

Social Democratic party's electoral strategies amid social class (re)alignment and (re)mobilisation

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Changing Cleavage Lines

- Cleavage (Bartolini & Mair, 1990; Bornschieer, 2009)
- Class - "...a fundamentally economic phenomenon, that is reflected in patterns of social 'groupness' (Pakulski, 2009: 152).
- Shared constructions of social reality (Tajfel, 1981).
- Class voting – material class and social consciousness class





A changing workplace

- Deindustrialisation – disintegration of working-class culture
- Growth of Postmaterialism (Inglehart, 1981; 1990).
- Expansion of technology, education, globalisation
- Shrinking working class, bid to attract the median voter
- Pzeworski and Sprague (1986).
- electoral strategy with three options, being; they can appeal to the broad church of voters, appeal solely to the growing electorate of youth postmaterialists, or solely the traditional blue-collar voter.

How have Social Democratic parties responded?

Labour's civil war

Hard-left belief that the route back to power through the mobilisation of the working-class (UK)

1983 – dismal results, Neil Kinnock takeover
Towards a progressive policy

Miner's Strike

Old Left and New Left merge unsuccessful

Purge of the Left, emergence of 'Soft Left'



Willy Brandt, assimilation of the APO

External Challenge

Helmut Schmidt – reasserted party's traditional identity



Isolated and expelled leftists from the party

New Left frustrations

Programmatic Renewal,
The Berlin Programme
(1989)

Social Democratic Response – Towards a Broad Electoral Strategy

- “We are all middle class now” – John Prescott, Labour MP. Classless society - Evans & Tilley (2017).
- Neoliberalism – ‘The Third Way’
- Blair-Schröder Paper (1998)
- Social Investment Model
- “A pale version of social democracy emerged from a decade of Blair” (Kavanagh, 2010: 23)
- Schröder (2002) gvt – Agenda 2010 and Hartz reforms
- Neo-liberal reforms as an attack on the German social welfare system
- Defections – formation of the Alternative for Work and Social Justice





Backlash Effect - Polarisation

- Broad electoral strategies alienated traditional voters
- Backlash effect (Norris & Inglehart, 2018).
- Rise of RRP – UKIP/AfD
- In an environment of high cleavage mobilization there are favourable conditions for oligopolistic competition and disincentives for pivoting, therefore, the ranks of ideologues are likely to grow disproportionately inside the party (Kitschelt, 1994).
- Deep cumulative divisions evident between "anywheres" and "somewheres" (Goodhart, 2017).

Responding to Realignment: UK Case Study

- 'Red Ed' Miliband, 30.4% (2015)
- "Today our danger is to defend traditionalist New Labour solutions" (Miliband, 2010).
- Jeremy Corbyn, 40% (2017)
- "Youthquake"
- *"Jeremy was very much of the ultra-left, John on the other hand was a Marxist, and remains a Marxist (S. Mulready, Personal Communication, 2018).*

It's very tricky for the Labour Party, people we are gaining are very pro-remain very South-London, our traditional vote is much more leave and skeptical (Asser, Personal Communication, 2018).

Classism is no longer as regimented as it used to be I think the idea of what a traditional Labour voter is has changed (Timberley, Personal Communication, 2018)

I think at some point over the next decade or so, there will be a big problem, and essentially you need to make the decision, do you want to try and keep that electoral coalition together even if they are from different backgrounds, or do you actually go well, this electoral coalition is no longer going to sustain us, and try and simply appeal to one or the other (Pope, Personal Communication 2018).

The idea of having that kind of middle-class well-meaning liberals and working class traditionally left-wing people has always been Labour's like successful coalition and it feels we are much more heavily weighted towards the former of those two currently (Pope, Personal Communication, 2018).

People on lower incomes, usually without a university degree or heavily unionised ... it's a combination of the Labour party's failure to provide a narrative that really got to the heart of what they need and resonated with their lives (Burns, personal communication, 2019).

Labour support is concentrated in you know like the youth vote that will get us where the cult like status from to some degree (Hayes, Personal Communication, 2018).

Electoral Dilemma once more

There is an element of them [working class] coming back when they start to see a party that seems to be taking their concerns seriously (Firman, Personal Communication, 2018).

What happened then with some of the left sects if you like, people who've been ploughing away for years, suddenly think well hang on, they start to focus there, and they want to take control (Hayes, Personal Communication, 2018)

I think we have to be careful to like not have it just be a liberal thing, just make it actually solidified with reasons (McNeil, Personal Communication, 2018).

Progress and the right in the party don't have any answers for liberating them from the shackles that they are placed in economically and socially (Timberley, Personal Communication, 2018).

Socialism as the only answer

The neoliberal onslaught, you know, I call it the Kinnock effect, that's when Blair and other people like them started throwing leftists out of the party and essentially taking control over Labour ... tough, now it's our turn (Timberley, Personal Communication 2018).

Labour is completely capable of building a coalition that encompassed those groups (Hayes, personal communication, 2018).

when you look past the hip and cool stuff ... he is reaffirmed ... what makes me like as a young person support Jeremy is like, he's supported things like getting rid of tuition fees before it was cool he has always been on the right side of history, he's always stood up for young people when he's not been young and loads of people from ethnic minorities have the same thing. He has kind of stood up for them (McNeil, Personal Communication, 2018)

how do you think socialism is going to be a solution in a country that voted for Margaret Thatcher for 18 years? (Mulready, N. Personal Communication, 2018).

[Corbyn has an] extremely specific type of voter ... People who are already political engaged and quite left-wing anyway ... I don't think he's got a particularly broad appeal at all [when campaigning in] ... Fleetwood, deprived postindustrial town ... I can count one hand the number of times Jeremy Corbyn has been an electoral asset (Burns, Personal Communication, 2019).

I'm much more in the majority of ordinary Labour party people, do not want this. But we've become the silent majority (Mulready, S. Personal Communication, 2018).

Socialism will not work

Corbyn himself probably likes the idea of keeping the coalition together, I think quite a few people in Momentum would probably be kind of fine with going with the, you know, university educated young people vote (Pope, personal communication, 2018).

Jeremy was very much of the ultra-left, John on the other hand was a Marxist, and remains a Marxist, and his whole economic policy is one which ordinary party members cannot fathom (Mulready, S. Personal Communication, 2018).

CDE voters were actually with Blair ... it was more your middle-class urban voters who were sort of classic socialists ... go back to a 1970s style, nationalize everything, the more ideological (Burnell, personal communication, 2019).

2019 General Election

- Campaign against big polluters and tax Dodgers
- Battersea

- Corbyn's opinion poll ratings lie at 22%, remaining the most popular with millennials at 34%, week ending 10/11/19 (YouGov, 2019).
- Brexit - negotiate deal and bring it to the people

soft left manifesto and dress it up a bit harder left than what it actually is ... They will absolutely run the tuition fee promise again, because that did very well, they will almost certainly have a few key nationalisations that are popular like water ... I suspect that they are a bit worried about the Greens, that will be a key part of it and hopefully, although you never know, some sort of regional devolution (Burnell, personal communication, 2019).



Responding to Realignment: Germany

- Identity Crisis
- 2007 Hamburg Programme
- Financial Crisis
- 2017, post-war low at 20.5%
- Coalition?
- Generational Split, Jusos, Kevin Kuehnert
- Andrea Nahles, 66%
- “As it stands, the only glue that still holds the SPD together is the desire to “reinvent” the SPD.” (Richer, 2018).
- European elections May 2019, SPD became the 3rd party.



Moving Forward

- Leadership election
- Olaf Scholz and Klara Geywitz (*Seeheimer Kreis*)
- Norbert Walter-Borjans and Saskia Esken
- #Eskabolation

Initial Findings

- Both parties split on the question of electoral dilemma
- Corbyn's Labour, seems to be an attempt to appeal broadly to all 'left' voters
- Test: General Election 2019
- SPD remained centre ground, continuously dropping in the polls
- Now mimicking 'Bernie Sanders effect'
- Test: poll ratings after election of new leaders
- Comparative Analysis