ISCTE IUL
REPOSITÓRIO
INSTITUTO UNIVERSITÁRIO DE LISBOA

Repositório ISCTE-IUL

Deposited in *Repositório ISCTE-IUL*:
2026-09-28

Deposited version:
Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:
Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:
Marsili, M. (2026). From grand ideologies to nano-ideologies: Operational belief systems and geopolitical alignment in the 21st century. Journal of Political Ideologies, N/A. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2026.2735931

Further information on publisher's website:
10.1080/13569317.2026.2735931

Publisher's copyright statement:
This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Marsili, M. (2026). From grand ideologies to nano-ideologies: Operational belief systems and geopolitical alignment in the 21st century. Journal of Political Ideologies, N/A. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2026.2735931, which has been published in final form at https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13569317.2026.2735931. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with the Publisher's Terms and Conditions for self-archiving.

Use policy

Creative Commons CC BY 4.0
The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a link is made to the metadata record in the Repository
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Serviços de Informação e Documentação, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL)
Av. das Forças Armadas, Edifício II, 1649-026 Lisboa Portugal
Phone: +(351) 217 903 024 | e-mail: administrador.repositorio@iscte-iul.pt
https://repositorio.iscte-iul.pt

From Grand Ideologies to Nano-Ideologies: Operational Belief Systems and Geopolitical Alignment in the 21st Century

Marco Marsili

Centre for International Studies (CEI-Iscte), ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal

CONTACT Marco Marsili info@marcomarsili.it; marco_marsili@iscte-iul.pt

Marco Marsili is a researcher at the Centre for International Studies of Iscte (CEI-Iscte) based at ISCTE.– University Institute of Lisbon. His work focuses on ideology, political mobilization, hybrid conflicts, and the interaction between information, cognition, and geopolitical power. He has published widely on information warfare, influence operations, and emerging forms of ideological alignment in contemporary politics.

From Grand Ideologies to Nano-Ideologies: Operational Belief Systems and Geopolitical Alignment in the 21st Century

ABSTRACT

This article argues that while classical, system-building ideologies have not disappeared, they no longer function as the primary infrastructures of large-scale mobilization and alignment in the post-Cold War international order. It introduces the concept of *nano-ideologies* — operational, issue-centered belief systems that mobilize consent under conditions of perceived crisis through normative compression and urgency-driven framing. Unlike comprehensive doctrines, nano-ideologies are temporally contingent and strategically volatile; unlike ordinary issue frames, they generate strong expectations of alignment and narrow the space for legitimate dissent. Drawing on concept-building methodology and engaging debates on ideology, securitization, and framing, the article situates nano-ideologies within a typological spectrum running from grand ideological systems to purely discursive frames. Three illustrative cases — the war on terror, pandemic governance during COVID-19, and Western support for Ukraine — show how nano-ideologies emerge, consolidate, and erode, and how their operational instability can produce backlash dynamics that exceed their initial scope.

Keywords: Nano-ideologies, Ideology, Political mobilization, Geopolitics, Crisis politics, Legitimacy

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, ideology has occupied an ambiguous position in analyses of global politics. The collapse of the Berlin Wall, followed by the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact, marked not only the end of bipolarity but also the exhaustion of the grand ideological confrontation that had structured international relations throughout much of the twentieth century. Liberalism, socialism, and communism had functioned not merely as political doctrines but as comprehensive systems of meaning, capable of legitimizing geopolitical alignments, mobilizing mass consent, and providing relatively stable interpretative frameworks for global conflict.[1]

Contrary to early expectations, however, the post–Cold War era did not result in a stable, ideology-free international order. While some influential interpretations famously announced the "end of history" and the universalization of liberal democracy,[2] subsequent developments exposed the limits of such claims.[3] Rather than disappearing, ideology underwent a profound functional transformation. Classical, system-building ideologies did not vanish, but they progressively lost their capacity to operate as primary drivers of geopolitical alignment and large-scale political mobilization.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, global politics was largely shaped by conflicts that seemed to confirm this ideological thinning. Civil wars, asymmetric warfare, terrorism, and humanitarian interventions dominated the international agenda, often framed in technocratic, legal, or moral terms rather than explicitly ideological ones. Yet this apparent depoliticization was short-lived. As great-power competition gradually re-emerged and the governance of the international order became increasingly contested, the need for ideological instruments capable of sustaining strategic choices and mobilizing public consent resurfaced with renewed urgency.

This return of ideology did not take the form of a revival of classical doctrines. Instead, contemporary geopolitical conflicts have increasingly relied on what this article conceptualizes as *nano-ideologies*: operational, issue-centered belief systems designed to function under conditions of perceived crisis. These nano-ideologies do not aspire to offer a comprehensive worldview, a theory of society, or a stable vision of human nature, as classical ideologies traditionally did.[4] Rather, they are constructed ad hoc around specific issues — such as security, public health, or international solidarity — by political actors, media institutions, and epistemic authorities seeking to legitimize immediate policy choices while polarizing political space along simplified moral and normative lines.

The central argument of this article is that nano-ideologies have become an increasingly important mechanism of geopolitical alignment in the twenty-first century. They function as *operational belief systems* that legitimize and stabilize concrete policy choices under conditions of uncertainty, mobilizing consent and narrowing the space of legitimate dissent through urgency, normative compression, and binary framings. At the same time, they are structurally prone to rapid erosion when the crisis conditions that sustain them weaken or shift. Their reliance on contingency and crisis renders them highly sensitive to shifts in the international environment and to the strategic repositioning of dominant actors. This fragility is particularly

evident in pluralistic political systems, where normative rigidity collides with rapidly changing geopolitical realities.

To substantiate this claim, the article advances three interrelated contributions. First, it clarifies the conceptual distinction between classical ideologies, thin-centered ideologies, policy frames, and nano-ideologies, situating the latter within contemporary debates on ideology and securitization.[5] Second, it illustrates how nano-ideologies operate through selected cases—the war on terror, pandemic governance during COVID-19, and support for Ukraine—treating them not as ideologies per se but as contexts in which ideological functions are performed. Third, it argues that nano-ideologies are characterized by a structural paradox: they generate strong expectations of alignment and a narrowing of legitimate dissent while remaining exposed to geopolitical volatility.

The argument advanced here is situated at the intersection of political theory, international relations, and political sociology — a juncture that has proven analytically productive in recent scholarship on ideology, security, and global governance. [6] By treating ideology not as a fixed property of political systems but as a relational and situational practice, the article contributes to understanding international political life as shaped by historically contingent practices of meaning-making, legitimation, and contestation. The concept of nano-ideologies extends this perspective by showing how the same relational and situational logic that has been applied to security practices, governance, and subjectivity also characterizes the ideological dimension of contemporary geopolitical alignment. Ideology, on this account, is approached primarily as a *practice of legitimation* whose forms, functions, and fragilities are themselves products of specific historical and structural conditions, even if other strands of scholarship also treat ideology as a causal factor in geopolitical outcomes.

Methodologically, the article adopts a qualitative and concept-building approach,[7] relying on analytical differentiation and illustrative cases rather than systematic comparison. The objective is not to provide an exhaustive empirical account of contemporary geopolitical conflicts, but to offer a conceptual tool capable of capturing a recurrent yet under-theorized phenomenon in current global politics.

State of the Art: Ideology after the Cold War

The scholarly debate on ideology after the Cold War has been dominated by three broad interpretative strands: claims concerning the exhaustion of ideology, theories emphasizing its transformation and fragmentation, and approaches that relocate ideology within discursive, securitizing, or governmental practices. While these perspectives offer valuable insights, none fully captures the action-oriented and contingent character of ideological mobilization in contemporary geopolitics.

Early post-war accounts had already framed this dynamic as a broader “end of ideology”, suggesting that complex doctrinal systems were being displaced by technocratic and managerial forms of politics.[8]

One important qualification is necessary before proceeding. The claim that classical ideologies functioned as primary drivers of geopolitical alignment should not be understood as implying that ideology determined state behavior in any deterministic or causally unmediated sense. The realist tradition in international relations, from Carr[9] and Morgenthau[10] to Mearsheimer,[11] has consistently argued that ideological narratives are largely epiphenomenal — instrumentally deployed by states to legitimate interests rooted in power, security, and material competition. On this reading, the Cold War was not fundamentally an ideological contest but a bipolar struggle for hegemony in which liberalism and communism served as convenient legitimating languages for rival great powers. This critique is well-founded and must be integrated rather than dismissed.

The argument advanced in this article does not depend on the claim that grand ideologies governed geopolitical behavior. It rests on a more modest functionalist claim: classical ideologies performed distinctive and consequential functions, including legitimizing alliance architectures, generating mass consent for strategic choices, and providing stable interpretive frameworks for international conflict. It is this functional infrastructure of *durable legitimation* — the capacity to sustain alignment over time, absorb dissent, and reconstitute consent after setbacks — that contemporary nano-ideologies seek to replicate, and that they systematically fail to sustain. The analytical contrast is therefore not between "ideological" and "non-ideological" geopolitics, but between durable and contingent forms of ideological legitimation.

In reaction to these claims, a second strand of scholarship rejected the idea of ideological exhaustion and instead emphasized transformation and persistence. Freeden conceptualized ideologies as morphologically structured configurations of political concepts, capable of adaptation without losing their core identity.[12] From this perspective, ideologies do not simply disappear; they mutate, recombine, and rearticulate in response to social and political change. Eagleton similarly stressed the enduring role of ideology in shaping meaning, power, and legitimacy, even under conditions of apparent depoliticization.[13] These contributions remain foundational, but they are primarily concerned with ideologies as relatively coherent systems of ideas, offering limited analytical leverage for understanding highly contingent and issue-specific mobilizations.

Building on this insight, subsequent scholarship focused on ideological thinning and simplification.[14] Mudde's notion of "thin-centered ideologies" was particularly influential in explaining the rise of populism, understood as an ideology lacking a comprehensive program and therefore dependent on attachment to "host" ideologies.[15] While analytically powerful, this framework remains centered on political movements and party systems, and it presupposes a degree of ideological continuity that is often absent in contemporary geopolitical mobilizations.

A third body of literature has shifted attention away from ideology as a doctrinal system and toward discursive and security practices.[16] Securitization theory, developed by the Copenhagen School, conceptualizes political mobilization as the result of speech acts that construct issues as existential threats requiring exceptional measures.[17] This approach has been widely applied to terrorism, migration, health, and cyber security, offering valuable tools for analyzing crisis-driven governance. Similarly, work on framing processes has highlighted how political actors simplify complex realities to generate alignment and mobilization.[18] While these perspectives capture key mechanisms of contemporary politics, they often bracket the normative and belief-based dimensions traditionally associated with ideology.

Parallel contributions in critical theory and governmentality studies have further emphasized the role of emergency, exception, and expertise in contemporary governance. Agamben's analysis of the "state of exception" highlights how extraordinary measures tend to normalize themselves within legal and political orders.[19] More recent interventions have linked these dynamics to epistemic authority, post-truth politics, and the erosion of democratic

deliberation.[20] Yet here again, ideology tends to appear either as a residual category or as an implicit background condition, rather than as an object of conceptual innovation.

A fourth body of work, rooted in post-structuralist political theory, offers a more radical dissolution of ideology into discourse and hegemonic practice. Laclau and Mouffe argue that ideological formations are constituted through chains of equivalence that temporarily fix the meaning of floating signifiers around a nodal point, producing a partial and always-contested social order rather than a coherent system of ideas.[21] On this account, ideology is never stable or self-contained: it is permanently traversed by antagonism, and its apparent unity is always the contingent result of hegemonic articulation rather than doctrinal coherence.[22] This perspective offers genuine analytical leverage for understanding how political identities are constructed and destabilized through discursive contestation, and it anticipates several features of the contingency and reversibility that characterize contemporary political mobilizations.

Yet the post-structuralist framework, like securitization and framing theory, emphasizes discursive construction and contingency, leaving less space for the belief-based and normatively constraining dimensions of ideological adherence. By resolving ideology into discourse, it underspecifies the mechanisms through which political actors come to experience particular alignments not merely as contingent discursive constructions but as normative expectations of alignment — and through which the exposure of that contingency generates not simply political reconfiguration but ideological betrayal. It is precisely this transition from discursive articulation to normative compulsion that the concept of nano-ideologies is designed to capture.

Taken together, these strands reveal a persistent analytical gap. Existing approaches tend either to conceptualize ideology primarily as a relatively stable system of ideas or to analyze its contemporary operation through broader discursive and securitizing practices. What remains under-theorized is the emergence of temporary, issue-centered belief systems that perform ideological functions without possessing the structural depth, durability, or coherence of classical ideologies.

This article addresses this gap by introducing the concept of nano-ideologies. By situating nano-ideologies between classical ideological systems and purely discursive frames, the article

offers a conceptual tool for analyzing how ideology operates under conditions of crisis, uncertainty, and geopolitical volatility.

Ideology and International Politics

Recent scholarship in international relations has moved beyond the view that ideology is merely a rhetorical cover for material interests. The *Routledge Handbook of Ideology and International Relations*[23] consolidates a field in which ideology is treated as consequential for foreign policy, alliance formation, state legitimation, and international order, rather than as a residual epiphenomenon. In the same vein, Mark L. Haas's work on great power politics[24] shows that ideological distance can shape threat perceptions and, through them, foreign-policy choices; John M. Owen's work likewise demonstrates that ideology can affect regime promotion, alliance behavior, and the escalation of international conflict.[25] More broadly, Manfred Steger's work on political ideologies in the age of globalization shows how ideological formations are reconfigured under conditions of global interdependence and contestation.[26]

This broader literature also demonstrates that ideology operates through multiple mechanisms, not through a single causal pathway.[27] Studies of ideology in China and Russia, for example, highlight how foreign-policy doctrines are shaped by ideational repertoires that can be simultaneously universalist or particularist, expansive or selective, and how these repertoires inform the public justification of state action.[28] Related work on legitimation and grand strategy further shows that rhetoric and public justification are not merely ex post rationalizations, but part of the political work through which strategies are made acceptable to domestic and international audiences.[29]

The argument developed in this article does not deny those insights. Rather, it shifts the analytical focus from durable ideological architectures to temporary, issue-centered belief formations that perform ideological functions under conditions of crisis.[30] On this reading, nano-ideologies are not a rival to the literature on ideology and international politics, but a specification of one of its more contingent forms: they are shorter-lived, more compressed, and more vulnerable to rapid reconfiguration than the broader ideological constellations mapped in the existing scholarship.[31]

Methodology and Conceptual Framework

This article adopts a qualitative, concept-building research design aimed at developing an analytical category capable of capturing a recurrent yet insufficiently theorized phenomenon in contemporary geopolitics. Rather than testing predefined hypotheses or conducting systematic comparison, the study focuses on conceptual differentiation and analytical clarification, following an approach commonly employed when existing theoretical frameworks fail to adequately describe emerging empirical patterns.[32]

Concept formation is particularly appropriate in contexts characterized by rapid transformation and conceptual ambiguity. As Goertz notes, new concepts are not introduced to replace existing ones arbitrarily, but to account for phenomena that cannot be satisfactorily explained using available analytical tools.[33] The present study builds on this premise by addressing a specific gap in the literature on ideology: the lack of a category that captures temporary, crisis-driven belief systems that perform ideological functions without possessing the structural coherence or durability of classical ideologies.

The analytical strategy combines three elements. First, it draws on a critical reading of the literature on ideology, securitization, and political mobilization to identify the limits of existing concepts when applied to contemporary geopolitical dynamics. Second, it employs analytical differentiation to distinguish *nano-ideologies* from adjacent categories such as classical ideologies, thin-centered ideologies, policy frames, and securitizing discourses. Third, it uses illustrative cases to show how nano-ideologies operate in practice, without claiming causal generalization or empirical exhaustiveness.

The illustrative cases are intended for conceptual illumination rather than theory testing.[34] The selected cases — the war on terror, pandemic governance during COVID-19, and support for Ukraine — are treated as contexts in which ideological functions emerge under conditions of perceived emergency.[35] They are not analyzed as ideologies in themselves, but as arenas in which action-guiding belief systems emerge, consolidate, and eventually destabilize.

To situate the concept of nano-ideologies, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by ideology in this article. Classical definitions conceptualize ideology as a relatively coherent system of political ideas, values, and concepts that provides a comprehensive interpretation of social reality and a normative vision of political order.[36] Such ideologies are typically durable, internally structured, and capable of organizing political identities over extended periods of time.

By contrast, much of contemporary political mobilization operates through discursive mechanisms that lack this level of coherence. Securitization theory, for instance, explains how political actors construct issues as existential threats in order to justify extraordinary measures.[37] Framing theory highlights how interpretative schemata are deployed to simplify complex realities and generate alignment.[38] While analytically powerful, these approaches tend to focus on mechanisms of persuasion and legitimation rather than on belief structures and normative adherence.

The concept of nano-ideologies is introduced to bridge this analytical gap. Nano-ideologies are defined here as *operational belief systems* that are issue-specific, temporally contingent, normatively compressed, and oriented toward urgency-driven mobilization. Unlike classical ideologies, they do not provide comprehensive worldviews or long-term political projects; instead, they offer focused justificatory frameworks for concrete policy choices under conditions perceived as critical or exceptional. In this article, the term "operational" refers to belief formations that are deployed to enable specific courses of action rather than to stabilize enduring doctrinal commitments or identities.

Four criteria distinguish nano-ideologies from adjacent categories. *Issue-specificity* means that they crystallize around a delimited problem rather than around a general theory of society or human nature. *Temporal contingency* indicates that their legitimacy horizon is compressed: they are activated in response to crisis triggers, gain force within a finite window of perceived urgency, and become vulnerable once that window closes or stabilizes.[39] *Normative compression* captures the reduction of complex value landscapes into binary oppositions — responsibility versus irresponsibility, solidarity versus betrayal, security versus recklessness — which simplifies choice but restricts the space for proportional and pluralistic disagreement. Finally, *urgency-driven mobilization* refers to the expectation that relevant actors should align rapidly and with limited deliberation: calls for caution, proportionality, or continued

contestation are coded not merely as alternative positions, but as potentially harmful forms of delay or defection.

What distinguishes nano-ideologies is not just that they simplify political judgment, but that they organize those judgments into short-term structures of normative alignment. Their function is also coordinative: they stabilize expectations, delimit acceptable disagreement, and help sustain concrete policy choices while crisis conditions remain politically salient.

Taken together, these criteria distinguish nano-ideologies from thin-centered ideologies, which, despite their limited scope, retain a degree of ideological continuity and aspirational coherence.[40] They also differentiate nano-ideologies from frames or securitizing moves, insofar as nano-ideologies entail not only discursive construction but also normative alignment and identity positioning.

A further analytical question concerns the *production* of nano-ideologies: whether they emerge from elite constructions, societal mobilizations, or a combination of both. The evidence from the illustrative cases suggests that nano-ideological mobilization typically involves interaction between elite agenda-setting and mass resonance. State actors, media institutions, and epistemic authorities provide the initial framing architecture — the binary moral opposition, the crisis referent, the delegitimization of dissent — while platform dynamics and networked publics accelerate diffusion and reinforce normative closure.[41] This production logic distinguishes nano-ideologies from classical propaganda, which requires sustained institutional infrastructure, and from spontaneous social movements, which typically lack the normative compression and urgency-driven closure of nano-ideological mobilization. Recognizing the co-produced character of nano-ideologies has direct implications for their governance: interventions targeting only elite producers — through media regulation or platform content moderation — will be insufficient if the demand-side conditions that make nano-ideological appeals resonant remain unaddressed. Conversely, approaches focused exclusively on audience resilience and media literacy will be structurally inadequate if platform architectures continue to reward urgency and moral compression over deliberative nuance.

Conceptualizing nano-ideologies as operational belief systems yields a specific analytical payoff. It allows scholars to explain how contemporary political actors achieve ideological mobilization without committing to comprehensive doctrines, while also accounting for the

instability and backlash that frequently accompany such mobilization. By combining normative rigidity with strategic volatility, nano-ideologies generate a structural tension that is not adequately captured by existing theories of ideology, framing, or securitization.

This conceptual framework provides the basis for the subsequent analysis, which examines how nano-ideologies function in concrete geopolitical contexts and why their fragility constitutes a systemic feature rather than a contingent failure.

Several limitations of the present approach deserve explicit acknowledgment. The concept of nano-ideologies is developed here through analytical differentiation and illustrative cases, rather than through systematic comparative analysis or formal hypothesis-testing. This design choice is appropriate for a concept-building objective, but it means that the article cannot establish the causal mechanisms through which nano-ideologies emerge, persist, or collapse with the precision that a dedicated empirical study would require. The three selected cases — counter-terrorism, pandemic governance, and the Ukraine alignment — are drawn primarily from Western liberal democratic contexts, which raises questions about the generalizability of the concept to non-democratic settings, where the relationship between crisis narrative, deliberative closure, and institutional backlash may follow different structural logics. Future research should address these limitations by extending the comparative framework across regime types and geopolitical contexts, and by subjecting the definitional criteria proposed here to systematic operationalization and empirical testing.

To avoid conceptual overlap and to clarify the analytical specificity of *nano-ideologies*, Table 1 situates the concept in relation to adjacent categories commonly employed in political theory and international relations. The table does not propose an exhaustive taxonomy of ideological phenomena, but rather an analytical differentiation aimed at highlighting functional, temporal, and normative distinctions relevant to contemporary geopolitical mobilization.

Category	Scope	Temporal horizon	Normative density	Mobilizational logic	Relation to uncertainty
Classical ideologies	Comprehensive and systemic	Long-term, transgenerational	High and internally coherent	Identity-based and programmatic	Strong reduction of uncertainty

Thin-centered ideologies	Thematically limited	Medium-term	Medium, selectively articulated	Antagonistic and polarizing	Partial reduction of uncertainty
Policy frames	Issue-specific	Short-term	Low and instrumental	Persuasive and technocratic	Management of uncertainty
Securitizing discourses	Threat-focused	Event-driven	Instrumental and exceptionalist	Emergency-based mobilization	Amplification of uncertainty
Nano-ideologies	Single-issue, context-bound	Contingent and reversible	Compressed and moralized	Urgency-driven and fideistic	Strategic exploitation of uncertainty

Table 1. Analytical differentiation between ideological categories.

The table contrasts classical ideologies, thin-centered ideologies, policy frames, securitizing discourses, and nano-ideologies along five analytical dimensions. The most analytically consequential of these distinctions — that between nano-ideologies and issue frames — requires further elaboration, as it constitutes the primary conceptual objection to the category introduced here.

Nano-ideologies and Issue Frames: An Analytical Distinction

The most important conceptual objection to nano-ideologies concerns their relationship with frames --- especially framing theory in political communication and social movement studies. If nano-ideologies are defined as issue-centered, temporally compressed, and morally loaded constructs, one might reasonably ask whether they are simply what political scientists already call *issue frames*. Addressing this objection requires a careful and systematic comparison, as the answer is not obvious and the difference — while real — is one of degree as well as kind.

Framing theory, as foundationally developed by Snow and Benford[42] and subsequently systematized in political communication by Chong and Druckman,[43] conceptualizes frames as interpretive schemata that organize and give meaning to political events by selectively emphasizing certain considerations over others. Frames work cognitively: they render particular aspects of a complex reality more salient, shaping how audiences process information, attribute responsibility, and evaluate policy options. Iyengar's influential distinction between *episodic* and *thematic* framing captures this dynamic with particular precision, showing how the presentation of an issue — as an isolated incident or as a systemic condition — systematically shapes attributions of political responsibility, with episodic framing tending to produce individualized attributions and thematic framing producing structural ones.[44] In the social movement tradition, Snow and Benford identify three *core framing tasks* that collective action frames perform: *diagnostic framing* (identifying a problem and attributing blame), *prognostic framing* (proposing solutions and strategies), and *motivational framing* (mobilizing adherents to act).[45] These analytical tools have proven highly productive across decades of research in political communication, social movement studies, and policy analysis.

Nano-ideologies share important structural features with frames: both are issue-specific, both selectively emphasize and moralize complex realities, and both function to generate political alignment around simplified normative positions. To treat them as functionally equivalent, however, would be to miss three analytically consequential distinctions.

Frames operate primarily at the level of *cognition* and *interpretation*: they shape how subjects process information and attribute meaning, but they remain external to moral identity. One can recognize a frame — even employ it strategically — without adopting it as a constituent element of one's normative self-understanding. Framing effects, as Chong and Druckman demonstrate, are competitive and contextually variable: subjects exposed to counter-frames, or who possess strong prior attitudes, show substantially reduced susceptibility to framing,[46] and framing contests are, by design, processes of open deliberation in which multiple frames compete for audience uptake with no a priori guarantee of success. Nano-ideologies, by contrast, operate at the level of normative expectation of alignment: they demand adherence for political inclusion. The subject who questions a nano-ideology is not simply offering a different cognitive framing; they are committing an act of defection that triggers normative

sanctions and political delegitimization. This transition from *interpretation* to *obligation* marks a qualitative threshold that framing theory, by design, leaves untheorized.

Second, the treatment of dissent. In framing theory, the legitimacy of counter-frames is structurally assumed: the analytical model presupposes the possibility of competitive framing environments in which multiple interpretations vie for audience acceptance.[47] Frames can be contested, reframed, or displaced without generating existential political consequences for those who challenge them. Nano-ideologies, conversely, are premised on the *closure* of deliberative space: skepticism, proportionality, and qualified support are systematically coded not as alternative positions in a deliberative contest but as moral deviance or political betrayal. It is this *fideistic* dimension — the demand for prior normative commitment, independent of deliberative justification — that distinguishes nano-ideological mobilization from competitive framing. The war on terror's "you are either with us or against us" construction, pandemic governance's delegitimization of evidence-based skepticism, and the framing of any qualified support for Ukraine as strategic defeatism or covert sympathy for the adversary all illustrate this dynamic: these are not framing competitions but normative closures.

Third, the relationship to identity and belief. While framing theory operates primarily at the level of attitudes and opinion formation, nano-ideologies generate *identity positioning*. To adopt a nano-ideology is not merely to accept a frame; it is to locate oneself within a moral community — and to implicitly accept the boundary between legitimate insiders and illegitimate dissenters. This identity dimension explains why nano-ideologies generate backlash dynamics that frames typically do not. When the conditions sustaining a nano-ideology erode, the moral community it has produced does not simply update its beliefs: it experiences *ideological betrayal* — a sudden exposure of the contingency underlying what had been presented as moral necessity — with potentially severe consequences for political trust and institutional legitimacy.

A fourth consideration reinforces this distinction at the level of mobilization dynamics. Snow and Benford[48] identify *frame resonance* as the mechanism through which collective action frames achieve their mobilizing power: a frame must pass a dual test of credibility — consistency, empirical credibility, and the *credibility* of frame articulators — and *salience* — the centrality, experiential commensurability, and narrative fidelity of the framed issue — before it succeeds in generating sustained adherence.[49] Resonance, in other words, is achieved

through an iterative and socially distributed process of alignment between a frame and the pre-existing beliefs, experiences, and values of its target audience. Nano-ideologies characteristically *short-circuit* this process: rather than seeking resonance through credibility testing and narrative alignment, they impose adherence through urgency and normative expectations of alignment. To ask whether a nano-ideology "resonates" is already to resist it — and resistance, under nano-ideological conditions, is not a legitimate deliberative act but a normative defection.

In sum, nano-ideologies are not a relabeling of issue frames. They share with frames the function of issue-specific simplification and selective moral emphasis, but they exceed this function by generating normative obligation, closing deliberative space, and producing identity commitment. The surplus analytical value of the concept lies precisely in its capacity to capture this transition from interpretation to obligation — a transition through which ordinary political issues acquire ideological force, and which framing theory, by its own epistemological design, leaves outside its scope.

From Grand Ideologies to Nano-Ideologies

Building on Freeden's morphological understanding of ideology and Koselleck's insight into the compression of historical time under crisis, nano-ideologies are operational and situational belief systems rather than doctrinal formations. The transition from classical, systemic ideologies to nano-ideologies is neither abrupt nor accidental. It reflects a structural reconfiguration of the functions that ideology performs in global politics. Table 1, introduced in the previous section, provides the analytical anchor for this transition: by situating nano-ideologies alongside classical ideologies, thin-centered ideologies, policy frames, and securitizing discourses, it clarifies both the *continuities*—ideology continues to legitimize political choices—and the *discontinuities*—the reduction in temporal durability, normative density, and systemic scope. In this article, nano-ideologies are defined as short-lived, issue-specific, and normatively compressed belief systems that mobilize political adherence under conditions of crisis by generating normative expectations of alignment rather than offering comprehensive worldviews.

Classical ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, conservatism, and communism emerged over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as comprehensive frameworks for interpreting social reality, guiding policy, and mobilizing mass populations.[50] They combined a stable normative core with elaborate organizational and doctrinal apparatuses, allowing for predictable patterns of political alignment over decades, if not generations. Thin-centered ideologies, as described by Mudde,[51] represent a partial departure from this model: ideologies remain coherent enough to polarize political identities, but their scope is limited and dependent on "host" frameworks. Similarly, policy frames and securitizing discourses retain specific ideological functions—simplifying, moralizing, and legitimating—but do so without reproducing comprehensive worldviews.[52] In other words, classical ideologies provided both *conceptual depth* and *durability*, whereas contemporary thin or instrumental ideologies deliver *functional alignment* under contingent conditions. The analytical value of the concept becomes clearer when its distinctive features are specified more concretely.

Three features distinguish nano-ideologies from their conceptual neighbors. First, they are activated contingently in response to crises or high-stakes policy challenges, such as the war on terror after 2001, which generated specific moralized frameworks aligning publics behind security-driven policies.[53] Second, they exhibit a single-issue orientation: unlike classical ideologies, which articulate comprehensive social visions, nano-ideologies focus on discrete, politically salient topics, such as public health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic.[54] Third, they operate through dynamic moral compression, reducing complex normative landscapes to simplified oppositions, such as loyalty versus betrayal, responsibility versus irresponsibility, or solidarity versus defection. This mechanism allows rapid consensus but increases vulnerability to geopolitical or domestic shifts, as evidenced by fluctuating support for Ukraine under variable international pressure.[55]

In sum, the transition from grand ideologies to nano-ideologies reflects a broader structural transformation in global politics: ideological mobilization persists, but its forms have been compressed, operationalized, and rendered contingent. Nano-ideologies, therefore, are not marginal phenomena; they are central mechanisms through which contemporary geopolitical actors manage consent, polarization, and legitimacy under conditions of uncertainty. This conceptual bridge prepares the analytical ground for the detailed exploration of illustrative cases in the following section.

Illustrative Cases: Nano-Ideologies in Geopolitical Context

The three cases examined in this section — the war on terror, pandemic governance during COVID-19, and Western support for Ukraine — are examined not as self-standing ideologies, but as geopolitical and governance contexts in which nano-ideological functions can be systematically traced. For each case, the analysis follows a common analytical template: *activation* (the crisis trigger that initiates nano-ideological mobilization), *normative compression* (the binary moral structure that organizes alignment and dissent), *fideistic demand* (the expectation of prior commitment independently of deliberation), and *structural fragility* (the mechanisms through which the nano-ideology erodes and generates backlash). This structured approach demonstrates that nano-ideological mobilization is not a contingent or episodic phenomenon, but a recurrent pattern with identifiable structural features.

The War on Terror (2001–present)

The *mobilization* that followed the September 11 attacks represents a paradigmatic case of nano-ideological construction at geopolitical scale. The *activation* was immediate and crisis-driven: the attacks provided a widely shared referent of urgency that condensed complex geopolitical realities into a single and morally intensified emergency. The operative frame was issue-specific (counter-terrorism), temporally compressed (the anticipation of further attacks), and structured through a binary opposition between civilization and barbarism, democracy and terror. President Bush's formulation — "you are either with us or against us" — expressed this logic with unusual clarity, transforming geopolitical alignment into a normative expectation rather than a matter of ongoing strategic contestation.[56]

The mobilizational power of this nano-ideology was considerable. It facilitated the invocation of NATO's Article 5, the construction of a broad multinational coalition, and the rapid alignment of domestic publics behind exceptional security measures and military campaigns. Crucially, the expectation of alignment extended beyond governments to wider public spheres: media institutions, commentators, and political actors who questioned the proportionality of the response, the legal basis of specific measures, or the evidentiary foundations of subsequent

interventions were frequently represented not simply as critics, but as politically irresponsible, morally suspect, or insufficiently committed to collective security.

The case also illustrates the *structural fragility* of nano-ideological mobilization. As the war expanded from Afghanistan to Iraq, and as the justificatory architecture surrounding weapons of mass destruction, detention practices, and long-term occupation came under increasing scrutiny, the initial moral compression proved difficult to sustain. The failure to discover weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the Abu Ghraib revelations, and the protracted insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan did not merely weaken public support; they exposed the contingency of an alignment that had initially been presented as morally self-evident. What followed was not only opinion change, but a broader crisis of strategic and institutional legitimacy, reflected in intensified public distrust, legislative scrutiny, and durable controversy over the use of emergency rationales in democratic politics.

Pandemic Governance (2020–2022)

The governance of the COVID-19 pandemic produced a second illustrative case, distinctive in its explicitly non-military character and in the specific form of epistemic authority it mobilized. The *activation* occurred with the declaration of a global health emergency in early 2020, which generated the temporal compression and moral urgency that nano-ideological mobilization requires. The normative binary organizing alignment was structured around responsibility versus irresponsibility, with scientific consensus functioning as the primary source of moral authority. Following official public health guidance — lockdowns, mask mandates, and eventually vaccination campaigns — was framed not as a rational policy choice open to deliberation and proportional assessment, but as a moral duty; those who questioned these measures on empirical or proportionality grounds were systematically coded as vectors of harm, as structurally irrational, or as politically suspect.[57]

The structural conditions enabling this normative closure were not solely discursive. The architecture of digital platforms played a constitutive role in amplifying and consolidating the pandemic nano-ideology's mobilizational logic. Automated messaging systems, algorithmic amplification of high-engagement content, and the systematic de-platforming of heterodox medical perspectives collectively reduced the informational diversity available to mass publics,

while simultaneously accelerating the circulation of the dominant normative frame.[58] This dynamic illustrates a structural feature of contemporary nano-ideological mobilization that distinguishes it from pre-digital forms of crisis governance: platform architectures do not merely transmit nano-ideological content but actively reproduce its internal logic of urgency and closure, by rewarding morally charged, binary, and emotionally resonant messaging over qualified, evidence-based, or proportionality-sensitive communication.[59]

Cross-national evidence on platform moderation practices during the pandemic further supports this pattern, showing that content governance interventions can themselves function as mechanisms of ideological inhibition rather than neutral instruments of information management.[60]

The *fideistic* dimension of pandemic nano-ideology was particularly visible in the treatment of scientific uncertainty. In a context where evidence was genuinely evolving, expert disagreement was structurally normal, and the risk profiles of different populations varied significantly, the nano-ideological frame required the presentation of evolving public health guidance as settled, beyond deliberation, and morally non-negotiable. The political cost of expressing doubt was high: qualified support for measures, or advocacy for alternative approaches, consistently triggered delegitimization rather than engagement.

Structural fragility became evident as the epidemiological reality became more complex and the exceptional justification for extraordinary measures eroded. The normative architecture of pandemic nano-ideology proved structurally unable to accommodate uncertainty without delegitimizing those who expressed it — generating intense polarization, sustained vaccine hesitancy, and a measurable and durable erosion of public trust in health institutions that persisted well beyond the acute pandemic phase.[61] The rapidity with which the normative consensus dissolved — and the depth of the institutional damage it left behind — reflects the structural paradox at the core of nano-ideological mobilization: its operational effectiveness is inseparable from its fragility.

Geopolitical Alignment with Ukraine (2022–present)

The response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine constitutes a third illustrative case, marked by a distinctively geopolitical rather than domestic or public-health orientation. The *activation* occurred in late February 2022, when the invasion abruptly reconfigured the European security environment and generated a powerful moral and strategic imperative to align. In this context, support for Ukraine was framed not simply as a policy preference, but as a test of international order, sovereignty, and the credibility of collective security commitments. The resulting alignment was organized through a compressed moral binary — aggression versus resistance, solidarity versus abandonment, democracy versus authoritarian expansion — that reduced room for proportionality, strategic ambiguity, or qualified endorsement.

The nano-ideological character of this mobilization was visible in the speed with which support became widely articulated across governments, media, and public discourse, particularly in liberal democratic settings. Calls for caution, negotiated compromise, or attention to escalation risks were often interpreted not as legitimate strategic concerns, but as signs of appeasement, weakness, or moral equivocation. This did not eliminate debate, but it narrowed its acceptable boundaries by attaching strong normative pressure to public expressions of alignment. As in the other cases, the issue was not the absence of disagreement, but the transformation of disagreement into a morally charged problem of loyalty and political responsibility.

Digital platforms and networked media further intensified this pattern by accelerating the circulation of highly condensed narratives of victimhood, heroism, and existential threat. In these environments, simplified frames of identification and condemnation tended to outperform more cautious, legally nuanced, or diplomatically complex accounts. The result was a communicative environment in which the dominant alignment could appear both urgent and self-evident, even as the long-term strategic consequences of the conflict remained highly uncertain.[62]

Structural fragility became increasingly evident as the war evolved into a protracted conflict marked by battlefield stalemate, shifting external support, and uneven domestic costs. The initial moral compression that had enabled rapid alignment proved less effective in sustaining unconditional consensus over time, particularly where publics began to encounter the economic, military, and geopolitical limits of sustained escalation. In this respect, the Ukraine case highlights a core feature of nano-ideological mobilization: it is exceptionally effective at

producing rapid alignment in moments of crisis, but it remains exposed to erosion once the conflict becomes prolonged, ambiguous, or politically costly.

Discussion and Implications: Operational Fragility and Strategic Consequences of Nano-Ideologies

Nano-ideologies can be effective mobilizing instruments when they combine targeted framing, moral simplification, and contextual urgency. Their effectiveness is onditional and unstable. Because they depend on crisis-specific legitimacy and prompt adherence, they can lose traction quickly when political or informational conditions change.[63] The result is a tension between short-term mobilization and medium-term durability.

Their compressed temporal horizon makes nano-ideologies especially sensitive to shifts in external shocks, audience attention, and normative expectations. In hybrid conflict settings, changes in geopolitical pressure can quickly weaken narratives that were previously effective.[64] In public health governance, comparable effects may follow from changes in epidemiological knowledge or policy priorities, especially where compliance has been framed in moralized terms.[65] These vulnerabilities become more pronounced when multiple nano-ideologies compete within the same population, generating conflicts of loyalty and interpretation.[66]

At the same time, nano-ideologies offer substantial operational leverage. By concentrating on narrowly defined issues, they permit rapid coordination without the institutional investment required by classical ideologies.[67] In corporate, activist, and political settings, digital micro-campaigns show how selective framing, algorithmic amplification, and small-scale interventions can produce measurable effects on consumer alignment or policy pressure.[68] State actors similarly exploit these dynamics in contested environments, using audience segmentation and hybrid communication channels to shape perception and behavior.[69]

These dynamics point to the need for governance mechanisms capable of responding quickly to ideological shifts without undermining democratic deliberation. Efforts to detect and mitigate disinformation offer one example, because they combine normative standards, technological monitoring, and institutional coordination to reduce the openings that nano-ideologies exploit.[70] Yet such measures face a persistent dilemma: the same urgency that makes

nano-ideologies effective also makes them difficult to regulate through slower institutional processes.

Recent European Union initiatives illustrate both the promise and the limits of this response. The *Digital Services Act*[71] and the *AI Act*[72] address platform architectures that facilitate nano-ideological amplification through transparency obligations, access for independent research, and risk-based accountability for AI-generated content.[73] These measures implicitly recognize that nano-ideological mobilization is not only discursive, but also infrastructural. Their effectiveness remains limited, however, because regulation generally moves more slowly than crisis-driven communication. The main governance challenge is therefore to preserve deliberative space even when urgency and algorithmic incentives work against it.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings support a sharper distinction between classical, thin-centered, and nano-ideologies. Classical ideologies provide long-lasting normative frameworks; thin-centered ideologies retain partial programmatic coherence; nano-ideologies, by contrast, are contingent instruments whose force depends on audience receptivity and volatile environments.[74] Understanding them in this way makes it possible to connect political theory, securitization studies, and information-governance research without collapsing their differences.

The broader implication is a paradox: the same features that make nano-ideologies effective in the short term also make them vulnerable to rapid weakening once conditions change. Future research should therefore examine more closely how audience segmentation, platform design, and geopolitical volatility interact over time. A combination of qualitative case analysis and computational approaches would be especially useful for mapping the limits and consequences of nano-ideological mobilization.

Conclusion

Nano-ideologies help to explain how ideological mobilization operates under contemporary conditions of crisis, uncertainty, and accelerated communication. Rather than replacing classical ideologies altogether, they identify a more compressed and contingent form of belief formation through which political actors justify concrete choices, organize alignment, and

narrow the space of legitimate dissent. In this sense, the concept is intended not as a claim about the disappearance of broader ideological structures, but as an analytical tool for understanding a specific mode of ideological operation that has become increasingly visible in recent geopolitical and governance contexts.

The analysis does not suggest that nano-ideologies are inherently illegitimate or deceptive. It suggests, rather, that their defining features — issue-specificity, temporal compression, normative simplification, and urgency-driven mobilization — generate characteristic vulnerabilities under conditions of rapid change. Because they derive much of their force from crisis-specific legitimacy, they can be highly effective in producing short-term coordination while remaining exposed to rapid weakening when geopolitical, epistemic, or institutional conditions shift.

Understanding nano-ideologies as operational belief systems provides a way to connect political theory, international relations, and research on digital communication without reducing one field to another. It clarifies how consent can be organized in real time through the interaction of crisis narratives, moral alignment, and infrastructural amplification, and why such forms of mobilization often struggle to sustain legitimacy once the immediacy of the triggering crisis recedes. The concept therefore helps illuminate both the power and the limits of contemporary ideological coordination.

The broader implication is not that ideology has ceased to matter as a durable structure of political meaning, but that one important part of its contemporary operation is increasingly short-term, situational, and strategically targeted. This has consequences for both scholarship and governance. For scholars, it invites closer analysis of the relationship between doctrinal depth, communicative urgency, and political legitimacy. For institutions, it underscores the importance of preserving deliberative space precisely when crisis conditions create the strongest incentives to compress complexity into binary forms of alignment.

Future research should pursue at least three directions. First, the emergence, consolidation, and erosion of nano-ideological mobilization should be investigated through more systematic comparative work across different crises, regime types, and media environments. Second, greater attention should be given to the institutional conditions that intensify or mitigate nano-ideological dynamics, including the plurality of epistemic authorities, the robustness of

oversight mechanisms, and the resilience of deliberative norms. Third, the interaction between nano-ideologies and digital infrastructures — especially algorithmic amplification, generative artificial intelligence, and hybrid forms of conflict — requires sustained theoretical and empirical inquiry if the societal consequences of this mode of mobilization are to be properly understood.

In this sense, nano-ideologies are best understood not as substitutes for classical ideologies, but as contingent instruments of political legitimation whose effectiveness depends on the crisis conditions that make them plausible and compelling.

Notes

[1] M. Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 21–26; T. Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 1–3.
[2] F. Fukuyama, 'The End of History?', *The National Interest*, 16 (1989), pp. 3–4.
[3] H. Farrell and A. L. Newman, *Underground Empire: How America Weaponized the World Economy* (New York: Henry Holt, 2023).
[4] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 54–60.
[5] C. Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition*, 39/4 (2004), pp. 544–546. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x; B. Buzan, O. Wæver and J. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998), pp. 23–26.
[6] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, *op cit.*, pp. 23–26; D. Bigo, 'Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of Practices, Practices of Power', *International Political Sociology*, 5/3 (2011), pp. 225–258. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2011.00132.x.
[7] G. Goertz, *Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 3–7.
[8] D. Bell, *The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York: Free Press, 1960).
[9] E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1946).
[10] H. J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948). pp. 4–6.
[11] J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), pp. 17–19.
[12] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–82.
[13] T. Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 28–31.
[14] Marwick and Lewis, *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online*, *op. cit.*; J. van Dijck, T. Poell and M. de Waal, *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[15] Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *op. cit.*, pp. 544–547.
[16] M. Marsili, 'The European Union's Strategic Adaptations to Hybrid Conflicts and the Influence of External Actors', *Public Administration and Security Studies*, 19/19 (2025), pp. 23–60. https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0055.6583.
[17] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, *op cit.*, pp. 23–26.
[18] D. A. Snow and R. D. Benford, 'Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization', *International Social Movement Research*, 1 (1988), pp. 198–200.
[19] G. Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 2–4.
[20] L. McIntyre, *Post-Truth* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018), pp. 5–7; T. Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why It Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).
[21] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), pp. 105–114.
[22] E. Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 67–74.

[23] J. Leader Maynard and M. L. Haas (Eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Ideology and International Relations* (Abingdon/New York, Routledge, 2023). https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003026754.
[24] M. L. Haas, *The Ideological Origins of Great Power Politics, 1789–1989* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).
[25] J. M. Owen IV, *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510–2010* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[26] M. B. Steger, 'Political Ideologies in the Age of Globalization', in M. Freeden, L.Tower Sargent and M. Stears (Eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 365–385.
[27] P. Gries and P. P. C. Yam, 'Ideology and international relations', *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34 (2020), 135–141. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cobeha.2020.03.006.
[28] D. Lewis, 'The Role of Ideology in Russian Foreign Policy'. in Leader Maynard and Haas, *op cit*., pp. 374–90; E. A. Jo and J. Chen Weiss, 'Ideology and Chinese Foreign Policies', in Leader Maynard and Haas, *op cit.*, pp. 343–358.
[29] S. E. Goddard, 'Rhetoric, Legitimation, and Grand Strategy', in T. Balzacq, R. R. Krebs (Eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Grand Strategy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 322–336. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198840299.013.20.
[30] Steger, *op. cit.*; Klaus-Gerd Giesen (Ed), *Ideologies in World Politics* (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2020).
[31] Gries and Yam, *op. cit*; J. S. Casey and L. Dolan, 'Ideological Topography in World Politics: A Guide to the End of the Unipolar-Homogeneous Moment', *International Studies Quarterly*, 67/1 (2023), sqad011. https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqad011.
[32] Goertz, *Social Science Concepts…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–7; J. Gerring, 'What Makes a Concept Good?', *American Political Science Review*, 93/3 (1999), pp. 347–360. https://doi.org/10.2307/2585781, pp. 357–360.
[33] Goertz, *Social Science Concepts…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–31.
[34] J. Gerring, *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) pp. 101–105.
[35] M. Marsili, 'The Russian Influence Strategy in Its Contested Neighbourhood', in H. Mölder, V. Sazonov, A. Chochia and T. Kerikmäe (Eds) *The Russian Federation in Global Information Warfare* (Cham: Springer, 2021), pp. 149–172. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73955-3_8; M. Marsili, 'Cognitive Warfare, Disinformation, and Corporate Influence in Europe's Energy Transition: Information Control, Regulation, and Human Rights Implications', *Applied Cybersecurity and Internet Governance*, 4/1 (2025). https://doi.org/10.60097/ACIG/214045.
[36] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–26; Eagleton, *Ideology…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–3.
[37] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, *op cit.*, pp. 23–26.
[38] Snow and Benford, 'Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization', *op. cit.*, pp. 197–217.
[39] R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 236–239.
[40] Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *op. cit.*, pp. 544–547.
[41] Marwick and Lewis, *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online*, *op. cit.*; van Dijck, Poell and de Waal, *The Platform Society…*, *op. cit.*
[42] Snow and Benford, 'Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization', *op. cit.*
[43] D. Chong and J. N. Druckman, 'Framing Theory', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10 (2007), pp. 103–126. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054.
[44] S. Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 13–15.
[45] Snow and Benford, 'Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization', *op. cit.*, pp. 199–201; R. D. Benford and D. A. Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26 (2000), pp. 615–617. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611.
[46] Chong and Druckman, 'Framing Theory', *op. cit.*, pp. 111–112.
[47] Chong and Druckman, 'Framing Theory', *op. cit.*, pp. 106–107.
[48] Snow and Benford, 'Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization', *op. cit.*
[49] Snow and Benford, 'Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization', *op. cit.*, pp. 205–210; Benford and Snow, 'Framing Processes and Social Movements…', *op. cit.*, pp. 619–622.
[50] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–26; Eagleton, *Ideology…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–3.
[51] Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *op. cit.*, pp. 544–547.
[52] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, *op cit.*, pp. 23–26; Snow and Benford, 'Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization', *op. cit.*, pp. 198–200.
[53] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, *op cit.*, pp. 24–26.
[54] McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, *op. cit*., pp. 5–7.
[55] Eagleton, *Ideology…*, *op. cit.*, pp. 28–31.

[56] Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, *op cit.*, pp. 24–26.
[57] McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, *op. cit*., pp. 5–7.
[58] Y. Benkler, R. Faris and H. Roberts, *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018);S. Woolley and P. N. Howard, *Computational Propaganda: Political Parties, Politicians, and Political Manipulation on Social Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[59] van Dijck, Poell and de Waal, *The Platform Society…*, *op. cit.*; E. Loru, A. Galeazzi, A. Bonetti, E. Sangiorgio, N. Di Marco, M. Cinelli, M. Falkenberg, A. Baronchelli and W. Quattrociocchi, 'Ideology and Polarization Set the Agenda on Social Media', *Scientific Reports*, 15 (2025), p. 35816. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-19776-z.
[60] J. A. Danowski, 'Digital Moderation and Ideological Inhibition: A Cross-National Study of Political Communication and Polarization', *Technology in Society*, 82 (2025), p. 102887. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2025.102887.
[61] Loru et al., 'Ideology and Polarization Set the Agenda on Social Media', *op. cit.*
[62] Loru et al., 'Ideology and Polarization Set the Agenda on Social Media', *op. cit.*
[63] Farrell and Newman, *Underground Empire…, op. cit.*; Marsili, 'Cognitive Warfare, Disinformation, and Corporate Influence in Europe's Energy Transition'…, *op. cit*.
[64] P. Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible: Adventures in Modern Russia* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014); Marsili, 'The Russian Influence Strategy in Its Contested Neighbourhood', *op. cit*.
[65] McIntyre, *Post-Truth*, *op. cit*.
[66] Benkler, Faris and Roberts, *Network Propaganda…*, *op. cit.*
[67] van Dijck, Poell and de Waal, *The Platform Society…*, *op. cit.*
[68] A. Marwick and R. Lewis, *Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online* (New York: Data & Society Research Institute, 2017); Marsili, 'Cognitive Warfare, Disinformation, and Corporate Influence in Europe's Energy Transition'…, *op. cit*.
[69] Pomerantsev, *Nothing Is True and Everything Is Possible…*, *op. cit.*; Marsili, 'The Russian Influence Strategy in Its Contested Neighbourhood', *op. cit*.
[70] Farrell and Newman, *Underground Empire…, op. cit.*; Marsili, 'The European Union's Strategic Adaptations to Hybrid Conflicts'…, *op. cit.*
[71] European Union, *Regulation (EU) 2022/2065 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 October 2022 on a Single Market for Digital Services (Digital Services Act)*, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 277 (2022), pp. 1–102. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32022R2065.
[72] European Union, *Regulation (EU) 2024/1689 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 June 2024 Laying Down Harmonised Rules on Artificial Intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act)*, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 1689 (2024), pp. 1–144. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L_202401689.
[73] M. Szczepański, *The Geopolitics of Technology: Charting the EU's Path in a Contested Digital Landscape*, Briefing PE 762.384 (Brussels: European Parliament Research Service, 2024). https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/762384/EPRS_BRI(2024)762384_EN.pdf.
[74] Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory…*, *op. cit.*; Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *op. cit.*.