme right as a reaction against the cartel of parties, which is perceived to be unable to address the voter's demands. The failure to satisfy a voter's demands is not an individual failure, it is not the failure of any individual party. It is a collective failure, it is the failure of all those parties that make up for a system. Hence in order to assess whether and to what extent a voter perceives the party system to be representative of

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<sup>23</sup> Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, "Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy", *op. cit.*, pp.

their views or not, it is necessary to measure the distance between the position of the voter and that of the party system.

The subjective approach is superior to the systemic-subjective approach because it recognizes that the perception of changes parties' political offer (as indicated by parties' centripetal convergence) is always mediated by subjective factors. Voters' perception of the representativeness (or the lack thereof) of the cartel party system reflects voters' assessment of the changes in parties' political offer relative to the changes in voters' and electorate's demands. Specifically, my subjective version of the cartel party hypothesis suggests voters' perception of an increasing under-representativeness of Western European cartel party systems reflects the perception of an increasing gap between their own demands on the one hand and the political offer of the cartel party system on the other hand.

### Part Three: Testing the Hypotheses

In the previous part of the paper, two major conclusions were reached. The first is that the cartel party hypothesis is not inconsistent with the emergence of the parties of the new extreme right. The second conclusion is that there are some good theoretical reasons to believe that the rise of the new extreme right is better explained by the subjective version of the cartel party hypothesis than it is by either the systemic or the systemic-subjective version of the hypothesis. The purpose of this part of the paper is to test whether and to what extent the alleged theoretical superiority of the subjective cartel party hypothesis over the systemic and the systemic-subjective versions of the cartel party hypotheses is also supported by empirical evidence.

In order to do this, I will employ three logit models. The three models are fairly straightforward. The first logit model estimates whether the probability that a voter decides to cast her ballot for an extreme right party increases as the polarization of the party system (that is the distance between the left-most and the right-most party) declines.

Party positions can be estimated in different ways. Party positions can be estimated by performing factorial analysis on ecological data to assess the extent to which parties' electoral returns vary across a certain number of territorial units.<sup>24</sup> Party positions can also be estimated by analyzing the content of party manifestoes and other party documents and statements.<sup>25</sup> Last but not least party positions can be estimated by analyzing either expert or mass survey data.<sup>26</sup> In the present paper parties' positions on the political spectrum are estimated on the basis of mass survey data.

The reason why I decided to use mass survey data instead of other types of data is that in order to test one of the three cartel party hypothesis I need to estimate the distance between the party system's position and the position of the voters. Most of the data that we have mentioned before (with the exception of the party manifestoes and mass survey data) are not

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<sup>24</sup> Luca Ricolfi, *Destra e Sinistra? Studi sulla geometria dello spazio elettorale*, Torino, Omega edizioni, 1999, pp. 18-19. Ecological data that can also be analyzed with multidimensional scaling techniques. An interesting discussion concerning the dimensionality that can be found by analyzing ecological data with either factor analysis or multidimensional scaling technique, see Herbert F. Weisberg, "Dimensionland: An Excursion into Spaces", *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 18, n. 4, 1974, pp. 743-776.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of how party positions can be estimated on the basis of the party manifestoes, see Ian Budge et alii, *Mapping Policy Preferences. Estimates for Parties, Electors and Governments 1945-1998*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001. For a critical assessment of this methodology see Riccardo Pelizzo, "Party Positions or Party Direction? An Analysis of the Party Manifesto Data", *West European Politics*, vol. 26, n. 2, 2003, pp. 67-89; Simon Franzmann and Andre Kaiser, "Locating Political Parties in Policy Space: A Reanalysis of Party Manifesto Data", *Party Politics*, vol. 12, n. 2, March 2006, pp. 163-188. For a discussion of how political texts can be used to estimate parties' policy positions, see Michael Laver, Kenneth Benoit and John Garry, "Extracting Party Positions from Political Texts Using Words as Data", *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, n. 2, May 2003, pp. 311-331. Examples of empirical analyses conducted by using computer wordscoring, see Michael Laver and Michael Benoit, "Estimating Irish Party Position using Computer Wordscoring: The 2002 Elections", *Irish Political Studies*, vol. 17, n. 2, 2002.

terribly useful in this respect as they do not provide any estimate as to where the electorates and individual voters stand on policy dimension.

Kim and Fording showed how party manifesto data can be used to estimate the electorate's position.<sup>27</sup> Valuable as their measure may be, it cannot be used in the course of the present analysis as the electorate's position is measured as a function of party positions. In other words, this methodology assumes that parties adjust their political offers to changes in the voters' demands—which is exactly what is questioned by the scholars working in the cartel party framework. Moreover, even if this methodology provided a proper indication of the electorate's position on policy matters, it would still be unable to provide any indication of where individual voters actually stand in policy matters and therefore would not allow the analyst to test whether the distance between the party system and the voter is responsible for why some voters support the parties of the new extreme right. It is exactly because we need some data that can allow me to measure the distance between the position of the voters and that of the party system that in this paper I will use mass survey data.

German and Dutch election surveys asked respondents to place themselves as well as national political parties along the left-right scale. The left-right scale adopted by the Dutch Election survey is a ten-point scale, where value 1 means 'left' and value '10' means 'right', while the German election survey is an 11-point scale where 1 means 'left' and 11 means 'right'.<sup>28</sup> After a voter assigns a score, a position, to each party, we can identify which parties

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<sup>26</sup> See Peter Mair, "Searching for the Position of Political Actors. A Review of Approaches and a Critical Evaluation of Expert Surveys" in Michael Laver (ed.), *Estimating the Policy Position of Political Actors*, London, Routledge, 2001, pp. 10-30.

<sup>27</sup> Heemin Kim and Richard C. Fording, "Voter ideology in Western Democracies: An Update", *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 45, 2003, pp. 95-105.

<sup>28</sup> The German data are taken from ZA-Studiennummer: 3066 Titel: *Politische Einstellungen, politische Partecipazion und Waelerverhalten im Vereinigten Deutschland 1998*, Jurgen W. Falter, Oscar Gabriel and Hans Rattinger. The Dutch data are taken from Hans Anker and Erik V. Oppenhuis, *Dutch Parliamentary Election*



occupy the left-most and the right-most positions, we can compute what the distance is between those two parties according to our voter. Having estimated this distance between the extremes, or polarization, we can test whether the probability that a voter votes for the extreme right or not is affected by the polarization of the party system as a whole. This first model provides a fair test for the systemic version of the cartel party hypothesis.

The second logit model estimates whether and to what extent the probability that a voter votes for a party of the new extreme right is a function of the distance between the SD and MC parties. Each respondent involved in the survey was asked to assign a score, a position along the left-right dimension to all parties, including SD and MC parties. On the basis of these responses, we know the position of SD and MC for each voter, we can compute the distance between these two parties for each voter. In the second model we test whether the probability that a voter votes for a party of the new extreme right is affected by his perception of the distance between SD and MC parties. Specifically, we test whether voters who perceive only a small distance between SD and MC are more likely to vote for an extreme right party than those voters who detect instead major inter-party differences. This second model is used to test how good the systemic-subjective version of the cartel party hypothesis is.

In the third logit model, I plan to test whether the probability that a voter casts her ballot for an extreme right party increases as the distance between the position of the voter and the position of the party system increases.

The reason why I decide to operationalize in this way the independent variable for the third model can be explained very easily. Spatial analysis assumes that the utility attached to

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*Study, 1994* [computer file], 2nd ICPSR version, Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Dutch Electoral Research Foundation (SKON)/Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) [producers], 1995. Amsterdam, the

voting for a given party for a given voter is a function of the distance between the position of the voter and the position of the party. If there are two parties, the voter will cast her ballot for the party which is closest to her position.

But if we are to operationalize the vote against the cartel, if we are to understand the growing dissatisfaction of a voter with system parties and their ability to address her concerns, what we need to do is not to compute the distance between the position of a given party and our voter, but rather to measure the distance between the position of our voter and the position of the party system. If the utility attached to the system parties is inversely related to the distance between the position of the voter and that of the party system, so that a voter grows increasingly dissatisfied with the party system as she perceives the party system to be detached from her own position—and as a voter's dissatisfaction increases with the system parties, so does the probability that she will cast her ballot for a party of the new extreme right—just to manifest her discontent with the system. This third model is used to test whether the subjective version of the cartel party hypothesis provides a better explanation for the rise of the new extreme right than either the subjective or systemic-subjective version of the cartel party hypothesis.

### Some Results

After recoding the vote choice variable into a dichotomous variable taking value 1 if the voter voted for an extreme right party and taking value of 0 otherwise, I run a logistic regression in which I regress the newly dependent variable against the distance between the

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Netherlands:Steinmetz Archive/Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributors], 1997. ICPSR 6740.

parties located at the extremes of the political spectrum, that is against polarization. The model takes the form :

$$\text{Logic}(\text{extreme right vote}) = a + b_1 \text{ polarization}$$

When I run this model using the data from the 1998 German election survey, I find that the model takes the following form:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Logit}(\text{extreme right vote}) &= -3.584 + .009 \text{ polarization} \\ & (.000) \quad (.784) \end{aligned}$$

The coefficient is very weak and statistically insignificant. This result suggests that, as far as the German case is concerned, voters' decision to support the parties of the new extreme right is not related to their perception of the polarization of the party system.

The 1994 Dutch Parliamentary election data do not allow me to replicate exactly the analysis we performed with the German data. The basic problem is due to the fact that Dutch voters dramatically under-reported voting for a party of the extreme right. In fact, while 2.5 % of the Dutch voters voted for the parties of the extreme right, only .9 % of the respondents reported voting for an extreme right party. Interestingly enough, 2.5% of respondents reported, before the election, that they were planning to vote for the extreme right. Since the percentage of voters stating that they were planning to vote for the extreme right is much closer to the percentage of the vote cast for the extreme right than the vote for the extreme right reported by the respondents, in the Dutch case I will use the following model:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{intention extreme right vote}) = a + b_1 \text{ polarization}$$

When this model is used to analyze the 1994 Dutch parliamentary election survey, the model takes the following form:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{intention extreme right vote}) = -3.524 - .035 \text{ polarization}$$

(.000) (.560)

The coefficient is weak and statistically insignificant. Hence, the first set of logistic regression analyses does not support the claim that the probability that a voter votes for or has the intention to vote for a party of the new extreme right is related to polarization of the party system.

Does the vote for the extreme right or the intention to vote for the extreme right represent a reaction against the centripetal convergence of the SD and MD parties? To test whether this is the case, I run the following logistic regression models for, respectively, the German and the Dutch case:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{vote extreme right}) = a + b_1 \text{ convergence}$$

$$\text{Logit}(\text{intention vote extreme right}) = a + b_1 \text{ convergence}$$

When the model is run with the 1998 German election survey data, it takes the following values:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{vote extreme right}) = -3.610 + .012 \text{ convergence}$$

(.000) (.805)

The coefficient is weak and not significant from a statistical point of view, which means that, at least as far as the German case is concerned, changes in the perceived similarity between the SPD and the CDU does not increase the likelihood that a voter will cast her ballot for the extreme right.

When I perform the analysis of the 1994 Dutch parliamentary survey data, the model takes the following values:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{intention vote extreme right}) = -4.616 + .229 \text{ convergence}$$

(.000) (.021)

This means that when for a voter the distance between the MC and SD parties is 1, the probability that the voter has the intention to vote for the extreme right is:

Logit(intention vote extreme right) =  $-4.616 + .229(1) = -4.387$ . Given this logit, the

probability that a voter has the intention to vote for the extreme right is  $e^{-4.39} / (1 + e^{-4.39}) = .98$

percent. When instead the distance between the MC and the SD party is 9, the logit is:

$-4.616 + .229(9) = -2.555$ . given this logit, the probability that a voter has the intention to vote

for the extreme right is  $e^{-2.56} / (1 + e^{-2.56}) = 7.21$  percent.

The evidence generated by running this second model is mixed. While the analysis performed with the Dutch data indicates that the intention of voting for a party of the extreme right increases as the distance between the MC and the SD diminishes, the results of the analysis performed with the German data do not show any (statistically significant) relationship between the probability to vote for the extreme right and the perceived distance between the CDU and the SPD.

Does the vote for the parties of the extreme right represent a reaction against the system parties' perceived inability to address voters' demands? If this were the case, we should find that the probability that a voter votes for an extreme right party increases as the gap between her self-reported position and the position of the party system widens.

To test whether this is actually the case, I run two logistic regressions using the 1998 German and the 1994 Dutch election surveys data. The dependent variables are the same variables that I used with the previous two models. It is a dichotomous variable taking value 1 for, respectively, the vote for the extreme right in Germany and for the intention to vote for

the extreme right in the Netherlands. The dependent variable takes value 0 otherwise. The independent variable is the distance between the self-reported position of the voter and the position of the party system. The score indicating the respondent's position on the left-right continuum is provided by the respondents themselves as both the 1994 Dutch parliamentary election survey and the 1998 German election survey asked respondents to indicate their own position on the political spectrum. The position of the party system for each voter is measured by calculating the mean of scores that the respondents assigned to each and every party with the exception of the extreme right party. If we are correct in hypothesizing that the vote for the new extreme right parties is a vote against the cartel, then the perception of cartel like tendencies among the system parties increases as the distance between the voter's and the party system's position widens. To assess whether this is actually the case, I will employ the following logistic regression model:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{extreme right vote}) = a + b_1 \text{ distance}$$

By using this model to analyze the data of the 1998 German election survey, I find that the model takes the following values:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{extreme right vote}) = -4.288 + .272 \text{ distance}$$

(.000) (.000)

This means that when the distance between a voter and the party system is 1, the logit amounts to -4.016. In this case the probability that a voter casts her ballot for an extreme right

party corresponds to  $e^{-4.02} / (1 + e^{-4.02}) = 1.77$  percent. When the distance between a voter and

the party system is 9, the logit takes the following value:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{extreme right vote}) = -4.288 + 2.448 = -1.84.$$

In this case the probability that a voter casts her ballot for an extreme right party equals

$$e^{-1.84} / (1 + e^{-1.84}) = 13.7 \text{ percent.}$$

In the Dutch case I will use the following model to test whether the gap between the position of the voter and the position of the party system exercises any influence on the voter's intention to vote for a party of the extreme right. The model takes the following form:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{intention}) = a + b_1 \text{ distance}$$

When I use this model to analyze the 1994 Dutch election, the model takes the following values:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{intention}) = -4.352 + .278 \text{ distance.}$$

When the distance between the self-reported position of a voter and the position of the party system is 1, the logit equals:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{intention}) = -4.352 + .278 (1) = -4.074.$$

In this case the probability that a voter will declare her intention to vote for an extreme right party corresponds to  $e^{-4.07} / (1 + e^{-4.07}) = 1.67$  percent. When the distance between the party system and the position of the voter is 9, the logit equals:

$$\text{Logit}(\text{intention}) = -4.352 + .278 (9) = -4.352 + 2.502 = -1.85.$$

In this case, the probability that our voter will express her intention to vote for the extreme right corresponds to  $e^{-1.85} / (1 + e^{-1.85}) = 13.6$  percent.

These findings are very important for several reasons. First of all they are important because they indicate that the distance between the position of the voter and the position of the party system is a better predictor of whether a voter will support a party of the extreme right or not. This result is important not only because it indicates that the subjective approach

to the study of cartel party system is better than both the systemic and the systemic subjective approach, but also and more importantly because it provides new understanding of why voters support parties of the new extreme right. Voters perceive the party system to be distant from where they stand, they perceive the policy and political offer of the system parties to be inadequate to address their own demands, and they vote for the extreme right as a reaction against the under-representativeness of party systems and system parties.

Second, the vote for the extreme right is indeed a reaction against the cartel as the cartel party literature has consistently argued. However, my findings indicate that by voting for the parties of the new extreme right, voters react against the perceived discrepancy between their individual desires (and needs) and the system parties' perceived ability (or the lack thereof) to satisfy them. Voters react against a party system which is perceived to be non-competitive exactly in the same way in which markets are not competitive.

The findings of my analysis are important in a third respect. My analysis illustrates that the perception of oligopolistic tendencies and behavior in Western European party systems does not always nor necessarily reflect oligopolistic practices at the systemic level but it may simply reflect voters' subjective perception. It is the voters' perception of the gap between their demands and the party system's political offer that generates the perception of the cartel and provides a justification for voting for the new extreme right.

## Conclusions

Several conclusions can be drawn on the basis of what has been said in this paper. The first, but not necessarily the most important, is that the cartel party hypothesis provides the best



analytical framework for understanding the rise of the new extreme right parties. Scholars working within the cartel party framework of analysis have in fact understood (and argued) that what made possible the right wing revival was not just the emergence of new (salient) issues, the development of post-Keynesian social fears and anxieties or the reaction against post-materialist values. These changes, which are exogenous to the political system, have certainly generated new political demands within the Western European electorate. But the formation of new demands *per sé* would have not been sufficient to pave the way for the right wing surge. The success of the parties of the new extreme right was made possible by the fact that the existing system parties were or were perceived to be unable to recognize, address and provide an answer to the new political demands. Hence, by recognizing the system parties' under-representativeness and failure in satisfying the new political demands, the cartel party literature recognizes a condition without which the right wing surge would not have occurred.

The second conclusion, suggested by the analyses performed in this paper, is that the vote for the new extreme right parties is not so much a reaction against the cartel at the systemic or the systemic-subjective level, but it is rather a reaction against the cartel at the subjective level. This means that growing distance between the position of the voters and the perceived position of the party system is a better predictor of the right wing vote than the similarity of the electoral programs or the distance between SD and MC parties. The fact that my subjective approach provides a better explanation than the systemic-subjective approach is a remarkable finding but not a mysterious one. It simply means that voters are more concerned with the direction of competition, the distance between the perceived position of the party system relative to their own positions, than they are concerned with the centripetal convergence of SD and MC parties or with the declining polarization of the party system.

Having identified in the cartellization of the system parties one of the major determinants of the rise of the new extreme right parties is important not only in theoretical terms (as it provides a better explanation), but also in substantive terms. In fact, if we are concerned with substance, that is with the proper functioning of democratic systems, then I should find that cartellization poses a threat to democratic systems. First of all, cartellization poses a threat to the functioning of democratic regimes because it makes political systems under-representative, and to the extent that democracy is dependent on representation, reducing the representativeness of a system amounts to undermining its democraticness<sup>29</sup>. Second, cartellization poses a threat to democracy because it creates the proper conditions for the emergence of extreme right parties that, in the name of democracy and the people, aim at the restriction of those rights, freedoms and principles that make liberal democracies both liberal and democratic<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> On democracy and representation, see Richard S. Katz, *Democracy and Elections*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1997.

<sup>30</sup> Larry Diamond, "Is the Third Wave Over?", *Journal of Democracy*, July 1996, pp. 20-37.