

Right-Libertarian Parties and the “New Values”: A Re-examination*

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Among the most noted and studied societal tendencies of recent decades have been those associated with structural change in industrial societies becoming postindustrial. Within political science, much attention has been focused on the behavioural and institutional effects of value change accompanying that transition, and especially on the diminishing impact of class and ideology on politics. Among the institutional effects have been (at times and in some places) decline in support for “established” parties and the rise of alternative political organizations, including new parties on both the left and right. Many of the new parties of the left, and especially those labelled “left-libertarian”, are generally viewed as harbingers of things-to-come in the “new” politics – progressive vehicles, driven along by the tides of change. In contrast, the new parties of the right are generally viewed as conservative, authoritarian, materialist *reactions* to change – representing transitional efforts to stop change and its effects. The latter parties presumably tell more about the past, the present, and efforts to preserve them, than about the “new” in politics. The purpose of this article is to explore the possibility that some of the new right-wing parties – especially those in social democracies – might themselves be viewed more accurately (or at least *as justifiably*, based on reinterpretation of the available evidence) as reflections of new values and as vehicles of forward-looking change. If so, then those parties, like their left-libertarian counterparts, may tell us something about the *future* of postindustrial politics.

Introduction

Literally hundreds of new parties have been added to the party systems of Western democracies in the past few decades, some formed by splits or mergers of existing parties, while others were created as completely new actors (Harmel & Robertson 1985). Though the formation of new parties has been something of a continual process and so is not especially noteworthy in its own right, one particular group of the “completely new” parties of the 1970s and 1980s has been singled out for considerable attention in the parties’ literature. These “new politics” parties, pre-

* This article was submitted to *Scandinavian Political Studies* in July 1993. References to the Progress parties in the main text should be read as an attempt to describe and interpret the role of those parties from their inception through early 1992. Some later events within the Norwegian party, which may have the effect of altering its nature and role, are briefly treated in the Postscript following the main text. We interpret those events as being generally supportive of our main contention.

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dominantly of the “greens” variety, presumably reflect postmaterialist values and hence can serve as harbingers of the politics-to-be (Inglehart 1987; Kitschelt 1988; Betz & Swank 1991). Both in their issue profiles and their anti-organizational styles, such parties are thought to offer a valuable glimpse into postmodern politics.

More recently, some attention has been focused on another group of new parties, labelled the “new” or “populist” right (e.g. Betz 1990). Though some of these parties were at first dismissed as short-term protest phenomena, the growing number of them and their relative staying power have made them a subject of some interest. Generally speaking, though, these parties are viewed as conservative, reactionary, anti-modern proponents of the past, rather than as purveyors of something new and different. Whether reacting to growing taxes, growing bureaucracies, or growing numbers of immigrants, such parties presumably offer reflections of the past rather than glimpses of the future.

Though students of the postmaterialist parties of the left have now established that not all of these parties are alike (e.g., see Müller-Rommel 1985), and especially that not all are alike in their “progressiveness”, it has been only very recently that questions have been raised about the homogeneity of the new parties of the right. It is our purpose in this article to add to the latter literature by (1) re-examining existing knowledge about new parties of the right and their supporters, and (2) offering a reinterpretation of the aims, roles, and significance of *some* of these parties.

Because we do not consider all new right-wing parties to be a homogeneous group (and in fact find it problematic that some authors have treated them as such), and especially because we do not contend that all such parties will be as progressive and “libertarian” as their left-libertarian counterparts (but only that some might be), it is possible for us to establish our point with just a few cases. On the premise (which we hope to validate below) that the role played by a new right-wing party – i.e., whether conservative or progressive, “forward-” or “backward-” looking – depends as much on its politico-economic system as on its own issue profile, we focus much of our attention on the new right-wing parties of two comprehensive social democracies. A finding of “forward-looking” right-wing parties in such systems (where the status quo is left-oriented) will certainly not establish that the same phenomenon exists or does not exist elsewhere; it is only meant to establish that the phenomenon has existed someplace. That in itself may contribute to a more complete understanding of new politics, especially given the propensity within the literature to assume that all “status quos” are alike, and hence that all progressions from the status quos should be similar as well.

After a brief review of the literature pertaining to left-libertarian parties (to establish a basis for comparison), we proceed to assessing the extent to

which the Progress parties of Denmark and Norway fit the description, “conservative, authoritarian, reactions to postmaterialism”. Throughout, we will note that the aims and positions of right-wing parties may equip them to play different roles in predominantly socialist democracies from those they normally play in the more capitalist (i.e., “liberal”) democracies.

New on the Left

It is alleged by Inglehart and others (e.g., Lafferty & Knutsen 1985; Van Deth & Guerts 1989; Kitschelt & Hellemans 1990) that what is “new” about the parties that are now commonly labelled “left-libertarian” (including, of course, greens’ parties) is their abandonment of the old ideologies in favour of pursuit of the “postmaterialist” values. These parties not only espouse such values, but in doing so they disproportionately attract voters with such values as well. The establishment of industrialized society brought with it not only a new set of problems (e.g. environmental) to be solved, the argument goes, but also a level of affluence that allows the need for economic security to be subjugated to other, “newer”, values. According to Inglehart:

Advanced industrial societies are undergoing a gradual shift from emphasis on economic and physical security above all, toward greater emphasis on belonging, self-expression, and the quality of life (1990, 11).

So, according to Kitschelt:

Left-libertarian parties grow out of the sentiment that the realms of instrumental action in modern society – the market place and bureaucratic organization – dominate too much of social life and have displaced relations of solidarity (in the primate sphere of interpersonal communication) and participatory political deliberation (in the public sphere of collective decision making). . . . In their view, the formal rationalities of markets and bureaucracies expropriate the citizens’ capacity to determine their own lives and must be checked by institutions that impose substantive standards of rationality on their boundless expansive dynamic (1988, 197).

In addition to the disdain for markets, other reasons have been cited for the propensity of such parties to form (or at least end up) on the left. According to Inglehart, it was originally because the left (and especially the communist left) was associated with protest and demands for change, and so were the postmaterialists (1990, 263). But postmaterialists were quickly repelled by the authoritarianism they found in the communist left, and now are more selective in supporting only left-oriented parties that are not so inconsistent with “the Postmaterialist desire for a less hierarchical, more human society, in which the quality of life is more important than economic growth” (1990, 264).

In spite of the evidence of postmaterialist parties forming on the left, it

is obvious that there are also some natural tensions between leftism and postmaterialism. Kitschelt has noted that such parties “link libertarian commitments to individual autonomy and popular participation, with a leftist concern for equality” (1988, 195), creating an obvious tension between strains of individualism and collectivism. Additionally, the libertarian desire for reduced regulation comes into direct conflict with willingness to use the state to impose environmental restrictions.

So while it is possible to observe that a merger of postmaterialist values and leftist orientations has proven workable in a number of instances, it is less evident that it is the exclusively “natural” combination of new and old values. In fact, the libertarian dimension (as distinguished from the quality of life and communitarian dimensions), with its inherent emphasis on individualism, would seem to fit more naturally with values normally associated with the right. Nonetheless, in spite of Savage’s (1985) finding of a significant minority of right-identifiers among postmaterialists and in spite of a few right-oriented environmentalist groups (e.g. Switzerland’s National Action for People and Homeland), there is no denying that most postmaterialists and most of their parties have been found on the left, giving indirect support to the proposition that it is from that end of the left–right continuum that we can learn about the politics of the future.

However, it is not necessarily true that *all* parties representing “new values” would be postmaterialist, whether on the right or the left. That is, Inglehart’s postmaterialism – as intriguing a concept as it is – is but one construct of values that might be given heightened emphasis as a result of postmodern structural changes. We will return to this important point below.

New Right-wing Parties

Historically, the term “right” in politics has meant support for the monarch against reformist tendencies, support for monied interests (society’s “haves”) against those favouring redistribution of wealth (to the “have-nots”), and support for *laissez faire* as opposed to “big” governmental involvement in the economic sphere more generally.¹ It has become so commonplace to associate the concept of the right with the terms “conservative”, “authoritarian”, and “reactionary” that the actual relationships among these characteristics are seldom investigated or even questioned. This tendency is evident in the literature on new political parties of the right, contributing to the implicit assumption in much of this literature that all of such parties are basically conservative, authoritarian, and reactionary, in spite of attempts by some of them to stress their “progressiveness” (e.g. the names of the Progress parties of Denmark and Norway).

Certainly, there are cases among the new parties of the right in Europe that fit the more common description. For instance, the Republikaner in Germany, a racist reaction to increased immigration, can be accurately thought of as conservative, authoritarian, and reactionary. So might the National Front and the British National Party in Great Britain, and Germany's Deutsche Volksunion. These parties prefer the past, if not the present, to what they fear might be the future. Rather than being vehicles of "progress" (no matter how defined), they take pride in their regressive orientations.

But others among the new parties of the right did not begin as authoritarian, anti-immigration vehicles. The Progress parties in Denmark and Norway, for instance, began as anti-tax, anti-big government, quasi-libertarian movements which saw in their platforms what their names imply – progress, not regress. (Both parties have since added anti-immigration positions to their profiles, emphasizing the economic dimension (see Andersen & Björklund 1990, 211–212).) Indeed, when Mogens Glistrup started his Danish party in 1972 and when Anders Lange followed suit in Norway in 1973 (see Harmel & Svåsand 1989, 1990), both saw their offspring as more than just "anti-tax"; they were also *anti-establishment*. And since that time, neither party has drawn upon images of a more favourable past (see, for example, Svåsand 1987); both have seen themselves as offering images of a new, better, and different future for themselves and many of their fellow Danes and Norwegians. It is to further consideration of whether these parties might better be thought of as forward-looking, libertarian, reactions to the past than as conservative, authoritarian, reactions to change, that we now turn.

Conservative or Forward-Looking?

While noting that what he called radical right-wing populist parties were "far from a homogeneous phenomenon", Betz went on to suggest that such parties do share a number of features, including their propensity to "oppose any further extension of the welfare state and the high taxes necessary to support it, advocating instead a *return* to the virtues of initiative and individual entrepreneurship" (1990, 11; italics added). Though not saying so explicitly, these words convey the clear impression that the new right-wing parties have in common a desire to turn back rather than to "progress", at least as regards the relationship of state and society on the economic dimension.² And in predominantly capitalist systems, the stated positions may in fact indicate conservatism (if not regression). What the statement overlooks, however, is that not all democracies coincide with predominantly capitalist economic systems, and that in others "initiative and individual

entrepreneurship” may be something *new*, not something to be *returned to*.

Inglehart, too, tends to treat right-wing positions as being naturally conservative, while left-wing positions are more “future oriented” (1971, 993, 1987, 1297). In the postindustrial societies of the capitalist democracies, he argues, those placing a premium on the new “postmaterialist values” have naturally merged those values with leftist orientations, because it is the left that has presumably stood for change. Though this thesis may be fine as far as it goes, it does not go far enough to cover the postmodern societies of socialist democracies (perhaps exemplified best by the Scandinavian social democracies). The thesis seems to assume that all “status quos” of a generation ago were alike, and hence that all cultural changes from those status quos should be similar as well, with the consequence that the resulting “forward-looking” parties would always be found on the left and the “regressive” (or “conservative”) parties would be found on the right. These assumptions do not recognize the fundamental differences in values that exist between democracies of the capitalist variety and those that have been significantly more socialist in orientation.

Though the United States, France, and Britain have substantial welfare programmes in place, none of these liberal democracies has developed the comprehensive (“institutional”) welfare state (see Wilensky & Lebeaux 1958; Mishra 1984; Esping-Andersen 1990; Sainsbury 1991), including what might be called a “welfare culture”, that has for some time been a fixture of Scandinavian social democracy. The Danish and Norwegian societies, for instance, have traditionally placed much greater emphasis on collective (as opposed to individual) responsibility and goals, resulting in a much bigger and more “authoritarian” state, providing more for its citizens and demanding much more from them (especially in taxes), than has been true for the capitalist or even “mixed economy” democracies. The latter have placed more of a premium on individual initiative, objectives, and achievements, even while engaged in the development of residual welfare states. And this difference goes beyond the actual size of the welfare state; the two types of systems differ fundamentally in their norms and values, with the capitalist and even “mixed economy” democracies emphasizing norms of “individualism” and the socialist regimes placing greater emphasis on “collectivism”.³ (For example, one need only consider how recipients of welfare benefits are viewed in the two types of systems; whereas welfare tends to be frowned upon and viewed as acceptable only as a last resort in the more liberal regimes with “residual” welfare systems, welfare is much more generally accepted as a right of citizenship in the social democracies with their “comprehensive” welfare systems.)⁴

The left-libertarian movements and parties of the more capitalist regimes, exemplified by the greens’ parties, were originally seen as anti-estab-

ishment threats to the status quo, and were treated as such by most of the established parties. These parties challenged the widely accepted compromise between beliefs in basic tenets of individual entrepreneurship and the need for some type of “safety net” to catch those who failed in the system. Against that backdrop, the left-libertarians’ rejection of both markets and bureaucratic solutions had to be seen as “new”, and certainly not conservative.

Against the backdrop of general consensus on socialist values in the social democracies, however, it would seem that parties on the *right* would have the greatest chance of offering something dramatically different from the status quo. Indeed, Lars Svåsand thought it necessary to write a special explanation for inclusion of the Norwegian Progress party among his entries for a book on Conservative parties:

It is with some ambivalence that I have included the Progress party. . . . The rationale for including the party is its undoubtedly right-wing character. But “right-wing” is not synonymous with “conservative”. . . . Conservatism is usually associated with the introduction of moderate changes based on existing conditions, and with the preservation of certain values that have a historical legitimation . . . the party’s views on some of the predominating features of Norwegian society deviates significantly from other parties. . . . In this respect the party’s policies can hardly be said to be “bound by tradition” (forthcoming, 1).

In fact, as Svåsand notes, the Progress party “breaks with the general consensus in post-Second World War Norway where the public sector has been greatly extended in virtually all economic and social spheres” (forthcoming, 2). Much the same can be said for the Danish party.

In this sense, then, it is the traditional leftist parties that have perhaps become the most conservative of all in the socialist democracies. And by merging into the left-oriented post-occupation consensus, the self-proclaimed Conservative parties have come to offer but a minor variation on the same theme. In fact, it was during periods of Conservative-led governments that right-oriented Scandinavians became most frustrated with their systems and their parties; the Conservative parties were governing, they thought, like socialist parties (see Andersen & Björklund 1990, 198). During these periods, the “non-socialist” parties demonstrated how much they had become accustomed to and satisfied with the role of “arguing on the fringes” of social democratic positions, rather than offering a true, far-reaching alternative. In fact, it is evident from Harmel & Svåsand’s (1990) analyses of the parties’ positions on a range of issues that the Conservative parties of Denmark and Norway were, by the time of the birth of the Progress parties, almost as leftist as rightist in their issue profiles.

If the older Conservative parties had become truly conservative in their social democracies, unwilling or unable to provide clear alternatives for

the future, the founders of the Progress parties took the opportunity provided by system-shaking EC votes in the early 1970s (see Andersen & Björklund 1990, 198) to start vehicles that would fill that void. Pedersen (1988, 260) describes the Danish party in its early days as seeing itself as “a popular movement, the ‘Progress Army’, marching against ‘The System’, and against the ‘Old Parties’”. And McHale (1983, 693) notes that the Norwegian party (at first called “Anders Lange’s Party for Strong Reduction in Taxes, Rates and Public Intervention”) “directed its attacks against the social and welfare legislation of the Norwegian Labour Party government and was the only party to do so in parliament in the post-World War II era.” Indeed, Harmel and Svåsand’s data on the parties’ issue positions clearly show that the Progress parties’ platforms placed them distinctly to the right of the Conservative parties not only in the early years, but in more recent years as well (and the latter despite rightward moves by the Conservatives).⁵

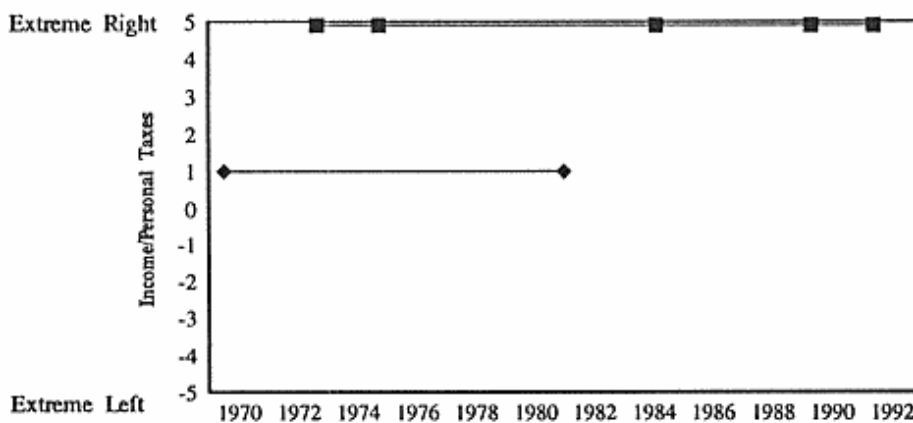
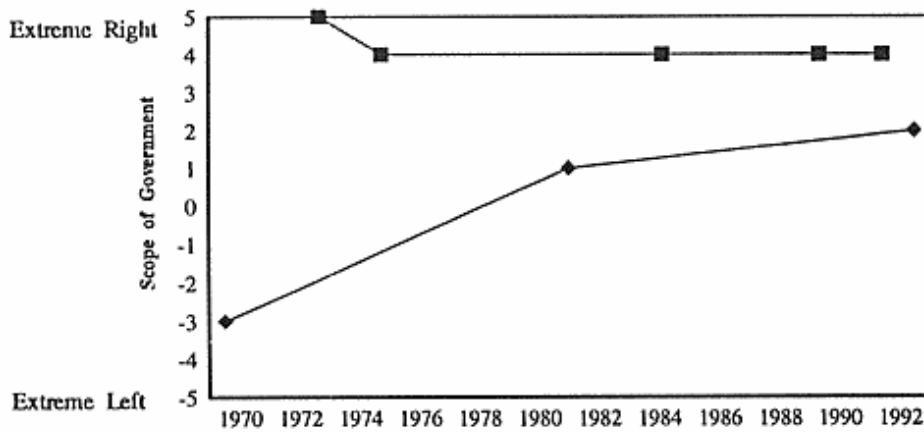
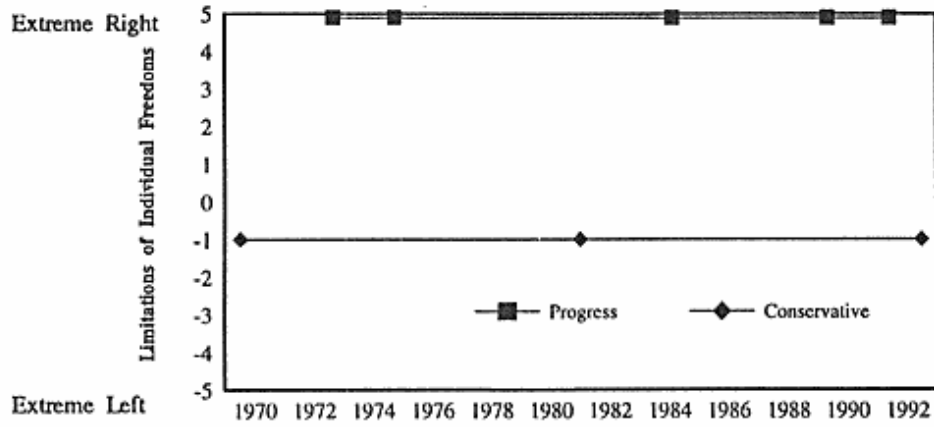
Not only have the Progress parties tended to be further to the right on those issues dealing with a market economy (when both parties have taken positions), but they established themselves early on as the parties with the greatest concern for individual freedoms more generally. On both counts, the Progress parties would seem to have justified the claim to being the true parties of change (or as they see it, “progress”). The “conservative” label, while perhaps applicable to the new right-wing parties of the more capitalist regimes, seems to have been ill-suited to the Progress parties of social democracies.⁶

Authoritarian or Libertarian?

Though at times noting what he calls their “radical neo-liberal” tendencies, Betz (1990) suggests that one of the shared characteristics of all of the new radical right-wing parties is their pursuit of “an authoritarian, xenophobic, and nationalist agenda” (1990, 12), with support based on “a rather distinct materialist–authoritarian value structure which is diametrically opposed to that of the left-libertarian camp” (1990, 24). Given Svåsand’s characterization of the Norwegian Progress party as “radical liberalistic” (forthcoming, 1), the novice reader on the Progress parties can be excused for feeling a bit confused. We think the confusion is rooted in definitional and “indicator” problems. Since “liberal” values, much more so than authoritarian values, might be considered “new” to social democracies (as opposed to liberal democracies), it is important for our thesis that the matter be clarified.

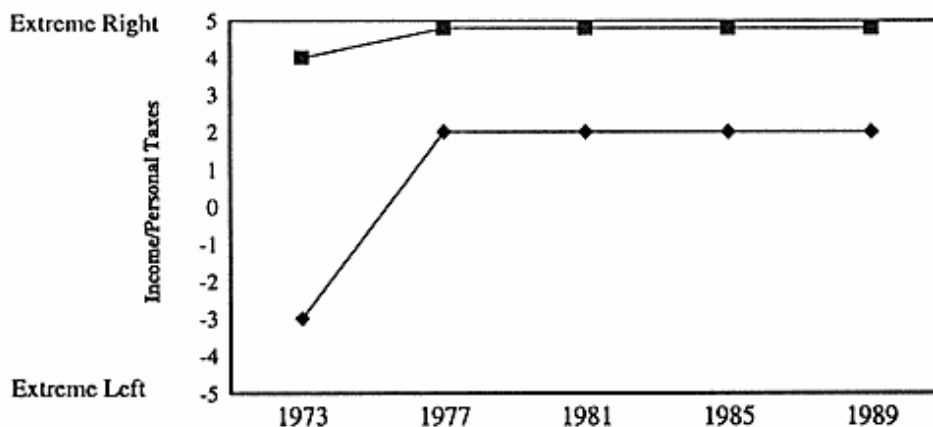
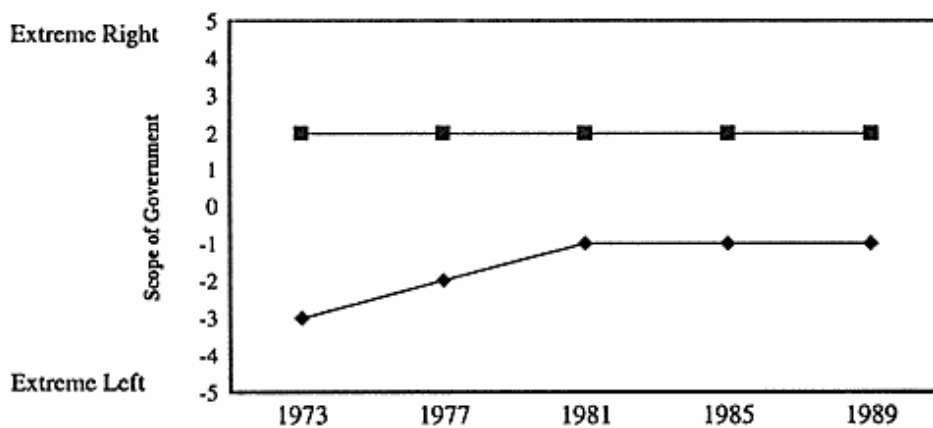
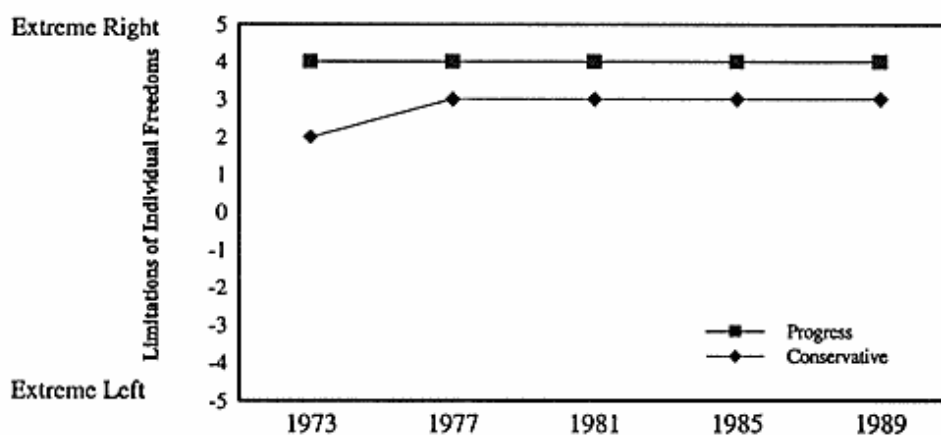
Our own preference is to call the Progress parties “right-libertarian” (although this label may no longer be as appropriate for the Norwegian

Table 1. Selected Issue Positions of Denmark's Progress and Conservative Parties, Over Time*



* For the Progress Party, platforms were coded for 1973, 1975, 1984, 1989 and 1991 (duplicate of 1989). For the Conservative Party, platforms were coded for 1970, 1981 and 1992. The Conservative Party did not take a position on "Income Tax" in 1992. For more information on the data, see Endnote 5.

Table 2. Selected Issue Positions of Norway's Progress and Conservative Parties, Over Time*



* For both parties, platforms were coded for 1973, 1977, 1981, 1985 and 1989. For more information on the data, see Endnote 5.

party; see Postscript). If libertarianism is equated with emphasis on maximizing individual freedom and minimizing interference of government in citizens' lives, and authoritarianism emphasizes state control over society and its members, then the Progress parties have clearly been more libertarian than authoritarian, and have probably been – throughout most of their existence thus far – as libertarian as those parties now referred to as “left-libertarian”.

Libertarians can be thought of as the “new liberals”, distinguished from the 19th century liberals by their target of opposition. The old liberals wanted freedom from non-democratic, autocratic rule (see Duverger 1972). The new liberals (or libertarians) seek independence from what they see as the authoritarian rule of democratic states and the extensive bureaucracies that they have come to embody. Descriptions very similar to this have often been applied to the left-libertarian parties, and the description may have applied no less appropriately to right-libertarian parties of social democracies (where there has been even more authoritarian, big-government to react to than in the more individual-oriented capitalist democracies).

With the exception of their willingness to maintain extensive welfare safety nets for those who “truly need them” (see Betz & Swank 1991, 23), the Progress parties have, from their beginnings, favoured much smaller public sectors, far less regulation both of their economies and of people's lives, and, of course, a severe reduction if not elimination of some types of taxes (including income tax).⁷ With reference to the Danish party, Berglund & Lindström (1978, 185) have summarized the positions of the Progress party this way:

The public sector should not be allowed to expand more with all the concomitant encroachments on private initiative and individual responsibility. Education, housing, employment, etc., were best left to the citizen's own judgement.

And Svåsand has summarized the position of the Norwegian party this way:

[Issues involving the economic system and economic policy] occupy the main concern of the Progress party, together with a general opposition to most kinds of public regulation that in the party's view *inhibit the individual's freedom to decide for its own affairs*. . . . The fundamental preference for individuals rather than the collectivity manifests itself throughout the party program. [This includes] the party's view on taxation and governmental economic activity. However, the party's emphasis on individual rights – and duties – goes much further. The party's proposals for referenda fit into this philosophy. . . . It is still preoccupied by its concern for a “*limited*” state. (forthcoming, 32, 34 and 36; italics added)

That this (what we feel comfortable in calling “libertarian”) orientation is itself “new” and hardly “conservative” within the Norwegian social democracy is also captured succinctly by Svåsand's conclusion that with

such positions “The Progress party has challenged some of the consensus in Norwegian politics” (forthcoming, 37). The same statement applies equally well for Denmark.⁸

Why, then, have the Progress parties been alleged at times to be “authoritarian”? It is primarily because of the parties’, and their supporters’ tendencies to support stronger stands on law and order as well as stronger limitations on immigration, two positions that have become strongly identified with “authoritarianism” in the literature on the new right-wing parties. Betz is correct in noting that such parties (including the two Progress parties) “heavily emphasize two concrete programmatic points: they propose to combat the allegedly growing threat posed by rising crime by means of the restoration of law and order, and they vociferously oppose foreign immigration and the granting of asylum” (1990, 11), and public opinion surveys (e.g., see Andersen & Björklund 1990, 210–211) have found a tendency among Progress voters to support the latter position.

Andersen and Björklund have best summarized the positions of these parties with regard to immigration:

... the most important rallying issue for the Progress parties at present is probably the question of immigrants and refugees. But it is hardly legitimate to characterize the Progress Party as solely an anti-immigrant party. The Progress parties existed before the immigrant question came on to the political agenda and they will probably continue to exist when it drops off. Furthermore, questions of immigrants and refugees are not among the most salient, not even among Progress voters (1990, 212).

(See Postscript.) So while anti-immigration may have become a useful “rallying issue” for the parties, it became so only recently (in 1987 for the Norwegian party, according to Björklund (1988, 217)). But even though it has become an important component of the parties’ issue profiles, is anti-immigration necessarily a good indicator of authoritarianism?⁹

Authoritarianism implies extensive governmental control over the lives of citizens, and an anti-immigration position certainly implies greater regulation of *immigration*, but it is hardly obvious that the two things are the same. The Progress parties’ anti-regulation position, more generally, is certainly well established. It may be that they are concerned only for the well-being (including individual freedom) of “their own” citizens, but that is hardly the same thing as wanting more regulation of those citizens. The parties and their followers may be egocentric, but with regard to those whom they feel are entitled to government concern (and in Norway, at least, the party has for the most part shaped the issue as one of economics, not culture, *per se*; see Björklund (1988, 217)), they are also “libertarian”.

It is equally unclear that law and order necessarily equates with authoritarianism, and the Progress parties are again candidates for consideration as “exceptions”. If by saying that more law and order is a high priority, the party or party supporter means that there are not sufficient laws to order

society, then “law and order” clearly means “authoritarian”. But both Glistrup’s party in Denmark and Lange’s in Norway began with the premise that those countries already had *too many* laws governing behaviour; if anything, they wanted fewer behaviours, not more, to be “illegal”.

But if wanting more law and order means wanting those who break the “important laws” to be caught more often and punished more severely, that may indeed mean that high priority is given to personal safety, but it hardly translates into the desire for more laws. It may simply reflect the feeling that current laws are being broken too often and the criminals caught too seldom and punished too little. It is particularly the last point that has been stressed by the Progress parties. As an alternative to the status quo of thinking of lawbreakers as clients who have been failed by the state and who should be treated as such (i.e., with emphasis on rehabilitation rather than punishment), the Progress parties have argued that in order to deter crime, lawbreakers should be given the punishment they deserve for failing society¹⁰ (see Harmel & Svåsand 1990.) In taking this position, Progress has again been challenging established principles of the dominant welfare culture. But by demanding more attention to law and order, it is not clear that the parties or their followers were breaking with the basic tenets of individualism and more limited government.¹¹

Indeed, in spite of their anti-immigration and law and order stances, the Progress parties seem to have placed as much, if not more, emphasis on individualism and libertarianism as have their left-libertarian counterparts, who have generally been more willing to accept collectivist, governmental solutions to some of society’s problems. And in challenging the collectivist status quo, the right-libertarian parties have clearly reflected and/or promoted different values. Whether those values have been part of the future, or of the past, is yet to be considered.

Proaction or Reaction?

While it is difficult to imagine any political party or movement that is not reacting to something, the relevant distinction here seems to be between those parties that are reacting to the past and those that are reacting to change or the fear of change. The former parties might be considered “proactive” by endorsing change in some new direction, while the latter might more accurately be thought of as “reactive” for holding tightly to the status quo or even desiring a return to the recent past.

Precisely because of mounting evidence that fundamental cultural change is taking place in modern democratic societies, this distinction is very important in analysing new right-libertarian parties and what they mean for their political systems. When cultural change takes place, it can have

two important effects. First is the direct result of the change itself; it consists of the new political behaviours and organizations that are “carried along” by the new values and norms; this would include parties’ taking proactive positions. The second is the reaction to the first and to the forces that brought it about; it is the “reactive” challenge to the changes, the argument for keeping things as they are or for returning to the good old days.

In some of the postindustrial societies of the capitalist democracies, the cultural changes of the past few decades led directly to the development of new political organizations through which could be channelled the new orientations to political issues and participation. Representatives of this phenomenon have been, of course, greens’ parties and other parties of the “libertarian left”.

In some of those same societies, new parties and movements were developing on the right as well. But instead of being direct outgrowths of the value shifts resulting from structural changes in the society, these organizations could be better seen as reactions to those changes. This is certainly the position taken by Inglehart in explaining the rise of the “Moral Majority” in the United States and the National Front in France:

They both represent reactions against change, rather than change in a new direction. Massive and rapid cultural change has been occurring throughout advanced industrial society during the past few decades; [including the shift from Materialist to Postmaterialist values, changes in religious orientations, gender roles, and sexual norms, and major immigration flows] . . . The rise of militant religious fundamentalism in the United States, and of xenophobic movements in Western Europe, represents a reaction against rapid cultural changes that seems to be eroding some of the most basic values and customs of the more traditional and less secure groups in these countries. These are alarming and important phenomena – but they do not represent the wave of the future. On the contrary, they are a reaction against the broader trends that are moving faster than these societies can assimilate them (1990, 11–12).

Though Inglehart himself does not include the two Progress parties in this category, Betz and Swank clearly seem to. Often citing the two parties as good examples of tendencies associated with their model of “radical right-wing populist parties”, they posit that, among other things, the rise of such parties “represents a largely materialist reaction to the postmaterialist-oriented groups of the libertarian left” (1991, 12). More specifically, they see the new right-wing message as having found fertile ground in those groups in society which are “objectively most threatened economically, socially as well as culturally by the transition from modern industrial welfare capitalism to postmodern individualized consumer capitalism: blue-collar workers, young people with low levels of formal education and/or without vocational education and training, and the long-term unemployed” (1991, 11). They cite the fact that the radical right-wing parties have arisen in the most affluent European societies, where postmaterialist values are most prevalent, as evidence that “these parties react at least in part to this change

in values” (Betz & Swank 1991, 18). Among the examples supporting Betz and Swank’s contentions are the Progress parties of Denmark and Norway, both of which have developed disproportionate support among blue collar workers, and both of which “have been on opposite poles [from the left-libertarians] regarding the question of environmental protection and equal rights for foreigners” (1991, 22).

Betz and Swank’s argument, at least with regard to the examples of Denmark and Norway, is faulty on a number of counts:

- (1) the Progress parties were born at essentially the same time (in the early 1970s) as their less prominent left-libertarian counterparts, and hence could hardly have been just a reaction to the latter;
- (2) their supporters’ dispositions to the contrary, the Progress parties themselves, and especially the Danish party, have not been as anti-ecology as Betz and Swank assume; in fact, the first platforms of the Danish party were very “green”, to the point of approving of additional taxation *only* if necessary to protect the environment (see Glistrup 1978);
- (3) the Progress parties have been “materialist”, but they have also been “libertarian” on both economic and non-economic dimensions (but see Postscript), and the latter is generally taken as a “postmaterialist” orientation when associated with the left;
- (4) though the Progress parties have attracted considerable blue-collar support, it would be odd to find such voters supporting parties favouring more individualism and less socialism if indeed they were motivated by perceived threats from “the transition from modern welfare to postmodern individualized capitalism” (Betz & Swank, 1991).

While these flaws seriously weaken the foundation of the argument that the Progress parties were reactions to left-libertarian values and parties, there may still be useful insight in the observation that it is a disenchanting group of blue-collar workers who have supported the Progress parties in unusually large numbers (compared with the norm for right-wing parties).

It is highly plausible that in the case of the young, blue-collar supporters of Progress, these are people who have (1) wanted to keep those parts of the old that continue to assure a level of economic security for them, (2) have not seen much future in expansion of the old (i.e. the welfare state) and so have not seen *that* as their project, and (3) have not felt *so* well served by the “system” that they minded seeing parts of it fall by the wayside. They have not felt the responsibility to society and the state that their predecessors had felt, and they have seen the state in less of a benign light than those predecessors did. For them, big government has not been seen as a panacea; it may have provided a safety net but did not guarantee happiness (e.g., a fulfilling job with job security); and it exacted a high

price in taxes and personal freedom of choice. They have taken comfort in the knowledge that the safety net was there to catch them if they fell, but they could take no pride in contributing to the spreading of that net to catch others arriving from other lands, they were not satisfied that “this” is the best that they should hope for, and they were not convinced that the better life could be achieved through more (or even this many) government programmes and regulations. With the government still there to help them if they failed, they were feeling the itch to strike out on their own, to earn what they could, to spend it as *they* saw fit, and to make decisions for themselves without government interference. (Though not all of these specific attitudes have yet been tapped in public opinion surveys, enough have to make this general argument seem at least plausible.)¹²

So rather than reacting to perceived threat from the transition to “post-modern” society, as Betz and Swank have suggested, such workers may themselves have been reflecting “new” libertarian values while simultaneously reacting to feelings of being let down by the status quo, social democratic system and its representative institutions (and hence, their position on the right). If the Progress parties were merely a *materialist reaction to postmaterialist values*, then the “most threatened” blue-collar workers should demand *more* collective responsibility for individuals’ economic security, not less. The latter, after all, would better reflect the old, materialist values of “modern industrial welfare capitalism” than have the positions of the Progress parties. The blue-collar supporters of the Progress parties appear to have been reacting more to perceived failures of the “old” comprehensive welfare state and its ancillary institutions than to the “new” values and parties of left libertarianism. Seen in this light, both the left- and right-libertarians *react to old values and institutions*, though not the same ones in all cases.

Postmaterialism consists of “new values”, which in their newness are significantly different from the dominant existing culture. It receives policy expression through positions like those taken by left-libertarian parties; i.e., positions that place those parties in opposition to the “established” priorities and institutions of government. As much as they are reflecting the “new”, they are also reacting to the past (which they see as dominated by a combination of market concerns and unresponsive bureaucracy).

Individualism and free enterprise are also “new” values in the social democracies, receiving expression through the positions of new right-wing libertarian parties; i.e., positions that place those parties in opposition to the “established” priorities and institutions of government. As much as they are reflecting something “new” for those systems, they are also reacting to the past (which they see as dominated by a combination of social welfarism and bureaucracy that has grown too big).

Conclusions

Even though what has been happening on the right in the social democracies of Denmark and Norway may not fit Inglehart's definition of "post-materialism", and may in fact have within it a strong materialist component, neither has it been just a conservative *reaction to postmaterialism* which seeks to hold on to "old" materialist values. The old materialism of the social democracies was played out within a limited range of options, limited by general acceptance of the root norms of collectivism, solidarity, and social responsibility. Even more so than in the capitalist regimes (which were, after all, somewhat tense marriages of individualism and state welfarism), the social democracies were guided by a single ideology. Conservative parties would differ from their more leftist counterparts, but the differences were limited by a systemwide acceptance of the basic tenets of social democracy. With the breakdown (or at least growing meaninglessness) of classes and of the ideologies based on classes, the old limits gradually became less relevant, and individuals as well as parties could feel freer to ask again some basic questions for which the range of plausible answers was now wider than it had seemed for generations. Most basic of all was the issue of the preferred relationships among state, society and individuals.

Generations earlier, at a time when development of economic security was of prime importance and the components of a welfare state were the building materials of choice, decisions had been made about the responsibilities of the state to society and to individuals, as well as the responsibilities of individuals to society and the state. Now, with the accomplishment of economic security, there came the possibility of setting new goals, as well as the opportunity to re-examine the various responsibilities that had fit so comfortably with the means of achieving the old ones. Taking advantage of the greater latitude for political alternatives resulting from the structural changes in these societies, the right-libertarian parties offered a dramatically new and different vision of the relationship of citizen to government.

If materialist, the platforms of the Progress parties and the values of many of their supporters reflected a "*new materialism*", which in some important respects overlapped with the postmaterialism embodied in left-libertarian parties, themselves a reflection of post-class, post-ideology politics. And it is in the overlap that we may find the true relevance of both types of parties for the politics of postmodern democratic societies, whether socialist or capitalist.

The left-libertarian and right-libertarian parties together suggest that after generations of consensus-building on the proper role for government to play in the "economic" lives of individuals, there has been questioning anew about its proper role in other dimensions of citizens' lives. This is not to deny that there is a materialist/economic element in the new questioning;

the left-leaning variety presumably wants some expansion of the welfare component and the right-leaning variety wants somewhat less (but not a *lot* less) of it. But it is clearly the “intervention in people’s private lives”, more generally than just on the economic dimension, that is the crux of the matter. According to Duverger (1972), political battles between liberals and conservatives over who could and should exercise political power during the first half of the 19th century were replaced by battles between left and right over the relationship of the government to the economy (and particularly with regard to redistribution) in the second half of that century. What all of the new libertarian parties, including the leftist ones in capitalist regimes and rightist ones in social democracies, may have signalled is the shift to yet another primary line of combat involving the state/citizen relationship – this time pitting those opposed to extensive governmental regulation of people’s lives against those who favour the heavily ordered society. If this is true, then these parties – both left and right – have been not so much reactions to “materialism” (from the left) or “postmaterialism” (from the right) as they have been to the authoritarianism of the market-ordered (in capitalist systems) and government-ordered (in socialist systems) societies that were built during the “modern” era.

For Norway and Denmark, our argument may mean that whether the Progress parties themselves survive or not, politics may be long affected by the issues – and particularly the new “libertarian” positions – which they have promoted. This need not mean a significant reduction in the role of the state as welfare provider, of course, since the “attack” on the system is directed less at that role than others which, as a package, can be pictured as “control of people’s lives” by an authoritarian (albeit institutionally “democratic”) state.

For the postmodern societies generally, the discovery of postmodern libertarianism within the right-wing Scandinavian parties adds to the evidence from “the left” in other systems that it is the libertarian values that are most common and most prominent among what is new in postmodern politics. Whether the libertarian left in capitalist democracies or the libertarian right in social democracies, what these “new movements” are questioning is the *established* relationship of citizen to state, and vice versa.¹³

States may continue to (and are expected to) provide for economic security, but they should do so without imposing “control” and – and here is the real dilemma for future politicians – without requiring so much taxation of income. At the same time, more opportunities should be provided for individuals to participate meaningfully in the shaping of public policy. Materialist values, and especially concerns over law and order (assuming for sake of argument that law and order is a materialist value), will probably continue to hold an important place in the thinking of both

the left-libertarians and the right-libertarians, but what is new is that those materialist values must share their thrones with values of self-actualization that are not (or are no longer exclusively) acquisitive.

Postscript

When this article was submitted to *Scandinavian Political Studies* July 1993, we considered the argument to be valid and the descriptive information to be current. Though we continue to feel that the argument was and is valid, we would be remiss not to note potentially significant changes that have taken place in the leadership cadre of the Norwegian Progress party, and which have direct bearing on the “libertarian” strain within that party.

In recent years, many younger, visible, lower echelon leaders of the party publicly announced resignations from their positions and from politics generally. Chief among the reasons for the departures was disenchantment with party leader Carl Hagen’s willingness to compromise on libertarian principles in order to appease other segments of the party. Carl Hagen himself had earlier encouraged the training of the younger cohort in libertarian ideology, and would now lament that he had trained them “too well” (in an interview with Harmel and Lars Svåsand in February 1993).

In September 1993, just one week before the elections, Hagen startled many within and outside the party by declaring that it would be unreasonable to call for an immediate reduction in taxation. This apparent renunciation of what had been the party’s central tenet resulted in additional defections among startled party activists and supporters.

As if to finalize the party’s image makeover, Hagen used the occasion of the party’s national meeting in April 1994 to shift the primary focus to the immigration issue. In a memorandum circulated in advance of the congress, the libertarian positions of the younger cohort were characterized as a deviation from the party line. Subsequently, the deputy leader of the party – representing the “liberalist” wing – resigned from her position, as did another liberalist on the executive committee. Within a few weeks, several local and provincial leaders resigned and left the party, and the youth movement stood in danger of splitting between the Hagen loyalists and the libertarianists. In the parliamentary group, four members (including three of the younger members) left and established an independent group. In June, they founded an organization (called *Fridemokratene*, or “Free Democrats”) with potential for being an embryo of a new party. In July, the executive committee of the Progress party’s youth organization (FPU), which had been the base for liberalist opposition within the party, considered dissolving itself because of the conflict with the parent party.

Though these events clearly cast doubt on whether our characterization

of the Norwegian Progress party as standard-bearer of libertarian values will again be appropriate, they certainly do not challenge the appropriateness of that designation for the earlier period. To the contrary, the various announcements and resignations tend to highlight the extent to which the party has been seen as such a vehicle, especially (though not only) by significant portions of the younger leaders and members. As this postscript is written, it seems clear that the potential exists for expression of the libertarian thinking that had characterized the Progress party to take place via alternative political organizations.

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NOTES

1. "Right" in Europe has also meant support for the church, or more generally, for religion.
2. For a later elaboration and revision of what he means by "radical right-wing populist" parties, with recognition of the libertarian tendencies, see Betz (1993).
3. We do not mean to deny here that new parties similar to the Progress parties (e.g. in promoting values of individualism and libertarianism) can arise in democracies that are other than socialistic. It is in the social democracies, however, where such parties will represent something dramatically new and different from basic societal norms, and where they are most likely to be seen as dramatically different from existing parties on this dimension.
4. Derry (1979), in his history of Scandinavia, has noted that the emphasis on equality has long roots there, with the concept finding fertile soil in Scandinavia long before it did in the rest of Europe.
5. In Harmel & Svåsand (1990), the authors discuss their own preliminary findings. Since presenting that article, however, they have slightly revised the data. The tables presented here are based on the revised data, which Harmel and Svåsand coded as part of a larger data collection project on party change sponsored by the National Science Foundation (with Harmel and Kenneth Janda as principal investigators). Harmel and Svåsand coded Norwegian and Danish parties' positions on nineteen issues, three of which are used here. For each issue, a party was assigned a code from an eleven-point scale ranging from "most extreme left" (-5) through "centre" (0) to "most extreme right" (+5), based on judgemental coding from available party platforms. Though data exist from the 1950s onward, only data since the 1970s are plotted here, since the Progress parties were not founded until 1972 and 1973. More information on the coding instructions for these particular variables are available from Robert Harmel at Texas A&M University; the procedures followed are similar to those discussed in Kenneth Janda, *Political Parties: A Cross-National Survey*, New York: The Free Press, 1980.

6. This has been true at least until recently, but see the Postscript for information concerning changes in the Norwegian party.
7. It should be noted that, prior to the 1993 election, Hagan did depart from the position with which the party had most clearly been identified. Dismaying even many within his own party, Hagen stated publicly that he could not envision the possibility of reducing taxes within the next parliamentary term.
8. As for the parties' voters' positions on such matters, Andersen & Björklund (1990, 207) report the following: "In Norway, Progress Party supporters are in fact more liberal on the abortion issue than the average voter, and on questions concerning free distribution of pornography they are the most liberal of all voters. An influential group in the Norwegian youth organization of the Progress Party has even urged legalizing marriage between homosexuals and has on this issue joined with the postmaterialist Left, even though the proposal was voted down in the deciding organs in the Progress Party. In the permissive Danish society, moral issues have generally played a minor role in politics, and the Progress party voters appear neither more nor less concerned with moral issues than the electorate at large. In short, the Progress parties are certainly 'modern' parties."
9. It is noteworthy here that almost all parties and labour organizations in Norway and Denmark have, over time, become more restrictive with respect to immigration.
10. It should be noted that, at first, the Progress parties took no position on this subject.
11. It is not inconsistent, in fact, for someone to say "let's reduce the number of laws that affect our daily behaviour to just those that are truly needed to protect someone's life and freedom, and then enforce those fewer laws with much more vigour than is currently being employed." That may, in fact, be the position set taken by most libertarians with regard to "law and order". It is not really authoritarian, nor is it materialistic *per se*.
12. Though not referring specifically to young, blue-collar supporters, Andersen and Björklund have analysed data on attitudes of Progress party supporters generally, and have reached some conclusions that are consistent with the "plausible scenario" we are positing here. (See Andersen & Björklund, 1990, especially Table 2 and pp. 204–206 (on attitudes toward welfare programs), and p. 214 (on "welfare chauvinism")).
13. Nothing that we have said here is meant to suggest that right-libertarianism does not exist in capitalist systems, nor that left-libertarianism does not exist in social democracies. Indeed, either contention would be empirically false. We have focused here on the new parties that have caused the greatest stir in their respective systems, by offering the greatest challenge to their "status quos". For further discussion of the authoritarian–libertarian dimension in advanced industrial democracies, see Scott C. Flanagan's response at Inglehart (1987).

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