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*Abstract: Mainstream parties and their challengers: strategic choices*

This paper considers how Germany's established parties have reacted to the emergence of Die Linke and the Alternative for Germany (AfD) as populist newcomer-challenger parties. It also scrutinises how Die Linke, as the older of the two newcomers, has reacted to the AfD's emergence. Focussing on the period between since 2008 and on Eurozone and refugee crisis, the analysis is guided by the three-fold typology of strategic choice – dismissal, accommodation, and adversarialism – which is employed throughout the book.

The paper finds that the mainstream parties primarily used the strategies of dismissal and adversarialism vis-à-vis the challenger parties, but also tried the accommodative approach. For example, the Eurozone crisis saw the dismissal of all criticism of 'bank bailouts' and 'rescue packages' voiced by Die Linke. Criticism coming from the AfD was countered with hostile adversarialism in an attempt to ostracise it. The refugee crisis saw mainstream parties changing strategies. First, they defended Germany's humanitarian 'welcome culture' against the AfD's strong nativist criticism. Later, they adopted a discourse that sometimes bore resemblance to that of the AfD. Die Linke, losing voters to the AfD over its cosmopolitan positions on immigration, stayed its adversarial course against the right-wing newcomer party despite internal conflict over it.

The paper concludes that mainstream parties were not always well-advised in their choice of strategies. Ostracising and dismissing new parties has not worked in the case of Die Linke and AfD while later attempts of adversarialism and accommodation also have not weakened the electoral success of AfD or Die Linke.