



Research Repository UCD

Title	The Inequalities That Divide – A Theory of Left-Right Politics
Authors(s)	Lindqvist, Jesper
Publication date	2022
Publication information	Lindqvist, Jesper. "The Inequalities That Divide – A Theory of Left-Right Politics." University College Dublin. School of Politics and International Relations, 2022.
Publisher	University College Dublin. School of Politics and International Relations
Item record/more information	http://hdl.handle.net/10197/13334

Downloaded 2026-07-31 01:23:46

The UCD community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Your story matters! (@ucd_oa)



© Some rights reserved. For more information



The Inequalities That Divide – A Theory of Left-Right Politics

By

Jesper Lindqvist

Student Number: 18203033

ORCID: 0000-0002-5600-6220

The thesis is submitted to University College Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

UCD School of Politics and International Relations

Head of School: Dr Johan A. Dornschneider-Elkink

Principal Supervisor: Dr Johan A. Dornschneider-Elkink

Co-Supervisor: Professor David M. Farrell

Members of the Research Studies Panel:

Dr Johan A. Dornschneider-Elkink

Professor David M. Farrell

Dr Rory Costello

August 2022

Table of Contents

List of Figures	iv
List of Tables	vi
Abstract	viii
Statement of Original Authorship.....	x
Collaborations.....	xi
Acknowledgements	xii
Chapter 1. Introduction	1
Research Question and Methodological Considerations.....	5
Structure of the Thesis.....	14
Chapter 2. Literature Review.....	16
The Equality–Inequality Criterion	17
Competing Frameworks	25
Summary	33
Chapter 3. Acceptance of Inequality Separating Left from Right – A Theory	35
The Criterion	36
The Role of Salience	42
Discerning Causality	46
The Role of Accepting Inequality in General	52
Why Would Acceptance of Inequality Explain Left-Right Politics?	54
Chapter 4. Acceptance of Inequality Separating Left from Right? Evidence from Eastern and Western Europe	59
Abstract	59
Introduction	59
Can a Single Criterion Explain the Left-Right Dimension in Europe?	62
Data and Variables	67
Analysis and Results	71
Discussion and Conclusion	78
Chapter 5. A Political Esperanto, or False Friends? Left and Right in Different Political Contexts	80
Abstract	80
A Political Esperanto or False Friends.....	80
Suggested Underlying Dimensions of Left-Right Competition	83
Analysing Left-Right Classifications in Open-Ended Responses.....	86

Data and Methodology	88
Results	93
Robustness Checks	102
Conclusion.....	103
Chapter 6. An Urban Myth? Government Involvement in the Economy and Left-Right Politics	105
Abstract	105
Introduction	105
Economic Policy, Left-Right, and the Size of Government.....	108
Acceptance of Inequality.....	110
Personal Issue Salience	112
Alternative Explanations	114
Data and Method	114
Results	118
Conclusion.....	125
Chapter 7. The Left-Right Chameleon – Examining Unusual Instances of Left-Right Competition	127
Abstract	127
Introduction	127
Proposed Explanations of the Left-Right Dimension	129
Acceptance of Inequality – A Theory	131
Methodology	134
Mapping Cases of Left-Right Competition	136
A Divide over Religion – Evidence from Indonesia	139
Moldova – Resistance to Change in Post-Communist Societies.....	142
Israel – The Israel-Palestine Conflict and Left-Right Politics	146
Discussion	150
Chapter 8. Discussion and Conclusion	152
Implications, Limitations and Future Research.....	154
Concluding Remarks	157
Appendix A. Acceptance of Inequality Separating Left from Right?	159
Survey Items and Corresponding Variables.....	159
Descriptive Statistics	166
Multilevel Regression Models	170
World Value Survey and European Values Study	173
The Czech Republic and Lithuania	193

Venezuela	195
Controlling for Partisanship	199
Changing Indicators for Independent Variables.....	201
Issue Salience Measure - Comparative Manifesto Project.....	203
Issue Salience Measure - Chapel Hill Expert Survey	205
Appendix B. A Political Esperanto or False Friends?	209
NMF Topic Output – All Topics.....	209
NMF Topic Modelling – Considering Centrists Answers	219
All Countries Topic Model 2D Projection	230
Topic Coherence Scores.....	231
Appendix C. An Urban Myth?	233
Overview	233
Multilevel Regression Models	246
Multilevel Regression Models – Alternative Datasets.....	250
Resistance to Change	252
Controlling for Partisanship	254
Dutch Parliamentary Election Survey 2017	255
Appendix D. The Left-Right Chameleon.....	269
Overview	269
Indonesia	270
Moldova	283
Israel	292
Bibliography.....	303

List of Figures

Fig. 1.1. From Core Political Dispute to Left-Right Classifications.....	8
Fig. 3.1. Euclidean Distance in Spatial Representation Depending on Dimension Weights	44
Fig. 4.1. Independent Variable Coefficients by Country – ESS 2008	72
Fig. 4.2. Independent Variable Coefficients by Country – ESS 2016	73
Fig. 4.3. Estimated Coefficients of Acceptance of Inequality Explaining L-R Self-Placements, Conditional on Issue Salience.....	77
Fig. 5.1. Two-dimensional Projection of Jenson–Shannon Distances between Topics for Canada, Denmark, Germany, and Hungary	99
Fig. 5.2. Two-dimensional Projection of Jenson–Shannon Distances between Topics, for Israel, Mexico, Spain, and the USA.....	101
Fig. 6.1. Country Coefficients for Independent Variables – WVS 7 and EVS 5... 	120
Fig. 6.2. The Predicted Effect of Accepting Economic Inequality on L-R Self-Placement, Depending on Personal Issue Salience	123
Fig. 6.3. The Predicted Effect of Wanting Less Asylum Seekers on L-R Self-Placement, Depending on Personal Issue Salience	124
Fig. 6.4. The Predicted Effect of Wanting Less Taxes on L-R Self-Placement, Depending on Personal Issue Salience	125
Fig. A.1. Independent Variable Coefficients by Country – WVS 1995-1998.....	191
Fig. A.2. Privatization Coefficients by Country – WVS 1995-1998	192
Fig. A.3. Resistance to Change Coefficients by Country – WVS 1995-1998.....	192
Fig. A.4. Independent Variable Coefficients. Controlling for Partisanship – ESS 2008	199
Fig. A.5. Independent Variable Coefficients. Controlling for Partisanship – ESS 2016	200
Fig. A.6. Changed Indicators. Independent Variable Coefficients – ESS 2008	201
Fig. A.7. Changed Indicators. Independent Variable Coefficients – ESS 2016	202
Fig. B.1. Two-Dimensional Projection of Jenson–Shannon Distances Between Topics – All Countries Model.....	230
Fig. B.2. Topic Coherence Score by Number of Topics – All Text	231

Fig. B.3. Topic Coherence Score by Number of Topics – All Country Topic Models	
.....	232
Fig. C.1. Independent Variable Country Coefficients – WVS 6.....	250
Fig. C.2. Independent Variable Country Coefficients – WVS 7.....	251
Fig. C.3. Country Coefficients for Resistance to Change – WVS 7	253
Fig. C.4. Independent Variable Coefficients by Country. Controlling for	
Partisanship – WVS 7 and EVS 5	254

List of Tables

Table 5.1. Overview of Responses	92
Table 5.2. NMF Topic Output – Top Five Most Important Topics per Model	96
Table 6.1. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in the Netherlands 2017	122
Table 7.1. Examples of Different Types of L-R Competition	138
Table 7.2. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Indonesia 2018.....	142
Table 7.3. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Moldova 2002	146
Table 7.4. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Israel 2013.....	150
Table A.1 Survey Items and Corresponding Variables	159
Table A.2. Descriptive Statistics. ESS 2008.....	166
Table A.3. Descriptive Statistics. ESS 2016.....	168
Table A.4. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placement – ESS 2008 and 2016	170
Table A.5. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. WVS	175
Table A.6. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. EVS.....	179
Table A.7. Descriptive Statistics. WVS 1995-1998	183
Table A.8. Descriptive Statistics. EVS 1999 The Czech Republic.....	185
Table A.9. Descriptive Statistics. EVS 1999 Lithuania	187
Table A.10. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placement – WVS 1995-1998	189
Table A.11. OLS Regression Explaining L-R Self-Placement – EVS 1999.....	193
Table A.12. OLS Regression Explaining L-R Self-Placement – Venezuela	196
Table A.13. Issue Salience Measurement. CMP	203
Table A.14. Country-Level Issue Salience Data.....	206
Table A.15. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placements. Interaction Effects Included – ESS 2008 and 2016.....	207
Table B.1. NMF Topic Output – All Topics	209
Table B.2. NMF Topic Output – R Score Only Considering Centrists’ Answers	219
Table C.1. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. WVS 6, 7, and EVS 5... 	234
Table C.2. Descriptive Statistics. WVS 6.....	240
Table C.3. Descriptive Statistics. WVS 7.....	242
Table C.4. Descriptive Statistics. WVS 7 and EVS 5 combined data	244

Table C.5. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placement – WVS 7.....	246
Table C.6. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placement – WVS 7 and EVS 5	248
Table C.7. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. DPES 2017	257
Table C.8. Descriptive Statistics. DPES 2017.....	262
Table C.9. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in the Netherlands 2017 – Table 6.1 Long Version	264
Table C.10. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in the Netherlands 2017 – Robustness Checks.....	267
Table D.1. Examples of Different Types of L-R Competition. Table 7.1 Continued	269
Table D.2. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. WVS 7	270
Table D.3. Descriptive Statistics. Indonesia WVS 7	276
Table D.4. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Indonesia. Only Muslims Included – WVS 7	278
Table D.5. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Indonesia. Controlling for Partisanship – WVS 7.....	279
Table D.6. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Indonesia 2018 – Table 7.2 Long Version	280
Table D.7. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. WVS 4	283
Table D.8. Descriptive Statistics. Moldova WVS 4.....	287
Table D.9. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Moldova 2002 – Table 7.3 Long Version	289
Table D.10. OLS. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Post-Communist Countries in Eastern Europe. Attitudes Towards Change	291
Table D.11. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. INES 2013	292
Table D.12. Descriptive Statistics. INES 2013.....	296
Table D.13. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Israel 2013 – Table 7.4 Long Version	298
Table D.14. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Israel. Controlling for Arab Sample – INES 2013	301
Table D.15. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Israel. Changed Independent Variable – INES 2013	302

Abstract

The left-right dimension of politics is a dominant political divide in numerous societies around the world, and the corresponding left-right terminology describing this dimension is commonly used by voters, political elites, and scholars alike to make sense of various political landscapes. Yet, what makes political phenomena left- or right-wing is not fully understood, neither in the academic community, nor in broader society. Building on previous literature, this thesis proposes a novel version of acceptance of inequality theory to explain what makes political phenomena left- or right-wing. I argue that there are many potential inequality dimensions (e.g., divisions along class, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.) that can become politically divisive. This means that different societies can be divided along different inequality dimensions. When one of these inequality dimensions is preponderant, many voters and political actors decide their left-right orientation based on their acceptance (or rejection) of this particular inequality. This means that left-right competition will comprise different coalitions in one context compared to another, as different inequalities divide voters and political actors in different settings. This theory is compared to several competing explanations, including that the underlying difference between the Left and the Right is attitudes towards change, government intervention in the economy, religion, and the idea that there is no context-independent distinguishing feature. My novel version of acceptance of inequality theory as well as the alternative explanations are examined in four empirical research papers. The aim of these papers is to examine acceptance of inequality theory in instances of left-right competition that the theory has previously been unable to explain, as well as instances that remain understudied overall. In the first paper, multilevel regression models demonstrate that contrary to previous research, acceptance of inequality predicts right-wing self-placements of individuals in both Eastern and Western Europe. Importantly, this paper demonstrates that whether attitudes towards a specific inequality predict left-right self-placements in a country is dependent on the country-level salience of that inequality dimension. The second paper analyses open-ended survey answers describing what the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ mean using topic modelling. This paper provides evidence for acceptance of inequality theory, as well as partial evidence for two other explanations of the left-right dimension, namely that resistance to change or attitudes towards government intervention in the economy separate left- from right-wing politics.

Conversely, using data from the World Values Survey, the third paper finds that attitudes towards different inequalities better predict left-right self-placements around the world compared to attitudes towards both economic statism and change. An additional analysis of the Netherlands shows that the proposed moderating effect of personal issue salience on the relationship between issue attitudes and left-right self-placements (an observable implication of the proposed causal relationship) is only present for acceptance of inequality, but not for attitudes towards economic statism. The fourth paper examines different instances of left-right competition around the world, with a focus on exploiting variation and finding rare instances that would be able to challenge the reach of acceptance of inequality theory. This paper finds that equality–inequality theory is the only prominent explanation that can consistently explain the left-right dimension in the reviewed cases, as well as in three case studies (of Indonesia, Moldova, and Israel). Overall, this thesis provides substantial evidence for a theory of the left-right dimension that can help social scientists and voters alike make sense of historical, contemporary, and future left-right politics.

Statement of Original Authorship

I hereby certify that the submitted work is my own work, was completed while registered as a candidate for the degree stated on the Title Page, and I have not obtained a degree elsewhere on the basis of the research presented in this submitted work.

Collaborations

This dissertation contains four empirical research papers, one of which – “A Political Esperanto or False Friends?” – was co-authored with Dr Johan A. Dornschneider-Elkink. The research and writing of the final paper were joint efforts, where most of the tasks were divided evenly, or conducted together. A few tasks were not, however. For example, I collected the data and wrote the initial draft of the paper. We both individually wrote separate parts of the code for the analysis, whereas Jos was chiefly responsible for the choice of research design and creating the relevance score.

Acknowledgements

My interest in understanding the left-right dimension began in the fall of 2012 at Stockholm University, as I tried to guess the left-right leanings of my lecturers. It seemed as if it was possible to sense where they were on the left-right spectrum. This pastime continued while I studied economics at Uppsala University, even though the lecturers never disclosed their political leanings, nor spoke about politics (at least not explicitly). The ability to have an intuitive sense of an individual's left-right orientation is common to those who observe politics, but understanding what creates these feelings of being left- or right-wing is less clear. Ultimately, it relies on understanding a more fundamental question: what makes political phenomena left- or right-wing? This question is so rudimentary that one would assume that the answer would be taught in first-year political science modules. Yet, this was far from well-known knowledge. There were multiple suggestions in the literature, but insufficient evidence to support one or the other conclusion.

Given the lack of a clear answer in the literature, I started investigating this question myself. The pursuit of this answer during the first few years was mostly a hobby, an interesting puzzle to escape boredom. My approach was entirely inductive, beginning with comparisons of the left-right landscapes in Sweden and the United States. During my studies I moved to Australia, the Netherlands, and Ireland, affording me new contexts to use for my inductive approach. I have thought about, and researched, the left-right dimension for almost ten years, and this thesis is the culmination of that hobby.

Unsurprisingly, over the past ten years I have met many people who have helped me in different ways, and I consequently have many people to thank. Without their help I would never have been able to complete this dissertation, let alone start a PhD programme at all. It is appropriate to begin this list with thanking my primary supervisor Jos Dornschneider-Elkink, who has supported me throughout this PhD programme. We have discussed my research approximately once every second week for four years, and Jos has been more patient than imaginable. His countless suggestions for revisions, as well as guidance, during these four years have been invaluable to me. My secondary supervisor, David Farrell, has similarly been of great assistance. David is the reason I went to Dublin, as he was the first person there to read my proposal for this research programme. He encouraged me to apply, which is the reason I came to Ireland. During

my first weeks in Ireland, David also kindly offered to send me on a two week-long summer school on party politics held by the European Consortium for Political Research, which proved to be very helpful for me. Another individual who has offered helpful feedback is Rory Costello, the third member of my Research Studies Panel (RSP). Some of Rory's criticisms have been some of the most helpful for this thesis, partly because it has been some of the most critical examinations of my work.

During these four years (2018-2022), many of my fellow PhD researchers have helped me with my work. Four in particular have read and examined what I have written at various stages of this research: Samuel Johnston, Emma Murphy, Leticia Barbabala, and Audrey Plan. Your critical comments on my work have been extremely helpful, and I owe you immense gratitude. I am also very grateful that you, together with Julia Cañas Martinez, took the time to proof-read the final manuscripts of these thesis chapters. I would also like to further thank all the PhD researchers at the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIRe) at University College Dublin (UCD), as well as the academic and administrative staff. In particular, I want to thank Stefan Mueller who gave extensive comments on my work early on, James Cross who took a particular interest in my work, as well as Martijn Schoonvelde who was always available to help me. Dara Gannon and Yuko Conlon should also be mentioned given how much they have helped me throughout these years. In addition to these people at UCD, I also owe thanks to Costanza Galanti, Mary Naughton, and Vincenzo Maccarrone who supported me at the Geary Institute. Lastly, there were several people who contributed to my work during the dissertation in different ways that ought to be mentioned, including Cees van der Eijk, Anders Backlund, Natalia Umansky, Dana Guy and Alona Dolinsky.

During my master's programme at Leiden University (2016-2018), I was privileged to meet several individuals who changed my life substantially. To begin, I fortunately met Jinte Veldman and Sietse Papenborg who helped me with my poor writing skills. Without their comments I would not have been able to pursue a PhD at all. From Leiden I would also like to thank all the other students of the research master programme. I would like to in particular thank Rick van Well and Alexander Verdoes, who have continuously helped me throughout the last four years as well. Lastly, I want to thank the faculty at Leiden University who supported those of us in the research master programme who wanted to pursue a PhD, especially Joop van Holsteijn, Rudy Andeweg, Michael Sampson, Ingrid van Biezen, Petr Kopecký, and Michael Meffert.

Before moving to Leiden, I lived in Australia for two years (2014-2016), where I often discussed this topic with friends who were kind enough to listen longer than common politeness demands. At this point in time, I was not as certain about my research project and the possibilities for me to write a PhD dissertation. There were a few people in Australia who in particular helped me develop the idea, and who I therefore owe much gratitude to. Medha Majumdar was arguably the first person who took an active interest in my topic, and our discussions made me believe that I could pursue this research. I would also like to thank Ian McAllister and William Bosworth at the Australian National University, the first political scientists that I encountered who believed in the idea.

I lastly want to thank my close friends and family who have put up with me talking about this subject for the last ten years. These include Catarina, Mats, Jennifer, Fredrik, Philip, Andreas and Mohinii, but there are ultimately too many people to mention. I hope that these acknowledgements demonstrate that this thesis is ultimately, like most research, a collaborative effort.

Chapter 1. Introduction

The great battle between socialism and capitalism was arguably the most prominent political divide of the latter half of the last century, a battle largely associated with left-right (L-R) politics (Zuell and Scholz, 2019, p. 86). Possibly because this divide was understood to be a clash over economic policy, the L-R divide came to be considered an economic dimension by many. When the Berlin Wall fell, capitalism seemed to have been victorious. Some then drew the conclusion that L-R competition was a relic of the past (Bobbio, 1996, p. xxii). The emergence of “third way politics” in the 1990’s also furthered this idea (Driver and Martell, 2000). In Europe the GAL-TAN dimension (ranging from green/alternative/libertarian to traditional/authoritarian/nationalist) became popular in the academic literature in the beginning of the 2000s (Hooghe et al., 2002), as well as the winners vs losers of globalization hypothesis (Kriesi et al., 2006; Kriesi et al., 2008). Since then, the rise of populism has similarly drawn much of the scholarly attention, and it is regularly invoked in news coverage of politics. Brexit, the election of Trump and the rise of right-wing populists in Northern Europe over the last 20 years has likely contributed to this focus. It has been common during the same period of time to claim that the L-R divide is eroding, becoming irrelevant, and altogether less useful to analyse politics (e.g., Blom, 2017; Azmanova, 2011; Mouffe, 2016; Norris, 2019b), resembling the end of ideology debate that followed World War II (as eloquently described by Jost, 2006). As Charnock (2010, p. 491) states, “societal changes [...] have led a number of authors (more or less strongly) to the idea that left–right ideological differences have faded or will fade away or, at least, will become much less relevant for understanding political behaviour” (see also White, 2011, p. 123). Is this (finally) the end of the L-R dimension? Will it fade into irrelevance and become a relic of the past, more suitable as an object of study for historians, rather than political scientists?

The surprising answer is that the L-R dimension is not fading away or becoming less relevant. To the contrary, it continues to be an important dimension that is used to describe the political landscape in most representative democracies around the world. The L-R dimension continues to better explain vote choices than other comparable political divides and cleavages in Europe (Gall and Berton, 2013). In Western Europe most individuals can place themselves on the L-R scale. While party identification declined in many West European countries between 1976 and 2004, L-R identification remained at

the same levels (Freire, 2006b). In Eastern Europe an average of 80% can place themselves on the L-R dimension (Otjes and Rekker, 2021, p. 4). This “high level transcends old and new democracies and nations of quite different heritages” outside of Europe as well (Jou and Dalton, 2017), such as Latin America (Harbers et al., 2013) and Asia (Jou, 2010b). In Ireland where L-R competition has traditionally been of less significance (Mair, 1986), L-R self-placements now increasingly predict vote choice (Müller and Regan, 2021). In much of the rest of Western Europe where there is evidence of a realignment of political dimensions (Walczak et al., 2012, p. 282), the L-R dimension has absorbed much of the new types of politics (in particular immigration, De Vries et al., 2013) that have become more important. The new political landscape is being absorbed into the L-R dimension (instead of replacing L-R politics) as predicted in earlier research (Kitschelt and Hellemans, 1990; Knutsen, 1995). The L-R dimension is accordingly viewed by many political scientists as a sort of “super” issue/dimension (Van der Eijk et al., 2005, p. 166; Gabel and Huber, 2000, p. 96), which can absorb other political conflicts (preventing the L-R dimension from being replaced and fade away). Much empirical evidence supports this view, as most established representative democracies continue to have prominent L-R divides and citizens continue to utilise this language (Mair, 2009), even though new issues have become politically divisive (Knutsen, 1995). Not only has the L-R dimension survived the end of the Cold War, it has survived since it first was used after the French Revolution – over 230 years ago.¹ The idea that the L-R dimension has (or is predicted to) become irrelevant seems to (1) not reflect the empirical evidence in the literature and (2) be a reoccurring theme that is “neither new nor politically neutral,” being propagated many times throughout history, one instance recorded as early as the 1930s (Lukes, 2003, p. 603). The supposed demise of the L-R dimension is a prophecy that never seems to come to fruition.

While there is a long (and continuing) history of widespread usage of L-R terminology in most advanced representative democracies, the L-R distinction is still a somewhat elusive phenomenon in political science. There is no consensus on crucial aspects of the L-R dimension. This leads me to the research question of this dissertation: What makes (/why are) political phenomena left- or right-wing? Fortunately, there is a

¹ Lukes (2003, p. 7) claims that it took until 1820 before the terminology became widespread in France, while Noël and Thérien (2008, p. 15) argue that it was not “commonplace” in France until 1890.

rich literature on the subject where many authors have proposed different frameworks (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Rokeach, 1973; Laponce, 1981; Silverman, 1985; Inglehart, 1990; Bobbio, 1996; Lukes, 2003; Noël and Thérien, 2008; Jost et al., 2003b; Cochrane, 2015; Joshi, 2021). Unfortunately, however, there has been limited hypothesis testing of these frameworks across sufficiently diverse socio-historical contexts around the world (for a notable exception, see Noël and Thérien, 2008), and the research that has been conducted has mostly been focused on Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries, with limited attention given to Latin America, Africa and Asia. Furthermore, most research excludes any discussions of historical patterns (for one of the exceptions, see again Noël and Thérien, 2008). This has ultimately left political science ill-equipped to understand L-R politics, and in particular whether there is any context-independent difference between left- and right-wing politics. Partly due to the limitations of previous research, as well as the trend of viewing L-R politics as an economic dimension of waning importance, there is a lack of consensus and no clear answer to the research question in the literature. This is unfortunate for political science as a field because the scale is widely used by political scientists, without a complete understanding of it. For example, L-R self-placements of individuals and L-R placements of parties are often included in studies as measurements of their ideological position (e.g., Dalton and McAllister, 2015; Hakhverdian, 2010; Brambor and Lindvall, 2017; Martin and Vanberg, 2003). This means that understanding what separates left from right will almost certainly increase measurement reliability (Adcock and Collier, 2001). A better comprehension of what distinguishes left from right would therefore be of great importance for political scientists.

More importantly, uncovering what separates left- from right-wing politics may unearth fundamental insights about ideology, individuals' core political values, and political competition in modern representative democracies, to name a few examples. In fact, examinations of more foundational elements of politics are arguably in general (*ceteris paribus*) more consequential than examinations of more niche and specific areas of politics, since the former are more likely to implicate and affect other areas of research. The median voter theorem (Downs, 1957; Hotelling, 1929; Black, 1948) and cleavage politics (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967) are two examples of theories that attempt to explain fundamental structures of politics and have had significant implications for other areas of political science. Explaining the L-R dimension in politics could have similar

implications for political science at large because the L-R dimension is an important and dominant ideological divide in most representative democracies around the world.

Additionally, the value of this research will hopefully extend beyond political science. Understanding what divides left- from right-wing politics could be beneficial to voters in representative democracies if it assists them in voting and understanding politics. After all, the L-R dimension can be likened to a sort of glue that holds together elites and citizens in democratic competition (Mair, 2009) – i.e., a political language most individuals can intuitively comprehend. Understanding what separates the Left from the Right could clarify democratic competition for everyone, but especially those in society who are less likely to engage with politics enough to develop this intuitive understanding of L-R terminology. Unlocking the criterion that separates left from right may be equated to removing a barrier of entry to politics. To summarise, understanding why different political phenomena is left or right is of significant relevance to both political scientist and voters, and I consequently envision great potential benefits with this research programme.

There are many advantages with this inquiry, but it is not entirely uncontroversial. To unearth a theory explaining what separates (what is considered) ‘left’ from ‘right’ should not be a contentious affair in itself. If there is a core distinction, then the knowledge of it should be politically and scientifically neutral, much like knowing the speed of sound. Yet, what left and right means have for most of its history been fraught with contention (Lukes, 2003, pp. 63-64). It is as if a part of politics itself is to argue over this terminology. Not to mention that political actors sometimes use the terms for strategic purposes, and thereby unwittingly (or purposefully) create confusion over the meaning of the terms (White, 2011). One example of this is the tendency of new political parties to claim that they are ‘neither left nor right,’ as was the case when the German Greens entered the political scene (Blühdorn, 2004, p. 566). Another common occurrence is parties who state that they have a position that they do not actually occupy, such as the far-right Sweden Democrats who claimed that they were in the centre (Hellström and Nilsson, 2010, p. 70). The Centre Party/Centre Party ‘86 (Centrumpartij/Centrumpartij ‘86) in the Netherlands in the 1980s, was also a far-right party, unlike what their name suggests (Mudde, 2000). While I suspect that this type of confusion will continue to surface in future politics, this thesis will hopefully help resolve some of these arguments.

Research Question and Methodological Considerations

The L-R dimension has the remarkable ability of visualising policy alternatives to both the more and less informed participants of democratic politics. As a heuristic, it contains information that assists voters and thereby helps them understand politics that is otherwise very complicated (Jou and Dalton, 2017; Lesschaeve, 2017, pp. 358-359). Conversely, researching L-R politics is a complex endeavour, and even more difficult is to answer the research question: what makes political phenomena left- or right-wing?

When approaching this question, one quickly realises that there are several clarifications that ought to be made before formulating a theory of L-R politics, as well as testing that theory. First, researchers in the literature have focused on the notion of a criterion that can be used to separate left from right (MacIver, 1947, pp. 215-216). I use this term to describe a shorthand, a guiding principle, a rule that can be used to classify phenomena on the L-R scale. To find such a criterion, researchers have relied on isolating correlations to find stable elements, those that always stay the same. The logic is as follows: if an element always stays the same, then it is a useful criterion that we can rely on to classify other/future cases (which hopefully will then follow the same pattern). Conversely, if there is no such criterion, then this would indicate that the L-R dimension is completely context-dependent. Using inductive reasoning, we can discard a few potential criteria fairly quickly. Partisanship, for example, which is an important cause of L-R self-placements (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976), is not a stable element – more or less partisanship in itself does not predict left- or right-wing placements. Rather, an individual with partisan attachments to a left-wing party is more likely to be left-wing, in the same way an individual with partisan attachments to a right-wing party is more likely to be right-wing. The same is true for education. In some countries, higher education is correlated with left-wing self-placements while in others it is correlated with right-wing self-placements (Rindermann et al., 2012, p. 220; Dunn, 2011, pp. 292-293). Thus, inductive reasoning may lead us towards a criterion, and help us discard flawed criteria.² In fact, most if not all investigations into what the difference is between ‘left’ and ‘right’ begin as inductive enterprises (Cochrane, 2015, p. 14). Finding a stable correlation is thus a good starting point when attempting to understand whether there is any context-independent explanation of L-R politics. This dissertation correspondingly starts by

² This criterion can then be tested in new cases, using a deductive approach.

examining theoretical frameworks in the academic literature that suggest context-independent³ explanations of what makes a political phenomenon left-/right-wing. This first part of the research (the literature review) is thus aimed at examining proposed isolated correlations that may hold in different circumstances. The objective is however to move beyond previous literature and suggest an explanation of why political phenomena are left- or right-wing, because a stable correlation between a criterion and L-R classifications ought to have a causal explanation. This pulls the research from a more descriptive enterprise interested in finding a stable correlation of the L-R dimension, to one aimed at finding a theory of what makes political phenomena left- or right wing in the first place. I therefore discuss potential causal pathways in the theory section, arguably more in depth than in previous research.

Second, what it means for something to ‘be left- or right-wing’ in most explorations of the subject is simply taken for granted. Yet, this is a vital point to clarify. The L-R dimension is a political divide, and the commonly used L-R language describes this political landscape (Cavazza et al., 2022, p. 70). It is thereby possible to separate the L-R language from the L-R dimension as a real political conflict, and it is important to always keep this separation in mind. The language allows people (in many societies) to communicate about politics in a simple way, where this (left-right) imagery describes a political conflict between those on ‘the Left’ and those on ‘the Right,’ or those more to the left and those more to the right. For a person to be on the left side of the political spectrum means that they are closer to other individuals and entities on the Left, as in that they are more willing to politically associate themselves with the Left, compared to the Right. They are ‘with’ that side. To be left-wing thus means to choose a side in a specific political conflict, where you associate yourself with one side over the other. A political party will be right-wing if it prefers to cooperate with other right-wing parties and prefers their politics. Any thing, item, or phenomenon can be considered ‘right-wing’ if it is more associated with the political right than the political left, and vice versa (something as banal as "television" might be considered more right- than left-wing by some, see Bobbio, 1996, p. 90). As can be seen in Fig. 1.1, the L-R terminology (the third box) is used in society to describe this broader societal conflict (the second box). Informed L-R

³ It is contrariwise not my aim to understand the differences in what is left- or right-wing in varying contexts. Such information is interesting and helpful, but detracts from the question of what does not change from one context to the other.

classifications (the fourth box) can then be deployed by individuals (and experts) that have used and/or observed this language. L-R classifications are thereby simply a measurement of what we see on the left and right side of politics. Those political phenomena that are more common on ‘the Right’ in a context will become associated with that side of this political divide, and individuals will then tend to label that political phenomenon as ‘right-wing’ (and vice versa for the Left).⁴ This labelling exercise results in classifications, which help us understand who and what is associated with either side of this conflict. L-R classifications are thereby a reflection of the broader L-R divide.

⁴ This is not to say that the classifications and the use of the language itself cannot have an effect on politics, only that the language reflects a political reality.

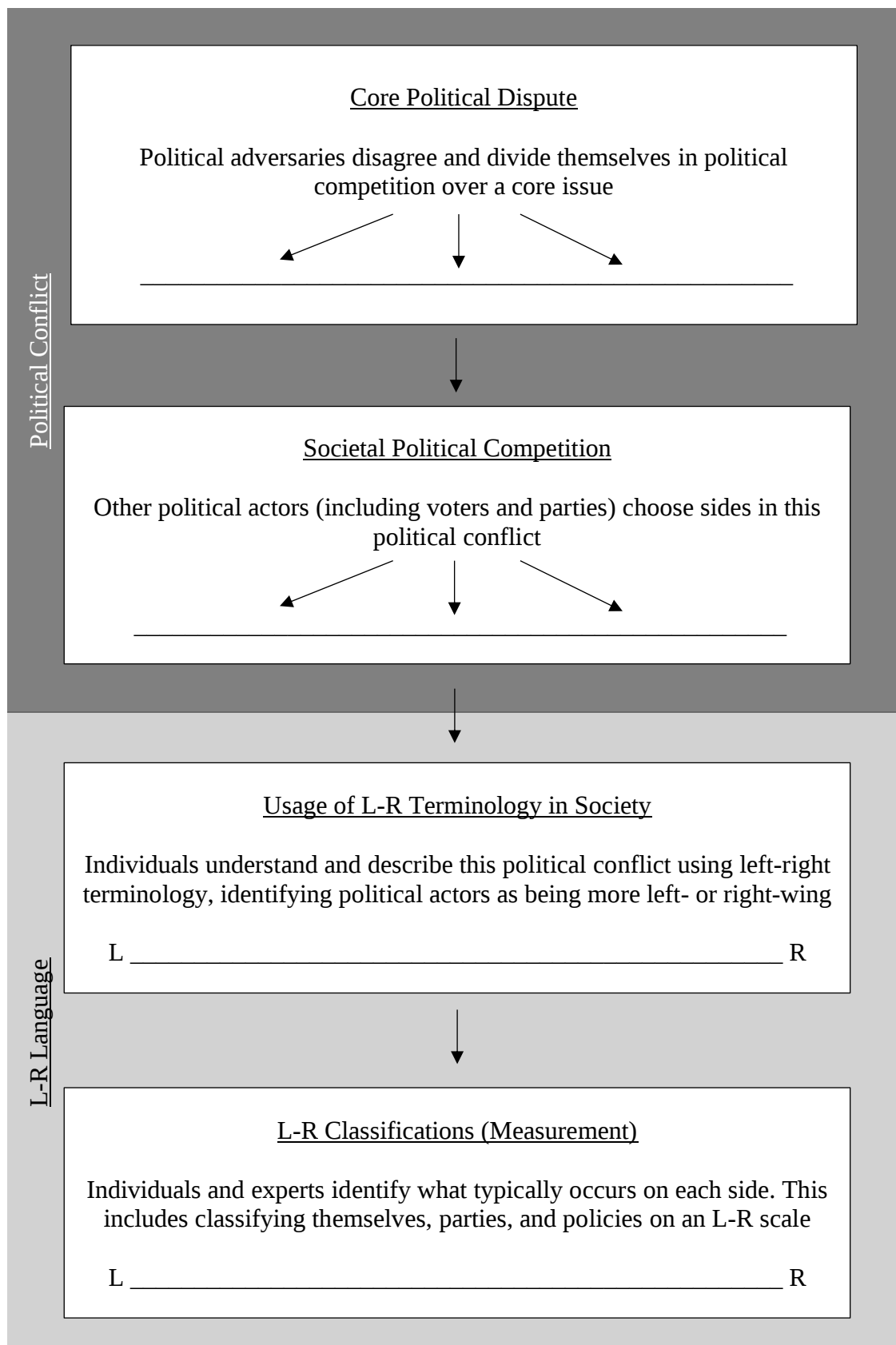


Fig. 1.1. From Core Political Dispute to Left-Right Classifications

Importantly, the broader societal L-R divide (the second box in Fig. 1.1) is different from a core dispute that potentially creates the L-R conflict in the first place (the box at the top of Fig. 1.1), as the proposed criteria in the literature imply (a core that holds consistent across time and space). There should therefore be variation between contexts in how the societal L-R dimension appears, but not in the core disagreement. The question for political scientists is what the core conflict of the L-R dimension is (if there is one), that which makes many political actors (voters, politicians, parties, etc.) choose a position/side (left or right),⁵ because this core divide is the most important cause for why any political phenomena becomes classified as left- or right-wing. My aim throughout this dissertation is to examine whether there is a core L-R conflict, and what the core disagreement in that case is. I use L-R classifications as a measurement of the societal L-R dimension, which (at least partly) reflects the core disagreement. Given that a core conflict would be at the beginning of the causal chain, uncovering this conflict would therefore answer the research question (what makes political phenomena left- or right-wing?).

When examining the L-R dimension, researchers generally study two types of classifications: individuals' (/citizens/voters) and experts' classifications. In this thesis I mainly focus on the former. These include for example individuals' classifications of parties, policies, ideologies, as well as their own self-placements on the L-R scale. Some of the classifications will be uninformed, and some will be 'wrong.' Much like other measurements, there will be an error term. However, the widespread usage of the terminology means that many individuals do provide meaningful information in their classifications. They classify something as left or right for a reason, not due to some unexplainable randomness. They furthermore share their reasoning with other individuals experiencing the same phenomenon. There are many disagreements regarding this

⁵ It is important to note here that there are two separate categories of reasons for why political actors prefer the Left or the Right. Either they choose sides because of their position on the (potential) core conflict of the L-R dimension, or they choose sides for another reason. Importantly, it is difficult to know whether a political actor has chosen the Left or the Right because of the core conflict, or for any other reason. This is also reflected in the L-R classifications that researchers typically analyze. We cannot know whether a party's position on the L-R dimension (as classified by experts) reflects the party's position/view on the core conflict of the L-R dimension. This is different from classifications of experts on dimensions where the core conflict of the dimension is decided beforehand, such as a pro EU–anti EU dimension. In such a case, it is more likely that the classification reflects the party's position on the core issue of the dimension (given that the dimension is defined as the core issue).

labelling exercise (regarding what is left or right), but there tends to be some agreement and some patterns in regard to L-R classifications. Thus, I attempt to explain these classifications in this dissertation, but in doing so, I am hoping to explain the broader L-R conflict in society since L-R classifications are a measurement of this conflict. Accordingly, I do not wish to prescribe what *should* be classified as left or right, since my aim is to explain the societal L-R conflict, which exists independently of what we think it should or should not be.

It ought to be clear at this point that the aim of this thesis is not to study the L-R terms/language (/classifications) themselves. After all, this research is a part of political science, not linguistics. The terminology could be switched for other words, but still perform the same function, like in the case of the liberal-conservative continuum in the U.S., which has often been (or been treated as) synonymous with L-R politics (Arian and Shamir, 1983, p. 139; Tetlock et al., 2013, p. 27).⁶ It is not contentious to state that citizens in representative democracies experience the L-R dimension as a political phenomenon, so much so that they find utility in discussing it (Noël and Thérien, 2008, p. 12). As Cochrane (2015, p. 30) states: “Political scientists did not invent the language of left and right. Regular citizens and experts in a number of countries use these words, in remarkably similar ways, to describe the positions of political actors on a wide range of policy issues.”⁷ In summary, I study L-R classifications to uncover a social phenomenon, which is tied to this terminology, because many social scientists suspect that there is a reason for why the same two terms (and the corresponding spatial dimension) are used across time and space.

Third, throughout this dissertation I attempt to explain the core dividing line between those on the Left and those on the Right. It is helpful for this aim to isolate

⁶ However, it is important that it is still *the same* political conflict. There are other political conflicts, that can be the major conflict in a society, which is not the same as the L-R conflict. For an example, see Taiwan (Yi-ching Hsiao et al., 2017). In the United States, the liberal-conservative continuum has at least at times been synonymous for some members of the public with the L-R dimension (see Benoit and Laver, 2006, p. 13, for a different conceptualisation of the dimension).

⁷ As further evidence of this, Bienfait and Beek (2001, pp. 170-173) convincingly argue that when the terminology was born in France during the French Revolution, it did not simply relate to their seating arrangement but to a political disagreement (see also Cochrane, 2015, p. 10), even though the original description related to which side of the National Assembly representatives were sitting, in a literal sense (Knapp 2006: 1-2).

correlations, as well as the use of a lot of variation, to find stable elements. The most common way to do this in the literature, which is also the principal tool used in this dissertation, is to predict L-R self-placements of voters with their political attitudes and beliefs (e.g., Freire and Kivistik, 2013). This allows the researcher to isolate correlations between proposed dividing lines/issues and L-R self-placements, while controlling for other factors. Isolating correlations does not necessarily allow for causal inferences, but by using a lot of variation (both temporal and spatial) it is nevertheless possible to examine if the observable implications of any theory holds consistently. If we reliably find the same isolated correlations in different settings, then this provides evidence in favour of that there is a context-independent predictor and consequently a core divide between the Left and the Right. Three of the four empirical chapters of this thesis rely on this logic and examines individuals' L-R self-placements in various contexts (attempting to use as much variation as possible). Chapter 4 examines L-R self-placements in Europe and whether the relationship between acceptance of inequality and L-R self-placements is moderated by country-level salience of issue dimensions. Chapter 6 predicts L-R self-placements in the whole world using World Values Survey data, while Chapter 7 examines unusual cases of L-R competition, predicting L-R self-placements in three case studies (Indonesia, Moldova, and Israel).

The only chapter that does not use this approach of isolating correlations is chapter 5, which examines individuals' open-ended survey answers where they describe what the terms "left" and "right" mean. The disadvantage of this approach is that me and my co-author do not isolate any correlation between L-R classifications and proposed explanations, while the advantage is that we can examine the elements individuals' find the most relevant when discussing left and right. Using topic modelling, we then can see whether the topics we find, and how they relate to each other, reflect what we expect to see given the hypotheses from the literature that we evaluate.

Importantly, whether we examine L-R self-placements of individuals, experts' L-R placements of parties, discussions of what the L-R terminology means, or politicians' L-R self-placements, we are always examining L-R classifications. And crucially, L-R classifications always measure⁸ the same phenomenon: the societal L-R dimension (see

⁸ Different types of L-R classifications capture different parts/aspects of the L-R dimension, and can have varying levels of accuracy.

Fig. 1.1). There are naturally important differences between these classifications that need to be taken into account when examining them. Individuals may for example be less likely to take part in the core disagreement that creates the L-R division, while examining politicians L-R self-placements may get to the core division more effectively. However, examining the latter may conversely mean that we are not examining a representative sample of the population, meaning that we cannot be certain that the results can be generalized. Thus, there will be important strengths and weaknesses that must be kept in mind whichever measurement we use, but they nevertheless all measure the same phenomenon. The choice of L-R classification, whether L-R self-placements of voters or L-R placements of parties, is therefore less important than examining each type of L-R classification using the right tools. In each empirical chapter I discuss how the measurements I use can be utilized to examine observable implications of the different arguments in the literature, in the most appropriate manner.

Fourth, the L-R dimension is a *spatial* construction on which political parties, individuals, opinions and ideologies (etc.) can lie/occupy a specific point (Laver and Hunt, 1992, pp. 12-15). Again, this is taken for granted by many, but the idea that communists are ‘closer’ to social democrats than they are to conservatives and fascists is a somewhat remarkable idea as this does not describe an actual physical space, but an imagined space. This ‘closeness’ is a metaphor which helps us understand that communists are more ideologically similar to social democrats than conservatives and fascists (Benoit and Laver, 2006, p. 11), at least on the L-R dimension.⁹ Intriguingly, communism in some cases share ideological features with ideologies not close to them on the L-R dimension, for example, fascism’s contempt for liberal democracy (De Regt et al., 2011, p. 300). Yet, communism and fascism are regularly placed as extreme left and right on the L-R spectrum respectively (Freedon, 2003, p. 79). This hints at that they probably disagree ideologically on some other point, and that support for liberal democracy is not a context-independent criterion that can separate between left and right. We do not know precisely why communists prefer social democrats over conservatives

⁹ There are examples where the main dimension of conflict is not the L-R dimension, resulting in parties that are similar on the L-R dimension not wanting to cooperate. To illustrate this, consider Fine Gael and Fianna Fail who were both classified as centre-right parties, yet did not want to cooperate (Castles and Mair, 1984, p. 79).

and fascists (on a substantive level), which is one of the reasons for pursuing this research project.

The spatial nature of the L-R dimension also implies that the L-R dimension is of a relative nature¹⁰ – anything that is understood as ‘left’ must have a reference point that is ‘right’. This correspondingly means that the centre can shift and there are no absolute points which are always ‘left’ or ‘right’ (Silverman, 1985, p. 72; Lukes, 2003, p. 606; Cochrane, 2015, p. 19). This point also has the implication for the inquiry of this thesis that any criterion separating left from right should also be able to separate between the centre left and the far left, as well as the centre right and the far right.

Fifth, each chapter in this dissertation is devoted to the same question, as I attempt to focus on one narrow question alone. Some authors (e.g., Silverman, 1985; Jost et al., 2003b) incorporate other dimensions into their explanations, likely to explain deviant cases that their frameworks otherwise would be unable to explain. Adding another dimension is likely to increase its precision, while losing in parsimony. This dissertation is conversely aimed at finding the simplest explanation of the L-R dimension, which means increasing parsimony, at the price of losing information and accuracy. That means that this dissertation will not be able to explain everything about the L-R dimension. Yet, many powerful theories cannot explain every potential case because they lose in parsimony in what they gain from depth and specificity. Instead, as Mearsheimer (2001, p. 11) states, a good theory is like “a powerful flashlight in a dark room: even though it cannot illuminate every nook and cranny, most of the time it is an excellent tool for navigating through darkness.”

This discussion is to some extent related to the always so relevant problem of striking the right balance between “‘everything is the same if you stand far enough back from it’ [... and] ‘everything is different if you look closely enough’” (Laver, 1997, p. 180). As Lipset and Rokkan (1967, p. 36) state, “[it] is easy to get lost in the wealth of fascinating detail, and it is equally easy to succumb to facile generalities and irresponsible abstractions.” This thesis is more focused on finding general patterns of L-R politics, (rather than the “fascinating detail”), yet attempts to avoid extreme generalities that have no explanatory power because they explain everything (and thereby also nothing).

¹⁰ It is important to remember that the relativity of the L-R dimension is not a unique characteristic of L-R politics. Most political issues/questions can be understood as a question of more or less.

Thus, this thesis attempts to find a stable element of the L-R dimension, a common denominator that is helpful in separating left from right – and indeed, I find an explanation in the literature that I develop further, test against empirical data, and find strong support for. This thesis presents evidence for a novel version of acceptance of inequality theory, building on previous work that has championed this thesis (MacIver, 1947, p. 216; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990, p. 293; Lukes, 2003; Bobbio, 1996) by specifying how acceptance of inequality separates left from right. The L-R divide tends to correlate with societal inequalities, in which the Left tends to be less accepting of the inequality, and the Right more. I find that this pattern is context-independent, and I am therefore able to present a single parsimonious theory of the L-R divide. Yet, while the evidence presented throughout this thesis is strong, there is a need for more research on equality–inequality theory and its application around the world. Future research will do well to test the theory in new cases, and probe the causal mechanism more in depth, to see whether the theory can be further specified.

Structure of the Thesis

The chapters in this thesis are structured as follows. The second chapter is a general literature review where I evaluate different proposed explanations of the L-R dimension as well as the empirical evidence supporting them. The third chapter details a new account of equality–inequality theory that builds on previous work, but importantly goes beyond earlier literature and specifies the causal mechanisms involved. Four original research articles then follow in this paper-based dissertation. The first paper (the fourth chapter of this dissertation) examines survey data from the European Social Survey, to see whether attitudes towards inequality can explain individual L-R self-placements in Eastern Europe, which previous studies did not find. The chapter demonstrates that acceptance of different inequalities between different groups (specifically related to class, immigration, gender, and sexuality) indeed predict right-wing self-placements in both Eastern and Western Europe, and that the link between acceptance of an inequality and right-wing self-placements is stronger when the issue dimension is more salient in that context. This provides crucial evidence in favour of the proposed causal mechanism (even though strong causal inferences are not possible). The fifth chapter subsequently explores how individuals in eight different countries (in Latin and North America, Eastern and Western Europe, as well as Israel) describe their own interpretations of what is ‘left’ and ‘right.’

The paper analyses these answers using quantitative text analysis (topic modelling to be more specific). This allows us to evaluate the different theoretical frameworks in the literature to see how well they are supported. The evidence provides support for equality-inequality theory, but also (to a lesser extent) for some of the competing arguments in the literature (specifically change–resistance to change and for–against government interventionism in the economy).

In the sixth chapter I apply a similar strategy to how the fourth chapter studied L-R self-placements in Europe, but on survey samples from the World Values Survey. I compare acceptance of inequality as a predictor of L-R self-placements, to attitudes towards government involvement in the economy (and resistance to change), a common explanation of L-R politics. The paper finds that acceptance of different inequalities best explains L-R self-placements in diverse contexts around the world (Asia, South and North America, Europe, and Oceania). I subsequently compare the attitudes towards inequality and economic statism in the Netherlands to test an observable implication of the causal mechanism. In particular, I argue that when voters perceive a political issue as being important, then the correlation between an issue attitude and L-R self-placements should become stronger if this attitude causes individuals in established representative democracies to become left- or right-wing. By running regression models on data from the 2017 Dutch Parliamentary Election Studies, this paper finds this link for attitudes towards refugees and income inequality, but not towards taxation and spending, providing further evidence for acceptance of inequality theory. The seventh chapter subsequently applies the theory to different unusual instances of L-R competition over time and around the world to examine whether the theory holds in unusual circumstances. The paper subsequently compares the theory to competing explanations in three case studies. For the three case studies, I examine survey data from Israel, Indonesia, and Moldova, and find that the theory accurately predicts the L-R landscape in these contexts as well, while competing explanations cannot explain all three cases. I subsequently discuss the implications of the findings in the concluding eighth chapter. In particular, I suggest that the findings of this dissertation reveal fundamental facts about political life, which will be indispensable for future research on the L-R dimension.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Gauche et droite, 좌우, izquierda y derecha, vänster och höger, kiri dan kanan, links en rechts, left and right – the words vary, but the spatial metaphor remains the same. The usage of this terminology is universal, especially in representative democracies (Huber and Inglehart, 1995). Voters and political leaders alike have an intuitive understanding of the dimension in many different contexts, yet political scientists still have a limited understanding of what the dimension entails. In particular, it is not clear what makes a political phenomenon left- or right-wing. There are tautological explanations such as that social democratic parties are left-wing because they are social democrats, or far-right politicians are far-right because they propose far-right politics – but such accounts are obviously unsatisfactory. The literature provides promising suggestions, however, and there has been some empirical research testing these arguments. In this chapter I discuss these different arguments, as well as the empirical evidence supporting them.

Given that this literature review is focused on a narrow part of the literature (explanations of what makes political phenomena left- or right-wing), it should be noted that there are several subfields of left-right (L-R) research that are disregarded. There has for example been an extensive debate on how to best create indices/classification schemas for placing parties in different countries on the L-R dimension (Gabel and Huber, 2000; Budge et al., 2001; Franzmann and Kaiser, 2006; Slapin and Proksch, 2008; Jahn, 2010; Budge, 2013; Franzmann, 2013; Jahn, 2014; Däubler and Benoit, 2021).¹¹ These approaches are generally aimed at providing classifications of parties on the L-R dimension, rather than explaining what the core difference between the Left and the Right

¹¹ Gabel and Huber (2000) utilize party manifesto data to scale parties on a L-R scale, using a factor analysis. This “Vanilla approach” does not need to assume any definition of the L-R dimension beforehand, and can construct L-R classifications without such knowledge (for another example, see Däubler and Benoit, 2021). This is different from the Right-Left Index (RILE), which identifies what positions are more left- or right-wing beforehand, and subsequently scales parties accordingly (Laver and Budge, 1992; Budge et al., 2001). However, even in this latter case, there is no theory of an underlying dimension underpinning the index – i.e., an explanation of what decides L-R positions in the first place. Rather, different policy positions are assumed to be ‘left’ or ‘right’ in the RILE by deriving left-right policy aims from readings of “ideological writings” by “influential early modern theorists” around 1900 (Budge, 2013, p. 3). This latter approach, much like the Vanilla approach, is helpful in estimating parties’ L-R positions. However, this index does not attempt to explain the core disagreement of the L-R dimension.

is in the first place, which in turn explains parties' L-R positions. This is true even for Jahn's (2010) proposed L-R index which, while built on the Bobbio's proposed L-R distinction (see later discussion in this chapter), is an application of a theory to create L-R classifications of parties rather than an explanation of the dimension itself. This debate is therefore disregarded in this literature review.

The literature review is structured as follows. The first section discusses the equality–inequality criterion, the various interpretations of how acceptance of inequality may separate left- from right-wing politics, and the accompanying empirical evidence. The second section is devoted to describing the competing explanations of the L-R dimension, and the evidence that supports either interpretation. This literature review ends with some reflections on what is missing in the current literature, and which directions are fruitful for future research. In particular, I argue that more attention needs to be given to testing different hypotheses in new settings, as well as understanding the potential causal mechanisms that create the L-R dimension of politics. Overall, the conclusion from this review is that the equality–inequality criterion is arguably the most popular in the literature, with much evidence to support it in most contexts.

The Equality–Inequality Criterion

The L-R scale is a political language that takes many forms in different countries. What is considered 'left' in one context might be considered 'right' in another, as has often for example been the case with liberalism (e.g., the difference between liberalism in the United States and in Northern Europe). The connotations of the words differ between individuals, and even the same individual might change their idea of what is 'left' and 'right' over time. Notwithstanding the different associations individuals have, the L-R distinction has an almost universal reach and is repeatedly used as a short-hand to describe a complex political landscape. In most political contexts there are two sides that are in competition with one another, with a centre that is able to cooperate with both camps and opposing extremes hoping to pull other political actors towards their side. This political competition is often labelled an L-R conflict, and has been a component of democratic politics in many countries for many decades (centuries even, in some cases). The question of whether there is any stable element to the L-R dimension has a correspondingly long history. MacIver (1947) is the first instance, to my knowledge, of an author attempting to describe a criterion to separate left- from right-wing politics.

“Is there a permanent or universal direction of attitudes and policies corresponding to the ‘right,’ over against a permanent or universal ‘left’? [...] If we identified the right with the established order and the left with attack upon it, then obviously, after a political revolution, the previous right would become the left and vice versa. Again, at one period the right upholds the principle of authority while the left champions individual and group liberties, but with the growth of radical parties we find the extreme left adopting an authoritarian program. We might next seek for a permanent difference on the economic front, taking the right as the party or bloc favourable to capitalistic enterprise and the left as favourable to collective controls. But the fascist right in some countries has been rather more ready to adopt a measure of collectivism than the moderate and ‘liberal’ left of other countries. Our search for permanent dividing lines would run into similar embarrassments if we made our criterion the advocacy of nationalism as against internationalism, or of protectionism as against freer trade, or of clericalism versus anti-clericalism. At some point or another our criterion fails to apply to an existing right to-left alignment.” – (MacIver, 1947, pp. 215-216).

It is this type of reasoning that has guided social scientists attempting to understand the difference between left- and right-wing politics. For some this might lead to the conclusion that there is no permanent dividing line between left and right, but MacIver advises against such premature conclusions. Instead, he argues that the criterion that can hold in most (if not all) circumstances is that the Left tends to support the interests of the less privileged, while the Right tends to support the interests of the more privileged. This reflection is based on an historical account of L-R politics, and soon thereafter became the basis of the equality–inequality explanation, which is the most popular in the literature and has been proposed by multiple different authors. Some suggest this explanation independently (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Bobbio, 1996), while other authors explicitly reference previous work on the topic (Lipset, 1960; Inglehart, 1990; Lukes, 2003). Lipset et al. (1954, p. 1135), in a similar vein to MacIver, argue that the Left broadly seeks social change in an egalitarian direction, while the Right opposes such

change or advocates for change in an inegalitarian direction,¹² pointing towards social status and income as good indicators for measuring well-to-do-ness. Amongst white-collar workers, those with lower incomes tend to be more leftist than their upper income peers. However, being white-collar provides a distinction between them and blue-collar workers, and they are correspondingly not usually as left-wing as blue-collar workers even when making similar salaries (Lipset et al., 1954, p. 1139). Similarly, ethnic and religious minorities often have lower status compared to ethnic and religious majorities, which could explain their tendency to vote left-wing.¹³ Lipset et al. (1954, p. 1140) provide some examples of such dynamics in different contexts: the Andhras minority in India being more left-wing compared to the Indian majority, but the Indian minority in Sri Lanka being more left-wing. They further cite the same pattern in Japan with the Korean minority, the Arab minority in Israel and the Christian minority in Lebanon and Syria. This pattern is also present today, which can be exemplified by immigrants from non-western countries who usually vote for left-wing parties in Western democracies (for an overview, see Bergh and Bjørklund, 2010, pp. 311-312).

The equality–inequality thesis has since been explicitly clarified to not only be a function of individuals’ self-interest based on their group membership, but also the fact that individuals can ideologically support the interests of other groups depending on their views of the inequality (Inglehart, 1990, p. 293; Jou, 2011, p. 36). This makes explicit a previously implicit, yet important, aspect of the idea of an equality–inequality L-R divide: some will support the Left or the Right based on their group (sociodemographic) identity, while others will choose side based on their ideological attitudes regarding the groups affected. These ideological attitudes can be drawn from individuals’ sympathy for groups, or drawn from abstract principles justifying egalitarian or inegalitarian policies (many will of course support the Left and the Right respectively for other reasons). It may be argued that it is logical that groups who are less well-off are also the ones who want change.¹⁴ This could potentially explain the fact that the Left traditionally has been more

¹² Lipset (1960, p. 122) would later discuss this argument further and mention MacIver’s argument explicitly, while MacIver is not referenced by Lipset et al. (1954).

¹³ This holds even when controlling for income. However, these minority groups often have lower average incomes than the majority population.

¹⁴ Yet there are reactionaries on the Right who think that there is too much levelling in a given society, and seek change in an inegalitarian direction (Inglehart, 1990, p. 293).

interested in more radical change compared to the Right in many societies (especially in Western representative democracies). Resistance to change is in fact often an important component of L-R competition, and it has consequently been suggested that ideological differences between left- and right-wing individuals is chiefly explained by their resistance to change and acceptance of inequality (Jost et al., 2003b; Jost et al., 2003a; Jost et al., 2008). This perspective emphasizes that these attitudes are (in part) motivated by individuals' psychological need for uncertainty and threat management, and several studies find evidence supporting this view (Jost et al., 2003b; Jost et al., 2007; Jost et al., 2008). Furthermore, in their review of the neuroscientific and behavioural literature, Jost and Amodio (2011) find that there is much evidence to suggest that right-wing individuals have more need for security and mitigating fear, for example due to larger amygdalae. These factors contribute to a general aversion to change in individuals.

However, some authors point to instances where the Left has been more resistant to change compared to the Right, for example in some post-communist countries (Greenberg and Jonas, 2003; Jost et al., 2009, p. 184). A recent study of China also finds that the Left is more resistant of change than the Right there. Individuals of the “conservative left” score higher on “system justification” and have lower tolerance for ambiguity compared to individuals of the “liberal right” (Beattie et al., 2021, p. 457).¹⁵ Jost et al. (2009, p. 184) argue that a solution to these counter-intuitive examples is to view the resistance to change component (of the framework) as “relatively content-free,” and which can therefore in some cases operate in the opposite direction (i.e., that the Left is the more conservative side in certain circumstances). However, this explanation is unsatisfactory, because such instances would undermine the case for resistance to change as a criterion that differentiates left- from right-wing politics. A criterion ought to always predict left-right positions in the same direction. Otherwise, it is not a stable criterion, and thus not useful for predicting what will be considered left- and right-wing in future politics.

¹⁵ Interestingly, the researchers find that the conservative Left is less accepting of economic inequality compared to the liberal Right in China, which is in line with what the equality–inequality criterion would predict. However, given that China is not a representative democracy, it is possible that the L-R classifications in the study are from individuals that have not observed L-R competition, which would make the findings less reliable.

Returning to proponents of the equality–inequality explanation, Bobbio (1996) is another prominent author in this tradition, but his argument differs from that made by previous authors in the literature. The focus is instead on policies and abstract ideals, rather than on group divides/cleavages based on inequalities. To illustrate this, consider the aspects Bobbio (1996, p. 60) proposes for how any policy of distribution is determined to be ‘left’ or ‘right:’ “(a) the individuals between whom benefits and obligations should be shared; (b) the benefits or obligations to be shared; (c) the criteria by which they should be shared.” This means that any policy which includes more individuals (a), is more egalitarian. The more that is redistributed (b), the more egalitarian. The reason which the redistribution is based upon is also important (c), which Bobbio exemplifies with merit, need and hierarchy. Need is more egalitarian than merit, while merit in turn is more egalitarian than hierarchy. It seems fair to suggest that each of these criteria should be viewed as independent factors. To illustrate this, consider the fact that a meritocratic policy (I) could lead to more outcome inequality than a hierarchical policy (II), where outcomes are decided based on birth right. On the one hand, the unequal outcomes would then in themselves lead the L-R classification of policy I to be more right-wing compared to policy II. On the other hand, the hierarchical reason for policy I would have the effect of a more right-wing L-R classification compared to policy II, according to this framework.

For many policies this classification scheme arguably works well (e.g., Jahn, 2010). The framework is also sufficiently similar to previous work that it ought to be seen as an addition to the same argument or be viewed as of the same tradition. However, an important issue where these accounts seem to differ is whether the argument is applicable to individual policies or only to societal group inequalities. The following discussion on the seemingly contradictory example of abortion (which the Left tends to support more than the Right) is illuminating.

“It has been pointed out to me that this attitude appears to contrast with one of the general definitions of the left: that the left defends the weak. It could be argued that of the mother and the foetus, the foetus is the weaker of the two. In reply, it can be argued that it is undoubtedly weaker than the mother, but that the mother is weaker than the father, who, in most cases, has forced her to become pregnant. It is no coincidence that the pro-abortion campaign was strengthened enormously

by the spread of feminism, which has been favoured by left-wing parties.” –
Bobbio (1996, p. 12).

This account would then mean that the L-R classification stems from the inequality between men and women, rather than between the unborn and the mother. While this may be the case, and it would mean that the L-R dimension can still concern divides over inequality, it seems as if this explanation does not follow from the framework that Bobbio sets up to explain L-R classifications, making Bobbio’s account therefore somewhat unsatisfactory. It also seems as if Bobbio’s explanation of the L-R classification of abortion policy differs from previous accounts of the equality–inequality thesis (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990). Earlier accounts of the equality–inequality criterion seem to have been less concerned with explaining L-R classifications of policies, rather than explaining why different group inequalities became associated with the Left and the Right overall. This approach is easier to marry with the abortion policy classification because it is easy to imagine that, at least in Western societies, the reason that the Left supports abortion is because of the close ties between feminists and the Left. The Left would by this account be tied to feminism because of the overall inequality between men and women. Consequently, the Left would in this scenario, unsurprisingly, be more likely to defend the perceived interests of women based on the overall inequality (between men and women), even if the more egalitarian position in the specific instance of abortion policy could be conceived as protecting the foetus (being the weaker side in this policy area).¹⁶

A related proposal of what separates the Left from the Right, is that the Left is defined by the *principle of rectification* (Lukes, 2003). This entails that the Left has a “concern for those who are disadvantaged relative to others, with respect to well-being, resources, opportunities or capabilities” (Lukes, 2003, p. 612), and includes past, present and future inequalities. The Right is consequently defined by its opposition to this goal. While the principle of rectification differs to some extent from the equality–inequality criterion, there is considerable overlap between the ideas.

¹⁶ The secular/religious cleavage might also affect the L-R classification of pro-abortion policies.

Evidently, many theorists have favoured the equality–inequality distinction.¹⁷ There is also considerable empirical evidence to support this proposition from several different academic fields, examining various observable implications. Researchers examining political texts from key ideological figures find that those on the Left value equality much more highly than those on the Right (Rokeach, 1973; Rous and Lee, 1978). Furthermore, research on implicit biases of individuals (sampling mainly from the United States) suggest that conservatives (/right-wing individuals) have higher implicit preferences for high-status (compared to low-status) groups, than liberals do (Nosek et al., 2007, p. 35; Jost et al., 2008, pp. 129-130). Additionally, attitudes towards equality also separate party supporters’ of left- and right-wing parties (and Presidential candidates) in the United States (Rokeach, 1973, pp. 207-210; Bishop et al., 1972), United Kingdom (Cochrane et al., 1979),¹⁸ Australia (Thannhauser and Caird, 1990; Heaven, 1991), and South Africa (Heaven et al., 1994).

Egalitarian attitudes are also found to consistently correlate with left-wing self-placements of citizens in many different contexts, such as Britain (Evans et al., 1996), Latin America (Wiesehomeier and Doyle, 2012), and Western Europe (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Aspelund et al., 2013). Weber (2012) finds that general egalitarianism predicts left-wing self-placements in Europe, but that this effect is conditioned on party polarization. In a seminal meta-study including research from 12 different countries, Jost et al. (2003b) find evidence that the core of conservative (or right-wing) ideology revolves around justifying inequality (as well as resistance to change). They build this claim from a review of theories concerning the psychology of conservatism, such as the importance for some individuals to reduce fear, avoid anxiety, and uncertainty. These psychological traits are suggested to lead to an embrace of the current social order and its existing societal inequalities (Jost et al., 2003b, p. 343). The subsequent review (of studies) consists of 88 samples from 12 countries, mostly Western contexts, as well as South Africa, Poland, and Israel. Some regions were thus underrepresented in this meta-study. Importantly, Greenberg and Jonas (2003) argue that acceptance of inequality (as well as resistance to change) is unable to explain post-

¹⁷ Additionally, scholars studying the far-right frequently define resistance to equality as the core of the far-right (Mondon, 2016, pp. 17-18).

¹⁸ In fact, Cochrane *et al.* find that equality is the value of 18 terminal values that best separate left- from right-wing party supporters.

communist contexts, particularly in Eastern Europe. Later studies also find that individuals' egalitarianism does not consistently predict right-wing self-placements of citizens in Eastern Europe (Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Aspelund et al., 2013). Studies asserting that L-R competition is significantly different in Eastern and Western Europe (Tavits and Letki, 2009; Rovny and Edwards, 2012) also add to the hesitation of applying a Western-centric view of L-R competition to Eastern Europe. Another hesitation in previous literature comes from the fact that even though individuals' economic egalitarianism, similarly to general egalitarianism, correlates with left-wing self-placements in most contexts (e.g., Australia, see Charnock, 2010), there are examples where they do not. Studying eleven countries, Freire and Kivistik (2013) find that these are correlated in most instances, but also find the reverse (isolated) correlation in Uruguay and South Africa.

Conversely, previous literature reveals that the most prominent inequalities (those that are politically contested and discussed in a society) tend to consistently correlate with L-R politics in the expected direction. The previous prominence of the class divide in Western Europe (Bartolini and Mair, 2007, pp. 204-205) saw a clear L-R divide along these lines. In the Netherlands today, acceptance of economic inequality and the inequality between the native Dutch and immigrants from poor and culturally dissimilar countries, predict right-wing self-placements (De Vries et al., 2013; see also Weber and Saris, 2014). Other divides that contain inequalities, if they are the most salient political divide in a context, tend to also be structured so that the weaker group with lesser outcomes is found on the Left. Two unusual examples with different dominant political divides illustrate this phenomenon: Norway in the late 19th century, and Finland in the 1920s/30s.

Beginning with the former, differences in political opinion and political divides between urban centres and rural peripheries are common to many societies. Rural areas are often more right-wing compared to more left-wing urban centres (Lipset et al., 1954, pp. 1136, 1141-1142; Evans and Whitefield, 1998, p. 1027). This despite urban centres tending to have higher status and being closer to power compared to rural peripheries, especially when the capital is the largest urban centre of the country. Rural areas also tend to have lesser incomes on average. The political landscape that evolved in Norway at the end of the 19th century began with two main cleavages: a territorial and a cultural axis. The capital was more secular and focused on nation-building, while rural areas fought to

preserve cultural traditions – in their view the Norwegian identity. These divisions constituted the L-R divide of the time. As Rokkan (1967, p. 395) states, “the division between the Right and the Left remained roughly what it had been in 1884, a split along the territorial-cultural axis.” The two parties that came into existence at this point in time were appropriately named *Venstre* (meaning ‘Left’ in Norwegian), associated with the rural/peripheral side and *Høyre* (meaning ‘Right’), linked to the urban centres.

Finland has for most of its political history had a dominant class divide but was also divided in the 1920s/30s along linguistic lines. Finland had been in a union with Sweden until 1809 and under Russian rule from 1809 to independence in 1917. There was a significant linguistic minority in Finland speaking Swedish, which had a privileged status in the legislative assembly until democratization in 1906 (McRae et al., 1999, pp. 126, 191), when the minority status of the Swedish-speaking part of the population became reflected in parliament. The Swedish People’s Party was a conservative party until the linguistic cleavage became prominent in the 1920s with the increasing strength of Finnish ultranationalism, which the Centre and the Right became more closely aligned with. The Swedish People’s party therefore went to the Left and found a common cause with the Social Democrats, who also opposed extreme versions of Finnish nationalism. After World War II, when the class cleavage came back to undisputed prominence, the Swedish People’s Party returned to their centre/centre-right position in the political landscape (McRae et al., 1999, p. 192). Thus, when the linguistic cleavage was, together with the class cleavage, the most prominent political divide in the 1920s and 30s, the Left became the less nationalistic side, the side less accepting of the inequality between the Swedish-speaking minority and the Finnish-speaking majority. This is despite the fact that the party representing the Swedish-speaking minority was not a left-wing party before this period.

Competing Frameworks

In addition to acceptance of inequality, there are other suggested criteria in the literature. As mentioned in the previous section, one popular proposal is that attitudes towards change (together with acceptance of inequality) separate those on the Left and those on the Right (Jost et al., 2003b; Jost et al., 2003a; Jost et al., 2008), but the idea has also been challenged (Greenberg and Jonas, 2003). The literature provides mostly strong evidence for this hypothesis (Jost et al., 2003b; Jost et al., 2007). However, while empirical

research finds that valuing tradition (which is closely related to resisting change) predicts right-wing self-placements in Western and Eastern Europe (Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Piurko et al., 2011), other research only finds this relationship in Western, but not Eastern, Europe (Aspelund et al., 2013). Nevertheless, resistance to change is generally assumed to be correlated with right-wing self-placements in most countries.

Another popular idea in both academia and broader society (at least in Western countries) is that the Left and the Right are divided on the basis of how much government intervention in the economy they prefer (e.g., White, 2011, pp. 129-130; Potrafke, 2010, p. 136; Obinger et al., 2013, p. 1302; Ansell, 2019, p. 180). This assumption is key when Downs (1957), continuing the work of Hotelling (1929), Smithies (1941) and Black (1948), further develops the median voter theorem in which the L-R dimension can be viewed as one-dimensional under strict assumptions and conditions. Both the Left and the Right, in such a setting, are incentivized to move towards the middle to capture the median voter. Downs applies the *government intervention in the economy* criterion, which in many advanced Western representative democracies works fairly well to distinguish between what is considered ‘left’ and ‘right.’ This criterion seems to work especially well when the disagreement between the Left and the Right is one between socialism and capitalism. The two ideologies were dominant in the 20th century, and when individuals in different societies are asked to name what is considered ‘left’ and ‘right,’ socialism, conservatism and capitalism are especially stable elements (meaning that they are not placed on the ‘wrong side’, see Zuell and Scholz, 2019, p. 86). Nevertheless, Downs (1957, p. 116) highlights that right-wing extremists can be proponents of fascism, who do not have many qualms about involving the government in the economy. One can also think of anarchists on the Left as another counter-example (Gordon, 2007).

Attitudes towards privatization and regulation have been found to predict L-R self-placements in many countries. Wiesehomeier and Doyle (2012) find that pro-market attitudes predict right-wing self-placements in Latin America (although, they also find that acceptance of inequality is overall a better predictor). Attitudes towards the government’s involvement in the economy also predict L-R self-placements in most Western contexts, yet fail to do so in other representative democracies, and at times even correlate in the opposite direction (Freire and Kivistik, 2013). Furthermore, in several countries in Eastern Europe and East Asia, L-R positions of governments do not predict government spending as one would expect (Tavits and Letki, 2009; Shim, 2020).

Another proposal of what separates left from right in politics is that the dimension has two stable elements: equality/hierarchy, and secular/religious (Laponce, 1981). This explanation is thus essentially the equality–inequality criterion, but with an added explanation: the Right also tends to be more religious than the Left. The L-R dimension has been associated with conflicts over religion in many societies, for example in the Netherlands (Santen, 2002) and France (Bréchon, 2017) in the 1800s, as well as contemporary Turkey (Aydogan and Slapin, 2015) and Poland (Letki, 2013). The Left tends to be more secular than the Right in these conflicts. Freire and Kivistik (2013) find that support for either religiously based law or traditional religious values correlates with right-wing self-placements in most of the eleven representative democracies they examine, while rarely with left-wing self-placements. However, the question is whether this correlation also entails causation, or whether the equality–inequality criterion can explain the L-R dimension alone.

A useful exercise here, to examine which criterion better predicts L-R classifications, is to find examples where equality/hierarchy and secular/religious do not correlate as they usually do. This would allow us to see which explanation still correlates with the L-R dimension. Some examples provide reason to believe that the equality–inequality distinction is better suited to explain the L-R dimension. For example, Muslim minorities in Western countries tend to be more left-wing (see for example Sweden, Bäckelie and Larsson, 2013, pp. 69-70), despite their religiosity. This is unlikely to be *because of* the religious texts. Rather, it seems more likely that they are choosing sides in a divide over immigration, rather than due to their religiosity.

There are, as mentioned, societies where the main political divide concerns which role the majority religion ought to have. However, these divides can also be understood as inequalities, meaning that the equality–inequality criterion may be able to explain them alone. In societies where the majority of the population is religious, there is an inequality between the religious and the more secular strata, as already highlighted by Alexis de Tocqueville. He describes the eighteenth-century philosophers that inspired the French Revolution as fundamentally anti-religious, but more motivated by political inequality than secularism (De Tocqueville, 1955 [1856], pp. 6-7).

“It was far less as a religious faith than as a political institution that Christianity provoked these violent attacks. The Church was hated not because its priests claimed to regulate the affairs of the other world but because they were landed proprietors, lords of manors, tithe owners, and played a leading part in secular affairs; not because there was no room for the Church in the new world that was in the making, but because it occupied the most powerful, most privileged position in the old order that was now to be swept away.” De Tocqueville (1955 [1856], pp. 6-7).

This importantly goes against Laponce’s (1981) interpretation that the L-R dimension is differentiated by equality–inequality *and* secularism–religiosity, since which side is ‘left’ and ‘right’ in a L-R division over religion would be determined by inequality rather than the religious aspect. A significant prediction of the equality–inequality criterion is therefore that in a future context where a religious minority stands against a secular majority, and this is the main political group divide over which there is programmatic political competition, the secular majority should consequently be on the right.

Many of the proposed frameworks in the literature are similar to the equality–inequality argument, but with important disagreements. One proposal is the idea that the Left and the Right support different types of equality, where the Left favours “a more demanding conception of equality, one that considers not only the rules governing a presumably level playing- field, but also the conditions under which the players may reach this field, or not” (Noël and Thérien, 2008, p. 19). This is similar to the difference between supporting equality of outcome compared to supporting equality of opportunity (as noted by Otjes, 2018). However, the idea that the Left and the Right support different types of equality is ultimately different from the idea that the Left is less accepting of inequality than the Right.

Noël and Thérien (2008, pp. 32-55) examine this thesis using the third wave of the World Values Survey (WVS), where they find that attitudes positive to equality, redistribution, government intervention, and social justice generally correlate with left-wing self-placements around the world. However, Noël and Thérien also find several contexts where the correlation is not present. They argue (with corroborating evidence) that this is likely attributed to the link between the examined attitudes and L-R self-placements being stronger in established democracies with institutionalized party

systems, because such contexts assist voters in developing clear and consistent L-R attitudes. Overall, the evidence they present lends credibility to both their proposed criterion, as well as the equality–inequality criterion discussed in the previous section, demonstrating that the two criteria are fairly similar.

Another twist to the equality–inequality distinction is the idea that how much individuals value equality and freedom both separate left from right. Rokeach (1973) argues that attitudes towards equality/inequality separates between the Left and the Right, while attitudes towards freedom separates within the Left and within the Right respectively. In particular between four typical ideologies of the Left and the Right: communism, socialism, conservatism, and fascism. Communism and fascism are typically understood as being on the far ends of the L-R spectrum, and differ from their more moderate counterparts (socialism and conservatism) in how they value freedom (not equality), according to this argument. Attitudes towards inequality can therefore not alone separate between what is more left or right on each side, since valuing freedom within the Left is considered more right-wing, but more left-wing within the Right. Analyses of books from proponents of different ideologies on the Left and the Right provides support for this model (Rous and Lee, 1978; Rokeach, 1973, pp. 165-188). Conversely, several studies attempting to test this two-value model of ideology by examining individuals only find evidence for equality separating left- from right-wing individuals, and little evidence in favour of the importance of the freedom aspect in separating left from right (Braithwaite, 1982; Heaven et al., 1994; Thannhauser and Caird, 1990; Cochrane et al., 1979). However, Rokeach (1979) criticizes studies (in particular Cochrane et al., 1979) evaluating the two-value model of ideology by testing whether supporters of parties with different ideological profiles also differ in valuing equality and freedom, given that the model should only be applicable to the ideologies themselves (and not party supporters).

Another proposal similar to the equality–inequality criterion is the proposal that the divide is rather over *equality of power* (Joshi, 2021). In this framework, the question concerns whether there should be “diffusion or concentration of power within and across nations, communities and individuals” (Joshi, 2021, p. 1). Much like how the equality–inequality distinction is conceptualised in this dissertation, Joshi separates different areas and domains. The equality of power framework therefore bears resemblance to how the equality–inequality criterion is conceptualised in the theory chapter of this dissertation. Another similarity is that power hierarchies are an important source of inequality in

equality–inequality theory as well. The result is consequently that almost every predicted classification with the framework pursued by Joshi is the same as what the equality–inequality distinction would predict. For example, progressive taxation leading to economic equality is in the equality of power framework understood as more left-wing because it leads to more equality of power in the economic domain, while it is predicted to be classified as left-wing by the equality–inequality criterion because it leads to more equality overall between the rich and the poor. It is difficult to find examples where these two frameworks diverge. In fact, it might be impossible since resources are equivalent to power in the framework, making it difficult to distinguish between the two frameworks. In describing the Sweden Democrats in Sweden, Joshi (2021, p. 8) writes, “Mirroring right-wing populists in many other countries, this party *aims to concentrate domestic resources (and therefore power)* more narrowly on those who already hold citizenship, while reducing opportunities for outsiders to acquire citizenship” (emphasis added). Thus, even though Joshi argues against the equality–inequality framework, there is little (if any) difference in classifications that could follow from the two frameworks.

Silverman (1985) diverges from proponents of frameworks proposing some form of variation on the equality/inequality theme. Instead, Silverman postulates that the Left is more universal in its values, while the Right is more particularistic. The second (orthogonal) dimension which cuts across the L-R (universal – particular) dimension, is the holism-molecularism dimension. This dimension decides which type of entity ideologies focus on, best exemplified by groups (holism) or individuals (molecularism). This creates four archetypes, which can be exemplified by communism (universal/holistic), anarchism (universal/molecularistic), fascism (particularistic/holistic) and anarcho-capitalism (particularistic/molecularistic). This framework seems to work fairly well in separating ideologies. To test this hypothesis and compare it with the equality–inequality hypothesis, it is important to be able to separate them – i.e., where they would suggest different L-R classifications. However, universalism and egalitarianism have considerable overlap. Universalistic values according to Silverman are principles that encompasses all people (such as human rights), in comparison to particularism, which is only concerned with particular entities, such as the “rights of Englishmen” (Silverman, 1985, p. 74). To some extent, this inclusion is hard to separate from egalitarianism, because universalism is often understood egalitarian on its own. As Bobbio (1996, p. 61) states, “the more individuals that are included [..],

the more egalitarian the proposal.” There are nevertheless thought experiments that can separate the two. For example, if a racist politician went from wanting to apply racist policies in their own country, to desiring the implementation of the same policies to the entire world – would that make the proposal more left-wing? It seems at least that, arguably, when inegalitarian principles are broadened to include more people, it does not necessarily make them more left-wing. While difficult to validate, these types of thought-experiments are useful because many politically interested individuals have intrinsic understandings of what is ‘left’ and ‘right’ without being able to express exactly where this intuition comes from (this intuition is ultimately only useful if it is shared between individuals). Silverman (1985, p. 76) further exemplifies the proposed criterion with the slogan “Workers of All Nations Unite!”. This would be a holistic and universal slogan. Yet, as another thought-experiment, what if one said, ‘Capitalists of All Nations Unite!’? It would be equally holistic and universal. Would it still be considered left-wing? In addition to this, does the slogan “Workers of All Nations Unite!” include capitalists? Is the slogan more left-wing if capitalists are included?

Although many argue that there is a criterion through which left and right can be separated, many disagree and hold the opinion that there is no criterion that can separate what is classified as ‘left’ and ‘right.’ Corbetta et al. (2009, p. 625) and Bobbio (1996, p. 3, quoting Sartre but without providing a reference) describe this hypothesis as that the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ are “empty vessels,” which would mean that they can be filled with different content depending on its context. Sartori (1976, p. 335) states that “these labels are easily ‘unloaded’ and ‘reloaded’ – for they lack any semantic substratum.” The empty vessels hypothesis seems to draw some of its appeal from the fact that what is considered ‘left’ and ‘right’ is context-dependent – i.e. there are many differences between countries’ L-R dimensions (e.g. Benoit and Laver, 2006, p. 143; Zechmeister, 2006, p. 170; Zuell and Scholz, 2019). Education and cultural background can furthermore lead respondents within the same country to have different associations with the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ (Bauer et al., 2016), and citizens’ understanding of the L-R dimension changes over time (Corbetta et al., 2009). However, these realities do not provide enough reason to dismiss the idea that there is a stable element of L-R competition that holds through space and time. In fact, the only thing that a stable element

(/criterion) of the L-R scale implies is that only that element stays the same.¹⁹ Thus, everything else can vary and, perhaps counterintuitively, this variation is actually helpful for researchers in that it provides better opportunities to test different hypotheses (in line with MacIver's reasoning at the beginning of this chapter). If the terms 'left' and 'right' are empty vessels, then there should be no criterion that can separate them in all (or at least almost all) contexts. It can be useful for researchers to consider the empty vessels proposition as the null hypothesis in the pursuit of a criterion. If there is no criterion that can meaningfully differentiate between left and right, then the terms are truly empty vessels that can be filled with any content depending on the context.

The empty vessels (null) hypothesis must however answer an important question that so far remains largely unanswered: Why does the L-R dimension not lend itself to every political conflict? It is clear that there are contexts where L-R competition has not been very prevalent. As Cochrane (2015, p. 5) writes, "left / right is interesting precisely because it does not apply to everything." Taiwan for example has had much lower levels of L-R self-placements than other countries (Jou and Dalton, 2017), and it has been argued that the main political conflict of Taiwan does not map onto an L-R divide (Yi-ching Hsiao et al., 2017). If the terms are to be considered empty vessels, then we know that they are not open to be filled with anything.

Cochrane (2015) puts forth a third solution that stands between a criterion (an essential core) that can separate left from right on the one hand, and the empty vessels explanation on the other hand. Cochrane (2015, pp. 21-30, 53) states that the Left and the Right can be understood in many ways through *family resemblance*, rather than any strict condition applying to all left- or right-wing phenomena. Like a family, those on the Right (and the Left respectively) share different traits (e.g., similar eyes and height) with each other, but they do not necessarily share one single trait. Cochrane (2015, p. 30) concludes that "the resemblances between actors occur across their multiple characteristics rather than on any single characteristic [...] no single position, nor an 'essential core,' is necessary or sufficient for membership in either the left or the right." However, the many similarities (the family resemblance) that can be found on each side means that "'left' and 'right' are hardly empty vessels" (Cochrane, 2015, p. 75).

¹⁹ See also Thorisdottir's (2012, p. 206) discussion on the "contextuality of the L-R dimension," and the potential for a criterion to separate left from right regardless.

For this idea to be true, it is important that there is no single criterion that can explain the L-R dimension in all contexts. Important to remember here is that a criterion is not meant to explain all left- and right-wing classifications. A criterion can for example be that the Right in a country is always more *x* than the Left, but that does not mean that every right-winger or policy classified as right-wing is necessarily more *x* than all left-wing phenomena. It is thus true that “no single characteristic or essential core defines the resemblance” (Cochrane, 2015, p. 75), but the resemblance may be explained by some core divide between the Left and the Right in each society nevertheless. This is because the causation that leads to the divide in each society may be the same, even though some actors that join each side may completely disregard that issue/core divide. If, for example, the equality–inequality framework is accurate, and economic inequality (for example) is the most salient political divide in a society, then we assume that the Left will be in favour of more economic equality compared to the Right. However, there may be individuals that join the Left for completely unrelated reasons. For example, an individual may favour euthanasia, or like the colour yellow, and the Left happens to be more in favour of euthanasia and use the colour yellow in that context (for whatever reason). The individual may join the Left because of one of those reasons yet be unconcerned with economic equality. This does not mean however that the equality–inequality criterion cannot explain this individual’s resulting left-wing placement. The individual joined the Left because the Left was more in favour of euthanasia, or associated with the colour yellow, and the Left was in turn considered ‘the Left’ because of their position on economic inequality, the main political divide. The left-wing label of this individual still comes from the association with the side that is for more economic equality, whether the individual in question cares for that issue or not. The chapter outlining the theoretical framework of the equality–inequality explanation explores these processes more in depth. Nevertheless, the idea of viewing the Left and the Right through the lens of family resemblance is a valuable contribution to the literature on L-R politics, even if it does not exclude the possibility of a criterion separating left from right. Rather, family resemblance is yet another competing argument in the literature.

Summary

The literature on whether there is a context-independent criterion/dividing line between left- and right-wing politics tends to gravitate towards different versions of the idea that

acceptance of inequality separates left- from right-wing politics. Regardless of how equality is conceptualised, whether it separates L-R politics on its own or together with another criterion (such as religiosity, change and freedom), acceptance of inequality is the most popular proposal of a context-independent criterion in the literature. However, there are several popular competing explanations that cannot be dismissed without empirical testing, such as that attitudes towards government intervention in the economy separate left- from right-wing politics, or that the L-R terminology are akin to empty vessels. Throughout this dissertation I will discuss and test the different explanations of the L-R dimension. However, this dissertation develops acceptance of inequality theory and focuses on testing this explanation. I build on previous theorists who have proposed that acceptance of inequality separates left from right, and specify the theory further in the following chapter.

Chapter 3. Acceptance of Inequality Separating Left from Right – A Theory

Since MacIver (1947) discussed how acceptance of inequality separates left from right, there have been many different suggested versions of acceptance of inequality theory, as detailed in the previous chapter. In this chapter I outline a novel version of this theory, which is tested in later chapters. The theory in this chapter can be viewed as building upon five previous works (MacIver, 1947, p. 216; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990, p. 293; Lukes, 2003; Bobbio, 1996), where acceptance of inequality has been understood to separate left- from right-wing politics. Other authors writing in this area may not agree with the theory being pursued here, even though their work undoubtedly inspire the discussion in this chapter (see Jost et al., 2003b; Jost et al., 2009; Laponce, 1981; Rokeach, 1973; Joshi, 2021).

This chapter puts forth three original contributions to acceptance of inequality theory. First, my theory specifies that it is the overall inequality between groups, rather than specific policies, that matters when distinguishing left- from right-wing politics. Importantly, I differentiate between different inequality dimensions, similarly to Joshi (2021) who differentiates between equality (of power, according to Joshi) in different domains/areas (a point made in Lindqvist, 2019; see also Lindqvist, 2020). Such separation of different inequalities has been implicit in previous literature (see Lipset et al., 1954), and means that societies can have very different types of L-R competition. There is correspondingly well-documented divergence between countries.²⁰ This divergence is explained by my second theoretical contribution: the crucial role of salience. This is key to understanding the causality of L-R classifications, previously neglected in much of the literature. Salience of a political issue, i.e., the importance or prominence of an issue (typically to voters), is important because it is an indication that individuals and political actors choose sides in the L-R conflict because of that issue.²¹

²⁰ Documented in detail in later chapters of this dissertation.

²¹ I do not, however, explain why an issue dimension becomes politically salient (to parties or voters), but rather takes this as a given. Nevertheless, a good starting point to understanding why political divides in different societies become salient can be found in Bartolini and Mair's (1990, p. 215) definition of a cleavage. They argue that cleavages ought to have three elements: an empirical, a normative and an organisational/behavioural element. The first element denotes a tangible difference between different

Crucially, I propose that the disagreement over salient inequalities is the underlying core of the L-R dimension. This leads me to my third contribution. I suggest what I believe is the most likely causal pathway that leads to divides over inequality. Most important in this process is that more ideological and politically interested individuals often tend to apply the same acceptance/rejection of inequality to new inequalities that become salient, creating a durable core of the L-R divide that makes future L-R politics predictable.

The rest of this chapter describes the theory, beginning with describing the general pattern and subsequently moves back through the causal chain. I do this by first outlining how the equality-inequality criterion distinguishes left from right. I subsequently discuss why it is important to take salience into account from a theoretical point of view, followed by a discussion on the causal process through which the L-R landscape ought to be understood. The chapter ends with a discussion of what may explain why inequality is such a potent force in politics.

The Criterion

As mentioned in the first chapter, a criterion is a stable correlation that acts like a shorthand, a guiding principle, which can help us predict what will be classified as more left- or right-wing across contexts. In this section, I specify the equality–inequality criterion in a parsimonious manner, beginning with an illustrative example. Imagine a society with two groups between which there is an inequality.²² The inequality is not particular to any specific issue, but an overall inequality between the two groups. One group has, overall, more of what people value. I consider the most important outcomes to be power and resources,²³ but it can be anything (depending on what is valued). I label

groups that can be empirically established, the second denotes “values and beliefs which produce a sense of identity” and the third denotes organisations such as political parties. The latter two elements can help explain the salience of political divides. The production of a particular identity, and the creation of political behaviour/movements/organisations that advance the perceived interests of a group, are likely to increase the salience of a political divide. This is a good starting point but obviously does not answer why this happens to some group identities, but not others, in the first place.

²² Cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Bartolini and Mair, 2007, pp. 198-204) are one example of a group divide, but this theory is not limited to such divides.

²³ As mentioned in a previous chapter, the fact that Joshi (2021, p. 8) argues that inequality of resources equals an unequal power distribution means that his framework has roughly the same conclusions as

these as “outcomes,” but by outcomes I also include opportunities (which are often contrasted with outcomes, see for example Noël and Thérien, 2008). If one group has more opportunities than another group, then I consider this an outcome of the previous time period. By this definition, anything that one group has is an outcome. This is important for the criterion because it is the overall inequality that is the key mechanism, which is asserted to lead individuals to be more left- or right-wing. Take for example African Americans in the United States. The fact that they do better in the National Basketball Association (NBA) compared to white citizens does not change the overall inequality between the two groups. African Americans are poorer and generally have less political power compared to the white majority in the United States. I assume that individuals care more about overall inequality²⁴ rather than specific issue inequalities when they make their L-R choices.

Issue-specific inequalities are thus not driving L-R divides, but an inequality between groups will be focused on the domain that defines the groups (as suggested by Joshi, 2021). That is, overall inequality between groups is domain specific. The defining feature of group divides is some aspect that separates individuals as being a member of one or the other group (Converse, 2006 [1964], pp. 41-43). Inequalities between groups therefore typically take place based on this divide, or otherwise another inequality would take prominence. For example, in a society that is divided along religious lines where there is a religious minority and majority group, the majority group has an advantage when deciding policy regarding religion due to their relative size, i.e., a privileged position (at least in a representative democracy). In the same scenario we could also imagine that the majority religious group may have lesser incomes on average, in which case they are the less privileged group on that metric. The L-R divide will then be decided based on which inequality becomes politicized, which inequality matters when choosing side in the political landscape – which groups are against each other (i.e., which inequality divide matters). If the salient inequality is the religious divide, then the economic inequality is not as important (i.e., not as salient). In that instance it is the religious inequality that divides the Left and the Right. Importantly, if economic inequality was the

previous authors proposing the equality–inequality distinction, as well as the theory proposed in this chapter.

²⁴ We can also describe this relationship as having more or less privilege, but this is a somewhat charged term.

most salient, then this would involve different groups (those with lower and higher incomes, instead of different religious denominations) and thereby change which groups are compared to each other (as long as there are some low- and high-income earners in each religious group).

Another important specification of the theoretical framework is that policies aiming to combat an overall inequality will usually be unequal themselves. In the case of economic inequality, those aiming for more equal distributions of wealth and income are likely to argue for progressive taxation. That is, high-earning individuals pay a higher percentage of their income/wealth in taxes compared to low-earning individuals. This discriminatory treatment²⁵ is made by design because it is the overall inequality which those proposing such taxation (often) seek to alter.

The general relationship (criterion) between the Left and the Right is thus that when there is an inequality between two groups in terms of outcomes (of what people value – resources, power, or other), then those on the Left are in general less accepting of this inequality compared to those on the Right. However, this criterion (/correlation) is dependent on the salience of the specific inequality –the criterion will be more likely to correctly predict L-R classifications the more salient the cleavage/group divide is (over which there is programmatic competition). This is because salience closely corresponds to how likely participants are to make their L-R choice (where they are on the L-R dimension) in regard to that inequality. We can take this to its logical extreme and see that there is little reason to believe that left-wing actors would care more about reducing the inequality between for example tall and short citizens, or between attractive and unattractive individuals (Converse, 2006 [1964], p. 42), than right-wingers. These inequalities are not important political conflicts in most societies, and few individuals therefore base their L-R choice on these inequalities. Conversely, it follows from this discussion that the criterion ought to be applicable to the most salient political conflict in a society (if it is an inequality), at a bare minimum. I.e., we would have substantial evidence against the theory if L-R politics in a society does not correlate with the most salient inequality in the expected direction. The causal process that makes salience such

²⁵ I use the term “discriminatory” to describe progressive taxation, but most advocates for progressive taxation are unlikely to use such terminology to describe this policy. My point is that unequal treatment is a common tactic to achieving more overall equality.

an important aspect when predicting L-R politics will be detailed further in subsequent sections of this chapter.

Given that there is an inequality (or multiple inequalities) in a society that shapes individuals' political decisions, acceptance of inequality is then a spectrum that goes from the far left to the far right. Individuals on the far left of the spectrum favour the lower group and is unwilling to accept the inequality. There can theoretically speaking be individuals on the furthest left who argue for inequality in the opposite direction between the two groups, but this is unlikely to be a good strategy given that it is the weakness of the lower group that gives reason for sympathy with them. As we move to the right on this dimension, we find individuals that are increasingly willing to accept some level of inequality. At the furthest right we find those who defend the stronger group, as well as those who claim that the inequality is inevitable, acceptable and/or desirable.²⁶ While it is likely that most individuals who are interested in politics understand that the inequality exists, the existence of it is naturally politically contentious. The Left is much more likely to highlight that there is an inequality and exaggerate its size, while the Right would rather minimize such an inequality (or even deny its existence) and point out the different ways that the weaker group is relatively more privileged.

There are five specifications that are worth clarifying regarding how to apply and test this criterion. (1) The L-R scale is relative and thus what is considered left and right is relative (i.e., more acceptance of inequality means more right-wing). This means that the Right in any circumstance can be proponents of more equality, but simply relatively less than the Left. The centre (mid-point) will be located at different places in different societies. A right-wing individual may be in favour of change in an egalitarian direction, yet not as much as other individuals in that society and may therefore place themselves on the right side due to the relative nature of the scale.

(2) In this chapter I discuss an inequality between two well-defined groups, but this is a simplification. There are always individuals that are somewhere between the two (or more) groups, and some inequalities may be better understood as spectrums rather than taking place between two groups. Take class inequality as an example, which is often (for example in many surveys, as is the case in the World Values Survey) attributed to an

²⁶ There will be individuals on the Right who genuinely choose the Right because they reject the salient inequality and believe that the Right pursues policies that reduces that inequality better than the Left. However, this is the exception rather than the rule.

uneven income distribution. An income distribution is, by definition, a spectrum rather than categories with well-defined boundaries. The same is true for religious and ethnic conflicts, even though the lines between the groups are clearer. For example, in a society that is mainly divided by a secular-religious conflict, where most individuals are members of one religion, there will be individuals that are members of the majority religion even though they may not be very religious. The secular-religious divide can thus be seen as a spectrum, rather than two opposing groups. This does not detract, however, from the fact that the majority status of the majority religion is what creates the inequality (and why there can be a discussion about that religion's dominance in society in the first place).

To complicate matters further, where you draw the line between different groups in a politically contested inequality is part of political competition itself (Schattschneider, 1960, pp. 60-75). In the U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders famously argued that he was against the 1%, implying that he was advancing the interests of the 99%, but it is likely that many of those in the 90th percentile realised that Bernie Sanders was not primarily concerned with their economic interests. This discussion highlights that where we draw the lines between groups, or whether we understand the inequality as a spectrum rather than between distinct groups, is not important for acceptance of inequality theory. Rather, the fact that there is an inequality is the main factor.

(3) When applying the criterion, it is important to keep in mind that democratic governance is sometimes a precondition to predict certain L-R classifications. For example, if the theory is applied to L-R self-placements of a random subset of individuals in a society, then these individuals ought to have experienced L-R politics. If they have little to no experience with L-R politics, then there is no reason to assume that the theory is applicable. Representative democracies tend to have L-R competition, and that means that the L-R language is used and understood by the participants that we are studying.²⁷ When examining other L-R classifications, then other selection criteria may be appropriate. It may be, for example, appropriate to study elites' ideological beliefs in a society without representative democracy. The point is that we want to avoid using L-R classifications that are not based on observations of L-R politics (e.g., uninformed guesses). Fig. 1.1 in chapter one further explains why this is so important.

²⁷ Nevertheless, there are non-democratic societies where individuals understand the L-R terminology anyway, for other reasons.

(4) The *absolute* outcomes of the two groups are irrelevant, i.e., they do not contribute to deciding whether a phenomenon is considered left or right. Rather, the *relative* hierarchy between the two groups is the important feature. Absolute outcomes can however have other implications for L-R politics. For example, one can imagine that the inequality in itself is more pressing when the misfortunes of the weaker group are especially noticeable (like extreme poverty).

(5) The criterion is created for the short-term, by which I mean, created to predict someone/something being left- or right-wing today. An important implication of this is that some on the far left can argue for inequality in the other direction (i.e., making the less privileged group the stronger more privileged group) and nevertheless be left-wing. Why would this be the case? First, those that would advocate for inequality in the opposite direction would naturally ally themselves with the Left, since the Left moves in that direction (even though the Left generally would not want inequality in the other direction). In fact, most individuals on both the Left and the Right respectively have different preferences for how much inequality is acceptable, but they cooperate anyway because they unite in their opposition to the other side. Moving in the same direction is good enough to be able to cooperate (or simply receive explicit or implicit support). Take for example gender inequality. If there are individuals that want a matriarchal society, then they would likely cooperate with other individuals who want gender equality. Even though their aims are clearly different, moving towards gender inequality in most societies entails giving women more relatively to men in regard to money, power, and status (etc.). This is both a move towards overall gender equality as well as a move towards overall gender inequality where women have it better than men.

Second, I speculate that those who want inequality in the other direction would only be considered left-wing as long as the initial societal inequality is there, and possibly for some time after due to path dependence (it is impossible for us to know at this point for how long this would/could last, but change in politics can take time). However, I use the word *speculate* because it is difficult to research the very far-end of the spectrum, a hypothetical far-left position, because it is rare for an inequality to reverse in the opposite direction. My point is that advocating for inequality in the opposite direction in the short-term (in the current society with the existing inequality) is likely to be viewed as left-wing in that context, but more research is needed.

This also has implications for the labelling of the theory. I label the theory itself equality–inequality (/acceptance of inequality) theory, even though as mentioned, there can be (at least theoretically speaking) leftists that argue for inequality in the other direction. I do this because of two reasons. First, equality and inequality are concepts that are often used, which people have an intuitive understanding of that seemingly follows the theory closely. Second, my prediction is that if the inequality at a societal level were to become reversed, and it was still the same group divide that was the most salient political conflict, then the left and right side would switch.

The Role of Salience

I have thus far argued that the criterion, describing what makes political phenomena more left or right, is more likely to be applicable the more salient an inequality is. At the very least, the most salient inequality in a political context ought to align with the criterion – or we have evidence against the theory. This begs the question: why is salience so important for the criterion to explain what is (more) left or right? What makes this such an important condition for the criterion, and ultimately the theory?

The answer lies in the reason for *why* individuals (and political entities, such as political parties) choose their place in the left-right landscape. Remember that the L-R dimension is a dimension where participants can be more or less to the left and to the right. Positions on this dimension reflect political preferences, and distance between political actors indicates potential for cooperation, at least along this line of conflict.²⁸ As Cavazza et al. (2022, p. 70) state, it is an “organizing principle of the political space [...] in which] social groups, parties and leaders [...] place themselves in relation to each other and [...] define conflicts and commonalities among them.” Because this is a political dimension that signifies a political disagreement, the question becomes: what do those on the Left and the Right disagree on? It should logically follow that this disagreement is also the reason for why individuals choose the left or the right side. This may sound obvious, but it is nevertheless important to clarify because this link is important for the theory. The argument here is that the main explanatory cause of L-R competition is that many political actors (voters and/or politicians) choose their place on the L-R dimension

²⁸ In fact, it signifies a general cooperation potential only when it is the dominant conflict, which it often also is.

because of their acceptance of an inequality (an ideological choice), and these choices create a core disagreement between those to the left and those to the right: the L-R conflict.²⁹ There are of course many other reasons to choose sides in politics, such as for example concerns about freedom, democracy, and valence issues³⁰ such as corruption. Individuals may choose sides based on such concerns. However, when many individuals (at the voter level and/or among those that define the political choices voters have) choose sides in the political conflict due to the most salient inequality, then this is usually labelled the L-R dimension of politics. No matter where this process starts and how many individuals in a society that takes part in it, it is fair to assume that if acceptance of inequality divides left from right, then this conflict should affect at least some individuals' choices of whether they are on the Left or on the Right.

As the criterion is applicable to inequality on different dimensions (between different groups), we must know which inequality individuals make their L-R choice in regard to, in order to use the criterion. There are two important factors that will influence an individuals' L-R choice: country-level and individual-level salience (for a discussion on the latter, see Giger and Lefkofridi, 2014). In some societies, one inequality may be salient (e.g., discussed in the media) at the national level, and the salience will thereby lead individuals to choose the left or the right side of politics because of that inequality, more than other inequalities in that society (which individuals then do not consider). However, in that same society, different individuals may prioritise different inequalities when making their L-R choice, of which some inequalities may not even be salient at the national level. I thus propose that salience, whether it is at the societal or individual level, influences individuals' L-R choices.

The effect of salience has important implications for the theory. We can demonstrate this with a two-dimensional policy space, in which an individual should choose the option closest to them. Consider the difference in choice for Individual A in two different scenarios, illustrated in Fig. 3.1 by Map 1 and Map 2. In the first map, both dimensions have the same weights (which is common in many depictions of a two-

²⁹ Keep in mind that there is a difference between the L-R conflict as a social phenomenon (the L-R dimension), and the language used to describe it (the L-R language), elaborated on in the introduction chapter of this dissertation.

³⁰ Valence issues are those where voters mostly agree on the end goal, which can be contrasted with "position issues" where voters disagree, and there are two or more alternatives (Stokes, 1963, p. 373).

dimensional policy space in the academic literature, see e.g., Rovny and Edwards, 2012). This however means that the Euclidean distance for an individual in that policy space, to their preferred party/side, is only accurate if the individual finds both dimensions equally important – which is quite a strong assumption. In the second scenario where Individual A does not find the dimensions equally important (Map 2), the distances between the Left (/Right) and the individual changes (Benoit and Laver, 2006, pp. 31-32).³¹ This outcome is depicted in Fig. 3.1 with dotted lines illustrating the shortest distance and thus the individual’s preferred choice in each scenario.

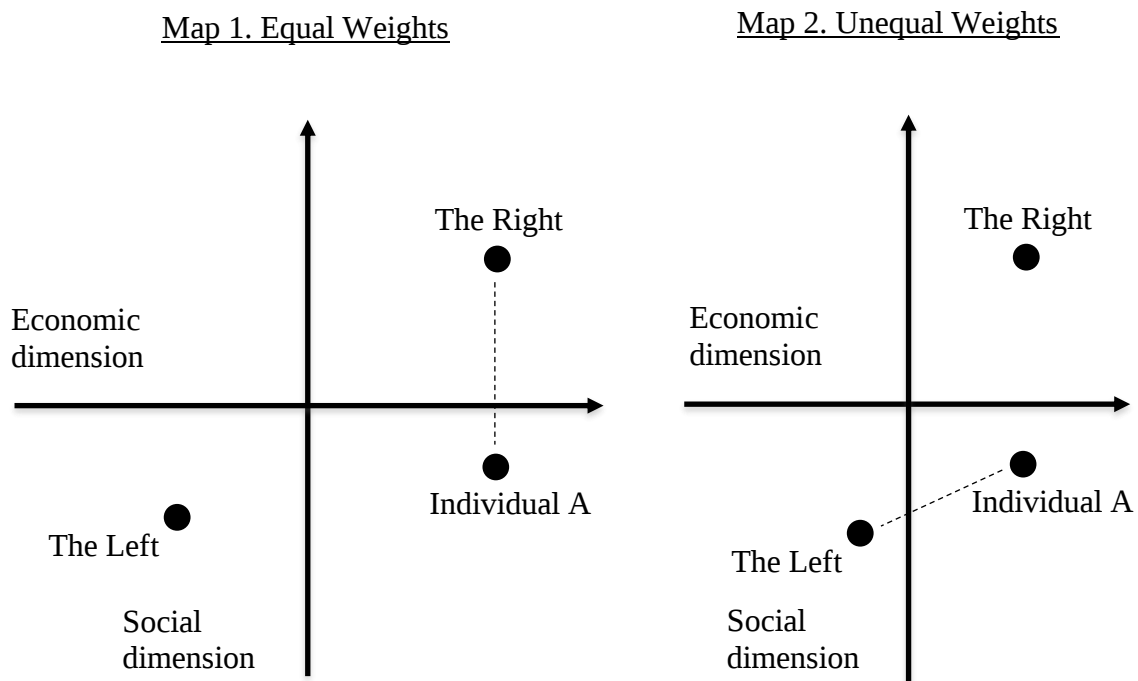


Fig. 3.1. Euclidean Distance in Spatial Representation Depending on Dimension Weights

Map 2 demonstrates a situation where individual A is more concerned with the social dimension than the economic dimension, changing the distance to the Left and the Right. Salience (whether at the individual or the national level) thus changes the distances between individuals and their supply alternatives. This means that to understand why an individual chooses the Left or the Right, it is important to understand the amount of

³¹ This is true even if we instead conceptualise these distances using “the ‘city bloc’ or ‘Manhattan’ metric” where distances on each dimension cannot be combined as individuals only move along each dimension in a grid, in a non-Euclidean fashion (Benoit and Laver 2006: 21-2).

importance that the individual attaches to each dimension. This is vitally important when applying the equality–inequality criterion given that many individuals (much like Individual A in Fig. 3,1) do not hold consistently (in)egalitarian views (Hiel and Kossowska, 2007; Malka et al., 2019). Many of these individuals will be left- or right-wing (and not centrists), and thus inevitably have some (in)egalitarian views that do not match their L-R self-placement. For example, when Individual A chose the Right in Map 1, their social views did not align with the Right (Individual A might for example have favoured legalizing gay marriage, contrary to the Right in that context).

There are theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that salience will differ between countries quite substantially. Beginning with the former, there are many different potential lines of conflict that could divide different factions in politics, but only a few tend to be dominant according to Schattschneider (1960, pp. 60-75). Schattschneider (1960, p. 65) labels this the “inequality of conflicts.” Deciding which issue(s) assumes prominence is a part of the political struggle in itself: “the definition of the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power” (Schattschneider, 1960, p. 66). As Mair (1997, p. 951) states in a discussion of Schattschneider’s *The Semisovereign People*, “politics is characterised by the existence of a multitude of both explicit and latent conflicts, where the key dynamic is often not simply the alignment of forces on one side or the other of a central dividing line, but rather the conflict of conflicts itself, with different divisions pushing up against one another in order to dominate the popular agenda.” The assumption is thus that some dimensions of politics will be more dominant than others.

The empirical reality is importantly also in line with this reasoning. To use Western Europe as an example (where there is a wide range of party systems with many different parties), Van Der Brug and Van Spanje (2009) argue that party competition there tends to be highly one-dimensional. Some argue instead that party competition should be understood as two-dimensional, rather than one-dimensional (e.g., Bornschier, 2010). In either case, it is not controversial to state that some dimensions are more salient than others, and experts of party politics tend to agree that one, two, or three dimensions can explain much of party politics (Van Der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009, pp. 311-312; Andrews and Money, 2009; Bornschier, 2010; Rovny and Edwards, 2012). It is furthermore known in the cleavage literature that there are large differences between countries in regard to which cleavages are salient, and that some conflicts tend to dominate (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009; Wegner and Cavatorta, 2019; Ford and

Jennings, 2020; Deegan-Krause, 2006).³² In addition to this, when a new dimension becomes important, there is reason to believe that this will take up space, to the detriment of the old divide. For example, the observed “issue crowding out” effect in the Netherlands, where the correlation between immigration attitudes and L-R self-placements has increased at the expense of the correlation between attitudes towards income inequality and L-R self-placements (De Vries et al., 2013), only further demonstrates this, and consequently the importance of salience.³³ Given this discussion there are two conclusions that can be drawn: first, some conflicts/dimensions tend to be more dominant than others; and second, the importance of a dimension differs both between individuals (Lefkofridi et al., 2014; Giger and Lefkofridi, 2014) and countries (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009; Wegner and Cavatorta, 2019; Ford and Jennings, 2020; Deegan-Krause, 2006). There is therefore good reason to take salience into account, as it is likely to have an impact on individuals’ L-R choice.

Discerning Causality

In the literature review I intentionally (mainly) discussed a correlation rather than causation, because the debate in the literature is over a criterion to distinguish left and right, rather than the specific causality leading to L-R politics. It is somewhat surprising that the literature on what is ‘left’ and ‘right’ in politics rarely involves a discussion of what causes these patterns to happen in the first place. Nonetheless, there is of course a causal process involved, which is likely more important to understand than any stable correlation we can observe. It is unfortunately much more difficult to discern such

³² Many of these cleavages are also group inequalities, and often clearly align with L-R politics. Class, ethnicity, and religion are a few examples of cleavages that also can be understood as group inequalities, and thus where the equality–inequality framework is applicable. We also already have good evidence that different political dimensions are related to the L-R dimension in different contexts (Huber and Inglehart, 1995; Benoit and Laver, 2007; Dalton, 2006).

³³ Salience when examining whether acceptance of inequality correlates with right-wing politics (i.e., acceptance of which inequality will lead to right-wing classifications?), can be understood as a top-down or a bottom-up process. Salience that stems from, for example, the media and political parties talking about the issue might affect individuals and lead them to choose sides (left or right) based on the issue. This would be a top-down explanation. A bottom-up explanation would instead be, for example, that the public cares about an issue, which drives the media and politicians to talk about it. The latter explanation implies that the resulting salience is merely the amalgamation of what the public finds important.

causality, but it is fruitful to present a theoretical framework for how to understand the causal processes that govern L-R politics. This means that I will not attempt to estimate all proposed causal mechanisms, but rather provide a theoretical framework for how we should understand how the L-R dimension is created, which subsequently informs the investigation.

There are multiple causal mechanisms that have been observed in the literature, of which most are irrelevant to understanding what the root cause of the L-R divide is. For example, sociodemographic variables have an effect on L-R self-placements, as well as ideology and partisanship (Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976). Political parties change their L-R placement to attract new voters according to the influential logic of the median voter theorem (Hotelling, 1929; Downs, 1957; Black, 1948), meaning that strategic factors also have an effect on the L-R placements of parties. Furthermore, L-R self-placements of individuals also themselves influence individuals' ideological stances (policy positions for example), meaning that the causality can go both ways. These are just some of the observed causal mechanisms in the literature. All of this might suggest that each of these has a separate causal effect, and that the reason for why each of them leads to a move to the left or to the right is different for each individual causal mechanism. However, this is, importantly, not the case. Rather, whether a causal mechanism leads to a move in the left or right direction for a political actor/object always stems from the same origin.

To explain this, we need to first establish a basic premise/assumption. *Whether something is classified as left or right depends on whether the cause (e.g., sociodemographic status) leads to an association with the Left or the Right in that context.* This may sound tautological but remember that there is a difference between the L-R landscape (the social reality where political actors fight and cooperate) and the L-R language (which is used to describe it, see Fig. 1.1 in the first chapter). This separation is vital to understanding L-R classifications, a point often missed in analyses and discussions of the L-R dimension (I have yet to find an example in the literature where this is discussed). For example, it is often assumed that being working class causes individuals to become left-wing (see for example Häusermann et al., 2012, pp. 225-226, who review some of this literature). But, perhaps counter-intuitively to many, it is important to underscore that being working class *in itself* does not lead to a left-wing self-placement, because it is not an intrinsic property of being working class. If it was, then

being working class would always cause a left-wing self-placement. The left-wing association rather comes from the fact that being working class often leads individuals to associate themselves (through voting for example) with the Left. Since L-R competition is somewhat different in different contexts, some causes that leads an individual to choose the left side in one context will lead them to choose the right side in another. Unsurprisingly then, there are some societies where we do not observe an isolated correlation between being working class and a higher propensity to vote for the Left (e.g., Turkey, see Aydogan and Slapin, 2015). In the end, the association between being working class and left-wing is dependent on what separates left from right in that specific context.³⁴

The question then naturally becomes: what decides what is associated with the Left and the Right in different societies? I.e., what decides which side is left and which side is right, which then decides other causal patterns, as described in the previous paragraph? This is a key question, which goes beyond the above stated causal patterns and I therefore differentiate between two different types of causality. The first type discussed above, such as the fact that partisanship and sociodemographic variables can cause changes in L-R classifications of parties, policies, and individuals, I here call *associated causation*. These L-R classifications are the result of which side (the Left or the Right) they happen to be associated with in that context. Such patterns can be helpful for the inquiry, but they are often the trees blocking us from seeing the forest. As much as the trees are relevant, they obfuscate the more important cause of L-R politics, which I here label the *underlying cause*.

The criteria discussed in the literature describe stable correlations, which are quite different from the discussed associated causes. They are discussed and examined as correlations in much of the literature, probably because proving causality is much more difficult, and the proposed criteria are still useful even as mere correlations. As long as they hold, they have predictive power. Nevertheless, these correlations are often implied to cause L-R classifications.

To illustrate the difference between associated and underlying causes, we can imagine an individual who is left-wing because she is in favour of expanding ethnic

³⁴ In societies where class is the most important political divide, acceptance of inequality theory (as presented in this chapter) of course predicts that the Left will be associated with the working class.

minority rights in the constitution (we will ignore her other political attitudes for the sake of simplicity at the moment), and there is an inequality between the ethnic minority and the ethnic majority in this society. Her attitude towards ethnic minorities leads her to be left-wing because in her societal context, the Left is pushing to change the constitution to include specific protections for ethnic minorities, and the Right is opposed to these constitutional changes. However, we could imagine the same outcome but with the ‘reverse causality.’ Imagine she is instead apolitical in the same societal context but grows up in an environment where her family members are partisan social democrats. She takes the label left-wing because of these influences, and subsequently learns about the positions of the Left in her country/context. She then begins to favour a constitutional change, due to her partisanship, emulating the positions of the Left in her country. In this case, her identification as left-wing has had an effect on her attitudes, not the other way around. Both of these causal chains consist of several associated causes, and we can conceive of them as two different causal chains, but the preceding cause of both processes is the same. In the first instance she becomes left-wing because of her attitude towards ethnic minority rights, in the second instance she is for ethnic minority rights because of her L-R self-placement (being left-wing). Both times this is due to that there is an association between being left-wing and being for ethnic minority rights in broader society. If this relationship did not exist in her context, then being left-wing would not cause her to be in favour of minority rights, nor would being in favour of ethnic minority rights cause her to be left-wing (*ceteris paribus*).³⁵

The advantage of knowing the underlying cause then is that we can explain why the relationship between favouring ethnic minority protections and the Left exists in the first place. The theory I advance, equality–inequality theory, explains this as follows: the L-R dimension of politics is an ideological divide between those that are more and those that are less accepting of inequality. The language describing this ideological divide started during the French Revolution, and has since been used to describe the same ideological conflict (even though it takes different forms) in other contexts. Inequality is

³⁵ It consequently follows that an individual can become right-wing because of that the Right is more in favor of ethnic minority protections than the Left in that society. Crucially, however, this can only happen in a society where an inequality between an ethnic minority and an ethnic majority is not the most salient political divide, because the right side would then be more accepting of the inequality than the left side (according to acceptance of inequality theory).

a potent political divide, and therefore tends to be the most divisive political issue in most representative democracies. While many individuals and voters are not necessarily consistently (in)egalitarian, the most ideological and political individuals (those that engage more in politics) tend to be more consistent in their beliefs (Converse, 2006 [1964]). This consistency only arises, however, when inequalities become salient. This is because these individuals apply the same reasoning (acceptance or rejection of inequality) when a new inequality ascends to prominence. Ethnic minority protections will belong on the left side when this issue becomes the most salient political topic. The most salient inequality may change from class to immigration, or from rural/urban to religion, but the fundamental aspect of inequality seems to most often be present. Depending on which inequality is most important, different associated causes follow and discrepancies between, for example, what is 'right' in one context compared to another consequently follows. Each side is then associated with different phenomena and therefore labelled as left- or right-wing, depending on which political camp they become associated with. However, most of these classifications are not meaningful, in the sense that they do not reflect the original cause.

To illustrate how the L-R conflict can change the political landscape and coalitions, we can apply the framework to the United States 50 years apart. Miller and Schofield (2003) demonstrate that the L-R divide has shifted from mainly concerning class and economic policy, to be more about ethnic inequality between white and black Americans (as well as other social issues, such as abortion and gay rights). When economic inequality was the main L-R divide in the United States in the 1950s, a specific coalition of voters preferred the Right over the Left. Without going into detail on how this coalition was constructed more specifically, one example is that the more educated part of the population tended to vote for the Right at the time (Piketty, 2018). Having a university education meant that it was more likely for that individual to vote for the Right. We might speculate that this was because educated individuals tended to earn more and therefore had an interest in voting for right-wing economic policies. Later, as the L-R divide became more about ethnicity and other social issues (Miller and Schofield present evidence for this being the main divide by 2000), the coalitions changed. Education in the United States has also become correlated with being left-wing (Piketty, 2018). We might speculate that the highly educated tend to be more progressive on social issues (Van de Werfhorst and de Graaf, 2004), and thus, when the L-R divide concerns social

issues, they generally choose the Left over the Right. It is thus the core divide (which inequality the Left and the Right are divided on) that decides what types of coalitions we see on each side.

Another example that can provide much needed insight into how L-R politics can change character over the years is France, the first and subsequently the longest case of L-R competition. The L-R terminology was first used during the French Revolution, where seating arrangements in the French National Constitutive Assembly in 1789 formed its basis. Those in favour of an absolute veto of the King sat to the right, and those in favour of a more restrictive veto sat to the left (Jost et al., 2008, p. 127; Bréchon, 2017). The divide was then between monarchists and those more critical of the monarchy, and in the beginning of the 20th century it had become a divide between the religious Right, against the anti-clerical secular Left. The divide would then again change in the 1930s when it became an economic conflict (Bréchon, 2017), and remained so in the years after the Second World War (as in many other countries in Western Europe). Today's France is again moving into new territory, with an L-R conflict increasingly focused on immigration and Islam.

These are only a few examples of a broader phenomenon – the salient dimension separating the Left and the Right changes over time, and a consequence of this is that the Left and the Right, as broad coalitions, change quite substantially depending on which issue(s) chiefly separates them. This is why we see many examples of different L-R constellations around the world (documented later in this dissertation). Getting to the core of the L-R divide is therefore important instead of getting lost in the details, that while interesting, are completely context-dependent and often say little about what is at the heart of the L-R conflict.

The Role of Accepting Inequality in General

The theory I have put forth so far states that acceptance (/rejection) of inequality leads many individuals to choose the left or the right side of politics. There are different inequalities that are important in different societies, and therefore, we should expect that it is the attitudes towards salient inequalities that lead many voters to choose the Left or the Right in a society. However, this does not explain why L-R politics takes on this predictable pattern. In particular, when we move from one L-R conflict to another, it is often the case that the Left and the Right adjust accordingly. For example, when a society goes from having a conflict over the role of the majority religion in a society to a conflict over economics, then we would expect that more of those on the right side in political competition (political elites), compared to those on the left side, go from endorsing the right of the majority religion to keep a dominant place in society to endorsing capitalism and an acceptance of income inequality (if they did not already). However, why would this happen? I theorised in the previous section that this is because of that individuals who are more interested in politics and/or ideological, tend to differ from each other in how accepting they are of inequality, i.e., a general level of egalitarianism. This type of egalitarianism among politically interested individuals is in essence about having sympathy for those that do well and are strong, or those who do worse and are weak, and this forms the core of the L-R dimension in representative democracies. When new inequalities become salient, ideological/politically interested individuals then tend to apply the same value to the new inequality. These individuals tend to be overrepresented in politically important institutions such as political parties,³⁶ that drive the elite response to new political issues (see Noël et al., 2021, pp. 320-322, for a similar account of this causal chain). The finding that parties are more consistently (in)egalitarian than voters on the two most salient inequality dimensions in Western Europe, immigration and class, supports this view (Van Der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). Additionally, politically interested individuals tend to have more predictable L-R attitudes (Converse, 2006 [1964]; Duriez et al., 2005; Harbers et al., 2013).

Importantly then, this means that the process of applying the same value onto new inequalities should primarily happen among the most politically interested and

³⁶ In representative democracies without high degrees of corruption and clientelism that may hinder ideological concerns.

ideological individuals, and only when inequalities are salient. Salience is key because otherwise individuals will not make the connection between inequality on one issue and another, and even then, we do not necessarily expect individuals to be aware of this. This notably means that the recent finding that it is very common for individuals in many societies around the world to hold left-wing beliefs on some issues, and right-wing on others (Malka et al., 2019), does not conflict with the proposed theory. All individuals are not politically interested in a society, and even then there is “a major leap from some awareness that a controversy is in the air to opinion formation of a strength sufficient to register in an individual's own political behavior” (Converse, 2006 [1964], p. 60).

It is possible that acceptance of inequality theory could transpire through another causal pathway. For example, it may be the case that conflicts over whether to accept or reject specific inequalities are potent political divides, and people tend to label the resulting conflict as the L-R dimension, even though there is no general (in)egalitarianism that is linking different issues in the minds of the most ideological and politically interested individuals. This would mean that the L-R language is utilised to describe a divide over acceptance of inequality, but general egalitarianism is not a part of the explanation. The most important implication of this proposition is that it is not necessarily the old Left that will become the new Left in the new political landscape. In the previous example outlined earlier, where a society goes from having a conflict over the role of the majority religion to a conflict over class and economic policy, then it could be the case that the previous Right becomes the new Left, i.e., they switch places. Noteworthy, however, is that this type of ideological leap-frogging is very rare for political parties (for an example, see Miller and Schofield, 2003).³⁷

In summary, we do not know the factors at play at this part of the causal chain, but I suspect that general egalitarianism in the most politically interested and the most ideological individuals often plays a key role in deciding which side becomes the new Left/Right in the new political landscape when one inequality becomes less salient at the expense of a new inequality (but not necessarily every time). Future research ought to explore this part of the causal chain further, as this thesis is not able to test this aspect of

³⁷ The Democratic and Republican party in the United States switched places in the ideological landscape over approximately a century. The problem (for the discussion here), however, is that we do not know whether the L-R terminology was used before this shift took place.

acceptance of inequality theory. There are many different causal patterns that could be consistent with acceptance of inequality theory more broadly.

Why Would Acceptance of Inequality Explain Left-Right Politics?

I have thus far reviewed the potential explanations of L-R politics in the literature, and then proceeded to specify equality–inequality theory. In this section I attempt at suggesting some potential causes of L-R politics that are intrinsic to the theory. I am unable to test these in this thesis. They are not fundamental to the argument, and the theory tested throughout this dissertation may still hold even though these specific causes are not present. They are nonetheless reasonable and plausible explanations that deserve our attention and consideration.

I begin this discussion by going back a few steps, to the central contentions of the proposed theory. As I have outlined, the conflict between more or less inequality takes many different shapes (such as that over class, ethnicity, immigration, and religion), but can nevertheless be boiled down to the same question and be applied to many different political societies. Inglehart (1990, p. 293), arguing for the equality/inequality criterion, describes this process as follows:

“The utility of the Left-Right concept rests on the fact that through the years, and from one setting to another, the basic political conflicts quite often do reflect a polarization between those seeking social change and those opposing it. The concept is sufficiently general that as new issues arise, they usually can be fitted into the framework. The specific kinds of change may vary, but the question of more or less equality is usually involved, whether it be between social classes, nationalities, races, or sexes. Moreover, there is some continuity in which groups seek change. Generally, those who are least favorably situated in a given social order are most likely to support change. Hence over the years, certain social groups and political parties have come to be identified with either the Left or the Right.”

There is even room on the far-right for those who want social change in the direction of more inequality. As Inglehart (1990, p. 293) adds: “While conservative movements may be content to defend the status quo, reactionary ones seek change in the direction of

greater inequality between classes, nationalities, or other groups.” Why is this pattern so prevalent around the world in democratic politics? One obvious observation is that the pattern Inglehart describes relates to groups. Politics without groups seems almost impossible to imagine. Read any newspaper and you are almost certain to find discussions relating to groups and politics. Even for political questions that seemingly do not involve groups explicitly, such as how to tackle climate change or inflation, they nevertheless have impacts on different groups depending on the policies implemented to fight them. In other words, conversations about politics tend to cover the impacts of policies and political events on different groups, which is captured by the title of Lasswell’s (2018 [1936]) famous book “Politics: Who Gets What, When, How.” It is, however, not clear why these impacts (on different groups) are examined in political discussions, and why specific groups are considered. For example, why do some political conversations concern the impacts on different economic classes, but not on groups based on hair-length or sport interests?

It therefore makes sense that a dividing line between left and right would consequently also concern groups and group identities, but this is not specific to equality–inequality theory. Many important theories concern groups (such as the mentioned cleavage theory). The fact that equality–inequality theory refers to groups is thus not enough to motivate why the explanation would be powerful enough to be applicable to L-R politics throughout time and in varying contexts. Furthermore, acceptance of inequality theory does not demand that there are well-defined groups, as inequality can take place along spectrums as well (such as income distributions, see earlier discussion). We need another justification to explain why L-R politics has been so important in politics.

I suggest that there are potentially two key parts to this explanation. Inequalities are powerful dividing lines in politics because they combine two powerful forces: perceived relative group interests and relative group sympathy. Lipset and Rokkan (1967, p. 10) use the terms “interest-specific oppositions” and “ideological oppositions” to describe very similar forces in politics. An individual or an organization can support political positions out of self-interest or out of ideological concerns. Sometimes these can be intertwined and difficult to separate empirically, but this does not mean that they are not useful as concepts. As forces in politics, they are of crucial importance. Group-based interests are an important source of political power, while ideological concerns are a way

for both individuals and organizations to defect from these (perceived) group interests (or conversely justify them). Ideology in politics is therefore a way in which actors can be persuaded to act against their own group's perceived interests, as for example when rich individuals favour higher taxes for themselves, or when women oppose feminism. While Lipset and Rokkan discuss these as two broad categories (interest-specific oppositions and ideological oppositions), I believe that there are two potential factors within these categories that are useful for understanding the potency of inequality.

(1) *Perceived relative group interests form a powerful basis for politics.* Political actors need to convince large parts of the population to vote for them, but uniting many people is not a simple exercise. Many individuals are not very interested, nor very active in politics. Even among those that are politically active, it is difficult to unite large numbers of people who have varying policy ideals. The effect on groups is conversely simple to estimate (Converse, 2006 [1964]; Kinder, 2003), and creates easily interpretable political cues. The impact and effectiveness of a specific political policy on many areas may be difficult to understand, but understanding who benefits from it (in relation to others) is much easier. This could partially explain why it is that people can be mobilised along group lines.

Lipset and Rokkan (1967) demonstrate the power of cleavage politics, which can be characterized as a type of group conflict. Sociodemographic effects are often included in political analyses due to its powerful effect on voter behaviour (see for example Furnham and Cheng, 2019) and L-R self-placements (Freire, 2006a; Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976). This is not to say that sociodemographic effects are necessarily due to perceived relative group interests. Rather, it is one potential causal pathway. Sociodemographic effects may come from other causal mechanisms than perceived relative group interests, such as learned social roles, education, etc. Even if so, group divides are a powerful influence on politics, whichever causal pathway it happens through.

I discuss *perceived* relative group interests because I aim to avoid a reductionist reading of politics. As Sartori (1969, pp. 200-206) points out, whether voters vote according to class interest or whether parties represent any specific economic class' interest, is difficult if not impossible to verify. Even when group interests are conceptualised to apply to groups of any kind (ethnic, religious, etc., which Sartori, 1969, p. 207, finds more appealing), the representation of such interests is still difficult to

conceptualise. Firstly, how do we know what is in the interests of a group? Secondly, do individuals necessarily share interests simply because they belong to a socially constructed identity? Thirdly, what does it mean to politically represent these interests, and how do we know it when we see it? All these questions are important for political sociology (and difficult to answer as Sartori points out), but I want to avoid this discussion by simply stating that there is an inequality and political conflict on a dimension, that are perceived by members of that society. Individuals commonly perceive that certain groups are on the Left and the Right, and that each side care for the interests of different groups (see for example answers to survey questions on what is 'left' and 'right,' e.g., Laponce, 1981; Andreß et al., 2015). This does not mean that the Left or the Right actually advance those groups' interests, but only that they are perceived to do so (or ideologically want to). This conceptualisation is much less demanding than attempting to justify that group interests themselves can be/are represented.

(2) *Relative group sympathy provides a second important factor in politics.* If perceived group interests decided everything, then each election would be nothing more than counting the number of members of each group. The fact that people can vote for another group's perceived interests provides reason for a more meaningful political debate because it is possible to convince other voters. Why, however, would you vote for the perceived interests of another group? Why would a man vote for feminist policies? Why would a worker vote for free market policies? Before answering these questions, it should first be stated that there are other reasons for voting than just group interest or group sympathy. A voter might for example value specific values such as freedom or tradition. Nevertheless, as Converse (2006 [1964]) hypothesised, and later evidence demonstrates (Nelson and Kinder, 1996; Kinder, 2003; Chudy, 2021), group sympathy is a strong factor in determining political attitudes. Most voters are not driven by complex belief systems and instead may be motivated by relative group sympathy.

The group sympathy I am concerned with in this chapter is *relative* group sympathy, which is simply an individual's sympathy for one group compared to their sympathy for another.³⁸ To illustrate this concept, imagine someone opposing feminist policies. This person is likely to sympathize with both men and women (much like

³⁸ I am here concerned with relative group sympathy as it relates to politics. An individual can have sympathies in regards to different groups that has little to do with politics, and may not affect how they view the political divide between the same groups.

feminists do), but they likely differ from a feminist in how much they sympathize with the plight of women in comparison to men.³⁹ Group sympathy is for many individuals the last step in a long line of evaluating a lot of political information (that is often designed to lead to sympathy for different groups). If they have already made up their mind (they are already partisan), then they are likely to seek out information that strengthen their position. Relative group sympathy and relative group (self-)interest should in combination contribute to an individual's overall assessment of the inequality, and their acceptance/rejection of the inequality. This acceptance (/rejection) of a specific inequality is, as previously theorised, the key to why many individuals choose their place in the political landscape, their L-R self-placement, creating the core divide between the Left and the Right.

In summary, this chapter has detailed a novel version of acceptance of inequality theory, first by describing the criterion (/correlation) that can be used as a tool to predict L-R classifications, and subsequently by describing how political phenomena become left- or right-wing. Most importantly, I have argued that while it is common in many societies to have political disagreements over inequality, the specific inequality that is politically salient differs between societies. This means that the inequality that political actors in political competition are divided on varies. Crucially, we can predict which side will be the left and right side in each case – the Left will be the side that is less willing to accept the salient inequality. This assertion is tested empirically in the following chapters.

³⁹ This is not to say that this is necessarily the case. A man can have very little sympathy for women and a lot of sympathy for men, yet have no issue with feminist policies if he believes that they have no negative impact on men. Thus, there are other potential causal pathways leading to support for feminist policies, as already mentioned. Perceived relative group interests and relative group sympathy are simply two potential factors.

Chapter 4. Acceptance of Inequality Separating Left from Right? Evidence from Eastern and Western Europe

Abstract

Many scholars suggest that the left-right dimension can be simplified to a conflict over how much inequality should be accepted in society. Building on previous literature, this paper develops and tests a novel version of this framework. Attitudes towards different inequalities are measured separately (specifically in relation to class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity), unlike previous research that attempts to explain individuals' left-right self-placements with a single underlying attitude towards egalitarianism. Furthermore, I propose that the salience of the inequality matters, with more salient inequalities playing a greater role in shaping individuals' left-right self-placements. Using survey data from 27 European countries, multilevel regression models demonstrate that contrary to previous research, acceptance of inequality is consistently correlated with right-wing self-placements in Europe. Multilevel interaction effects demonstrate that this relationship is stronger in contexts where the inequality is more salient. These findings provide strong evidence for the equality–inequality framework, contrary to previous research that found the framework not to be applicable in Eastern Europe.

Introduction

An intriguing conundrum for researchers of left-right (L-R) politics has been the political landscapes of the Czech Republic and Hungary in 2006. It appears that what was considered left-wing in the Czech Republic was considered right-wing in Hungary. In the 2006 Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Hooghe et al., 2010), parties on the Left in Hungary were considered more socially progressive, but also more economically right-wing, compared to parties on the Right. However, the opposite was true in the Czech Republic, where left-wing parties were more economically leftist and socially conservative than their right-wing counterparts. Even though both countries share a large portion of their recent history as part of the communist bloc in Europe, their L-R scales in 2006 were thus in large part the reverse of each other. A seemingly reasonable conclusion to these

puzzling examples would be that what is considered *left* and *right* in different countries is entirely context dependent.

This stands in stark contrast to attempts at finding a universal explanation for L-R classifications. Many theorists have tried to find a stable element of L-R competition that is not context dependent – a substantive meaning that can travel across time and space. Arguably the most prominent of such explanations is the suggestion that *acceptance of inequality* (or the equality–inequality criterion) is the core dimension of the L-R distinction, defined in different terms by different authors (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990; Bobbio, 1996; Lukes, 2003). The Czech and Hungarian cases would seemingly weaken this claim because it poses an impossible situation: how can a single criterion explain L-R competition when what is *left* in one country is *right* in another? Another troubling finding for the equality–inequality criterion is that several studies find that acceptance of inequality is correlated with right-wing self-placement in Western Europe, but not in Eastern Europe (Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Aspelund et al., 2013). This would mean that attitudes towards inequality can only explain L-R self-placements in Western Europe, and that the explanation is at best region-specific. L-R party competition in Eastern Europe provides further doubt for the equality–inequality criterion. There is a positive correlation between parties being socially conservative and economically leftist in some countries in Eastern Europe (e.g., Czech Republic), while social conservatism is consistently linked to right-wing economic policy in party politics in Western Europe (Rovny and Edwards, 2012). All this indicates that L-R politics in Eastern Europe is fundamentally different from Western Europe, and that equality/inequality is not a suitable criterion for separating left from right in all of Europe.

This paper, contrary to the established view, finds evidence supporting the equality–inequality criterion in both Eastern and Western Europe. Key to this finding is that previous research has overlooked two important aspects that are considered in this paper: (1) citizens' attitudes towards different inequalities are more likely to explain L-R self-placements than an underlying general level of egalitarianism, and (2) attitudes towards an inequality should only explain voters L-R self-placements if the specific inequality is important/salient in that political context. Attitudes towards inequalities that are not politicized cannot be expected to correlate with L-R self-placements in the expected direction, because it is then unlikely that individuals choose their L-R self-placement because of those inequalities. This is especially important to consider in

Eastern Europe where there is a “structured diversity” of issue salience (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009), more so than in Western Europe.

To re-examine the equality–inequality distinction in Europe with the divergence of issue salience in mind, I study voters’ attitudes towards several different inequalities. Drawing on arguments made by MacIver (1947, p. 216), Lipset et al. (1954), Inglehart (1990, p. 293), Bobbio (1996) and Lukes (2003), I utilise four different instances of societal inequalities – rich/poor, men/women, heterosexual/homosexual individuals, and white citizens/poor immigrants or ethnic minorities. Since this paper argues that different inequalities are likely to be the reason for individuals’ L-R choice in different political contexts, there is a clear observable implication of the novel version of the equality–inequality framework developed in this paper: acceptance of each inequality ought to predict right-wing orientations, dependent on how politicized the particular inequality is in that context. For example, where immigration is a highly salient issue, we should expect those who are more against immigration (and thus more accepting of the inequality between immigrants and non-immigrants) to be more likely to place themselves on the right of the left-right spectrum, whereas those who are pro-immigration will be more likely to place themselves to the left. High salience of an inequality should thus make it more predictable which side takes which position on the issue (right-wing individuals should be more accepting of the inequality).

Using survey data from the European Social Survey (ESS) for 27 countries from 2008 and 2016, I show that acceptance of inequality predicts right-wing self-placements in both Western and Eastern Europe in contrast to previous research. I subsequently demonstrate the importance of considering political salience when examining this relationship for three of the four inequalities (class, immigration, and sexuality), by utilising multilevel models and interaction effects between the country-level and the individual-level variables. The paper finds that higher salience of an inequality at the country-level is associated with a stronger relationship between right-wing self-placements and acceptance of that inequality at the individual level. These findings demonstrate that the equality–inequality criterion is indeed applicable to Eastern Europe, in contrast to earlier research. The main contribution of this paper is thus to develop a novel and theoretically stronger version of the equality–inequality framework, and present strong evidence in favour of it underpinning the substantive content of L-R self-placements (and consequently the L-R dimension) in different contexts.

Can a Single Criterion Explain the Left-Right Dimension in Europe?

Jost (2006, p. 654) describes the L-R dimension as “the single most useful and parsimonious way to classify political attitudes for more than 200 years.” It is all the more surprising then that there is no consensus as to what the L-R dimension actually entails. Or to be more specific, whether the dimension has any substantive meaning that can travel across time and space. Even though this consensus is lacking, political scientists frequently classify many phenomena and entities as *left* or *right* (such as ideologies and policies) and use the L-R dimension to measure the ideological position of parties and voters (e.g., Klingemann et al., 1994; Dalton et al., 2011; Dalton and McAllister, 2015; Cunningham and Elkink, 2018). Understanding why someone is placed to the left or right in this ideological space would be of utmost importance to political scientists as it would improve measurement validity, as well as to voters since a better understanding of what separates left from right could be useful when voting.

Multiple authors have attempted to explain what separates left from right by proposing a criterion (i.e., a guiding principle) that can explain the underlying divide (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Rokeach, 1973; Inglehart and Klingemann, 1976; Laponce, 1981; Silverman, 1985; Inglehart, 1990; Bobbio, 1996; Lukes, 2003; Jost et al., 2003b; Noël and Thérien, 2008; Joshi, 2021). Scholars are divided on this subject, proposing different explanations. The equality–inequality criterion provides an instructive example of how there could be a central criterion for L-R competition. Bobbio (1996, p. 61) defines a policy proposal that includes (re)distribution of something that individuals value (e.g., money, power, status) as more egalitarian if more individuals are included in the redistribution. Additionally, the more that is redistributed the more egalitarian the policy is. Finally, redistribution based on need is more egalitarian than merit-based redistribution, which in turn is more egalitarian than redistribution based on rank. Consider the implication of this framework on two important political issues in European politics: support for refugee immigration and economic redistribution. These can be understood to be part of two different dimensions (the socio-economic and immigration dimension), yet support for both positions is often considered to be *more left* than right in Western Europe (Lesschaeve, 2017). From Bobbio’s point of view, both political views seek more equality than their counterparts (anti-immigration and capitalist views). Thus, there is a common denominator that explains their left-wing classification.

Bobbio's proposed distinction is only one in a long tradition of authors proposing similar explanations of the L-R divide (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990; Lukes, 2003). The general agreement is that the Left overall is more in favour of change in an egalitarian direction than the Right. There are different nuances between these authors' arguments, but they can be understood as complementary. MacIver (1947, p. 216) and Lipset et al. (1954) emphasise the fact that underprivileged groups, either economically or with respect to social status, tend to support the Left regardless of context. Building upon this work Inglehart notably changes the focus⁴⁰ from sociodemographic effects to individuals' attitudes: "The core meaning of the L-R dimension, we believe, is whether one supports or opposes social change in an egalitarian direction [...]. While conservative movements may be content to defend the status quo, reactionary ones seek change in the direction of greater inequality between classes, nationalities, or other groups" (Inglehart, 1990, p. 293). These inequalities are often based on cleavages (e.g., class, see Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), but can also be based on inequalities between groups that are not necessarily classified as cleavages (e.g., sexuality).

However, recent research provides reasons for some scepticism of any universal explanation of the L-R dimension (including the equality–inequality distinction). Some researchers question whether the L-R dimension has the same meaning for citizens in different countries in Europe, which would mean that the L-R dimension cannot be used in cross-country comparisons, at least not without taking these differences into account (Zuelli and Scholz, 2019). While there may be differences in how individuals in various countries understand the L-R terminology, such differences do not contradict the idea of a criterion and in particular the equality–inequality criterion. Rather, a criterion can help explain many of these counter-intuitive patterns. Inglehart (1990, p. 293) argues that the equality–inequality criterion is flexible enough that it can be applied to different inequalities depending on the society. Joshi (2021) similarly argues that different domains ought to be treated separately when assessing which policy is more or less egalitarian (although Joshi contends that the difference between left and right is about inequality of power, rather than as inequality is defined here). I build on this by arguing that (1) different individuals may base their choice of where to be in the political landscape (for

⁴⁰ As noted by Jou (2011, p. 36).

example which side they choose when voting) on different inequalities. This is important to consider when predicting L-R self-placements given that citizens in representative democracies have different attitudes towards different inequalities. Additionally, (2) the salience of political issues (i.e., the prominence/importance of issue dimensions in the public debate) varies between countries, and these variations must be taken into account when examining the correlations between attitudes towards different inequalities and individual L-R self-placements because they change the meaning of the L-R language in that context. When many individuals in a society make their L-R choice due to their position on economic issues, then we would expect that the meaning of the L-R language at the national level should concern economic issues. However, most citizens in another society may choose between left- and right-wing politics due to an ethnic divide, and the meaning of the L-R language should instead correspondingly be tied to ethnic politics.

For example, L-R politics might be more about economic inequality in Portugal, while it is more related to the immigration dimension in Austria, but it can nevertheless be explained by the equality–inequality criterion in both instances (the Right is more accepting of the inequality in each case). The main difference between Austria and Portugal lies in the difference in salience of political issue dimensions. A similar logic can be applied to citizens of the same country. For instance, Caughey et al. (2019, p. 677) state that (citing Dalton, 2010, p. 105), a blue-collar worker in Germany may think of social welfare policies when thinking of the Left, while a college student in Germany may think of multiculturalism. Welfare policies relate to the economic dimension much like multiculturalism in Germany relates to the immigration dimension. As discussed earlier, the fact that policies in support of immigrants and the poor are left-wing in Germany is in accordance with the equality–inequality criterion. Thus, the two German individuals are associating different issues with the L-R dimension, yet the equality–inequality criterion can potentially explain the L-R direction in both cases. The same logic applies to explaining L-R self-placements. A German individual might for example favour less immigration but more feminism, and these preferences should have diverging effects on the individual's L-R self-placement according to the equality–inequality criterion. The first preference should pull the individual to the right while the latter to the left (given that both issues are politically salient in Germany).

Key here is thus to separate between attitudes towards different inequalities. This can reconcile the equality–inequality explanation and the contemporary debate on

multidimensional voter preferences. Research shows that voters regularly mix left-wing attitudes on some dimensions with right-wing attitudes on others (Malka et al., 2019; Lefkofridi et al., 2014, p. 68). We therefore must consider that an underlying (in)egalitarianism is not necessarily creating consistent left- or right-wing issue attitudes (and accompanying L-R self-placements) for many individuals, at least at the voter-level. This is not to say that there could not be an underlying egalitarianism at work (at least for some voters and political elites), only that (1) many individuals have different attitudes towards different inequalities (i.e., are not consistently egalitarian) and (2) are more likely to choose whether to vote for the Left or the Right depending on their attitudes towards specific inequalities rather than how they view inequality as a more abstract concept. When testing whether acceptance of inequality predicts L-R self-placements at the voter level, it is therefore more appropriate to examine attitudes towards different inequalities rather than individuals' level of egalitarianism.

Dividing the more general concept *acceptance of inequality* into attitudes towards different inequalities is especially important when analysing L-R self-placements in Eastern and Western Europe simultaneously. There are clear differences in issue salience between countries in Eastern Europe (Rohrschneider and Whitefield, 2009) as well as between the two regions, and studies highlight that L-R competition manifests itself very differently in Eastern Europe compared to Western Europe. The Right in Poland and Hungary for example have been found to increase government spending more than the Left (Tavits and Letki, 2009). This relationship is commonly assumed to be the opposite in Western representative democracies. Furthermore, researchers find that social conservatism (which is often connected to resistance to egalitarian progressive change) is associated with the West European Right, but with the Left in many countries in Eastern Europe (Rovny and Edwards, 2012, p. 57).

There is some previous research testing the equality–inequality distinction, although not as the framework is specified in this paper. Evans et al. (1996) find that egalitarian attitudes predict left-wing self-placements in the British electorate. Jost et al. (2003b) conduct a meta-analysis of the political psychology literature in which they argue that conservatism is at its core about resistance to change and acceptance of inequality (see also Jost et al., 2003a; Jost et al., 2009). Previous studies find however that individuals' acceptance of inequality is only correlated with right-wing self-placements in Western Europe, but not in Eastern Europe (Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Aspelund et al.,

2013). Yet it is not clear whether the equality–inequality explanation really fails to hold in both regions. Both Thorisdottir et al. (2007) and Aspelund et al. (2013) measure attitudes towards inequality (with data from the European Social Survey in 2002, 2006 and 2008 respectively) through the variable: “He[/she] thinks that it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. He[/she] believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life,” which measures *equality of opportunity*. This would imply that the most left-wing position (and far-left ideologies) is the most concerned with equalising opportunities. The measurement of attitudes towards inequality in this paper instead concerns support for change in an egalitarian direction in regard to salient inequalities between groups, where one group has overall better outcomes than the other group. The difference between these two approaches means that a re-examination might deliver different results. The general correlation hypothesised by the equality–inequality framework (H1) and the related interaction effect (H2) are therefore examined in this paper, succinctly formulated, as follows:

H1: Higher acceptance of inequality is correlated with right-wing self-placements.

H2: The relationship between acceptance of an inequality and right-wing self-placements is stronger when the salience of that inequality is higher.

The equality–inequality framework stands against the empty vessels explanation (Sartori, 1976, p. 335), which emphasises that citizens understand the terms in varying ways depending on their context and social background and that there consequently is no one criterion that can separate between left and right in different contexts. In addition, there are multiple other competing explanations for what separates left from right in politics that can be found in the literature: secularism–religiosity (Laponce, 1981), universalism–particularism (Silverman, 1985), for–against government intervention in the economy,⁴¹ change–resistance to change (Jost et al., 2003b) and diffusion–concentration of power

⁴¹ This is a popular notion seemingly based on the work of Downs, even though Downs (1957, p. 116) did not propose this as a universal criterion. Few, if any, authors have proposed this as a universal criterion separating left from right, but the idea remains popular nevertheless and is often discussed in the political science literature as a traditional or common element of L-R competition, see for example De Vries et al. (2013, p. 228).

(Joshi, 2021).⁴² Additional analyses in the appendix control for the most popular alternative explanations when testing the equality–inequality criterion. Future research will benefit from testing these competing frameworks further.

Data and Variables

To test the hypotheses, this paper examines whether respondents' L-R self-placements in different countries can be explained by attitudes towards salient inequalities, using data from the ESS from 2008 and 2016. The ESS is a cross-national survey that enables this paper to control for many intervening variables, and the two survey years are selected due to the availability of survey items measuring the independent variables. The individual survey answers are analysed using multilevel models with observations hierarchically structured, i.e., survey respondents (level 1) are located in different countries (level 2). Random intercepts for each country are employed, as well as random slopes for certain variables. All countries were included in the sample as long as they had been democratic for at least ten years at the time of the survey (using scores from the Polity IV index, see Marshall et al., 2014), because democratic experience is often assumed to help individuals develop consistent L-R self-placements and associations, see Thorisdottir et al. (2007, p. 183).

The dependent variable is *L-R Self-Placement* measured on an eleven-point scale, and there are four independent variables that measure different attitudes regarding change in an egalitarian direction. It is logical (from the perspective of the cited authors proposing the equality–inequality criterion) to treat an individual's L-R self-placement as being explained by their attitudes towards specific group inequalities. However, L-R self-placements can also in some cases conversely cause issue attitudes and this paper therefore mostly discusses these relationships as correlations (see Jaeger, 2008, for a discussion on the problem of disentangling these causal effects).

Attitudes towards inequality are measured with four societal inequalities that can be characterised as cleavages or group divides, but these four inequalities are not

⁴² Laponce and Jost et al. argue that equality–inequality also distinguishes between left and right, in addition to their own separate explanations, demonstrating the pervasiveness of the equality–inequality distinction. Additionally, Noël and Thérien similarly argue that the L-R dimension ought to be understood as a clash over equality. However, Noël and Thérien contend that the Left and the Right both value equality, but simply have different conceptions of the meaning of equality (Noël and Thérien, 2008).

exhaustive of the entire universe of different potential inequalities. These dimensions are however useful for this examination because contemporary research demonstrates that they are important/salient issue dimensions in Europe (Caughey et al., 2019). The first group conflict is the class cleavage. This is operationalised with the item *Economic Inequality*, measured in the ESS data with three statements, where respondents are asked to state their level of agreement: “Large differences in income acceptable to reward talents and efforts,” “For fair society, differences in standard of living should be small” and “Government should reduce differences in income levels.” The four independent variables are all operationalised by using the available and suitable items. This means that if more survey items are available, measuring the same concept, then they are added to construct the whole variable in that data set. In that sense, the independent variables are not always measuring the same underlying attitude, but function as measurements of individuals’ general level of hostility to/acceptance of inequality regarding each group conflict/cleavage.

The second inequality concerns ethnic minorities/poor immigrants compared to white citizens. The variable *Immigration/Ethnic Inequality* is measured in the ESS data with two items: “Allow many/few immigrants of different race/ethnic group from majority” and “Allow many/few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe.” Both policies are changes in an egalitarian direction – these immigrants have lesser outcomes than the current citizens and are seeking to improve their conditions. The last two inequalities are between women and men, and homosexual compared to heterosexual individuals. Like the class cleavage, each of these group conflicts have two groups that have differences in overall outcomes. Having better outcomes is defined by what people value, for example money, power, and status. The less fortunate group has lesser outcomes on average and has often historically been oppressed (e.g., through legal restrictions that made it impossible for women to vote, or for same-sex couples to marry).

The variable *Intolerance of Homosexuality* is measured with the items “Gays and lesbians free to live life as they wish,” “Gay and lesbian couples right to adopt children” and “Ashamed if close family member gay or lesbian” (the latter two are not in the 2008 data). The former two items are policy prescriptions. If these policies are not in place, then supporting them constitutes favouring change in an egalitarian direction. This is true even if the policy has no implication for heterosexual individuals since (in)equality is a relative concept. If these policies are in place (dependent on the specific country), then

opposing them would constitute favouring change in an inegalitarian direction. “Ashamed if close family member gay or lesbian” is not measuring any specific policy, but rather is aimed at measuring homophobia and prejudice. It is possible to be homophobic on a personal level yet favour policies in a more egalitarian direction, such as gay rights (which would result in measurement error). Therefore, this attitude is considered a proxy measurement rather than a direct measurement of support for change in an egalitarian direction. As a robustness check, the analysis in a subsequent model uses only “Gays and lesbians free to live life as they wish” (and using only “Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce” for the *Anti-Feminist Attitude* variable), resulting in no changes to the conclusion of this paper (see Fig. A.6 and A.7 in the appendix).

The last independent variable is *Anti-Feminist Attitude*, which is measured with one item in the ESS 2016 data: “Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce.” This is a policy description which indicates a change in an inegalitarian direction (for countries where this is not the case). For the ESS 2008 data, the survey item “Women should be prepared to cut down on paid work for sake of family” is also added to the variable. This is not a policy prescription and is therefore (similarly to the attitudinal item measuring homophobia) used as a proxy to measure how much the respondent favours change in an egalitarian or inegalitarian direction between men and women. As stated in the previous paragraph, an additional analysis only using “Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce” produces only minor changes to the results (see appendix).

When explaining L-R self-placements of individuals, Inglehart and Klingemann (1976) suggest three predictors: partisanship, social characteristics (sociodemographic variables) and ideology. Thus, L-R self-placements ought to be a function of these three (coupled with other less important causes). While it is possible to control for sociodemographic variables, it is very difficult to separate an individual’s party choice and an individual’s ideology as these are inextricably linked (see Mavrogordatos, 1987, p. 339). Party choice is therefore not controlled for. However, a separate analysis is conducted where partisanship is controlled for in the appendix, and the results are very similar to those presented in the main paper. Eight different sociodemographic control variables are however included in the analyses, mimicking previous literature on the topic: *Female*, *Age*, *Household Income* (Thorisdottir et al., 2007), as well as other standard control variables such as *Education Level*, *Union Member*, *Religiosity*, *Rural*,

Ethnic Minority and dichotomous variables for different religious denominations. The ESS data also allows the control of four psychological variables: *Traditionalism*, *Rule-Following*, *Need for Security* and *Openness to Experience*. These are psychological factors that might affect an individual's L-R position, as well as correlating with an individual's acceptance of inequality (see also Jost et al., 2003b; Thorisdottir et al., 2007). One last control variable is added: *More EU Integration*, which reflects attitudes towards the EU.

The data from the ESS does not contain some important additional control variables. Specifically, there is no variable measuring attitudes towards government intervention in the economy, freedom, and resistance to change, which have been linked to both ideological orientation and acceptance of inequality in previous literature (Rokeach, 1973; Downs, 1957; Lipset et al., 1954; Jost et al., 2003b). Separate analyses are conducted (see appendix) to be able to control for these variables, using data from the World Value Survey (WVS) as well as the European Values Study (EVS). The analyses are overall very similar to the ESS analysis. The main difference is the additional three extra variables just outlined, as well as not including controls for the psychological variables *Traditionalism*, *Rule-Following*, *Need for Security* and *Openness to Experience*. The WVS and EVS analyses overall demonstrate the same results for the independent variables as the analysis using the ESS data.

In a second step of the analysis of the ESS data, I test whether the political salience of an issue is associated with a strengthened relationship between attitudes toward inequalities and L-R self-placements (an interaction effect), as stated by H2. To this end I employ data from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) to measure the average salience of economic issues and immigration/multiculturalism in available manifestos ten years leading up to the ESS survey (Volkens et al., 2020). The specific selection of manifesto items can be found in the appendix. Country-level salience is measured as the average percentage of coded manifestos in a country that contained the different dimensions (economic and immigration/multiculturalism respectively). Party manifesto salience scores are weighted by the party's vote share in the corresponding parliamentary election. Unfortunately, neither gender nor same-sex political salience can be measured using the CMP. The Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) likewise has no measurement of the salience of gender politics, but contains a variable where experts were asked to assess the salience of "social lifestyle, (e.g. homosexuality)" for each party (Polk et al., 2017),

and I use this item in my analysis. Stecker and Tausendpfund (2016) use this CHES item in their analysis and argue that it measures the same dimension at the party level as the ESS survey item “Gays and lesbians free to live life as they wish” measures at the individual level. The closest previous CHES data available for each ESS survey is utilised to measure the salience of same-sex politics at the country level (see more detailed information on this measurement in the appendix).

Analysis and Results

The variables are analysed in multilevel regression models with different data sets separated. The independent variables are standardised in all models (in the paper and appendix) to facilitate comparison (Table A.2 and A.3 in the appendix display descriptive statistics). The ESS provides data for 27 countries (11 in Eastern Europe, 16 in Western Europe). The four independent variables have random slopes in the multilevel models as they are expected to differ by country. *More EU Integration* also has a random slope since its correlation with *L-R Self-Placement* substantively varies in different countries (Van Elsas et al., 2016). The multilevel regression model coefficients can be found in Table A.4 in the appendix.

The expectation of the equality–inequality framework is that different inequality dimensions will have an impact on L-R self-placements in different contexts. Fig. 4.1 and 4.2 display the coefficients and their 95% confidence intervals in the multilevel models for the four independent variables *Economic Inequality*, *Anti-Feminist Attitude*, *Intolerance of Homosexuality*, and *Immigration/Ethnic Inequality*, for each of the countries in the ESS data. The overall results demonstrate strong support for the equality–inequality criterion. Acceptance of inequality in at least one of the four areas correlates with right-wing orientation in all countries. In some countries, all four variables have significant positive correlations with *L-R Self-Placement* (such as the Netherlands and Croatia).

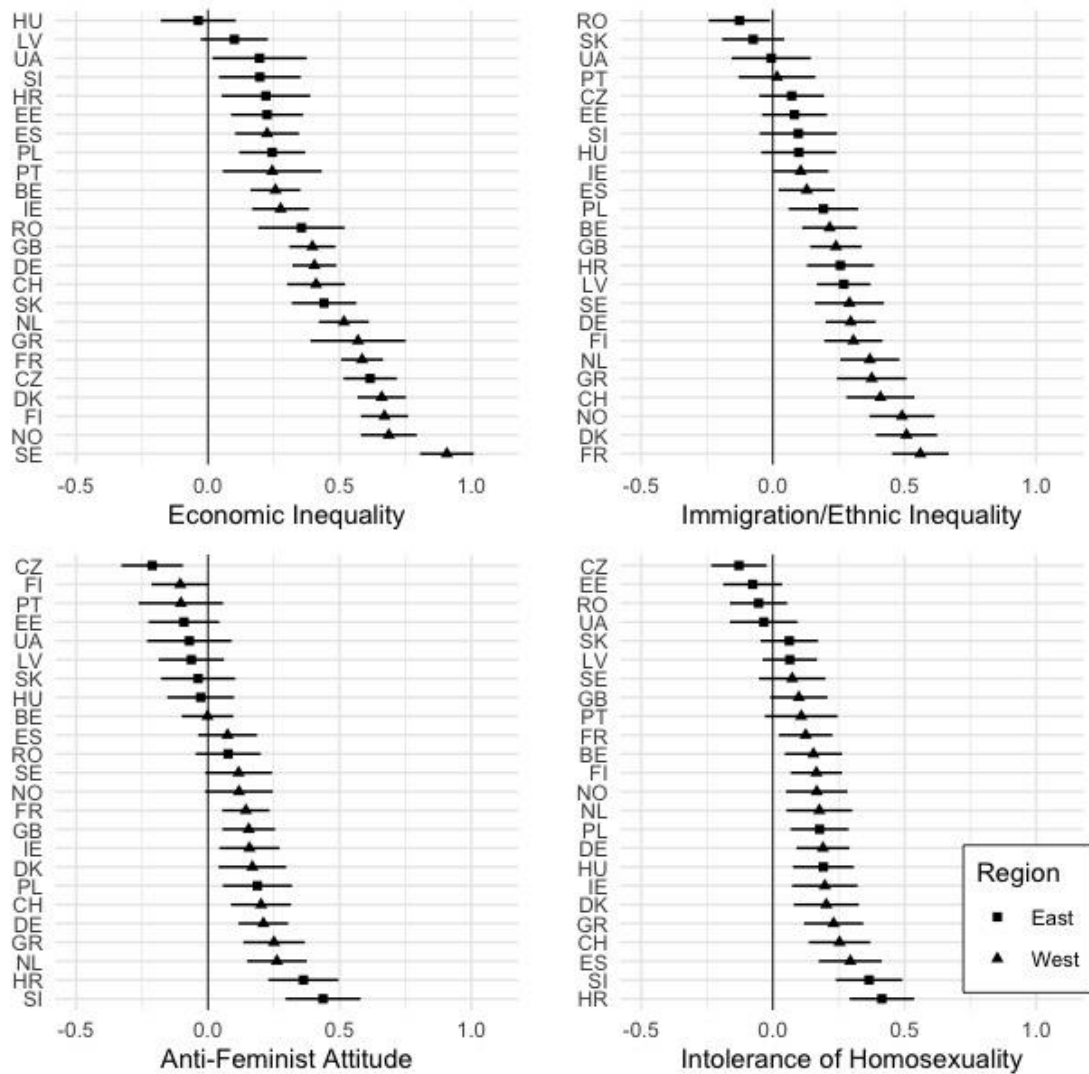


Fig. 4.1. Independent Variable Coefficients by Country – ESS 2008

Note: Multilevel regression models explaining left-right self-placements. The figure displays coefficients and 95% confidence intervals by country.

Overall, the independent variables are in almost every country either positively significant or non-significant. However, *Anti-Feminist Attitude* and *Intolerance of Homosexuality* have rather weak effects (and many times non-significant). Instead, *Economic Inequality* and *Immigration/Ethnic Inequality* have stronger correlations with L-R self-placements in most countries, which is expected due to the higher levels of salience of these issues. This seems to be the case especially in later years, as the *Immigration/Ethnic Inequality* coefficients are stronger in 2016 compared to 2008. This pattern corresponds well with the trend of increased salience of immigration as a political issue in recent years (e.g., De Vries et al., 2013).

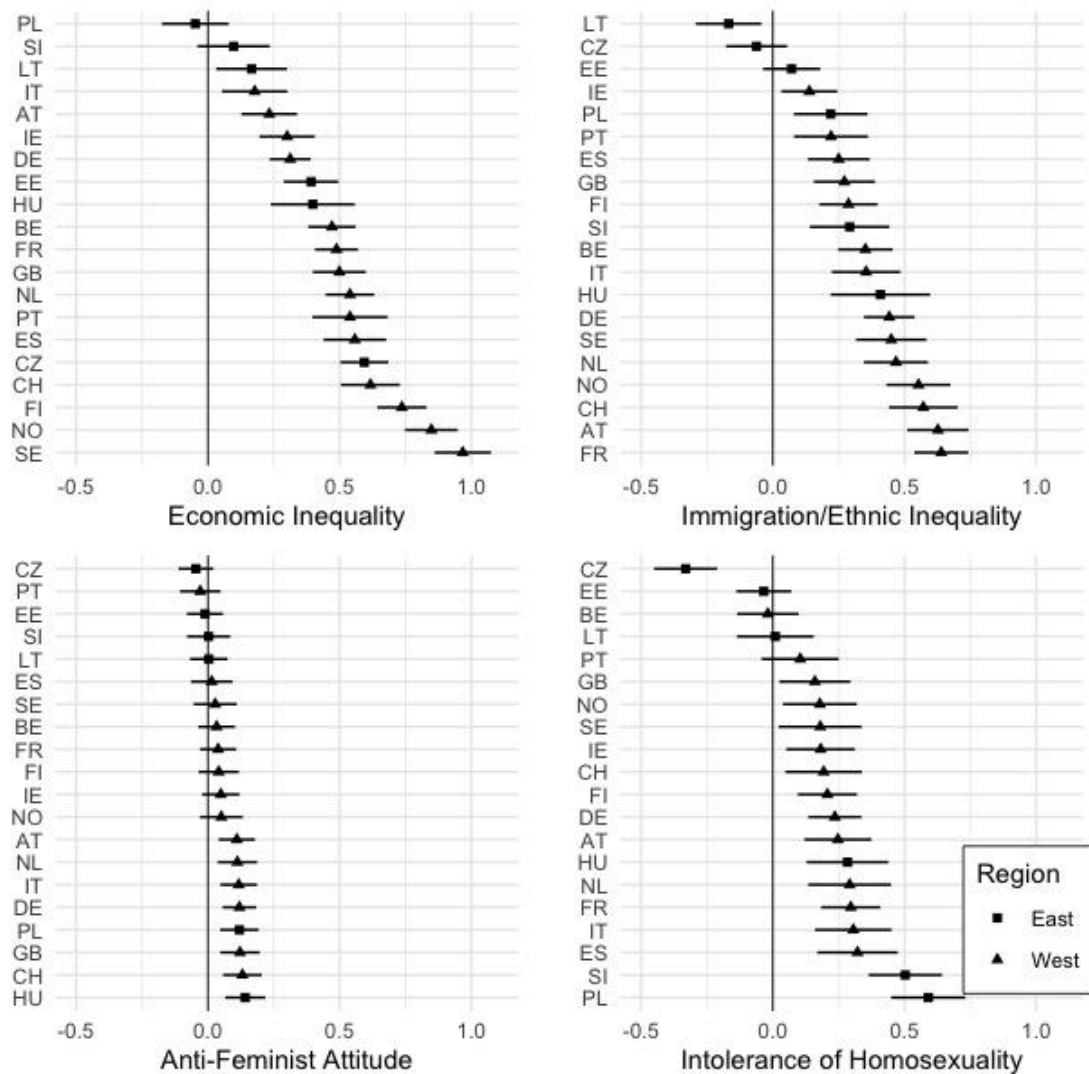


Fig. 4.2. Independent Variable Coefficients by Country – ESS 2016

Note: Multilevel regression models explaining left-right self-placements. The figure displays coefficients and 95% confidence intervals by country.

Importantly, similar patterns are found for East European countries as for West European countries, in contrast to previous studies on the same topic that found no link between acceptance of inequality and L-R self-placements in Eastern Europe (Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Aspelund et al., 2013). In Western Europe most coefficients are significantly positive in most countries, so the main difference between different countries is the size of the coefficients. In Eastern Europe, however, there is a clearer distinction between different countries, mainly because more coefficients do not reach statistical significance. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Slovakia, and Romania have rather strong coefficients on

the economic dimension, but not as strong for the other issue dimensions. Latvia and Hungary instead have stronger coefficients on the immigrant/ethnic inequality dimension, compared to their coefficients for *Economic Inequality*. Conversely, the strongest significant coefficients for Poland, Croatia and Slovenia are the ones for attitudes towards gender and sexuality.⁴³ This is an indication of that different political conflicts are important in different countries. H2 states that issue salience can help explain these different patterns. This claim is important for the equality–inequality framework because it creates an observable prediction: the link between acceptance of a specific inequality and right-wing self-placements should be stronger in contexts where that inequality is salient. This paper tests this prediction by including the country-level salience of each issue in the multilevel models. The salience measures are mean centred (non-mean-centred initial salience data is available in the appendix) because each interaction effect is then estimated at the mean-level of salience for the other issues. All interaction effects are positive and statistically significant (see tables for both years in the appendix). Fig. 4.3 shows the interaction effects between country-level issue salience and attitudes towards that specific inequality in 2008 and 2016 (the multilevel models can be found in Table A.15 in the appendix). The two-way interactions are presented in Fig. 4.3 by plotting the estimated coefficients of acceptance of inequality, conditional on issue salience, where the shaded areas indicate the 95% confidence intervals (Solt and Hu, 2021).⁴⁴ The country-level salience observations are displayed below each graph in the form of histograms (Solt and Hu, 2021; Berry et al., 2012, p. 668). The results demonstrate that the positive correlation between acceptance of a specific inequality and right-wing self-placements is stronger when the issue itself is more salient. In most cases, the estimated coefficients are not significant at very low levels of issue salience, in line with our expectations. Altogether, this provides strong evidence for the equality–

⁴³ One possible reason for the strength of the correlation between attitudes toward social issues and L-R self-placements, is the influence of religion in shaping L-R politics in some European countries (see for example Jou, 2010a).

⁴⁴ As can be seen in Fig. 4.3, the y-axis is the same for each plot, but not the x-axis. Salience of economic issues and immigration are measured differently compared to the salience of social lifestyle, as explained in the methodology section, meaning that the scales are not comparable. See exact operationalisations in the appendix.

inequality criterion because high levels of issue salience are associated with issue attitudes more clearly conforming to the expectations of the equality–inequality criterion.

There is also literature on the salience of different political divides and cleavages in individual countries that provides further support for the results in the multilevel models. Denmark for example (only in the 2008 data) has the second highest correlation between attitudes towards immigration/ethnic minorities and L-R self-placements, which corresponds well with the fact that the issue of immigration is more important for party competition in Denmark compared to many other European countries (Green-Pedersen and Otjes, 2019). This also helps explain the far-right classification of the Danish People's party who's economic policies are often centrist (Christiansen, 2016), and therefore cannot alone explain the far-right classification of the party. The cleavage literature can further help explain some of the weaker cases for the hypotheses. In particular, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, and Romania produce the weakest results in Fig 4.1 and 4.2, with a few significant negative coefficients. These weaker cases provide important insights, best exemplified by the Czech Republic. The economic dimension is strongly positively correlated (approximately 0.5), while attitudes towards homosexual individuals in 2008 and 2016, as well as women in 2008, are negatively correlated with L-R self-placements. These coefficients suggest that support for equality on the socio-cultural dimension in the Czech Republic is correlated (albeit weakly) with right-wing self-placements. Yet the same results are not found (see Table A.11) in one of the additional analyses, in which data from the European Values Study (EVS) from 1999 is used (see appendix). The only consistent effect in the Czech Republic in the EVS and ESS data (as well as when controlling for partisanship) is the positive coefficient for *Economic Inequality* (the same is true for Lithuania). The *Economic Inequality* coefficient also has a much stronger relationship with L-R politics than the socio-cultural variables. In fact, the Czech Republic has the strongest coefficient for economic inequality of all post-communist countries in both 2008 and 2016. The strength of the class cleavage is also in line with the literature on politics in the Czech Republic (Hloušek and Kopeček, 2008). The same can be said for Lithuania (Jurkynas, 2004) and Romania (Raymond, 2014, p. 296), where the economic cleavage has also been particularly salient (and important for the L-R dimension) according to previous research. The Czech Republic, Romania, and Lithuania thus partially conform to the theoretical framework, albeit as weaker cases since the effect of attitudes towards social (and immigration) issues

are expected to be non-significant and not slightly negative when the economic dimension is dominant (at the expense of social issues).

The fact that the main dimension of politics in the Czech Republic has been the class cleavage also explains the puzzling examples of Hungary and the Czech Republic in 2006 that were discussed in the introduction. Left-wing parties in the Czech Republic were more socially conservative than those on the Right in the Czech Republic (according to the CHES experts), but this is consistent with the equality–inequality criterion given that the main dimension (class) aligns with the equality–inequality explanation. Similarly, the fact that right-wing parties in Hungary were perceived to be more left-wing on economic issues in 2006 (and the fact that the *Economic Inequality* coefficient for 2008 in this study is not significant) does not contradict the equality–inequality explanation. Class has had “little bearing on political divisions” and “the relevant dimension of substantive political conflict in Hungary is cultural” (Vegetti, 2019, p. 78), in line with the positive coefficients for the non-economic independent variables in this paper. Nevertheless, it is unclear which lines of conflict (or other factors) best explain Hungarian L-R politics. A more in-depth analysis of Hungary is necessary to disentangle which inequalities may be important to explain L-R politics there.

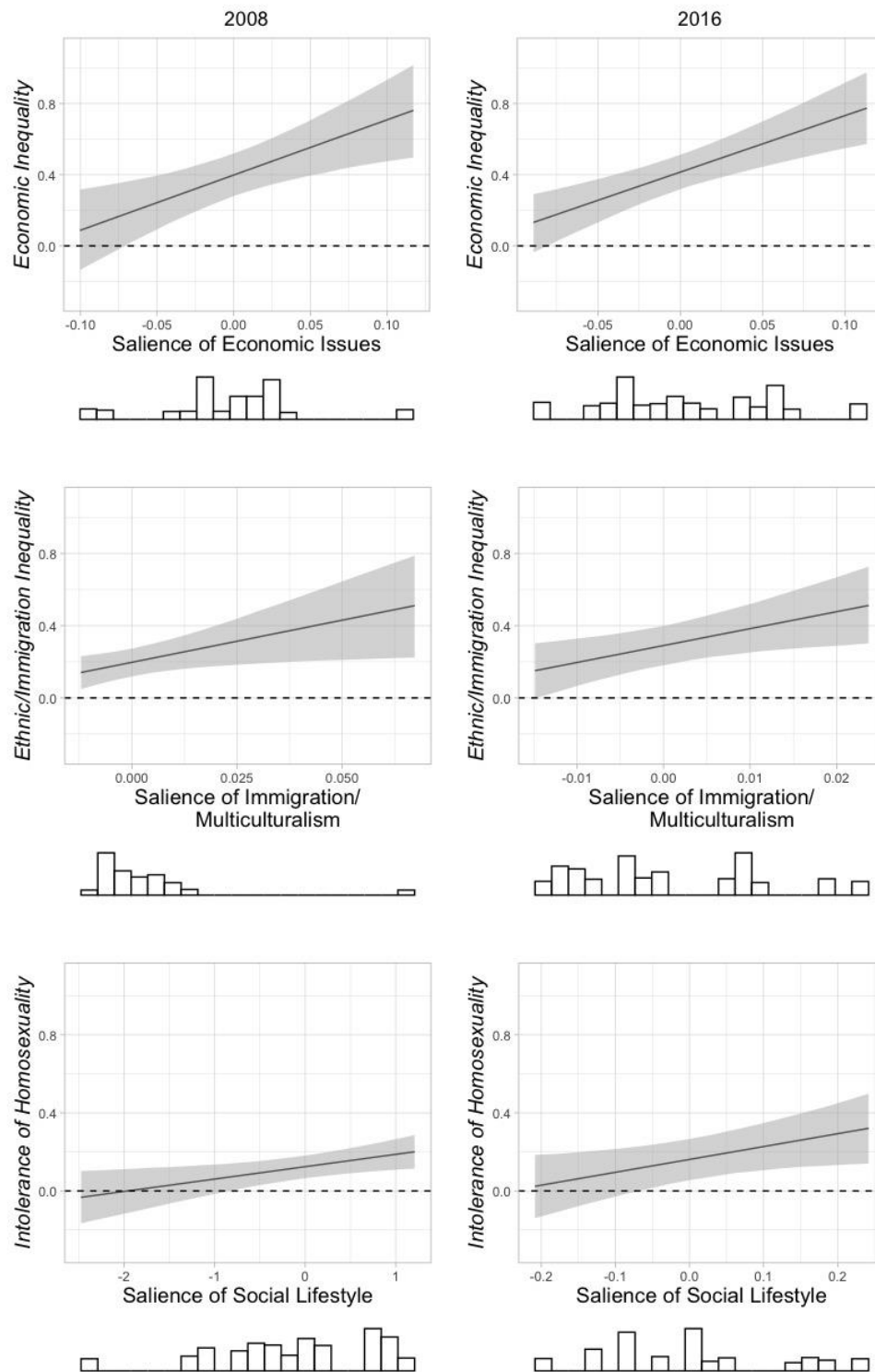


Fig. 4.3. Estimated Coefficients of Acceptance of Inequality Explaining L-R Self-Placements, Conditional on Issue Salience

Note: Multilevel regression models explaining left-right self-placements using ESS data (2008 and 2016), with interaction effects between survey respondents' acceptance of different inequalities (level 1) and country-level salience (level 2). Shaded areas indicate 95% confidence intervals. The histograms show the variation between countries in salience of each topic.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has presented a novel version of the equality–inequality framework and subsequently presented empirical evidence demonstrating that the equality–inequality criterion holds in both Eastern and Western Europe, in contradiction to earlier research. Acceptance of inequality predicts right-wing self-placements in both regions, and the relationship between acceptance of an inequality and right-wing self-placements is stronger in contexts where the inequality is a salient issue. In Europe, this relationship is seemingly especially important for two dimensions: the economic and the immigration/ethnic dimension. The broader theme in Europe in the 21st century is thus reflected in the results of this paper. The economic dimension has had an important role for the L-R dimension but has been increasingly challenged by the ethnic/immigration dimension, especially in Western Europe. Populist radical right parties have grown with refugee and immigration issues at the heart of their campaigns. This paper demonstrates that this pattern is seemingly very predictable. I.e., we are likely to see that pro-immigration attitudes become correlated with left-wing self-placements when immigration becomes salient in a country, as predicted by the equality–inequality criterion.

While this paper finds support for the equality–inequality framework, there remain alternative explanations that can explain the results. It is for example possible that the Right is primarily traditional and not interested in what might be argued as recklessly fast change, and therefore does not support change in an egalitarian direction (concerning the four dimensions measured in this paper). The same is true for government intervention in the economy – the Right might be sceptical of government intervention and therefore oppose egalitarian change (although this would not explain non-economic change towards more equality). However, when controlling for *Resistance to Change* and *Privatization* using WVS and EVS data, the coefficients for acceptance of inequality are still significant and positive (see additional analyses in the appendix). Nevertheless, *Resistance to Change* and *Privatization* are also correlated with *L-R Self-Placement* in the expected directions (see Fig. A.2 and A.3 in the appendix). Thus, it is possible that there are other dividing lines between left and right, which coexist with the equality–inequality criterion in Europe. Further research is needed (especially in contexts outside

of Europe) to test these and other competing explanations, as well as the equality–inequality criterion.

This study has some limitations, but the paper nevertheless has many benefits for future studies in political science as it adds to our knowledge of the L-R dimension. It is arguably the most popular and important single dimension of politics in representative democracies. Understanding whether there is a context-independent criterion that can separate between what is considered *left* and *right* is therefore of utmost importance for political science. Such a criterion could potentially be an important explanatory variable in a lot of studies in the social sciences. Uncovering this criterion could furthermore improve citizens’ understanding of politics, informing the citizenry of what tends to structure their politicians’ ideological stances. All of this highlights the need for more research examining whether there is an underlying core disagreement of the left-right dimension.

Chapter 5. A Political Esperanto, or False Friends?

Left and Right in Different Political Contexts

Abstract

The simplification of the political landscape in terms of 'left' and 'right' is common across most democracies, if not most of the world. This would suggest that the terminology has a shared core meaning in different political contexts. While no such stable element has been established in the political science literature, various potential dividing lines that may form the core meaning have been proposed. This paper is the first comparative study to our knowledge that evaluates these proposals by studying responses to open-ended survey questions on what the terms 'left' and 'right' mean by voters. Data from eight different democratic political contexts are analysed using quantitative text analysis methods. The results demonstrate varied support for the different explanations. Evidence is found in all contexts for the hypothesis that acceptance of inequality divides left- from right-wing politics. That the left-right dimension is a divide between those for and against government intervention in the economy, or between those for change and against change, is mostly congruent with our findings. We find less evidence that either secular/religious divisions, or different conceptions of equality, consistently differentiate left from right. Our findings point towards the existence of a context-independent underlying dimension of left-right competition.⁴⁵

A Political Esperanto or False Friends

The terms 'left' and 'right' are used to describe politics as spanning an ideological spectrum in most representative democracies in the world. As such, the left-right (L-R) dimension has correspondingly been labelled a form of 'political Esperanto' (Laponce, 1981, p. 56). Such a language, which knows no borders, should have the same meaning in different countries. If not, then social scientists might encounter so-called 'false friends,' i.e., words that have different meanings in different languages. The question that has occupied political science for many years can thus be summed up as follows: is the L-R language a political Esperanto, or just another example of false friends?

⁴⁵ This chapter/paper was co-authored with Johan A. Dornschneider-Elkink.

This analogy is useful, but a bit too simplistic. We know that the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ do not have the exact same connotations in different countries (Benoit and Laver, 2006, p. 143). There are even differences between how different groups in the same society understand the terms (Johansson, 2008, p. 141; Bauer et al., 2016). Thus, there is at least some differentiation on the surface. This does not necessarily mean that the core concept changes, however. It is possible that there are differences in what citizens in different countries associate with the terms ‘left’ and ‘right,’ while these various meanings are explained by a common underlying dimension of political contestation. A longstanding literature has in line with this reasoning attempted to find a distinction that can explain L-R dimensions in all (or most) contexts (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Rokeach, 1973; Laponce, 1981; Silverman, 1985; Inglehart, 1990; Bobbio, 1996; Lukes, 2003; Jost et al., 2003b; Noël and Thérien, 2008; Joshi, 2021).

The prevalence of the L-R terminology throughout politics, and in particular to describe party competition in representative democracies, is likely due to the helpful simplification of the high-dimensional policy space in which parties and other political actors operate. To understand how Labour, the Tories, and the Liberal Democrats differ from each other in the context of the United Kingdom, one might need to do a detailed analysis of all the positions taken on a wide assortment of policies, or one can simply describe how one party is more ‘left’ or more ‘right’ on average. This simplification helps political scientists abstract and model the dynamics of political competition, it helps parties clarify their position to voters, and most importantly, it helps voters understand where parties position themselves relatively to each other. The substantive or underlying meaning of the L-R dimension therefore can be seen from a range of different perspectives – that of analysts, politicians, and voters. Whether or not these align is an empirical question.

This paper focuses on the voter dimension and voters' interpretation of the L-R dimension. To this end, we analyse open-ended survey responses describing what ‘left’ and ‘right’ mean. Using topic modelling we can assess which topics are typically associated more with ‘left’ or with ‘right,’ and how prominent these topics are in subjective evaluations of the terminology. We can then evaluate how much prominent topics that strongly separate ‘left’ from ‘right’ align with the substantive interpretations of the L-R dimension in the literature.

From the literature we distinguish five main hypotheses regarding the underlying nature of the common usage of the L-R dimension. The various hypotheses suggest that ‘left’ and ‘right’ separate (1) support for change from resistance to change; (2) religious from secular; (3) support for equality from acceptance of inequality; (4) support for different types of equality; and (5) support for interventionist economic policy from a preference for a small state. A key challenge of the paper is that these five hypotheses are difficult to disentangle, because they tend to go together. For example, the religious tend to be more conservative and resistant of change, and these explanations thereby go hand in hand. Similarly, those who care for economic equality might endorse more government intervention in the economy to achieve more redistribution through taxes. Those who want more privatisation of the economy might likewise accept less economic redistribution as a consequence.

We therefore believe that it is imperative to examine different contexts with as much variation as possible to find examples where these explanations do not correlate. For this purpose, we have compiled data from three countries in Western Europe (Denmark, Germany, and Spain), one in Eastern Europe (Hungary), two English-speaking North American countries (United States and Canada), one Latin American (Mexico), and Israel. The selection of these cases is largely driven by data availability, as surveys that contain open-ended questions on the meaning of ‘left’ and ‘right’ are relatively rare.⁴⁶ We expect L-R competition to be quite different in these contexts. For example, L-R politics should be different in a post-communist country such as Hungary compared to Western Europe (e.g. Tavits and Letki, 2009), as well as between Mexico and the fairly unique political context of Israel. Assessing the subjective evaluations of the L-R terminology among voters in these different political contexts, we find the strongest evidence supporting the equality/inequality criterion. We find clear correspondence to the interventionism and change dimensions in all but one context each,

⁴⁶ We found a few other surveys containing these data that we were either unable or chose not to obtain. These data are either from Western Europe and the United States (Barnes and Kaase, 2006; Corbetta et al., 2009), or have samples from Mexico and Argentina that are not representative of the broader population (Zechmeister, 2006).

while less evidence is found to support the hypotheses that religiosity or different conceptions of equality separate the Left from the Right in different contexts.⁴⁷

The paper starts with a discussion of the various hypotheses in the literature regarding the underlying dimension of the L-R terminology. A discussion of our topic modelling approach is followed by our empirical results and a discussion of the implications for future studies on the topic.

Suggested Underlying Dimensions of Left-Right Competition

The L-R dimension is understood to be a product of the French Revolution, where those against the revolution and for the old regime sat on the right in the French parliament, and those to the left in the chamber favoured the revolution and its goals (Jost et al., 2008, p. 127). Understandably, many have therefore understood the L-R distinction as one between those opposing and supporting change. Research on the psychology of left-/right-wing individuals has also demonstrated that right-wing individuals tend to be more traditional and resistant to change compared to left-wing individuals (Jost et al., 2003b; Thorisdottir et al., 2007), although it is not clear whether this holds in post-communist contexts (Greenberg and Jonas, 2003; Aspelund et al., 2013).

Another suggestion in the literature is that the Right is more religious, compared to the more secular Left (Laponce, 1981),⁴⁸ which was another clear component of the French Revolution (where the Church was associated with the Right). This theme seems to be prevalent in many countries in the sense that Christianity in Western Europe and the United States tend to be associated with the right-wing (Lipset et al., 1954; Piketty, 2018). This pattern seems to be the strongest for majority religions, since Islam tends to be associated with the Right in Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia and Tunisia (Farag, 2019; Ufen, 2019), yet with the Left in countries where Muslims are in the minority. Indeed, religious minorities in Western Europe tend to be more left-wing compared to the overall population (Bergh and Bjørklund, 2010; Piketty, 2018).

⁴⁷ We will consistently use the phrasing ‘left’ and ‘right’ when referring to the terminology that is used, and Left and Right when referring to the groups of individuals referred to, in a particular context, as being on either side of the political spectrum.

⁴⁸ Laponce also argues that the division between the Left and the Right in part can be explained by the Right being more accepting of hierarchies than the Left (very similar to the equality–inequality framework). We test the religiosity perspective on its own, but one could test the second and third hypotheses together.

The French Revolution had a third element, which is also arguably the most popular criterion for separating ‘left’ from ‘right’ in the literature: *égalité*. The French Revolution was arguably motivated in part by resistance to the large inequality in France at the time (De Tocqueville, 1955 [1856]), and the argument in the literature is that, similarly to then, politics is often structured as a conflict over inequality between groups. When one group has better outcomes than the other (e.g., is more privileged, has more money, power and/or status), then the Left is more likely to be associated with levelling between these two groups, while the Right is less likely to be associated with such redistribution (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990; Bobbio, 1996; Lukes, 2003).⁴⁹ Context plays an important role here. Different societies have different inequalities that become important or politicized at a given time. The population can be divided in different ways and inequality can therefore take place along different lines of division, such as social class, religion, and ethnicity. Perceptions of the L-R divide should differ accordingly. This pattern has been documented around the world, and is a potential explanation for why ethnic and religious minorities tend to vote for left-wing parties (Lipset et al., 1954, p. 1140). Research on the psychology of individuals also demonstrates that left-wing individuals tend to value equality between groups more than right-wing individuals (Jost et al., 2003b), although not necessarily in all political contexts (Thorisdottir et al., 2007). Greenberg and Jonas (2003, p. 377) criticize this idea, arguing that communists in certain contexts have been staunchly inegalitarian against those who disagree with the party line, as well as espousing hostile attitudes towards minorities. The equality/inequality hypothesis as tested in this paper avoids this particular criticism because the Left is only assumed to be for more equality along the most salient dimension of inequality, or the one that causes their classification as ‘left’ (for communists we assume that this is often their opposition to economic inequality).

In contrast to the equality/inequality hypothesis, another suggestion is that the Left does not want *more* equality than the Right, but rather that the Left and the Right both strive for equality, but of different kinds (Noël and Thérien, 2008, pp. 16-19). The Left appeals to a “more demanding conception of equality,” which not only considers whether everyone formally have the same opportunities, but also the “conditions under

⁴⁹ Right-wing individuals often place more importance on other values, such as freedom, meritocracy, and equality of opportunity, instead of equality.

which the players may reach” their preferred endpoint or not (Noël and Thérien, 2008, p. 19). This resembles the debate between those who favour equality of opportunity and those who favour equality of outcome.⁵⁰ However, there has been little research on this proposal to date. The evidence Noël and Thérien (2008, pp. 32-55) find in support of this view also supports the equality/inequality hypothesis, demonstrating that the two perspectives are somewhat similar. One potential criticism of this explanation is that fascism (a far-right ideology) seemingly does not tend to value any kind of equality (Rokeach, 1973; Rous and Lee, 1978; Cochrane et al., 1979).

Finally, Downs’ (1957) criterion of government intervention in the economy is perhaps one of the most well-known criteria (Tavits and Letki, 2009, p. 555). This perspective suggests that the Left can be distinguished from the Right depending on how much government intervention in the economy they prefer. On the farthest left is full socialization of the economy and on the farthest right is complete privatization. It is noteworthy that Downs (1957, p. 116) argues that the criterion is unable to explain why many individuals on the far-right do not necessarily aim at privatization of the economy (e.g. far-right fascists). This criterion has also been criticized because government spending by leftist and rightist governments in Eastern Europe and East Asia do not diverge in the way that this criterion would suggest (Tavits and Letki, 2009; Shim, 2020). Nevertheless, the criterion has performed well in Western representative democracies as a way of distinguishing between the Left and the Right in parliamentary politics and remains one of the main hypotheses.

In summary, there are five hypotheses on criteria that can separate left from right that we examine in this paper. They are formulated as follows:

H1: The Right is perceived as more resistant to change than the Left.

H2: The Right is perceived as more religious than the Left.

H3: The Right is perceived as more accepting of inequality than the Left, with different inequalities politicized in different political contexts.

⁵⁰ This is how Otjes (2018) interprets Noël and Thérien’s discussion.

H4: The Right and the Left are both perceived as concerned with equality, but with different types of equality.

H5: The Right is perceived as less supportive of government intervention in the economy than the Left.

In addition to these hypotheses, another prominent explanation is the idea that the L-R terminology is void of any stable meaning – often referred to in the literature as the “empty vessels” explanation (Bobbio, 1996, p. 3; Noël and Thérien, 2008, p. 27; Corbetta et al., 2009, p. 625). According to this explanation, the terms can be filled with any content, dependent on the context, since there is nothing inherent to the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ that would prevent it (Sartori, 1976, p. 335). It is impossible to exclude all possible alternative explanations and therefore to test this hypothesis. Rather, if we find no support for any of the previously stated hypotheses, we might conclude that the empty vessels proposition is the likely explanation of the disjointed patterns we observe.

Analysing Left-Right Classifications in Open-Ended Responses

This paper examines the associations individual citizens have with the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ by analysing open-ended survey questions asking for the meaning of these terms. Research examining such open-ended responses often focuses on the differences between contexts and individuals in how they perceive the terms. Zechmeister (2006), studying what the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ mean in Argentina and Mexico, find significant cross-cultural differences between the two countries. Similarly, Corbetta et al. (2009) examine how the meanings of the terms have changed over time in the same country (Italy), and find that abstract meanings have become more important, while references to concrete entities such as parties have decreased. While these differences between contexts (spatial or temporal) are important, they do not imply that there is no stable element. For example, Bauer et al. (2016) find that different sociodemographic groups (in Germany 2008) use different words when describing what ‘left’ and ‘right’ mean in politics. However, the fact that some German citizens state ‘SPD’ when asked what the term ‘left’ in politics means, while others state ‘communism,’ does not mean that they have fundamentally different ideas of what is ‘left.’ Rather they have different immediate associations with the term. We do not treat answers to open-ended questions on what ‘left’ and ‘right’ mean

as the respondents' complete perception of the terms because respondents do not explain their entire understanding of the concepts when answering surveys, nor do they mention everything they associate with the terms. We also assume that respondents will usually not contemplate of any hidden dimension or cause of L-R politics. Respondents rather write down their immediate associations with the terms, and we infer from these associations which underlying dimensions of political competition, as outlined in the five hypotheses, might be at play in each particular political context.

Additionally, there are three more considerations we would like to note about respondents' associations with each term. (1) The associations will to some extent be context-dependent since different political settings offer different possible connotations. (2) The classifications (/associations) are not an end in themselves, but a measurement of the L-R divide in any given society (for a discussion on the difference between the L-R dimension as a social phenomenon, and as a language, see Noël and Thérien, 2008, pp. 11-12). (3) A significant upside to analysing these survey responses is that this measurement distinguishes between those associations respondents find important (those they write down) and those that are not perceived as equally central parts of the L-R dimension. I.e., we assume that those items that respondents write down will on average be more important to understand L-R competition than other phenomena they might associate with L-R politics but did not mention. This is important for the equality/inequality hypothesis in particular, since this means that we can distinguish between inequalities that are salient and important to L-R competition, and those that are not.

It should be emphasised that this paper is not making a causal argument. We are not trying to explain why particular voters associate themselves more with the Left or the Right, or how their association of particular concepts with the political 'left' or 'right' affects their political behaviour. While we will differentiate between how voters who themselves identify with the Left conceptualise 'left' and 'right' in politics, and how voters who themselves identify with the Right do so, we do not attempt to explain this identification. Rather, we assume that if there is an underlying differentiation in a specific political context that affects how actors in this context interpret the terms 'left' and 'right,' then this will be reflected in the concepts voters associate with these terms in that context

(Noël and Thérien, 2008, p. 12).⁵¹ Our analysis of the alignment of the descriptions voters give of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ with the hypothesised abstract descriptions of the common core of L-R competition is thus an attempt to identify the nature of this underlying differentiation.

Data and Methodology

This paper makes use of existing surveys that include open-ended questions on the meaning of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ respectively, amounting to one answer for each term and correspondingly two answers per respondent. Surveys that include such questions are rare and we have collated the answers from all such surveys we were able to identify. The material comes from four different surveys, covering eight different countries with nationally representative samples. The CICOM survey (Behr, 2019), carried out in 2011 in the United States, Canada, Denmark, Spain, Hungary, and Germany, asked survey respondents to “please tell us what ideas you associate with the term ‘left’.” The 2008 German General Social Survey (Andreß et al., 2015) asked “Could you tell me what you associate with the term ‘left wing’?” whereas the Israel Democracy Institute survey⁵² from 2019 asked “What, in your eyes, are the three main characteristics of the left?” (Hermann and Anabi, 2019). Last, the National Survey on Political Culture and Citizenship Practices (ENCUP) in Mexico in 2008 put the following question to individuals in Mexico: “Thinking about politics, tell me two words you think of when someone talks about the left” (Secretaría de Gobernación, 2008). In all surveys the same question was also asked for the term ‘right.’ These survey questions are somewhat different for each context, yet similar enough that they can be examined in the same analysis, because all answers express ideas of what the two terms mean. Importantly, this set of surveys capture very different political contexts, with different historical legacies and different levels of experience with democratic party competition. If we find a common usage of the L-R terminology across these contexts, it would therefore suggest that this might be valid across a wider population.

⁵¹ One could argue that the argument is causal in that it relates to the endogenous process of social construction, where social reality is caused by and causes how individuals interpret their social environment.

⁵² Data courtesy of the Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research at the Israel Democracy Institute.

To analyse this material we utilise a topic model based on Non-negative Matrix Factorization (NMF), which is an unsupervised non-probabilistic method (O’Callaghan et al., 2015). Topic modelling is a common technique for quantitatively analysing text. The general assumption behind topic modelling is that documents of texts contain certain underlying topics, and these can be uncovered by examining the words used in the documents. Topic modelling using NMF assumes that these topics are not completely document-specific, but are associated to a greater or lesser extent with each document (Blei, 2012). There are multiple alternative techniques used for topic modelling, such as Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA, see Blei et al., 2003) and Structural Topic Models (Roberts et al., 2014). However, one of the advantages of NMF over the more common LDA is that NMF tends to generalise less and find more niche topics (O’Callaghan et al., 2015), and functions well with relatively few and short documents.

Before we apply NMF, the answers were translated from their original language to English. The data from the six countries in the CICOM survey were also made available in German through manual translation. The German data were in these cases selected for translation to English. In all cases, the texts were translated using Google translate, which has been found to produce good results (De Vries et al., 2018). Subsequently, we asked research assistants fluent in each language to examine the translations and validate their accuracy. The research assistants changed approximately 10% of translations due to errors in the translation performed by Google translate.⁵³ Subsequently, we follow Denny and Spirling (2018) and take the following pre-processing steps, in the following order. All letters were converted to lowercase and punctuation, numbers and ownership were removed. We deleted definitional beginnings (e.g. “the right is”) as well as “don’t know” answers (similar to Bauer et al., 2016). Subsequently, stop words that add no information were removed. Given that stemming is generally considered sufficient for English text (Jacobi et al., 2015, p. 93), we stem all words and do not apply lemmatization.

The answers to the open questions range in length between just a word, to multiple sentences. This is imperfect when applying NMF because it performs better with larger documents (particularly larger than one word). We therefore combine respondents’ answers based on sociodemographic characteristics and whether they describe what is

⁵³ We had fluent speakers verify all translations, except for German, where we had a fluent speaker examine a subset of the answers, because of the large data set ($n = 4169$). Automatic translations turned out to be highly accurate.

‘left’ or ‘right’, to create larger combined documents, one for each combination of these groups (resulting in 48 documents per country). The sociodemographic characteristics are age (younger or older than 45 years old), gender (male or female), education (university educated or not), as well as L-R self-placement (left, centre or right). One document therefore contains answers from for example left-wing men younger than 45 years old, without a university degree, describing what is considered ‘right’ in politics in Denmark. Given that the documents consist of combined answers, the word order becomes irrelevant as all words in connection to each other are not necessarily related (the end of one respondent’s answer is next to the first word of another respondent’s answer). This is not an issue for our approach since we treat the answers as a bag of words, meaning that we disregard word order and grammar. However, we construct bigrams and trigrams before the answers are combined into larger documents, meaning that all bigrams and trigrams originate from the same individual respondent’s answer. Last, we conduct analyses with all data together, as well as for each country separately, since research has consistently shown that L-R politics in different countries are radically diverse in many ways (e.g. Zechmeister, 2006; Benoit and Laver, 2006; Rovny and Edwards, 2012).

Table 5.1 contains an overview of the responses. The number of respondents differ by country, from 586 in Canada to 4,169 in Germany. The percentage of substantial answers, after excluding non-responses and answers explicitly stating their lack of knowledge, vary considerably by country. All countries have a response rate of over 50%, except for Mexico. The low response rate in Mexico might be due to its relatively recent transition to genuine democratic competition. It is typically assumed that it takes some time for citizens to develop an understanding of the L-R terminology (Thorisdottir et al., 2007, p. 183).

After the pre-processing, we construct an $n \times m$ document-term matrix A , containing the word frequencies of m unique terms over n documents. We apply term frequency–inverse document frequency (TF-IDF) weighting to each term, which weighs terms differently depending on how often they occur and in how many documents.⁵⁴ The function of this weighting is that terms that occur repeatedly in few documents receive larger weights compared to terms that occur in nearly all documents or almost none

⁵⁴ TF-IDF is implemented using the standard implementation in the SciKit Learn library in Python, such that $idf_t = \log \frac{1+n}{1+df_t} + 1$, and df_t is the frequency of documents that contain term t .

(Manning et al., 2008, p. 109). Document length normalization is applied to avoid very large documents distorting the results (Greene, 2020). We then apply NMF, which decomposes A into two non-negative matrices H and W , such that $A = WH$. The k columns in W can be interpreted as topics, such that W indicates the association between each document and each topic and H the association between each topic and each unique term. The number of topics is set by the researcher before the estimation. For individual countries we use $k = 8$, and for the joint model across the full data set we use $k = 40$. In both cases this leads to high levels of topic coherence, assessed both through subjective interpretation and the use of topic coherence scores (Greene, 2020). The topic coherence scores for each model (for different numbers of topics) can be found in the appendix. These graphs reveal that the maximum topic coherence differs by country, with some peaking at three topics, and others peaking at 14. Although not always maximised, the coherence is typically good for all countries at $k = 8$, and a fixed number of topics across the sample provides us with better opportunities for cross-country comparisons.

Table 5.1. Overview of Responses

<i>Country</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Sample Size</i>	<i>Total words</i>	<i>Average Answer Length (words)</i>	<i>% Substantial Answers*</i>	<i>Example Answer</i>
Canada	2011	586	42,714	15	54%	"Left meaning more socialist. The more extreme left is communist which I am not which means the government does not consider individuals as having unique abilities, but rather tools of the state"
Denmark	2011	618	44,458	14	68%	"Prosperity over welfare"
Germany	2008, 2011	4,617	239,522	12	74%	"Communist thoughts, everyone should earn the same etc."
Hungary	2011	621	48,276	15	83%	"Protectionism, state interference in all areas of everyday life, arrogance, disregard for civil rights and democracy, tolerance of racist views, strengthening nationalism, disregard for international norms"
Israel	2019	601	33,338	14	56%	"Security, keeping the status quo, Jewish state for the Jewish people"
Mexico	2008	4387	56,066	3	38%	"Communism, Marxism"
Spain	2011	611	51,124	16	77%	"These are the conservatives, capitalists, liberals and religious."
United States	2011	585	43,812	14	66%	"Those who are completely on the left would absolutely support abortion rights no matter the circumstance, gay marriage, gun control laws, healthcare reform, minority rights, immigration reform etc. More than likely they also support a complete separation of religion from anything that is not directly related to a church/temple."

*These are the responses left after excluding those who did not respond or stated that they do not know.

Results

Before applying the pre-processing and NMF models described in the previous section, we went through the answers to get an understanding of how individuals in each country understand the L-R terminology. We can make a few remarks from this superficial overview. As previous studies of open-ended answers to these questions have revealed, respondents in different countries have very country-specific ideas of what the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ mean (Zechmeister, 2006; Corbetta et al., 2009; Bauer et al., 2016; Zuell and Scholz, 2019). However, some ideologies seem to have somewhat stable meanings in all examined countries. Socialism and communism are on the left, whereas capitalism and conservatism are on the right. Liberalism, being in the middle, tends to be on different sides, depending on the context. It is for example left-wing in the United States (in comparison to conservatism) but right-wing in several countries in Northern Europe (in comparison to socialism). Many respondents also mention parties, for which there seem to be large agreement between respondents (i.e., most people place parties on the ‘correct’ side). One interesting case is the liberal/conservative Danish party Venstre, which many Danish respondents name when describing what is ‘right’. This may be somewhat strange for a foreign observer considering that *venstre* literally means ‘left’ in Danish.⁵⁵ This indicates that there is an understanding of the L-R scale that goes beyond labels, since Danish respondents can differentiate between the word ‘left’ and where a party that is called *Left* ought to be placed on the L-R scale.

Some of these answers are however not that useful for our purposes since we already know from other surveys where parties and politicians tend to be placed. More interesting are the more substantive answers that aim to describe what policies and values are associated with each side. Before the NMF analysis we therefore also removed names of parties and politicians as they contribute little information in regard to the hypotheses that we test. This is despite the fact that parties are some of the most common reference points when discussing L-R politics.

The NMF topic modelling results in the topics listed in Table 5.2. In this table we only include the top five topics per model (all topics can be found in Table B.1 in the

⁵⁵ When Venstre entered politics, it was considered the liberal left-wing option at the time, but has since received socialist competition on its left. The center point in Denmark moved to the left, leading Venstre to become the main right-wing party (Bille and Rüdiger, 2011).

appendix). The top five topics are selected based on a relevance score $R_t = D_t I_t$, where each topic is assigned an importance score

$$I_t = \frac{\sum_i^n w_{it}}{\sum_i^n \sum_j^k w_{ij}}$$

and a differentiation score

$$D_t = 2 \frac{\sum_{i \in \mathcal{R}} w_{it}}{\sum_i^n w_{it}} - 1,$$

where $\mathcal{R}$ is the set of documents that describe what is ‘right’ and w refers to an element in matrix W . I_t is the importance score of topic t , i.e., how important the topic is in general for the topic model. D_t is the differentiation score, which measures whether the topic is primarily associated with documents describing what is ‘left,’ documents describing what is ‘right,’ or equally between both. R_t then provides a score that we use to determine which topics are the most important in each model to separate between left and right. High scores indicate that the topic is important and describes the Right, and rarely the Left. Negative scores indicate the opposite association, while scores close to zero imply either unimportant or non-differentiating terms. We subsequently rank the topics according to the absolute value of R_t and consider the top five topics for each subsample. The top five associated words in Table 5.2 go from the word with the highest score, to the word with the 5th highest score.⁵⁶ It is the researcher who decides the topic names. We do this by focusing on the 20 most important words per topic, presented in the appendix.⁵⁷

Since topic modelling using NMF is not probabilistic, and the assignment of topics to hypothesised explanations a matter of interpretation, it is not straightforward to perform conventional statistical tests on these results. Instead, we added five columns to Table 5.2 where we indicate which hypotheses are in accordance with these important topics. This scoring is our assessment of whether the topics support the hypotheses or not.

⁵⁶ We also use TF-IDF on the output of each topic model, using $tfidf_{it} = \lambda \log(H_{it}) + (1 - \lambda) \log\left(\frac{H_{it}}{N_i}\right)$, for term i ’s association with topic t . We use $\lambda = 0.2$. N_i is the relative frequency of a term i across all documents, which we calculate based on the column sums of matrix WH .

⁵⁷ We also examine the document that is most closely associated with each topic according to the NMF output. This allows us to examine how the words associated with each topic are used to describe what is ‘left’ and ‘right.’

For example, the topic *Conservatism* is associated with documents describing what is right-wing, and some of the higher scoring words are “conservative values,” “wealthier” and “less government,” which aligns with the expectations from H1 (less change), H3 (the stronger group in an economic class divide), and H5 (against economic statism) respectively. There is no mention amongst these 20 words of religion (H2) or equality of opportunity (which H4 expects for topics describing the Right). Conversely, when we find contradicting evidence, we indicate this with a minus. For example, when racism is associated with documents describing what is right-wing, then this contradicts the idea that the Right is viewed by respondents as in favour of more equality of opportunity (as suggested by H4).

Table 5.2. NMF Topic Output – Top Five Most Important Topics per Model

<i>Model</i>	<i>Topic name</i>	<i>Top 20 Associated Words</i>	R_t	<i>Evidence +/-</i>				
				<i>H</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>H</i>	<i>H</i>
				1	2	3	4	5
All Countries	Conservatism	conserv, conserv_valu, less_govern, right_conserv, decis	0.04	+		+		+
All Countries	Radical Left	communism, punk, left, left_radic, autonom	-0.03	+		+	+	+
All Countries	Xenophobia	nazi, right_radic, neonazi, xenophobia, nation_social	0.03	-		+	-	-
All Countries	Socialism (2)	socialist, labor, communist, socialist_communist, regim	-0.02			+	+	+
All Countries	Nationalism	nation_interest, christian, nation, arrog, disregard	0.02	+	+			
Canada	Conservatism	conserv, valu, money, support, extrem	0.09	+				
Canada	Socialism & Freedom	left, socialist, polit, work, extrem	-0.09	+		+	+	+
Canada	Liberalism	liber, work, free, social, govern	-0.07	+		+	+	
Canada	Tradition	right, tradit, polit, busi, money	0.07	+		-	+	
Canada	Equality	equal, health, care, societi, welfar	-0.04			+	+	+
Denmark	Socialism	socialist, communism, everyth, left, polici	-0.11			+	+	+
Denmark	Conservatism	conserv, bourgeoi, conserv_s, freedom, everyth	0.10	+		+		
Denmark	Individual Freedom	liber, focus, economi, econom, respons	0.09					+
Denmark	Equality	commi, equal, societi, care, everyon	-0.07			+		+
Denmark	Weak vs Strong	right, middl, littl, weak, capit	0.05			+		+
Germany	Social Justice	social_justic, justic, opporti, equal_opporti, balanc	-0.18			+	+	+
Germany	Radical Right	right_radic, radic, nazi, neonazi, nation_social	0.17	-		+	-	-
Germany	Communism	communism, sed, redistribut, communism_social, level	-0.12			+	+	+
Germany	Intolerance	conservat, intoler, conserv, authoritarian, conserv_attitud	0.11	+		+	-	
Germany	Radical Left	left, im, left_radic, keep, link	-0.09	+		+		+
Hungary	Solidarity	sensit, social_sensit, social, solidar, equal	-0.13			+	+	+
Hungary	Socialism	socialist, communist, old, corrupt, lie	-0.12			+	+	+
Hungary	Traditional Values	tradit, opporti, nation, conservat, countri	0.11	+	+			
Hungary	National Interest	conserv, protect, nation, interest, valu	0.09	+	+			
Hungary	Hungarian Politics	hungari, right, life, live, ideolog	0.07					

Israel	Security/Keep Land	secur, jewish, land, keep, israel	0.13	+	+	+		
Israel	Peace & Equality	equal, integr, peac, right, cost	-0.10			+	+	
Israel	Racism	racism, extrem, reliabl, corrupt, power	0.08		+	+	-	
Israel	Socialism & Liberalism	social, weak, liber, peac, power	-0.07					
Israel	Palestinian State	palestinian, state, left, arab, religion	-0.03	+	-	+		
Mexico	Politics & Parties	dialogu, conserv, presid, favor, promis	0.12					
Mexico	Disagreement & Violence	negat, disagr, conflict, violenc, march	-0.11	+				
Mexico	Businessmen	businessmen, money, authoritarian, imposit, corrupt	0.11			+		
Mexico	Political Change	contrari, conveni, chang, polit, march	-0.10	+		+		
Mexico	Communism	communism, popul, intoler, social, opporti	-0.10			+	+	+
Spain	Entrepreneurs & Privatization	entrepreneur, conserv, power, money, tradit	0.15	+		+		+
Spain	Equality	social, equal, worker, communism, freedom	-0.14			+	+	+
Spain	Capitalism	conservat, capit, privat, tax, public	0.10	+				+
Spain	The Poor	left, everyon, poor, distribut, citizen	-0.07	+		+	+	+
Spain	Economic Policy	econom, wealth, polici, liber, compani	0.05					
USA	Social Programmes	social, liber, program, give, chang	-0.12	+				+
USA	Big Business	busi, power, big, conserv, individu	0.11	+		+		
USA	Progressivism	left, health, go, equal, mind	-0.08	+		+	+	+
USA	The Rich	rich, lower, everyon, conserv, tax	0.08			+		+
USA	Traditional Social Policy	right, marriag, gun, countri, conserv	0.05	+				

Note: H1 = change/resistance to change; H2 = secular/religious; H3 = equality/inequality; H4 = both left and right associated with (different conceptions of) equality; H5 = for/against government intervention in the economy.

Table 5.2 (and the longer table in the appendix) provides evidence of many topics that correspond with the predictions of the hypotheses. The main hypotheses that receive the most support are change/resistance to change, equality/inequality and for/against government intervention in the economy. The secular/religious hypothesis (H2) is rarely supported, while we only find occasional evidence for the hypothesis that the Left and the Right are both associated with equality (H4). The first NMF topic model with 40

topics unsurprisingly demonstrates support for all hypotheses to varying degrees, and we therefore focus the rest of the analysis on the country-specific examinations where we can study how the hypotheses perform in different contexts.

Before further commenting on how the hypotheses perform in each case, it is helpful to visually understand how the topics relate to each other. For this purpose we conduct multidimensional scaling to produce two-dimensional maps (see e.g. Boussalis and Coan, 2016). These maps enable us to evaluate whether the topics relate to each other in meaningful ways, as well as to understand how ‘far’ they are from other topics. If similar topics are closer to each other in this two-dimensional space, it would also provide partial validation of the topic names. To do this we need to calculate the pairwise distance between each topic. One approach is to use the Jensen–Shannon distance, which is the square root of Jensen-Shannon Divergence scores (Österreicher and Vajda, 2003; Endres and Schindelin, 2003; Boussalis and Coan, 2016, p. 94). It is possible to calculate these scores as every topic has a score for each document (matrix W). This results in pairwise scores for all combinations of topics, which should reflect the similarity between the topics. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 project these scores with multidimensional scaling onto a two-dimensional space for each country (this projection for the analysis with all countries combined can be found in the appendix). The calculated distances between topics are meaningful. However, the position of each topic as either on the left or right side (as well as at the bottom or top) of the graph is not important. We expect that topics will be closer to each other if (1) the words that describe them are more similar (which often happens when topics also are similar) and (2) if the topics relate to describing either the Left or the Right. The dots representing each topic are coloured in shades of blue, reflecting differentiation score D , which captures whether the topic scores correlate with documents describing what is ‘left’ or what is ‘right’. Light blue topics are more likely to be found in documents describing what is ‘left,’ and dark blue in documents describing what is ‘right.’

There is a clear divide in each graph differentiating topics describing the left and topics describing the right, illustrating that the respondents have indeed different understandings of the terms that are meaningfully similar to other respondents. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 demonstrate that similar topics are often (but not always) closer, providing partial validation of our approach. *Big government* is related to social welfare programmes in the United States. *Socialism* and *Class Politics* are close to each other in

Denmark, while *Education & Equal Opportunities* is close to *Equality of Opportunity* in Spain.

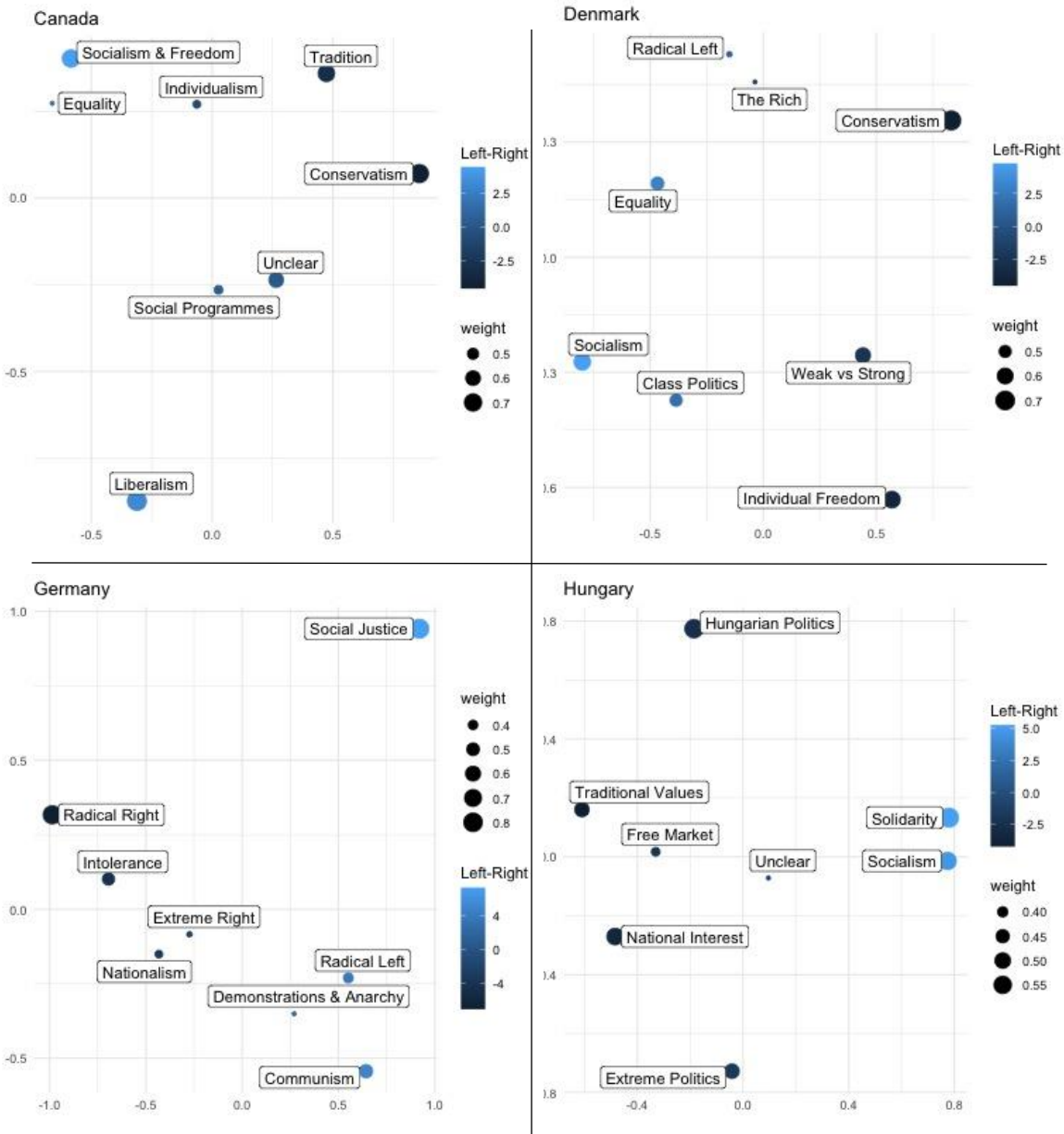


Fig. 5.1. Two-dimensional Projection of Jenson–Shannon Distances between Topics for Canada, Denmark, Germany, and Hungary

The graphs demonstrate some overlap between countries. Conservative values such as traditionalism, stricter immigration and capitalism are present in most graphs, correlated with descriptions of the Right. Topics describing progressivism, social justice and equality tend to correlate with responses describing what is ‘left’. However, the maps

demonstrate large differences between political contexts. German respondents seem to describe two different types of ‘left,’ one more pertaining to more moderate elements in electoral politics (such as social justice), and another more fringe type (the radical Left) which ends up at another end of the map. In Mexico it is the Right which is the most associated with freedom whereas the Left is more associated with freedom in Canada. The meaning of ‘left’ and ‘right’ in the U.S. and Canada bear a resemblance to each other. The Left (compared to the Right) is prone to being associated with big government spending while being against more traditional social policy such as banning abortion and guns.

Taken together, the evidence from Table 5.2, as well as Figures 5.1 and 5.2, produce a rather clear picture. H1, H3, and H5 receive the most support, compared to H2 and H4. Religion is associated with the Right (H2) in some contexts, but not all. It seems clear that it is a part of the discussion in Germany and Israel, but there is little discussion of this in Denmark, Mexico, and Spain. This is not to say that the Right is not more religious in these contexts, but it is simply not the first division that comes to mind for respondents from those countries when describing the meaning of ‘left’ and ‘right.’ The hypothesis that the Left and the Right both value equality, but have different conceptions of it (H4), receives modest support. The Right is consistently less associated with equality than the Left, and in several contexts not associated with the Right at all. Conversely, government intervention in the economy (H5) is associated with the Left in most countries, either through welfare programmes, spending or simply ‘big government.’ Capitalism and privatization are often associated with the Right. In all countries but one, we see this pattern present.

That is, except for Israel. Israel is a clear outlier, because most topics directly relate to the Israel-Palestine conflict and no topic (unambiguously) relates to government intervention in the economy. Israel is in this sense the most different L-R context, as L-R competition in Israel seems to be mainly concerned with this one political dimension. The equality/inequality hypothesis (H3) provides the most straightforward explanation for this case, since the stronger group (Jewish citizens) are on the Right side, while Palestinians are on the Left. However, the change/resistance to change criterion could also explain this case since *Keep Land* is the most important topic (explaining right-wing classifications, see Table 5.2), which limits change from the status quo.

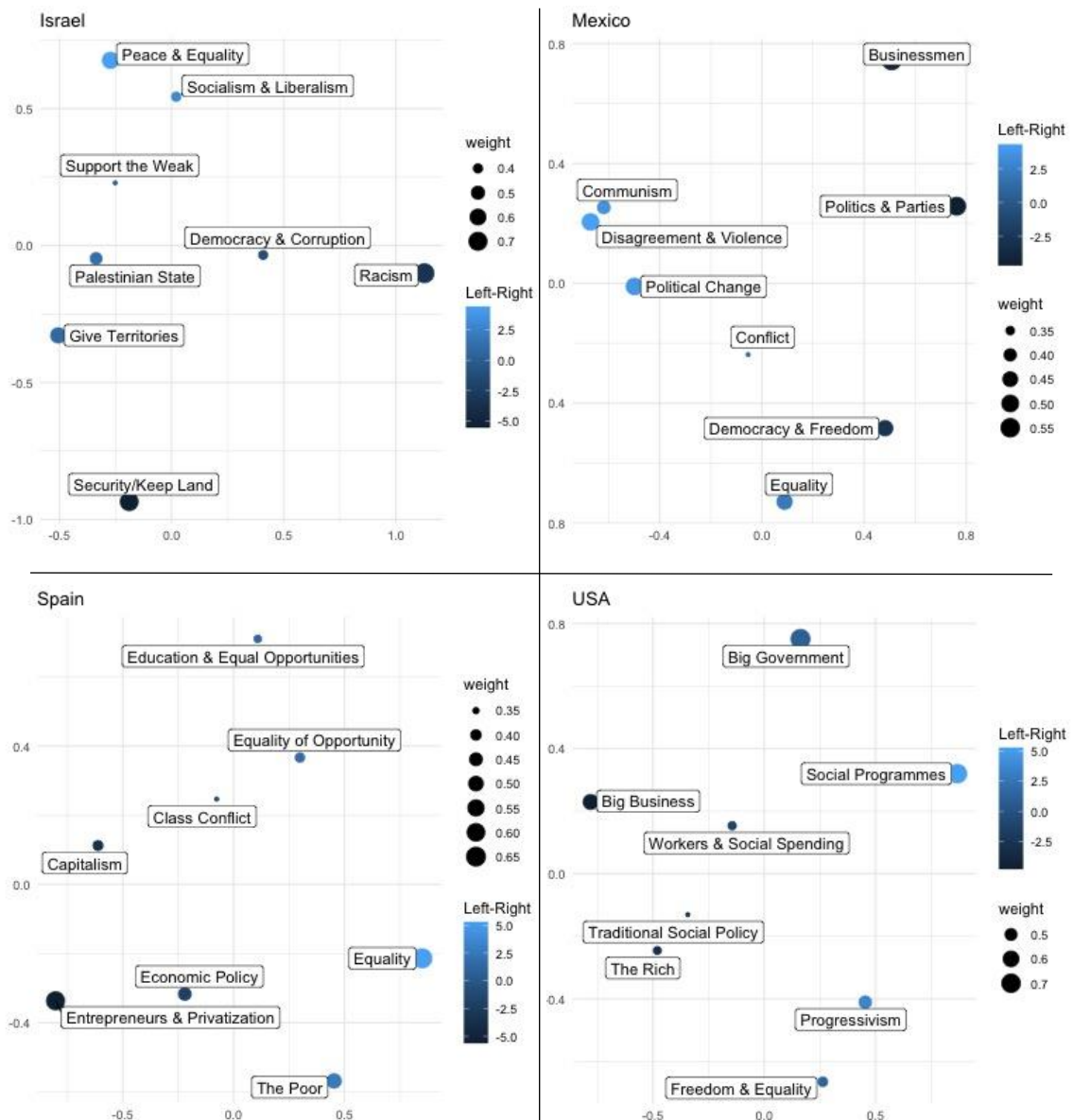


Fig. 5.2. Two-dimensional Projection of Jenson–Shannon Distances between Topics, for Israel, Mexico, Spain, and the USA

Support for the change/resistance to change hypothesis (H1) is, in fact, present in all contexts, as the Right is very often described as conservative and traditional, while the Left is prone to being described as progressive. Denmark is, however, potentially a somewhat weaker case for this hypothesis. L-R competition in Denmark (up until 2008) seems to mostly have been associated with economic issues, either understood as a class

divide or as a struggle between more and less state intervention in the economy.⁵⁸ While conservatism is used to describe the Right in Denmark (as is clear with one topic), it seems as if this mostly refers to ideological label rather than implying that the Right in Denmark was perceived as particularly resistant to change. This is logical given that the Danish Right has not been as clearly associated with social conservatism as in other countries, because the political landscape was mainly concerned with economic politics up until more recent years. The word “radical” is furthermore associated with both left- and right-wing topics in our model (see for example “Individual Freedom”). A possible reason for why we find less support for the change/resistance to change hypothesis in Denmark then might be that the Danish Right has been more liberal compared to other countries, where the Right might be more socially conservative. The Danish right-wing is also fairly secular, as Denmark is overall a very secular society compared to other European countries.

The equality/inequality hypothesis receives support in all contexts. Equality, solidarity, social justice, weaker groups (or hostility against stronger groups) are usually on the Left, while capitalism and stronger groups are usually associated with the Right. However, it is noteworthy that the Right is rarely described as against equality, but rather with other values. In Germany and Israel, the Right (and the far-right especially) is seen as against immigrants and minorities, but otherwise the Right is often described as for tradition or freedom, depending on the country. One possible explanation could be that these values might in some circumstances stand in contrast with equality, depending on the policy solutions prescribed for more equality by the Left in each specific context (Kerlinger, 1984, p. 37).

Robustness Checks

The results presented in this paper could be questioned, in part because individual respondents might not be unbiased observers when describing what is ‘left’ and ‘right’. Many respondents are partisans, with negatively biased views of the other side, and correspondingly positively biased views of their own side. To make sure that our results are not influenced by these types of biased interpretations, we recalculated the *R* score for

⁵⁸ This has for a long time been the main divide in Danish politics, but, as in many West European countries, immigration has become increasingly divisive in recent decades (Green-Pedersen, 2013).

all our models as a robustness check. We use the same topic models, but when calculating the differentiation and importance score respectively we only used documents with centrist respondents (excluding answers from left- and right-wing respondents). We include an updated table (Table B.2) in the appendix which is sorted by this new *R* score. The updated table demonstrate some differences with the original results, but none that affect the conclusions of the paper.

Conclusion

Is the L-R dimension a political Esperanto, or a case of false friends? Our analysis is, to our knowledge, the first in the literature to tackle this question in a comparative study based on open-ended survey questions, with considerable country-context variation in the meaning of the L-R language. Our analysis provides optimism for finding a universal explanation, one that can separate ‘left’ from ‘right’ in all or most contexts. We find substantial evidence for three potential universal explanations, related to equality/inequality, change/resistance to change and for/against government intervention in the economy. We find weaker evidence in one instance for the latter two hypotheses: resistance to change is not clearly associated with the Right in Denmark, while government intervention in the economy is not discussed much in Israel. We find little evidence for the other two explanations. No topics in this analysis relate to religion (or secularity) in Mexico, Spain, or Denmark. Similarly, equality is rarely discussed when respondents describe the Right.

Therefore, in contrast with the current trend of highlighting the differences between ‘left’ and ‘right,’ this paper demonstrates that there is a possibility of a political Esperanto. Several explanations for the common usage of the terms across political contexts are supported by our evidence. This speaks against the idea that the L-R terminology, at least when comparing the examined contexts, should be viewed as empty vessels. Future research is needed in new contexts to further test which of the different explanations is more likely to explain this commonality, i.e., equality/inequality, change/resistance to change or for/against government intervention in the economy.

The remaining challenge is that these explanations tend to go hand in hand. For example, support for equality is often coupled with economic government intervention as a solution to reduce inequality, while privatization of the economy might have more inequality as a, perhaps unintentional, side effect. Future research will do well to find

cases that deviate from these more common patterns. For example, finding cases where inequality is coupled with government intervention in the economy, or where equality is coupled with privatisation, would be helpful to differentiate between these two hypotheses. Such cases could be crucial to solving the overall research puzzle.

Aside from the contribution to the empirical literature on the use of the terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ in politics, we also make a modest methodological contribution. The recent rapid increase in political science of the use of quantitative methods for text analysis has initially focused on purely descriptive studies. The open-ended, or unsupervised, nature of topic modelling, for example, creates challenges for more focused analyses that answer specific research questions or evaluate specific hypotheses. The *relevance score* developed in the empirical sections of this article provides a measure for the extent to which two or more sets of documents differ in terms of their topics – which are the more prominent topics that are prevalent in one set of documents, but rare in the other set? This measure can be applied in any context where sets of documents are compared based on a topic model.

In conclusion, our research shows that looking at answers to open-ended questions asking for a description of the meaning of ‘left’ and ‘right’, in different political contexts, has strong potential to help understand whether a universal explanation exists or not. Our analysis has been limited by data availability, but future researchers would do well to include these questions more regularly in surveys among voters. This line of research is promising in that by testing these hypotheses using more cases studies, we believe that it will be possible to solve the overall research puzzle: is there a universal criterion that can explain L-R competition, or are two terms that are used across the globe merely empty vessels? Solving this puzzle, which has been researched for more than half a century, will help uncover fundamental facts about politics, at least in representative democracies.

Chapter 6. An Urban Myth? Government Involvement in the Economy and Left-Right Politics

Abstract

Attitudes towards the government's involvement in the economy are frequently assumed to differentiate left- from right-wing politics. This paper compares this idea to a novel version of equality–inequality theory: acceptance of inequality is the principal element of left-right competition, but the type of inequality motivating individuals' left-right choice may differ. Using multilevel regression models with survey data from the World Values Survey, as well as a case study of the Netherlands, this paper finds that (1) acceptance of inequality is a better context-independent predictor of left-right self-placements around the world; (2) in the Netherlands, the correlation between acceptance of an inequality (regarding class or immigration) and right-wing self-placement is stronger when the specific issue dimension is salient to citizens, whereas the equivalent interaction effect for attitudes towards economic statism is not found. The evidence thus supports the view that the left-right dimension concerns acceptance of inequality, rather than economic interventionism.

Introduction

It is common to assume that the left-right (L-R) dimension of politics is a conflict over the role of the government in economic affairs concerning issues such as taxation and regulation – the further to the left, the more the government controls in the economy. This definition of the L-R dimension continues to be common wisdom among many individuals in Western representative democracies. It is also a somewhat widespread belief in the academic community (e.g., Potrafke, 2010, p. 136; Obinger et al., 2013, p. 1302; Ansell, 2019, p. 180).⁵⁹ A perhaps more defensible version of this argument is that the role of the government in the economy only defines the *economic* L-R dimension, rather than the general L-R dimension. This idea is prevalent in contemporary political science, including in prominent expert surveys such as the Chapel Hill Expert Survey

⁵⁹ This is also how Stimson et al. (1995, p. 548) describe the L-R dimension.

(CHES) and the Global Party Survey (GPS). Experts in these surveys are asked to classify political parties on an economic L-R dimension, which is explicitly described as pertaining to the role of the government in the economy.

In this paper I argue that the idea that government involvement in the economy is the distinguishing feature between left and right politics (be it as an economic or general dimension), is akin to an urban myth. Instead, I argue that the disagreement over how much inequality should be accepted in society is a better explanation of L-R politics around the world. Building on previous literature (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990; Bobbio, 1996; Lukes, 2003), I develop equality–inequality theory further, arguing that different inequalities are important in different contexts and shape L-R politics accordingly because the most salient inequalities will form the basis of the L-R spectrum in each context. This means that L-R politics in a society where L-R politics mainly concerns economic issues may be unrecognizable from another where the L-R divide concerns religion or ethnicity. However, as long as the Left is less accepting of the salient inequality (in overall outcomes) than the Right, then L-R politics is predictable.

I evaluate these two competing perspectives side by side in two steps. First, since these hypotheses have previously been tested in Western contexts, it is advantageous to extend the analysis to cases of representative democracies in other environments, to increase the spatial variation. I am unaware of any study that compares the two competing hypotheses with samples from different parts of the world, and this paper thereby has a unique coverage as it examines survey data from the 2017-2020 joint World Values Survey (WVS) and European Values Study (EVS). The results from the multilevel regression analyses demonstrate that acceptance of different types of inequality (relating to class, gender, and sexuality) is better at predicting L-R self-placements around the world compared to preferences towards the government's role in the economy.

Thus, attitudes towards economic statism do not always reliably predict L-R self-placements around the world, but what about in an established Western representative democracy? Such a context might be more favourable to this explanation, given that many individuals there (both voters and academics) consider this to be the difference between left and right. In line with this logic, the second part of this paper tests both competing explanations in one such case: the Netherlands. For the government intervention in the economy argument, the Netherlands presents a favourable case. It is an established Western representative democracy where the debate over government intervention in the

economy has been an issue closely associated with L-R politics (along with concerns regarding economic inequality; see Middendorp, 1989). I compare both explanations of the L-R dimension in the Netherlands by testing an observable implication of how an attitudinal dimension could constitute the underlying divide of the L-R dimension in an established representative democracy: if the core divide between the Left and the Right at least partially takes place at the voter level (and not only at the elite level), then (at least some) individuals should choose their L-R self-placement because of the specific core issue dimension. The observable implication of this logic, in the case of attitudes towards inequalities, is that they should be more likely to predict L-R self-placements when the specific inequality is salient to individuals (personal issue salience). The analysis also demonstrates this interaction effect: personal issue salience moderates the relationship between attitudes towards inequality and L-R self-placements in the Netherlands. The same relationship is not found, however, between attitudes towards the government's involvement in the economy and individual-level salience of this issue. The conclusion is thus that only acceptance of inequality theory is consistent with the available data, while the pervasive view that the government's involvement in the economy is the core L-R divide is not supported in any of the analyses in this paper.

The paper is structured as follows; first, I explain how attitudes towards economic statism have been understood by some to separate left- from right-wing politics, resulting in two hypotheses stating that these attitudes divide the general (H1) or the economic (H2) L-R dimension. The following section explains why acceptance of inequality has been argued to separate left- from right-wing politics, and the accompanying evidence in previous literature supporting this hypothesis (H3). The third section details how personal issue salience may moderate the relationship between issue attitudes and L-R self-placements, resulting in hypotheses H4 and H5. Consequently, the paper discusses the methodology to evaluate the five hypotheses. The results are then presented, first with the analysis of the WVS/EVS data from different parts of the world (testing H1-H3), and subsequently with the case analysis of the Netherlands where the interaction effects (H4 and H5) can be tested. The paper ends with a discussion of the results and what they mean for future research on the L-R dimension.

Economic Policy, Left-Right, and the Size of Government

It is difficult to trace from where the idea that preferences for the government's involvement in the economy is the defining feature of the L-R divide stems. Likely, Anthony Downs' *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, where the difference between left and right was specified as one between preferences for more or less government intervention in the economy, helped popularise the idea. Even though Downs (1957, p. 116) specifically states that this assumption is "unrealistic" given that "the parties designated as right wing extremists in the real world are for fascist control of the economy rather than free markets," the conflation with L-R politics remains popular.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, many political observers and political scientists take for granted that the L-R dimension of politics relates to government intervention in the economy. There are two conceptions of how economic statism relates to the L-R dimension that, although related, deserve to be discussed here separately. Either economic statism (1) divides the general L-R dimension (e.g., Potrafke, 2010, p. 136; Obinger et al., 2013, p. 1302; Ansell, 2019, p. 180), or (2) only the economic L-R dimension (e.g., GPS and CHES). Both these perspectives are prevalent within and outside of academia, even though there is limited evidence to support either proposition. Literature uncovering contexts where government spending is not necessarily synonymous with left-wing governments in Eastern Europe (Tavits and Letki, 2009) and East Asia (Shim, 2020) speaks against the idea that the general L-R dimension is distinguished by attitudes towards economic statism. Additionally, in a study of eleven countries on four continents, Freire and Kivistik (2013) find several instances where attitudes towards government interventionism in economic affairs do not correlate with L-R self-placements in the expected direction (and in the wrong direction in several instances).

The second proposition's inclusion in expert surveys is especially problematic given that many political scientists rely on the accuracy of this data. For example, in the

⁶⁰ It is worth mentioning an idea similar to the proposition that attitudes towards the government's role in the economy separates left from right: the many political observers and political scientists who continue to assume that the L-R dimension of politics mainly (or exclusively) relates to economic policy. It is for example common to read in the academic literature that "economic issues represent the heart of the left-right divide" (Masseti and Schakel, 2015, p. 867). While this conception is widespread and important in its own right, this paper will not evaluate this idea, because the focus here is on evaluating the idea that attitudes towards the government's involvement in the economy divides left from right.

2019 GPS, experts around the world were asked to classify political parties on an economic L-R dimension. The survey vignette explains that parties “on the economic LEFT want government to play an active role in the economy. Those on the economic RIGHT favor a reduced role for government” (Norris, 2019a). This definition of the economic L-R dimension has never been established as a context-independent criterion separating economic left and right politics and is thus possibly a spurious correlation. The economic L-R dimension in the minds of experts may not always correlate with (or correspond to) government involvement in the economy.⁶¹ This conflation would then be an unnecessary source of measurement error.

I evaluate both versions of the argument. The former can be formulated as a hypothesis (H1) and tested with WVS/EVS data.

H1: Preferences for less government intervention in the economy correlate with right-wing self-placements.

The latter idea (that economic statism is the core of the economic L-R dimension) will be evaluated by comparing attitudes towards economic statism to attitudes towards economic inequality, examining which best predicts L-R self-placements when controlling for other factors. Even though the dependent variable is L-R self-placements (and not economic L-R self-placements), attitudes towards government intervention in the economy should better predict general L-R self-placements than acceptance of economic inequality (when controlling for other factors) if they form the basis of the economic L-R dimension. The opposite should be true if acceptance of inequality is at the core of L-R competition. It will be possible to find instances where one attitude explains individuals’ L-R orientation, and the other does not, because even though the ideological conflict over the role of the government in economic affairs and economic egalitarianism are two closely related phenomena (e.g., when economically left-wing individuals desire government intervention in markets because they want to redistribute resources), they are two separate dimensions (Achterberg et al., 2011).

⁶¹ Regressive tax increases, or cutting taxes for the poor while raising taxes on the rich (without changing the total revenue collected), are examples of policies that make it harder to classify parties in the GPS and the CHES, if parties pursue them.

H2: Preferences for less government intervention in the economy better predict right-wing self-placements than acceptance of economic inequality.

Acceptance of Inequality

While the idea that the ideological conflict over the role of the government in economic affairs is the core difference between left- and right-wing politics is popular, arguably the most prominent theory of the L-R dimension in the academic literature is acceptance of inequality (or equality–inequality) theory. Building on previous literature (MacIver, 1947, p. 216; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990, p. 293; Lukes, 2003; Bobbio, 1996), I put forth a version of this theory: the L-R dimension should be understood as a conflict over how much overall inequality (of outcomes) should be accepted in society between different groups. The Left comprises those that reject the inequality (in varying degrees depending on how far left), arguing for change that elevates the lower group or pulls down the group in the relatively better position. In either case, the stronger group loses in relative terms. In comparison to the Left, the Right is less concerned with inequality (often concerned with other values instead). In addition, the furthest Right embraces specific inequalities, arguing for change in the direction of more inequality. Inequalities can often be simplified to either a spectrum (e.g., class) or two defined groups (e.g., ethnic minority and ethnic majority). The overall societal inequality is determined by which group is overall more privileged/stronger. Overall outcomes that are perceived as desirable, such as wealth, power, and status, are common sources of hierarchy. When the groups are clearly delineated, being in the majority position in a representative democracy is also a source of a hierarchical relationship, considering that majority groups have considerable power compared to the minority in democratic competition.⁶² The immigration divide demonstrates an example of two groups (natives and immigrants) where there is an inequality, and the conflict has become salient in Europe. Minorities and immigrants also tend to vote for centre-left parties, the latter especially if they are from non-western and poor countries (Cain et al., 1991; Anwar, 2001; Bergh and Bjørklund, 2010).

This paper goes beyond previous literature and provides several theoretical contributions to acceptance of inequality (AoI) theory. In particular, I argue that (1) the

⁶² Importantly, any inequality is determined by the societal inequality, and not by whomever oversees government institutions, or else being right-wing would simply mean to be in government.

inequality that makes many individuals choose sides (the core dividing line between the Left and the Right) in politics can be different in different societies, and L-R politics is subsequently attached to different inequalities depending on the specific conflict(s) of that context; (2) in societies where there are multiple inequalities that are very salient, I argue that individual-level salience must be taken into account since different inequalities can affect individuals' L-R choice.

Previous research finds that acceptance of inequality separates left- from right-wing individuals in several contexts, such as the United States and Western Europe (Jost et al., 2003b; Evans et al., 1996), as well as Latin America (Wiesehomeier and Doyle, 2012). Noël and Thérien's (2008, pp. 32-55) study on the third wave of the WVS in the 1990s is, to my knowledge, the most extensive appraisal of whether more egalitarian beliefs generally predict left-wing self-placements, which they find evidence for in a majority of countries. Their study does not, however, examine acceptance of inequality as specified in this paper, nor does it compare these attitudes with attitudes towards economic statism.

Eastern Europe has been one of the regions that has been the most challenging to AoI theory, as some research finds that acceptance of inequality is unable to explain L-R self-placements in Eastern Europe (Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Aspelund et al., 2013). However, this research measures acceptance of inequality among voters with their general level of egalitarianism, while AoI theory (as developed in this paper) conceives of acceptance of inequality as taking place along different group divides (see also Lindqvist, 2020; Joshi, 2021) such as class and gender. I argue that general egalitarianism is more likely applicable to the more politically interested and ideological stratum of the population. These individuals are more likely to apply the same acceptance/rejection of inequality to a different inequality, as this value guides them when a new inequality becomes salient at the expense of the old one(s). Thus, the L-R conflict between those involved in ideological L-R competition will be predictable and this ideological conflict shapes the choices voters have in each context, which is how acceptance of inequality can consistently predict L-R politics over time even when the salient divide changes. However, this paper is focused on explaining regular citizens' L-R self-placements and this specific assertion is therefore not tested in this paper.

The general population, I argue, is less likely to apply the same logic consistently to different divides and more likely to be guided by their sympathy towards different

groups (Converse, 2006 [1964]). This is why it is less fruitful to examine whether voters' general level of egalitarianism predicts their L-R self-placements. It is rather the different inequalities that are salient in different contexts that are the most likely to impact voters' L-R choice. From this discussion, it is possible to put forth a general hypothesis:

H3: Acceptance of salient inequalities correlates with right-wing self-placements.

Personal Issue Salience

Both explanations discussed so far postulate correlations between individuals' political attitudes and their L-R self-placements. They also imply a causal mechanism: the core attitude should not only correlate with L-R self-placements, but also cause them (for at least some individuals), given that this is supposedly the core disagreement between the Left and the Right. There might be other political disagreements that correlate with L-R politics, but these correlations are unreliable given that they do not constitute the core disagreement. Given this logic, we can test whether the correlation between L-R self-placements and attitudes towards a political issue (that supposedly divides left- from right-wing politics) is stronger when individuals care about the issue (which Giger and Lefkofridi, 2014, label personal issue salience) because individuals should then be more likely to make their L-R choice because of this issue (Weber and Saris, 2014).⁶³

This logic for AoI theory can be elucidated with examples of different types of voters. In most of Western Europe, economic issues and immigration are both politically salient. One individual may associate themselves with the Left (by for example voting for a left-wing party) because of their policies regarding refugees, even though the individual holds right-wing economic positions (i.e., the voter is left-wing on immigration, but economically right-wing). The refugee issue thus decides which side the individual chooses. Consequently, when this hypothetical individual is asked to place themselves on an L-R scale, they are likely to be influenced by which side they have chosen – in this case, the Left.⁶⁴ If the voter would instead prioritise economic policy, they should vote

⁶³ I temporarily ignore the causal patterns going in the other direction, such as that being a part of the Left might lead individuals to adopt left-wing attitudes. This is why I speak of correlations rather than causation in the hypotheses (but either causal mechanism supports the overall theory).

⁶⁴ They may also be influenced by the country-level salience (e.g., the L-R dimension might be primarily tied to economic issues at the national level, and this affects their L-R self-placement as well).

for the Right and hence place themselves on the right side. Thus, the fact that the L-R dimension is one-dimensional (you cannot be both left and right at the same time) means that individuals often have to prioritise, since they do not agree with either side on all issues (Sartori, 1976, p. 338; Lefkofridi et al., 2014; Weber and Saris, 2014). This is likely to happen quite often because many voters are not one-dimensional in their political attitudes and often have a mix of left- and right-wing beliefs (Thomassen, 2012; Malka et al., 2019).⁶⁵

Following the same logic, if preferences for government intervention in the economy is the core divide that causes L-R self-placements, then this should be more likely to happen when individuals think economic issues are important (i.e., individuals decide their political position – their L-R position – because of the preferences for the role of government in economic affairs, at the very least when this issue is salient to them). Thus, while L-R politics might be associated with other issues in some societies, the link between preferences for government intervention in the economy and L-R self-placements is kept intact when individuals find the issue important (and we presume that they are then more likely to base their L-R self-placement on this issue). The above discussion can be summarized with two separate hypotheses:

H4: The correlation between individuals' attitudes towards economic statism and right-wing self-placements is stronger when individuals find economic policy to be the most important political issue.

H5: The correlation between individuals' acceptance of an inequality and right-wing self-placements is stronger when individuals find that specific issue to be the most important political issue.

⁶⁵ Naturally, all voters will not choose side based on an inequality, but a significant amount should since this is the basis of the L-R dimension according to the AoI argument.

Alternative Explanations

Another popular explanation of the L-R dimension is that the terminology is vacuous, without any coherent meaning. The terms ‘left’ and ‘right’ are akin to empty vessels that can be filled with anything, depending on its context (Sartori, 1976, p. 335), meaning that the distinction “should be relational, which has nothing to do with a priori issues or principles” (Shim, 2020, p. 25). Research that finds differences in how individuals perceive the L-R terminology, varying for example by sociodemographic variables (Bauer et al., 2016) and national context (Zuell and Scholz, 2019), is interpreted by some as support for the explanation. If accurate, then there would be no consistent predictor of what is left- or right-wing across time and space. Since the empty vessels explanation does not predict what will be left or right (only that anything in theory could be left- or right-wing), it is not possible to form testable predictions. This explanation is, however, the most likely answer if the context-independent explanations fail, similar to a null hypothesis.

Additionally, an explanation of the divide is that the Left is more open to change compared to the Right. Resistance to change is an important psychological trait that has been found to correlate with L-R self-placements. This is consistently found in Western representative democracies (Jost et al., 2003b; Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Jost et al., 2009), whereas contradicting evidence is found in Eastern Europe (Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Aspelund et al., 2013). I test this explanation in a subsequent analysis in the appendix (see Fig. C.3).

Data and Method

To test the competing hypotheses, I utilise the seventh (2017-2020) wave of the WVS and the fifth wave of the EVS. Only representative democracies are included in the analysis because it is unlikely that wide-spread and informed L-R self-placements amongst voters will develop unless citizens are involved in, or observe, political competition (Thorisdottir et al., 2007, p. 183). Therefore, I include all countries in the data sets that have been classified as a democracy more than 10 years prior to the survey in the analyses, measured with the Polity IV index (Marshall et al., 2014) and the V-Dem

dataset⁶⁶ (Lührmann et al., 2018).⁶⁷ 26 countries are included in the main analysis in the paper.

L-R Self-Placement is the dependent variable we are aiming to explain, measured on a 10-point scale. To evaluate H1, *Privatization* is measured with attitudes towards whether government (1) or private (10) ownership of business and industry ought to be increased. I use attitudes towards different inequalities as independent variables to test H3, where individuals can be more or less positive about policies that relatively benefits the lower group compared to the group that does/has it better. Different inequalities are salient in different democracies and the coefficients thus ought to be significantly positive or non-significant, but not negative, when controlling for other factors. The WVS allows for three measurements of attitudes towards inequality: *Economic Inequality*, *Gender Inequality*, and *Intolerance of Homosexuality*. The survey items do not measure any general egalitarianism, but rather measures individuals' attitudes towards these inequalities. In each case we have an inequality between two groups, with one group who overall does better compared to the other group. Acceptance of inequality in each of these areas is expected to correlate with right-wing self-placements. Consequently, all survey items are re-scaled so that higher values reflect higher levels of acceptance of inequality.⁶⁸

Economic Inequality is measured with attitudes regarding whether “incomes should be made more equal” or whether “we need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort.” *Gender Inequality* is measured by combining four survey items into one variable: whether “men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce,” “a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl,” “men make better political leaders than women do,” and whether “men make better business executives than women do” (creating a twelve-point scale; see Table C.1 in the appendix for further details). *Intolerance of Homosexuality* is measured according to how justifiable the respondent found homosexuality on a ten-point scale. This variable does

⁶⁶ I include countries that are considered electoral or liberal democracies.

⁶⁷ Only included if democratic on both metrics.

⁶⁸ I also include the variable *Xenophobia* in the models, which measures whether respondents mention that they would not want to have someone of a different race as their neighbour. This is a reasonable measurement of racial/ethnic discrimination, but it is not directional, and thus problematic for our purposes since minorities and weak ethnic groups can also have xenophobic attitudes. This means that this measurement cannot be used as an independent variable to test H3.

not directly measure attitudes towards the inequality between heterosexual and homosexual individuals around the world, but rather measures attitudes towards the weaker group. I nevertheless expect that these attitudes will correspond fairly well with how individuals view the overall inequality between homosexual and heterosexual individuals even though the variable is slightly more akin to a proxy measurement.

Previous research demonstrates the importance of social identities for L-R self-placements (Freire, 2006a) and the following standard control variables are included: ethnicity, age, level of education, income, gender, size of city, union, religious denomination, and church attendance. I also include controls for level of post-materialism, attitudes towards change, and whether respondents view themselves as world citizens or not. The appendix details operationalisations (Table C.1), as well as descriptive statistics (Table C.4), further.

The combined WVS 7 and EVS 5 data does not include information on ethnicity, and a control variable for geographical region is used instead. As a robustness check, I run the same models with WVS 7 and WVS 6 data separately where ethnic data is available. The models with this WVS data (Fig. C.1 and C.2 in the appendix) control for ethnicity instead of geographical region,⁶⁹ yet produces highly similar results. The appendix also includes an analysis where partisanship is controlled for as a robustness check, also producing largely the same results (see Fig. C.4). Partisanship is not controlled for in the main models because an individual is likely to choose party because of their policy preferences, which would lead to an underestimation of the independent variable coefficients.

H4 and H5 assert that when an issue dimension is salient to voters, then there should be a stronger correlation between attitudes towards that issue and L-R self-placements. To evaluate H4 and H5, as well as to compare them, we need a case where we can evaluate them at the same time. For acceptance of inequality theory, that means a case where there are two or more inequality dimensions that are at similar levels of high salience. The Netherlands is a suitable case, as the immigration and economy dimensions of politics are both salient, and it is arguably clear that these two dimensions are the main dimensions of contestation there (De Vries et al., 2013). Weber and Saris (2014) have also demonstrated that the relationship between attitudes towards economic inequality

⁶⁹ The WVS 7 and EVS 5 combined data also does not have a variable measuring resistance to change.

and L-R self-placements, as well as attitudes towards immigration and L-R self-placements, is stronger for those that view each respective issue as important in the Netherlands. However, Weber and Saris' approach is quite different from this paper, as they do not examine this as an interaction effect, where the important question is whether there is a significant difference in the effect on L-R self-placement between those that do and do not view the issue as important. Most importantly, they do not investigate the effect of personal issue salience on the relationship between negative attitudes towards economic statism and right-wing self-placement, which is needed to compare whether attitudes towards inequality or economic statism best explain L-R self-placements. When using the Netherlands to evaluate H4, it ought to be understood as a most likely case, as government intervention in the economy has traditionally been understood to be closely related to the L-R dimension in the Netherlands (as earlier discussed).⁷⁰

Data is taken from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES) for 2017 (Meer et al., 2017) and the analysis is mostly the same as for the WVS and EVS data, with similar control variables included (see appendix for exact details). Examining answers from a public opinion survey is appropriate in a case such as the Netherlands, where we can assume that the L-R dimension is widely understood in the population, i.e., it is not just an elite phenomenon (in which case it would be misguided to test the proposed interaction effects using L-R self-placements of the general population). The survey includes a (probability) sample of all eligible voters in the Netherlands. Preferences for government intervention in the economy is measured with the attitudinal item "taxes should be cut, even if that is at the expense of the standard of services," which measures preferences for the size and role of the government in the economy. The two most politically salient inequalities in the Netherlands are economic and refugee related inequality. Attitudes towards economic inequality is measured by combining two attitudinal items (weighted equally). One survey item measures individuals' preference for income differences on a 7-point scale, from 1 (smaller) to 7 (bigger), and the other survey item measures whether "the government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels," on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

⁷⁰ The Netherlands is also a most likely case for H5. This means that it is difficult to generalize any findings in favour of H5 in the Netherlands to other countries. However, this is acceptable for the purposes of this paper, given that the focus of the paper is to compare two explanations of the L-R dimension, and not on finding definitive/strong proof for any one explanation.

Attitudes towards asylum seekers is measured on a scale from 1 (more asylum seekers should be admitted) to 7 (more asylum seekers should be sent back).

Respondents were asked what the most important problem (MIP) was in the Netherlands and coders were subsequently constructed categories of these open-ended answers. I construct three MIP variables which correspond to the three independent variables. Respondents could give more than one answer and consequently gave different number of answers. To avoid utilising answers that are less important, I only count the first three mentioned issues (even if the respondent mentioned more issues), as three was the median number of most important issues recorded per respondent (I change this number in the appendix in Table C.10 to test the robustness of this measure, with only minor changes to the results). Each MIP variable is binary: 1 if respondents mentioned the issue as one of their first three answers, and 0 if not. For H4, I create the variable *MIP: Economics and Big Government*, which includes the three categories: “Economy / Financial situation,” “Income / Price levels / Taxes” and “Regulation / Big Government.” *MIP: Economics and Economic Inequality* also includes mentions of “Economy / Financial situation,” but then mentions of “Inequality / Poverty” instead of “Regulation / Big Government” and “Income / Price levels / Taxes.” *MIP: Minorities* includes mentions of “Minorities” and “Intolerance / Discrimination,” which are the two categories that most closely relate to the immigration/refugee divide. Minorities was also the most popular of all 22 categories (describing the most important problem), strengthening the claim that the ethnic/immigration divide is highly salient.

Results

The focus of this paper is to evaluate two competing explanations of the L-R dimension: preferences for more or less government involvement in the economy, and acceptance of inequality. Another less popular hypothesis (resistance to change) is tested in the appendix. If these three context-independent explanations fail to explain variations in L-R politics around the world, then this would suggest that the terminology may be entirely context-dependent, in line with the empty vessels model. Fig. 6.1 displays the country-level coefficients from multilevel regression models for the variables testing H1, H2, and H3, with lines demonstrating the related (95%) confidence intervals. All independent variables are standardized to enable comparison, and in each model the independent variables have random slopes to evaluate how they vary at the country level.

The clearest result is that attitudes towards economic inequality and gender inequality are the best predictors of L-R self-placements of all four independent variables in Fig. 6.1. All but one of the coefficients in Fig. 6.1 for these two variables are positively correlated with L-R self-placements (but not all significant). *Intolerance of Homosexuality* tends to be significantly positive (or not significant) as well, but not at all as often associated with L-R self-placements as *Economic Inequality* and *Gender Inequality*. All countries but Peru⁷¹ have at least one positive significant coefficient of the three variables measuring acceptance of an inequality, but they often have multiple significant coefficients. This is congruent with H3, given that different inequalities are important in different contexts. Also important to note is that two out of the 26 countries have a negative (and significant) coefficient for *Intolerance of Homosexuality*, but these countries also have at least one significant and positive coefficient for another measurement of acceptance of inequality.

The coefficients for *Privatization* (H1) can explain around half of the cases, much less than attitudes towards economic and gender equality. That attitudes positive to privatization are not predicting right-wing self-placements more often is a somewhat extraordinary finding considering how common it is to assume that these attitudes separate left from right. The primary issue with this explanation is that it is highly inflexible, when we know that L-R competition manifests itself very differently in different political contexts. The other version of this argument is that it only divides left- from right-wing politics in economic matters. However, acceptance of economic inequality alone predicts right-wing self-placements in more countries than *Privatization*, contrary to what was postulated in H2.

A less popular, but nevertheless relevant, proposed criterion separating left- from right-wing politics is that the Right is more resistant to change than the Left (Jost et al., 2003b; Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Jost et al., 2009). I test this hypothesis in the appendix and find that the criterion can explain around half of the cases and performs similarly well to attitudes towards privatization. Attitudes towards inequality thus outperforms this explanation as well. These findings are significant for the field given that the data covers

⁷¹ Peru does, however, have a positive significant coefficient for *Gender Inequality* in the model using WVS 7 data only, in the appendix.

most parts of the world, thus being arguably broadly representative of most representative democracies.

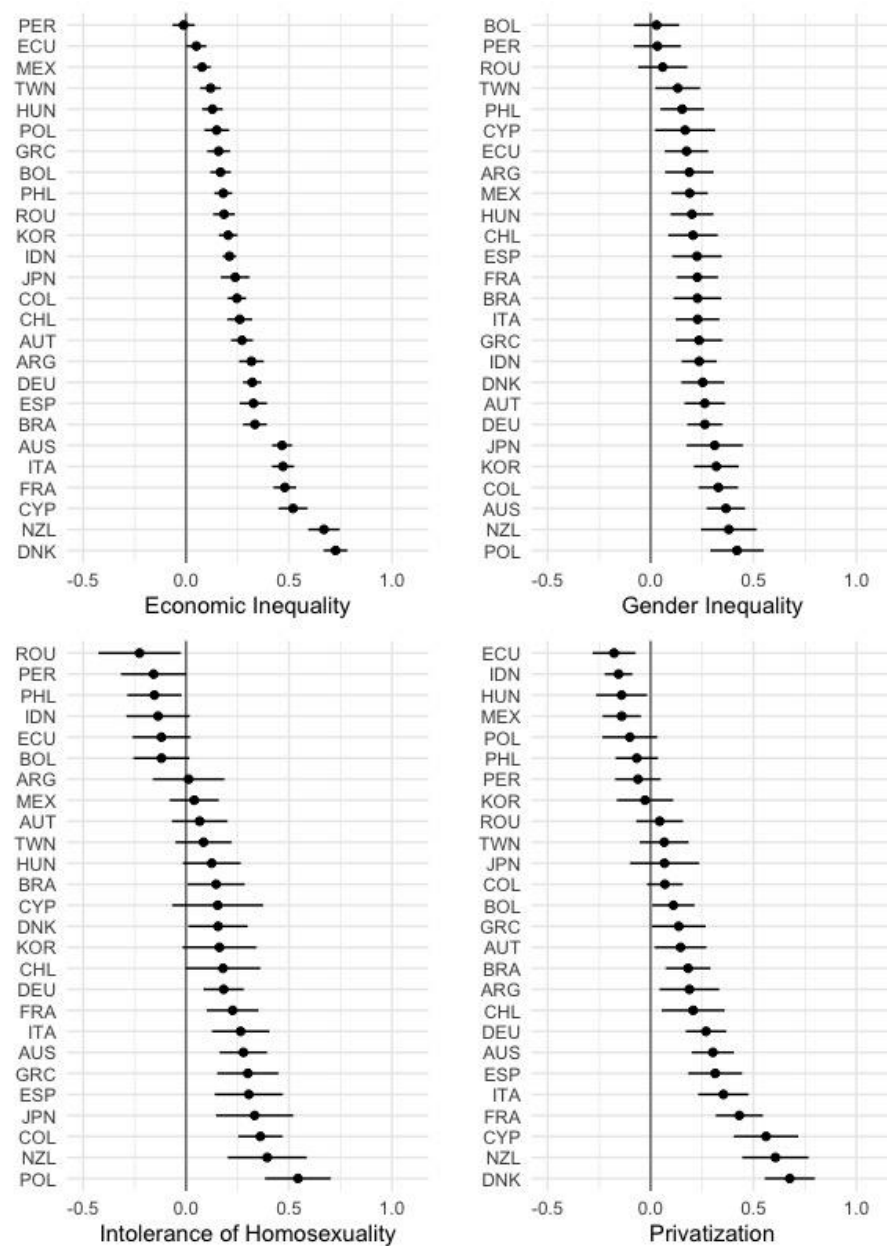


Fig. 6.1. Country Coefficients for Independent Variables – WVS 7 and EVS 5

Note: Multilevel regression models explaining left-right self-placements. The figure displays coefficients and 95% confidence intervals by country.

The multilevel models demonstrate the potential of acceptance of inequality in explaining L-R politics around the world, as it clearly outperforms competing explanations. However, the general trend observed in Fig. 6.1 is not sufficient proof of that acceptance

of inequality separates left from right in all contexts. We are not capturing all potential inequalities that might be the salient political divides in different countries. There are many different inequalities that divide politics in different societies, so the argument has to be evaluated in each case (separately), which is beyond the scope of this study.

This paper uses the Netherlands as a case study to test the framework in greater depth and compare it further with attitudes towards economic statism. Specifically, I propose that personal issue salience moderates the relationship between how acceptance of an inequality and L-R self-placements, especially important in contexts where there is not one dominant salient inequality. If that is the case, then the interaction effect between accepting an inequality and finding that specific issue personally salient ought to be significantly positive. The same ought to be true for attitudes towards economic statism. Even though the issue of immigration has become more and more salient in the Netherlands over the last 50 years (De Vries et al., 2013), it might nevertheless be the case that voters who find the economy and size of government to be their main political concern might still place themselves as left- or right-wing based on their attitude towards taxation and spending (an interaction effect between their issue attitude and issue salience).

I run ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions with interaction effects to test both explanations (H4 and H5). The attitudinal independent variables *Economic Inequality* and *Less Asylum Seekers* are standardized (thus centred around 0) so that the interaction effects are measured at the average level of the other effect. *Less Taxes* is kept as a binary variable, as is the personal salience variables. Robustness checks are conducted in the appendix where both *Economic Inequality* and *Less Asylum Seekers* are transformed to binary variables, providing only minor changes to the results (see Table C.10).

The results in Table 6.1, as well as Fig. 6.2, and 6.3, demonstrate that personal issue salience is associated with a stronger link between acceptance of inequality and L-R self-placements. This demonstrates support for that salience of an issue at the individual level moderates the relationship between attitudes towards inequalities and L-R self-placements in the Netherlands. As can be seen in Fig. 6.2 and 6.3, this moderating effect is different for individuals on the Right and the Left. Individuals are likely to be more left-wing if they find economic issues to be important while at the same time rejecting economic inequality. Conversely, individuals are more likely to be right-wing if the find issues related to minorities to be important while at the same time wanting less refugees

in the Netherlands. This indicates that different issues mobilise voters on the Left and the Right.

H4 receives less support than H5. I run several different specifications of the regressions in Table 6.1, but the interaction effect between *MIP: Economics and Big Government* and *Less Taxation* is never significantly correlated with L-R self-placements. As can be seen in the visualisation of the interaction effect in Fig. 6.4, individuals who believe that economic policy and the issue of big government are the most important issues in politics are not significantly more likely to have a stronger association between their L-R self-placement and their attitudes towards taxation.

Table 6.1. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in the Netherlands 2017

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Less Taxes</i>		0.54*** (0.13)	0.50*** (0.15)	0.52*** (0.13)	0.47*** (0.15)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>		0.94*** (0.06)	0.95*** (0.06)	0.86*** (0.06)	0.86*** (0.06)
<i>Less Asylum Seekers</i>		0.55*** (0.06)	0.55*** (0.06)	0.37*** (0.08)	0.38*** (0.08)
<i>Less Taxes * MIP: Economics and Big Government</i>			0.35 (0.32)		0.29 (0.31)
<i>Economic Inequality * MIP: Economics and Economic Inequality</i>				0.23* (0.12)	0.25** (0.13)
<i>Less Asylum Seekers * MIP: Minorities</i>				0.27** (0.11)	0.27** (0.11)
<i>Intercept</i>	6.61*** (0.85)	6.09*** (0.72)	6.09*** (0.72)	6.00*** (0.72)	6.24*** (0.73)
Sociodemographic Controls	+	+	+	+	+
Attitudinal Controls	+	+	+	+	+
Observations	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338
R ²	0.16	0.39	0.39	0.40	0.41
Adjusted R ²	0.14	0.37	0.38	0.39	0.39

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. OLS regressions. Data from the DPES 2017.

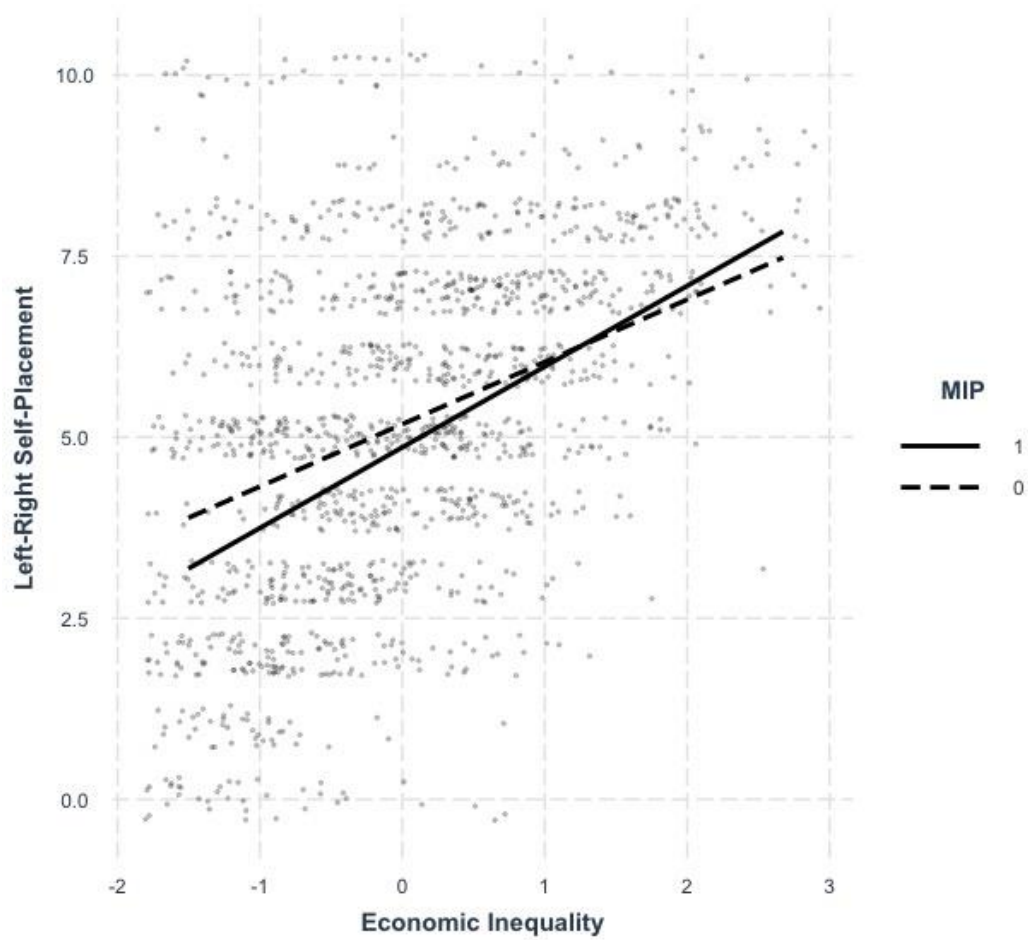


Fig. 6.2. The Predicted Effect of Accepting Economic Inequality on L-R Self-Placement, Depending on Personal Issue Salience

Note: OLS regression model explaining left-right self-placements. DPES 2017.

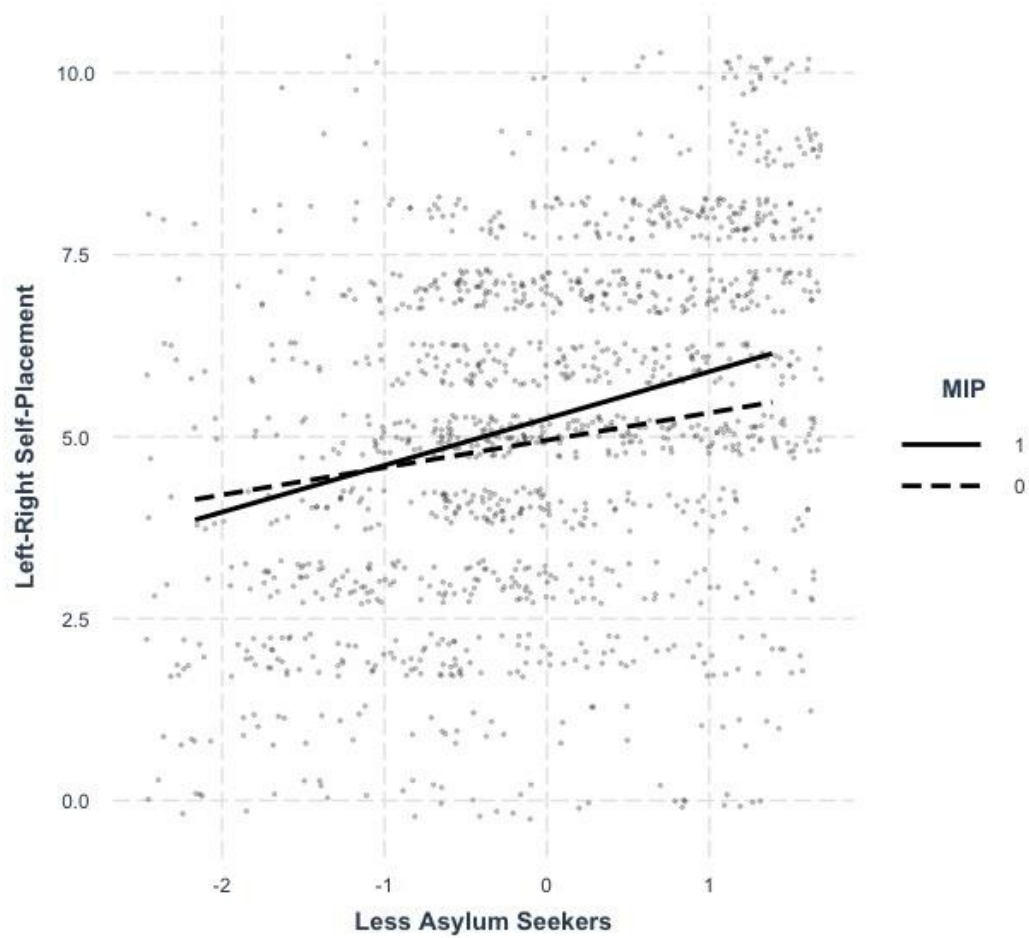


Fig. 6.3. The Predicted Effect of Wanting Less Asylum Seekers on L-R Self-Placement, Depending on Personal Issue Salience

Note: OLS regression model explaining left-right self-placements. DPES 2017.

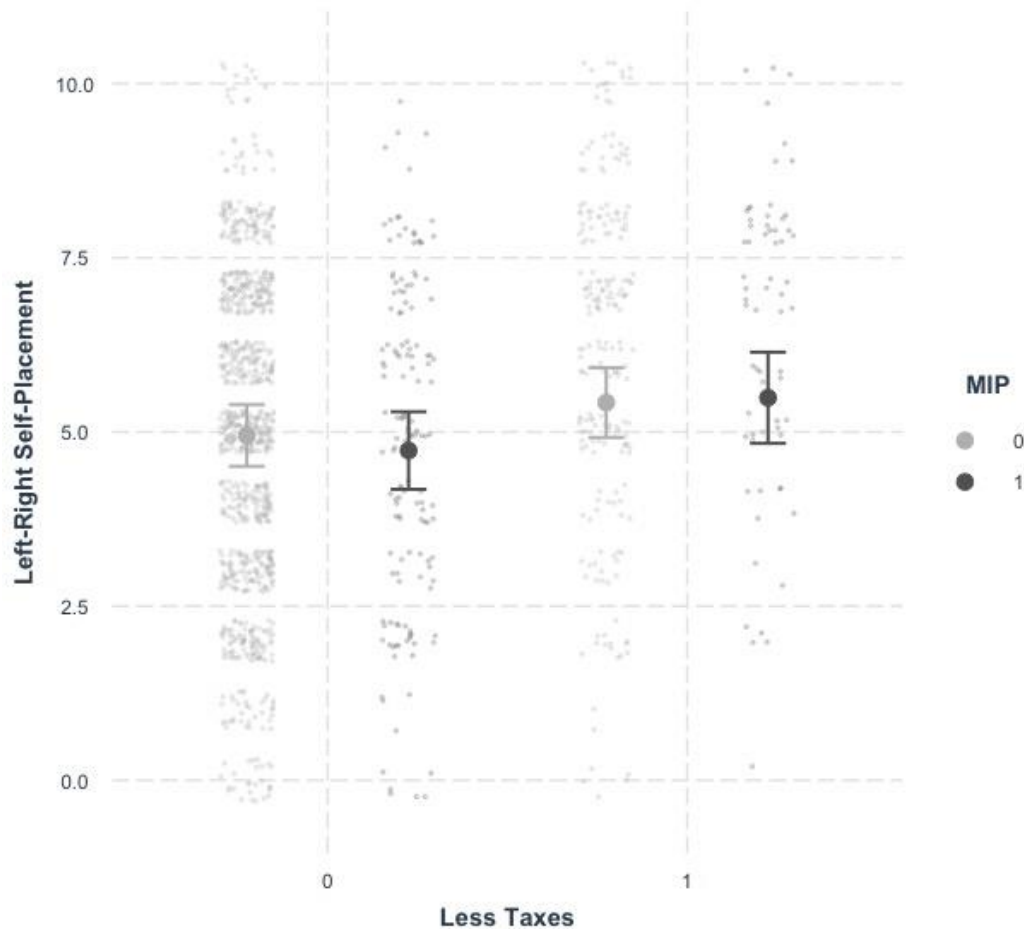


Fig. 6.4. The Predicted Effect of Wanting Less Taxes on L-R Self-Placement, Depending on Personal Issue Salience

Note: OLS regression model explaining left-right self-placements. DPES 2017.

Conclusion

There has been a disconnect between researchers attempting to understand what separates left- from right-wing politics, on the one hand, and the broader academic community and general public on the other. Many in the latter categories continue to assume that government involvement in the economy is the core feature of L-R politics, resulting in much confusion about the L-R dimension in the 21st century. Those that examine whether there could be a core divide between left- and right-wing politics have not, however, taken this idea as seriously, and no one in the academic literature has to my knowledge proposed it to be the underlying divide of the L-R dimension. This has likely meant that the idea has remained largely unscrutinised (see Freire and Kivistik, 2013, for an exception) and thus ultimately managed to survive.

In an attempt to fill this gap in the literature, this paper has examined whether attitudes towards government involvement in the economy or attitudes towards different inequalities better predict L-R self-placements, first at the macro level around the world, and then subsequently evaluated these two perspectives in the Netherlands. The results clearly demonstrate that attitudes towards inequalities outperform concerns about the government's role in the economy in predicting L-R self-placements, as well as other alternative explanations (such as resistance to change, evaluated in the appendix). In fact, attitudes towards economic inequality alone are a better predictor of L-R self-placements than attitudes towards the government's role in the economy, demonstrating that the latter should not even be conceived of as describing the economic L-R dimension (as H2 suggests). These findings have important implications for political science (as well as outside of academia). For example, the CHES and GPS expert surveys will need to reconsider their definitions of the economic L-R dimension, which they describe as pertaining to the government's role in the economy.

This paper thus demonstrates that an individual's opinion regarding the role of the government in the economy is not the best predictor of their L-R self-placement, but also provides considerable evidence in favour of the argument that acceptance of inequality is a context-independent criterion of the L-R dimension. Moreover, the paper advances the literature by providing an explanation of how different inequalities shape L-R politics in different contexts. Namely, personal issue salience decides which (acceptance of) inequality leads to individuals' L-R self-placements in a society. This is found in the Dutch case, but the Netherlands is a favourable case for the framework, inhibiting further generalizations. Therefore, future research should apply the same framework to new cases that provide more difficult tests.⁷² There are many different contexts that can be evaluated more in depth, providing ample opportunities for more research. That is beyond the scope of this paper, but the results presented here are nevertheless important in the search for an explanation of how the L-R dimension manifests itself around the world.

⁷² However, this mechanism might be difficult to detect at the voter level in contexts where the L-R language is not as widespread (and the phenomenon mainly takes place at the elite level, for example).

Chapter 7. The Left-Right Chameleon – Examining Variation in Left-Right Competition

Abstract

The left-right dimension of politics is arguably the most dominant ideological dimension in most representative democracies, and is associated with different political divides depending on the context. However, this variation remains both underexplored and unexplained. This paper utilises country-level variation to test the theory that left-right competition is, at its core, about acceptance of inequality. The theory is first assessed through an examination of the large-scale variation in left-right competition around the world and over time, which demonstrates the theory's predictive power. The paper subsequently compares the theory to competing explanations (that attitudes towards change or economic statism separate left from right) in three cases of dissimilar left-right competition: Indonesia (religious divide), Moldova (post-communist context), and Israel (ethno-national-territorial divide). Regression analyses of survey data from these three countries reveal that only acceptance of inequality can consistently explain which side is left and right, providing substantial evidence for the theory.

Introduction

What divides left- from right-wing politics? This question has been debated in the academic literature for at least 75 years (MacIver, 1947), yet, political science has failed to come up with a conclusive answer to this question. Much research has, however, established that there is large-scale variation in how the left-right (L-R) dimension manifests itself around the world. The L-R dimension was intimately tied to disagreements over economic policy in Western representative democracies after World War II, but before that, religious politics was frequently associated with L-R politics in Western Europe (see for example Santen, 2002; Bréchon, 2017). There have also been many instances where the L-R dimension has been tied to ethnic divides, immigration, nationalism, and urban-rural politics, to name a few examples (Huber and Inglehart, 1995; Benoit and Laver, 2006; see also examples in Table 7.1). This has led some observers to

conclude that the meaning of the L-R dimension is context-dependent (Benoit and Laver, 2006, pp. 141-144; Shim, 2020, p. 25).

In this paper I argue that viewing the L-R dimension as a context-dependent dimension may be mistaken. Rather, it ought to be viewed as a chameleon: taking on various forms in different settings, but nevertheless remaining the same animal. Specifically, this paper argues, in concordance with much of the literature (MacIver, 1947, p. 216; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990, p. 293; Bobbio, 1996; Lukes, 2003; Noël et al., 2021, p. 317), that the only constant of L-R competition is that the further to the right, the more willing political actors are to accept inequality. Such a consistent law-like pattern of L-R politics, if true, has important consequences for political science, and politics more broadly, as it leads us towards understanding one of its fundamental structures.

The main contribution of this paper is to provide a parsimonious account of *acceptance of inequality theory* and test it in new contexts by utilising underappreciated variation in L-R politics. I conceptualise the theory at the societal level, as I argue that each context is akin to one case (as is often implicitly assumed in previous research). This assertion leads the paper to review different types of L-R competition around the world and throughout time in an effort to increase variation. This case selection logic is similar to a deviant case selection method (Seawright and Gerring, 2008).

The focus of this paper is thus on exploiting variation and uncovering unusual instances of L-R competition. “Unusual events provide opportunities to test the empirical implications of rival theories, which are often rather close in practice” (Culpepper and Reinke, 2014, p. 432). This is certainly true for theories of the difference between left- and right-wing politics, which can all explain L-R competition in Western contexts post World War II (which closely followed the class cleavage). Cases beyond these instances of L-R division provide more difficult hoops for explanations of the L-R dimension to jump through. I am unaware of research that maps these differences in L-R competition around the world or over time and utilises this large-scale variation to assess the value of different frameworks and theories regarding what the L-R conflict is about. There is thus a substantial gap in the literature that this paper aims to fill.

To compare acceptance of inequality theory with competing hypotheses of what separates left from right, the paper subsequently chooses three of the reviewed cases of left-right competition, and studies them more in depth: Indonesia, Moldova, and Israel.

The selected cases demonstrate the weaknesses of competing L-R frameworks, in particular that L-R politics is about government intervention in the economy or resistance to change. Conversely, the mapping of cases and the case studies together provide significant support for the proposed theory: the further to the right, the more willing political actors are to accept inequality on the salient divide(s). Key to this explanation is the fact that inequality can concern different dimensions or domains, as theorised in burgeoning scholarship (Lindqvist, 2019; Joshi, 2021), allowing L-R competition to be applied to diverse political divides around the world. The L-R chameleon's ability to adapt therefore can help explain the prevalence of L-R politics around the world (Noël et al., 2021). This theory consequently also undermines the idea that the terms 'left' and 'right' are akin to empty vessels that can be filled with anything.

The paper is structured as follows. The different competing explanations proposed in the literature are presented in the following section, along with supporting evidence in previous literature. Acceptance of inequality theory is then specified, followed by a methodological section detailing which evidence will be assessed, and how. The paper subsequently provides a review of cases of L-R competition, with a focus on the most unusual instances. The three case studies are successively presented in the following order: Indonesia, Moldova, and Israel. The paper ends with concluding remarks on what the findings of this paper mean for our understanding of the L-R dimension.

Proposed Explanations of the Left-Right Dimension

The L-R dimension can be divided into two parts: an ideological conflict that is based on programmatic competition, and an accompanying L-R language that is utilised to describe this conflict. When individuals state that something is 'left' or 'right,' e.g., themselves, a policy, or a party, then this is a description of where these political objects belong in the political landscape (which side they are associated with). Studies of the L-R dimension in political science often (implicitly) focus on understanding the political divide in society, rather than the language itself (L-R classifications – the labelling of political phenomena as left or right), which is used as a measurement of the political divide/landscape.

There are several proposed criteria of the L-R dimension in the literature, each of which aim to explain the difference between left- and right-wing politics (i.e., the divide, not the language). The central contention of these arguments is that there is a core

underlying conflict of the L-R dimension, which does not change depending on the context, nor over time. Given that the same terminology is used in different countries, it would seem to be logical that a core feature of the L-R dimension would remain the same. That is, why would we use the same terminology in different contexts to describe various unrelated political conflicts? While there are many separate proposed explanations of the L-R dimension, this paper focuses on the three most popular arguments in the literature proposing an underlying/core dividing line between left- and right-wing politics (as well as the empty vessels explanation arguing against this logic).

To begin, attitudes towards the government's involvement in the economy is often referred to as the core of the left-right dimension (e.g., Potrafke, 2010, p. 136; Obinger et al., 2013, p. 1302; Ansell, 2019, p. 180), even though this has to my knowledge never been proposed to be the underlying divide of the L-R dimension by any scholar. There is nevertheless some supporting empirical evidence demonstrating that attitudes favouring economic statism predict right-wing self-placements in Latin America (Wiesehomeier and Doyle, 2012) and Western Europe (Freire and Kivistik, 2013). However, Freire and Kivistik (2013) find contradicting regression coefficients (non-significant, or significant but in the wrong direction) for several countries, for example Argentina, Chile, Hungary, and South Africa.

That those on the Left are more open to change compared to those on the Right is another potential explanation, which there is some evidence in favour of, at least in Western contexts (Jost et al., 2003b; Jost et al., 2009; Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Aspelund et al., 2013). Conflicting evidence for this hypothesis exists in Eastern Europe, where some studies find supporting evidence (Thorisdottir et al., 2007; Piurko et al., 2011), while others do not (Aspelund et al., 2013). Jost et al. (2003b, p. 343), who suggest that acceptance of inequality and resistance to change both separate left- from right-wing politics, argue that these are “independent constructs in principle” and that this highlights the importance of “investigating our hypotheses in as many different national and cultural contexts as possible [... in particular] cultures in which the status quo is relatively egalitarian and/or left-wing.” East European post-communist contexts have therefore been a source of contention. It is unclear whether resistance to change can explain the significant change from communism to post-communism, because it entailed significant societal change but was seemingly a move to the right (Greenberg and Jonas, 2003, p. 377). As a counterpoint, one can consider that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was

driven by a progressive left-wing compared to more conservative right-wing forces in Soviet Russia (Evans and Whitefield, 1998), although, it should be noted that the L-R spectrum quickly changed in Russia after 1991.⁷³ As this discussion illuminates, it is quite unclear whether attitudes towards change can be the main dividing line between left and right in post-communist settings.

A third explanation is the empty vessels argument, which asserts that the terminology is completely context dependent (e.g., Sartori, 1976, p. 335). The large-scale variation in the content of the L-R dimension that can be found in various countries is taken as evidence that the terminology does not carry any inherent meaning that transcends political context. The trend of academic journal articles being named “When Left is Right”, “Left-Right Reversed” and “Left is Right and Right is Left?” (Tavits and Letki, 2009; Aydogan and Slapin, 2015; Shim, 2020), has likely bolstered this thesis. The argument seems plausible considering the variation in how the L-R landscape manifests itself, but only holds as an explanation if the alternative hypotheses (the explanations proposing a context-independent underlying theme) fail to explain all (or at least almost all) contexts. In simple terms, the L-R dimension cannot be completely context-dependent if there is an element of left-right competition that stays the same regardless of context.

Acceptance of Inequality – A Theory

Acceptance of inequality is the most popular explanation of the L-R dimension (Joshi, 2021, p. 1), but, crucially, theorists often disagree on how exactly acceptance of inequality separates left from right. Laponce (1981) and Jost et al. (2003b) propose the explanation in conjunction with separate additional dividing lines between left- and right-wing politics (which can be condensed to secularism–religiosity and change–resistance to change, respectively). Other work focuses on how to conceptualize inequality (see for example Bobbio, 1996; Lukes, 2003), or postulating a specific inequality that separates left from right, like Joshi (2021), who agrees that the L-R dimension in large part is about

⁷³ Evans and Whitefield (1998) suggest that the L-R dimension in Soviet Russia in the 1980s was determined by attitudes towards civil liberties, but in the 1990s this changed as the main salient divide became the economic divide, leading to a left-right reversal (because many of those critical of authoritarian communism later chose the right-wing side in the economic competition). However, more analysis is necessary to establish what the main determinant of the L-R divide was in Soviet Russia in the 1980s, as Evans and Whitefield only present evidence from 1991-1996 (due to data availability).

inequality but that this inequality concerns power rather than inequality more generally. Specifically, the diffusion–concentration of power (i.e., more or less equality of power) along different issue domains. In this paper I build on the more general idea that L-R politics is about acceptance of inequality (MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1984; Bobbio, 1996; Lukes, 2003) and specify this theory. Crucially, I provide a theoretical explanation of the causality behind L-R politics, which previous literature has said little of, as it has been preoccupied with finding a stable correlation.

Why would acceptance of inequality separate left from right? To explain why, it is appropriate to begin by specifying that L-R politics is a societal-level conflict. It can take place in different types of societies and is not limited to representative democracies. However, in a representative democracy where there is universal suffrage, there is a reason for citizens to join the political process, whereas a lack of suffrage may disincentivize citizens from developing ideological beliefs (as they have less political power).⁷⁴ Other factors such as clientelism, strong partisanship, and valence issues such as corruption, may also lead political participants to not choose sides in the political conflict due to ideological beliefs. Clientelism hinders L-R competition because voters do not vote (and politicians do not seek votes) due to ideological disagreements (Ruth, 2016). Valence issues should by the same logic make ideological competition less relevant (Stokes, 1963; Green, 2007). Conversely, we know that clearer programmatic competition between political parties in a country is associated with voters having more stable L-R attitudes (Harbers et al., 2013).

Conflicts between the perceived interests of different groups are very potent political divides. I argue that such divides become even more potent when they are understood as inequalities. Such group divides can be cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967), but also conflicts between groups such as animals and people (for example, debates over veganism), or between groups of different sexualities, which goes beyond the traditional cleavage concept (Bartolini and Mair, 2007, pp. 198-204). The important ingredient is that there is an inequality, where one side is viewed as weaker/has it worse than the other. I define an inequality as the overall difference in outcomes between two

⁷⁴ In a very undemocratic society, there may be political competition at the elite level nevertheless, and subsequently, there may be ideological competition there (this was the case in several European countries in the 19th century, before democratization).

groups,⁷⁵ in terms of what people value, such as power, resources, and status. The inequality typically takes place along a dimension of contestation, such as an economic, ethnic, or religious dimension, to name a few possible divides. A divide is thus defined here in very broad terms because the key concept – inequality – is a very flexible concept.

Variation in salience of different inequalities becomes key to consider, because it helps us understand how the (likely) causal mechanism operates. There are several different latent inequalities and group divides in any society, and individuals may be relatively more sympathetic to the stronger side (compared to the weaker) in one conflict, and the weaker in another. Whether they will choose the left or the right side in the ideological landscape is therefore dependent on which issue dimension/group divide they find the most important (salience at the personal level), and subsequently base their L-R choice on (Giger and Lefkofridi, 2014). For many individuals there is thus a necessary prioritisation when choosing sides in ideological competition. The salience of an inequality at the country level may in turn be a reflection of many individuals in a given society prioritising that specific inequality (aggregated individual-level salience), or it could be due to politicians highlighting a specific group divide that serves their goals, or both. It is, in any case, clear that different societies have conflicts over different inequalities/issue dimensions (Deegan-Krause, 2006), which in turn has two critical implications for our understanding of the L-R dimension. First, a difference in the core L-R divide will produce very different types of coalitions on the Left and the Right respectively. For example, in one society individuals may be divided along class lines, whereas in another they may be divided along religious lines, which may make these L-R landscapes virtually unrecognizable from each other. Second, individuals' attitudes towards other issue dimensions (beyond the main divide) may not necessarily follow the logic of acceptance of inequality theory (the Right being more accepting of inequality), because these attitudes do not form the core of the L-R divide. In summary, the main salient inequality is likely to be the most important determinant of the L-R landscape in any given context. The theory thus provides its strongest prediction with regards to the main divide (that which divides participants): in a polity where the most salient issue boils down to an inequality, we expect the Left to be less accepting of it than the Right. This

⁷⁵ There can be more groups involved, or one can view an inequality as taking place along a spectrum of individuals instead (such as an income distribution). However, I limit my discussion to only two groups for the sake of simplicity.

core divide then shapes the broader L-R conflict, which in turn influences how individuals understand L-R politics in that context. This prediction is tested in the remainder of this paper.

Methodology

The focus of this inquiry is thus on each society (most often a national context), as the theory makes a strong prediction regarding this level of analysis. However, previous research already draws inferences (regarding what the L-R dimension concerns) about the national context, at least implicitly (e.g., Jou, 2010c), even when examining L-R politics at the micro level by studying individuals' L-R self-placements. This is logical given that the L-R dimension is a divide that individuals in a society create together and have a shared understanding of (although a key question is to which extent this meaning is shared). The fact that there is a societal-level meaning of left and right, which voters have at least a partially shared understanding of, is important to establish because this means that each country (/context) should arguably be viewed as a single (independent) case. This means that it is vitally important to find more variation in L-R politics that can be exploited for theory building and theory testing, because we are otherwise limiting variation quite a lot.

The observable implication of equality–inequality theory at the societal level is that if we examine different types of L-R competition around the world, with as much variation as possible, then acceptance of inequality ought to correlate with L-R positions in the expected direction. Previous studies have not taken into account the vast amount of variation in L-R competition, both temporal and spatial, that can be utilised to examine what separates left from right. I therefore aim to fill this gap by examining various cases of L-R competition. I select cases (see Table 7.1) by going through the literature that details the main dominant divides/cleavages in different societies at different periods of time, to find out which of these are considered to constitute/be most closely related to the L-R dimension in that context. The aim is to maximise the variation in the type of politics that dominates each political system.⁷⁶ This case selection logic mirrors that of a deviant case selection method (Seawright and Gerring, 2008). It is also similar to a most different

⁷⁶ I therefore ignore many cases where the economic/class divide is the most salient political divide linked to the L-R dimension, because these cases do not provide more variation.

systems design approach for acceptance of inequality theory, as varying dimensions are salient in each case and many other relevant variables vary considerably, but we nevertheless expect L-R politics to be predicted by the independent variable (acceptance of inequality). With regards to the most salient divide in that context, the Left should favour the perceived interests of the weaker (less privileged) side with lesser outcomes, and the Right the stronger side that does better overall. This examination provides a crude initial test of acceptance of inequality theory, as well as the empty vessels explanation, given that it would be very unlikely that equality–inequality theory would by mere chance correctly predict which side will be the Left and the Right in different contexts if left-right terminology had no shared cross-cultural meaning.

While reviewing multiple instances of different types of L-R competition provides variation, it lacks depth. I therefore utilise three case studies that allow for an in-depth account where we can isolate the correlation between L-R self-placements and attitudes towards an inequality, as well as compare the theory with competing explanations. From the cases I identify of different types of L-R competition (Table 7.1), I examine Indonesia, Moldova, and Israel in more depth. I select these three cases because they represent different types of L-R divides: secular-religious (Indonesia), post-communist (Moldova), and ethno-national (Israel), thereby providing important variation for the key prediction of equality–inequality theory. This is similar to what Seawright and Gerring (2008) call a diverse case selection method. These cases are arguably representative of the different types of cases in Table 7.1, but not representative of the whole universe of cases of L-R politics. This has implications for the generalizability of the results, discussed at the end of the paper.

For the Moldovan and Indonesian cases I utilise survey data from the fourth and seventh World Values Survey (WVS) respectively, while I use data from the Israel National Election Study (INES) for the Israeli case. For each case, I run ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions where attitudinal and sociodemographic variables predict L-R self-placements. I describe the variables more in detail when discussing the cases in their respective section of the paper, and further details can be found in the appendix. For the analysis of the WVS data (both the fourth and seventh waves), there are two variables that measure attitudes towards change and privatization (to test the competing hypotheses). To measure preferences for change, I use a categorical variable. Respondents were asked to select the type of societal change they preferred. I measure

preferences for *Radical Change* (“The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action”) and *Against Change* (“Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces”), compared to a baseline category (“Our society must be gradually improved by reforms”). *Privatization* is measured on a ten-point scale, 1 “Private ownership of business and industry should be increased,” to 10 “Government ownership of business and industry should be increased.”

Mapping Cases of Left-Right Competition

Table 7.1 (continued in the appendix with more examples) exhibits examples of different political divides in varying country contexts, but the list is not exhaustive.⁷⁷ The main salient group conflict is defined by the main political group divide, where policy-competition concerns differing interests between groups (programmatic political competition). The list contains examples where there are clear divides between groups, and thus leaves out some of the less clear examples. There are several examples of L-R competition where it is much more unclear which is the most salient inequality. For example Serbia (Jou, 2010c), where there is a lack of clear ideological competition at the party level and a lack of salient group divides/cleavages (even though there are some group divides present). This exclusion from Table 7.1 means that there is a need for further investigation in future research to determine their compatibility with the theory. Setting this limitation aside, the examples detailed in Table 7.1 provide important evidence for acceptance of inequality theory. The examined divides around the world and throughout time consistently correlate with what the theory predicts. The most common lines of conflict around the world that divide societies are arguably class, secular–religious, and ethnic/religious/language minority/majority conflicts, but there are several exceptions. Perhaps a surprising example is the territorial-cultural divide in Norway in

⁷⁷ I exclude the most studied types of L-R competition from Table 7.1, i.e., Western representative democracies from 1945 and onwards. I also do not discuss divides over nationalism in this paper. In such cases the theory ought to be applied with the same procedure as in other instances, because nationalism often functions according to the following logic: the members of the nation are one group, and their perceived interests are compared to a perceived out-group. For example, when nationalism concerns the stronger/better off group in this relationship, and it is the most salient political divide in a society, then we expect that the Right in such a context will be the more nationalistic side.

the 1880s, where the Left represented the rural countryside, in line with the expectations of the theory.

Another divide that has been largely overlooked in the literature of L-R politics is secularism–religion (with some notable exceptions, e.g., Laponce, 1981), which has historically been a common and important cleavage in many representative democracies. Table 7.1 provides examples where this has been considered to be the main L-R divide in Europe, such as in the Netherlands and Poland. Wegner and Cavatorta (2019) examine contemporary Arab countries through voter surveys and find that the secular-Islam divide is often the main programmatic political division there. Blaydes and Linzer (2012) argue that this divide is the basis of the L-R dimension in many Muslim-majority countries. Although many of these countries (of those which are representative democracies) have high levels of clientelism, there is nevertheless some ideological competition (Wegner and Cavatorta, 2019).

The main salient inequality is key to the predictions of the theory. In the case of a secular–religious divide, there is no initial directionality: one group is not more privileged/stronger by definition. Rather, unlike a class conflict, this is dependent on the societal context. Muslim-majority countries tend to have religious institutions/clergy that carry weight in those societies. More importantly, perhaps the most significant source of inequality in these contexts is the majority status of Muslims, which gives them significant electoral power in a representative democracy, even in a context such as Turkey where urban elites have been highly secular. In the next section I examine one religious divide as an example of a secular–religious conflict, namely Indonesia.

Table 7.1. Examples of Different Types of L-R Competition

Main Salient Group Divide(s)	Context	Weak – Left	Strong – Right	Reference
Class	The Czech Republic	Lower class	Middle/upper class	Hloušek and Kopeček (2008)
Religion	Indonesia	Secularism/ religious minorities	Islam	Aspinall et al. (2018)
Religion	Poland	Secularism (/progressive values)	Christianity (/traditional values)	Letki (2013)
Religion	Netherlands 1880s	Secularism	Christianity	Santen (2002)
Territorial/cultural 1880s	Norway	Periphery	Centre	Rokkan (1967)
Nationalist/ethnic/ religious/territorial cleavage	Israel	Palestinians	Israeli individuals/Jewish Israelis	Diskin (1999, pp. 503-504); Arian and Shamir (2008, p. 696)
Ethnicity and class ⁷⁸	United States	Ethnic minority groups and lower class	White majority and middle/upper class	Miller and Schofield (2003)
Class and ethnicity	Peru	Lower class and indigenous groups	Middle/upper class and white, mestizo, Asian	Barrera et al. (2021, pp. 39-48); Raymond and Arce (2011, pp. 560-561)
Class and immigration	Netherlands	Lower class and Muslim immigrants	Middle/upper class and Dutch natives	De Vries et al. (2013)
Religion (and caste)	India	Muslims (and lower caste)	Hindus (and upper caste)	Banerjee et al. (2019); De Leon et al. (2009)

⁷⁸ Miller and Schofield argue that class was the dominant divide between 1930 and 1960, and that the ethnic dimension has gained in prominence thereafter (up until 2000). Thus, their argument implies that ethnicity has become more important than class.

Class and ethno-linguistic	Finland 1920s/30s	Lower class/ Swedish-speaking minority	Middle and upper class/Finnish- speaking majority	McRae et al. (1999, pp. 66-73, 125-126, 191-192, 197)
Class and ethno-linguistic	Moldova 1990s/2000s	Lower class, Russian-speaking minority	Middle and upper class, Moldovan/ Romanian- speaking majority	Rusandu and Cărbune (2008, cited in Gorban 2013, p. 124)

Indonesia – A Divide over Religion

Indonesia, the largest Muslim-majority country in the world, provides a good example of a secular–religious divide today. After World War II and the following war of independence, multiple cleavage lines were visible in the 1950s in Indonesia (e.g., centre/periphery), but these were suppressed from 1966 during the authoritarian regime called the New Order (Ufen, 2012). After the fall of President Suharto in 1998, Indonesia has become classified as a democracy by the Polity IV index. This makes Indonesia a somewhat young representative democracy (Ufen, 2012, p. 445), which along with the corruption and clientelism present in the country (Berenschot, 2018), likely results in less programmatic group-based political conflicts, as well as less cleavage-based linkages between parties and voters. Perhaps partly because of this, the L-R language in Indonesia is not widespread among voters. Thus, if we find support for acceptance of inequality theory within the population here, then this finding likely extends to other societies where the religious divide is linked to the L-R dimension.

While the usage of the L-R language is not very prevalent among voters in Indonesia, it is possible to order parties in Indonesia along an L-R axis (Aspinall et al., 2018). This axis correlates with what the literature contends is the main contemporary political divide between political parties in Indonesia: secularism–Islamism (Ufen, 2012, p. 447; Fossati et al., 2020; Fossati, 2019; Aspinall et al., 2018), with the overarching question concerning the role of Islam. Fossati et al. (2020, p. 7) measure this question with items such as “The government should prioritize Islam over other religions,” “Islamic religious leaders should play a very important role in politics” and “Islam should become Indonesia’s only official religion.” Such a divide is possible in a context where the overwhelming majority of the population is Muslim. In a 2000 survey there were many different religions present, but the main ones were as follows: approximately 88% of the population were Muslims, 9% were Christians, while Hindus and Buddhists made

up a few percentage points each (Ananta et al., 2004, pp. 11-12). Given that the main divide has been about the role of Islam, we would expect Muslims to be more likely than members of minority religions to vote for parties in favour of more Islam. This divide can be called the Pancasila-Islam divide, where Pancasila is Indonesia's official state ideology that encourages religious pluralism and tolerance (Fossati et al., 2020, p. 5).⁷⁹

Muslims were less likely to vote for PDI-P (Indonesian Democratic Party-Struggle, on the Pancasila end of the spectrum) in the 1999 election, compared to non-Muslims (Ananta et al., 2004, p. 369). In the three provinces where Christians make up more than 60% of the population, PDI-P and Golkar (another party on the Pancasila side of the spectrum) also did better than the national average (Ananta et al., 2004, pp. 13, 263). Christians and Balinese Hindus have continued to support PDI-P (Ufen, 2012, p. 447), which makes sense for members of a minority religion when the main dividing issue of the party system is the role of the majority religion. However, it should be noted that these patterns are tenuous because of “the absence of divisive ideological cleavages” in Indonesian politics (Aspinall, 2016, p. 79; see also Mietzner, 2008).

Using the seventh wave of the WVS, it is possible to examine the importance of the religious divide for L-R self-placements of citizens in Indonesia, using three separate survey items. The item “the only acceptable religion is my religion” is highly imperfect since it is not directional (it could concern Christianity or another minority religion),⁸⁰ which here causes measurement error. Nevertheless, I argue that individuals that are on the more secular side of the secular–Islamism divide in Indonesia are less likely to agree with this statement simply because it is not beneficial for them in a majority-Muslim country (since this would result in Islamic-based legal system, rather than for example a Christian-based one). As a robustness check, I run the analysis (in Table 7.2) with only Muslim respondents in the appendix, which results in only minor differences to the results.

I assume the same reasoning for the other two survey items. “Having a system governed by religious law in which there are no political parties or elections,” is a similar measure, which perhaps better captures the possibility of theocracy than the most radical

⁷⁹ Parties on the Left are also sometimes referred to as nationalist. Nationalism was more clearly associated with left-wing ideology in the 1950s (Aspinall, 2016, p. 76) but parties on the Left are at times referred to as nationalist after 1998 as well (Tanuwidjaja, 2010).

⁸⁰ In the seventh wave of the WVS, 3% of respondents were Hindu, 12% Christian and 83% Muslim.

religious individuals could argue for. The last measurement is whether an essential part of democracy is that “religious authorities ultimately interpret the laws.” Also, an imperfect measure since it is a more theoretical question whether it is an “essential part of democracy.” Nevertheless, most respondents are likely to answer this question based on their opinions of whether this should be the case, rather than consider the definition of democracy in a more theoretical sense.

I run OLS regressions with these three survey items separately, as can be seen in Table 7.2. The inclusion and operationalisation of control variables are detailed in the appendix. Attitudes towards religion overall correlate with L-R self-placements in the expected direction, and two out of the three measurements are significantly correlated with L-R self-placements. It should be noted that the R^2 is low, which is likely due to the fact that large parts of the population (as in many young democracies) do not have clear L-R attachments. It is nevertheless clear from Table 7.2 that belief in a larger role for religion in politics correlates with more right-wing self-placements in Indonesia. There is good reason to believe that this best captures the L-R divide in Indonesia, also considering that it has been proposed that this divide is also the one that most closely aligns with the L-R divide at the party level in Indonesian party politics (Aspinall et al., 2018). Another remarkable finding is that government intervention in the economy has a negative correlation with L-R self-placements, which is also in line with the previous finding that left-wing parties (but importantly not all parties on the Left) in Indonesia tend to be slightly more pro-market than their right-wing counterparts (Fossati et al., 2020, p. 6).

Table 7.2. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Indonesia 2018

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>My Religion</i>	0.54*** (0.15)	0.44*** (0.15)				
<i>Theocracy</i>			0.17 (0.11)	0.11 (0.11)		
<i>Religion</i>					0.12*** (0.02)	0.09*** (0.02)
<i>Essential to</i>						
<i>Democracy</i>						
<i>Privatization</i>		-0.06*** (0.02)		-0.07*** (0.02)		-0.06*** (0.02)
<i>Radical</i>		0.10 (0.13)		0.09 (0.13)		0.08 (0.13)
<i>Change</i>						
<i>Against</i>		-0.01 (0.16)		0.01 (0.16)		-0.04 (0.16)
<i>Change</i>						
<i>Intercept</i>	5.91*** (0.13)	6.60*** (1.11)	6.26*** (0.08)	5.*** (0.97)	5.56*** (0.13)	5.08*** (0.97)
Control	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
variables						
included?						
Observations	2,601	2,601	2,573	2,573	2,593	2,593
R^2	0.01	0.07	0.001	0.06	0.02	0.07
Adjusted R^2	0.01	0.05	0.001	0.04	0.02	0.05

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. OLS regressions. Data from WVS 7. Standard errors in brackets.

Moldova – Resistance to Change in Post-Communist Societies

Moldova is a relatively poor European country wedged in between Romania and Ukraine that emerged as a new independent state after the Soviet Union collapsed. The literature on Moldovan cleavages and political divides indicates that there were two salient lines of ideological political conflict in the 1990s and the early 2000s: the socioeconomic cleavage, and an ethno-national-linguistic cleavage between the Russian-speaking

minorities (primarily ethnic Russians and Ukrainians) and the Moldovan/Romanian⁸¹ majority group (Rusandu and Cărbune, 2008, cited in Gorban 2013, p. 124; see also Crowther, 1998, pp. 158-159).⁸² Both of these divides reinforce each other, and closely follow the predictions of equality–inequality theory. Accepting economic inequality and language policy favouring Moldovan/Romanian was (and continues to be) considered more right leaning. It is not clear from the literature which cleavage/divide was the most important in Moldovan politics, which would be important for the theory to predict which side will be left- and right-wing respectively. In this case, both cleavages align with the predictions of the theory, meaning that Moldova during this time period was in any case in line with what we would expect (whichever divide of the two was the most dominant).

The socioeconomic cleavage is a common left-right divide that was important in Moldova in the early years of transition from communism, given the “pressing socioeconomic concerns” (March, 2007, p. 605). There is less need to explain the economic cleavage since this dividing line is common to many polities. The ethno-national-linguistic cleavage is contrariwise more context-specific to Moldova, partially due to historical legacies. Present-day Moldova was a part of the Russian empire up to 1918 when it became a part of Romania. This lasted until 1940 when it subsequently was incorporated into the USSR. It remained a constituent socialist republic until its independence in 1991. The two competing languages are consequently Moldovan/Romanian and Russian. The former is spoken by the ethnic majority, which either considers themselves Moldovans or Romanians, though they are nevertheless part of the same ethnic group (Gorban, 2013, p. 128, footnote 3). In the 2004 census they made up 75.81% of the population (Prina, 2015, p. 56). During the Soviet era, Russian was the dominant and prestigious language in Moldova “used by the government and in higher education, as well as being the language of interethnic communication” (Prina, 2015, p. 60), especially in larger and industrialized cities. This was despite the fact that Moldovan/Romanian and Russian formally had the same status. Already in 1989, Moldovan/Romanian became the official state language. The majority status of the

⁸¹ Whether the majority ethnic group ought to be called Moldovan or Romanian is a debate in Moldova, with those more to the Right preferring “Romanian” (as well as being more positive to Romanian-Moldovan unification).

⁸² Prina (2014, p. 57) argues that ethnic mobilization was the most important political divide between 1989 and 1994.

Moldovan ethnic group had now become an important factor, which became even more significant as Moldova became independent.⁸³ The status of the Moldovan/Romanian and Russian languages were then completely decided in a context where the ethnically Moldovan population had the decisive influence. This situation is however different from many other ethnic minority/majority relations, where the ethnic majority has dominated political life for many years. Moldovan/Romanian instead has the status of a “minorized majority language,” a language spoken by the majority of the country, but in need of protections that are usually reserved for minority languages (Prina, 2015, p. 53).

Between 1989 and 1994, there were calls for re-unification with Romania, most significantly promoted by the Popular Front (a pro-Romanian political movement, see Chinn, 1994, p. 311).^{84, 85} This position was understood as right-wing, with those supporting the language rights of the Russian-speaking minority (such as ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauz, and Bulgarians) considered more left-wing. President Vladimir Voronin (of the Communist Party) attempted to change the language policy in the 2000s by making Russian an official state language alongside Moldovan/Romanian (as well as teaching more Russian in school), but met large-scale popular resistance that stopped this effort (Prina, 2015, p. 57).

The change from communism to post-communism is not unique to Moldova, but the breakdown of the Soviet Union is an exceptional event in history. For theorists of L-R politics, this event is almost akin to a natural experiment, because one of the most prominent hypotheses in the literature argues that attitudes towards change separate left- from right-wing politics (Jost et al., 2003b; Jost et al., 2003a; Jost et al., 2009). It is unclear whether this hypothesis is applicable in the case of Moldova. On the one hand, the contemporary Moldovan left-wing clearly has some socially conservative elements. In the 2021 elections, “Socialists focused on waging cultural battles, advocating for the ‘traditional’ role of women in the family and railing against gay rights” (Negură, 2021,

⁸³ Minority groups were also reportedly worried about their situation. Approximately half of ethnic Moldovans, but only a fifth of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians, believed that conditions for minorities were good in a survey from 1992 (Crowther, 1998, p. 152).

⁸⁴ The Popular Front was a political movement whose leadership was “pro-Romanian (including support for unification), as well as anti-Russian” according to Chinn (1994, p. 311).

⁸⁵ During this time there was also a war with the breakaway region Transnistria in the East, where many individuals primarily speak Russian.

p. 268), which speaks against resistance to change (as well as acceptance of inequality) separating left- from right. Furthermore, as in many post-communist countries, the older generation were nostalgic for the old communist regime (Crowther, 2013, p. 744). That individuals would be drawn to the Left because they are resisting change therefore seems implausible. On the other hand, as mentioned, the Left sought to change the language policy in the 1990s and early 2000s.

The WVS provides a question to measure resistance to change (as detailed in the methodological section). I examine this survey item in the case of Moldova, but also in other available post-communist countries in the WVS to ensure that the results are not limited to this context (see appendix). The WVS survey data from Moldova (2002) also allows this paper to measure attitudes towards economic inequality (1 “Incomes should be made more equal,” to 10 “We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort”), as well as ethnic status (with Moldovan/Romanian as the baseline category), to examine whether they predict L-R self-placements as the literature on Moldova would suggest. I group together ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Gagauz, and Bulgarians as ethnic minorities, because the latter three categories contain less than eight observations each.⁸⁶ The results from the OLS regression models predicting L-R self-placements in Table 7.3 demonstrate that these variables have significant coefficients in the expected directions. Accepting economic inequality predicts right-wing self-placements, while being of minority status correlates with being left-wing, as suspected. However, measuring ethnic group belonging is not the same as measuring attitudes towards language policy, which is a clear limitation of this measurement. The results in Table 7.3 furthermore reveal that attitudes towards change (both those in favour of more change, and those more conservative) are not significantly associated with L-R self-placements in Moldova in 2002.^{87, 88}

⁸⁶ I run a separate regression model in the appendix, where I include all ethnic groups’ separate independent regression coefficients.

⁸⁷ This is even though attitudes towards language policy is not included in the regression model, which would have underestimated the regression coefficient for resistance to change given that resistance to change should (theoretically) correlate with willingness to change the language policy (resistance to change should come first in the causal chain, which means that some of the effect of resistance to change would be underestimated by including attitudes towards language policy).

⁸⁸ Table D.10 in the appendix displays the coefficients for the same variable, but for other available countries in the World Values Surveys (included if they had been democratic for ten years or more

Table 7.3. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Moldova 2002

	(1)	(2)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>		0.68*** (0.16)
<i>Ethnic Minority</i>		-1.02*** (0.38)
<i>Privatization</i>		0.13*** (0.05)
<i>Radical Change</i>	0.31 (0.30)	-0.10 (0.31)
<i>Against Change</i>	-0.05 (0.41)	0.13 (0.40)
<i>Intercept</i>	5.62*** (0.15)	3.70*** (1.23)
Control variables included?	No	Yes
Observations	400	400
R^2	0.003	0.20
Adjusted R^2	-0.002	0.14

Note: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01. OLS regressions. Data from WVS 4. Standard errors in brackets.

Israel – The Israel-Palestine Conflict and Left-Right Politics

Israeli L-R politics bears little resemblance to L-R politics in other countries, as it mainly concerns the political divide over the Israeli-Palestinian (or "Israeli-Arab", Arian and Shamir, 2008, p. 689)⁸⁹ conflict, and “security related issues” (Doron, 2005, p. 31). Yet, this was not always the case. From its establishment in 1948 to the Six Day War in 1967, the main dominant divide was seemingly a socio-economic cleavage (Diskin, 1999, p. 503). Since then, the focus has however been on the “future of the territories captured in the Six Day War and the population living in them” (Arian and Shamir, 2008, p. 685). As Doron (2005, p. 43) puts it:

according to the Polity IV index). In North Macedonia, Serbia and Romania, attitudes towards change do not significantly correlate with L-R self-placements either.

⁸⁹ Whether to label this conflict as Israeli-Arab or Israeli-Palestinian is politically contentious.

“Consequently, it seems that the only dimension where significant differences between Left and Right really exist is the security one (read: the orientation toward various aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict) [...] the left, almost by definition, is more open to negotiation with the Palestinians and more willing to make territorial concessions, while the right, again – almost by definition, holds a more rigid and mistrusting position toward the intentions of the Arabs. This conceptualization is almost circular.”

Hazan (2005 [1999], p. 165) argues that there are four major cleavages in Israel: Jews/Arabs, secular/religious, ethnicity, and class, where the first divide is the one that most clearly relates to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The latter three mainly relates to divides within the Jewish majority (even though class, for example, also correlates with the Jewish/Arab cleavage). The ethnic divide according to this classification relates to different ethnic groups within the Jewish majority. The Jewish/Arab (or Palestinian) divide can also be classified as an ethnic cleavage, but Hazan classifies this as an international divide: “the Jewish-Arab cleavage is international, not intra-national—between two national groups rather than two sub-groups” (Hazan, 2005 [1999], p. 172). This makes Israeli politics a fairly unique instance of left-right politics, given that this is the most salient political divide that separates left from right in Israel.

Nationalism in Israel is an ideological conflict that correlates fairly well with views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israeli nationalism is aligned with a more ‘hawkish’ position on the territories, and some religious authorities married this position to religious justifications after 1967 (Arian and Shamir, 2008, p. 689). On the other side is the more dovish (left-wing) position on the territories, i.e., the “peace camp” (Arian and Shamir, 2008, p. 696), more critical of settlements in the occupied territories.

L-R politics in Israel plays out in a highly developed party system. The Knesset, Israel’s unicameral parliament, elects its representatives through elections where the whole country constitutes one single district, and elections often result in more than ten parties in parliament (Doron, 2005, p. 32). Accordingly, there are many parties that can be put on the Israeli L-R dimension, with the two most dominant parties in Israeli political history being (first) Labor⁹⁰ on the Left, and (then) Likud on the Right. Parties’

⁹⁰ Labor has gotten considerably less seats in the Knesset in the last 20-30 years.

placements on the L-R scale tend to be a predictor of who they will cooperate and form coalitions with. Ideological closeness thus goes hand in hand with cooperation. Given that the dominant dimension in Israeli politics is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, parties' opinions on this issue correlates well with their left-right position, and correspondingly their willingness to cooperate with other political parties. However, this logic does not hold perfectly for all parties in the Israeli party system. For example, some of the very religious and ultra-orthodox parties do not view the main dimension of the Israeli party system as their most important issue. This has meant that they have been more difficult to put on the left-right dimension, as they are willing to cooperate with both the Left and the Right in exchange for support for their communities (Doron, 2005, pp. 34-36).

There are a few important conclusions that can be inferred from this L-R conflict. To begin, the L-R language is seemingly able to describe highly unusual conflicts that are specific to one distinct environment. The Israeli pattern also follows the predicted pattern of acceptance of inequality theory. Furthermore, given that the economic dimension is clearly not the primary dimension of contestation, the Israeli setting provides a case where it is difficult to know whether attitudes towards government involvement in the economy separate left from right, as they have been presumed to in other contexts. I run an OLS regression to test this whether this is the case, using data from the 2013 Israel National Election Study. The survey is based on a stratified sample of Jews and Arabs (/Palestinians), with the aim of achieving a representative sample of the electorate in Israel (Palestinians in the occupied territories are thus not included). The survey was conducted in waves using a panel design, with some questions asked before the election and some after. In the OLS regression I only use answers in the pre-election survey sample. The dependent variable is the respondent's L-R self-placement on a 7-point scale, and there are two independent variables to compare. *No to Palestinian State* is a binary variable, 1 if the respondent stated that Israel ought to consent to "the establishment of a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza strip under the framework of a permanent agreement," 0 if Israel ought to not consent. Being in favour of consenting to a Palestinian state ought to be viewed as an indication of being more favourable to the Palestinian side, the weaker side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, given that a respondent could be in favour of a one-state solution, there is a possibility that the respondent may wish to not consent to a Palestinian state for this reason. While a small possibility (especially given how the question was phrased), I nevertheless use other

survey items in the appendix as a robustness check (see further information in the appendix).

The second independent variable is *No Tax Increase*, which measures whether the respondent would “be prepared or not prepared to have taxes in the country raised, meaning that you would also pay more taxes, in order to take care of the different problems facing the country.” The variable is binary, with 1 indicating that the respondent would not be prepared to raise taxes. This survey item was only asked to half of the respondents, which can be seen in the models in Table 7.4. Regression models 3, 4, and 5 control for gender, level of education, age, social class, income, religion, religiosity, and place of residence. Details of how these variables were measured can be found in the appendix.

What becomes clear from Table 7.4 is that attitudes towards the government’s role in the economy are not associated with L-R self-placements. This is not surprising given how closely aligned L-R politics in Israel is with the Palestinian conflict after 1967. This serves as clear evidence against the idea that attitudes towards the government’s role in the economy constitute the core disagreement of the L-R divide, especially considering that Israel is a case with a strong and pervasive L-R dimension. This situation is very dissimilar to that of Indonesia for example, which is a new representative democracy with a lot of clientelism and corruption inhibiting citizens from attaining a clear understanding of the L-R dimension. One could argue that such a situation would lead to a more difficult test for any theory, but that argument is not applicable to Israel.

Table 7.4. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Israel 2013

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>No to Palestinian State</i>		1.63*** (0.14)		1.14*** (0.17)	1.14*** (0.17)
<i>No Tax Increase</i>	-0.04 (0.17)		0.05 (0.19)		-0.05 (0.18)
<i>Intercept</i>	3.29*** (0.14)	2.70*** (0.08)	7.01*** (1.72)	5.98*** (1.62)	6.04*** (1.63)
<i>Control variables included?</i>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	547	547	547	547	547
R^2	0.0001	0.19	0.48	0.53	0.53
Adjusted R^2	-0.002	0.19	0.22	0.30	0.30

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. OLS regressions. Data from INES 2013. Standard errors in brackets.

Discussion

Common wisdom still holds that the left-right dimension is waning. For example, Azmanova (2011, p. 385) argues that while the exact causality is unknown, “it seems beyond dispute that politics in the early twenty-first century can no longer comfortably fit into the conventional left/right political grid.” Yet, this prophecy never comes to fruition. The L-R dimension of politics continues to be a prominent feature of political life in many democracies, both new and old (Jou and Dalton, 2017). Like a chameleon, the L-R dimension takes on new appearances. Not only in various contexts, but also over time. When the political landscape changes, the L-R chameleon changes with it. This paper puts forth a suggestion of what the L-R chameleon’s true colours really are. The paper then provides considerable evidence for this parsimonious theory, by examining more variation in L-R competition than previous studies have. Examining this variation also demonstrates that competing theories of L-R competition are limited in their ability to explain various unusual forms of L-R competition. This paper can demonstrate that attitudes towards change and economic statism fail to predict L-R self-placements in some contexts. Most importantly, the fact that L-R competition in such diverse settings

follow the pattern predicted by acceptance of inequality theory also speaks against the empty vessels explanation, which has been a popular idea in previous literature.

Nevertheless, there are four limitations of this paper that ought to be considered when evaluating the evidence, and which future research may want to consider. One, Table 7.1 relies on academic literature to establish which divide was the most politically salient. This is an imperfect procedure for any research. In some cases, there is a clear consensus among researchers over which divide was/is the most important, but not necessarily in all. Two, the Moldovan case study is unable to examine attitudes towards language policy. The analysis can examine the impact of ethnic identity, but not attitudes.⁹¹ Three, we do not yet know the whole causal chain behind the (almost law-like) pattern observed in this paper between L-R competition and acceptance of inequality. This paper theorises some of the causality behind this relationship, but more work is needed to unveil the full picture. Four, while the case studies were selected to represent different types of L-R competition within the reviewed cases, the paper has focused on unusual cases of L-R competition, which means that the results are not generalizable to the whole universe of cases of L-R competition. The paper has been able to establish that acceptance of inequality is the only prominent criterion in the literature that fits these cases, and the fact that that acceptance of inequality can explain so many different types of L-R competition is unlikely to happen by chance, which provides doubt for the empty vessels explanation. Nevertheless, there are several contexts with L-R competition that remain unexamined that could potentially support the empty vessels explanation, and therefore, more research is necessary. In sum, there is much more research needed to understand the L-R dimension around the world. Hopefully the end result will be a predictive theory of L-R politics that can assist observers of politics in the future.

⁹¹ The available evidence nevertheless suggests an alignment with the expectations of the theory, while attitudes towards change are not found to be able to explain this (and other similar) cases.

Chapter 8. Discussion and Conclusion

The mission of this dissertation has been to answer a straightforward question: what makes political phenomena left- or right-wing? I have attempted to answer this question by developing a novel version of acceptance of inequality theory. In simple terms, I argue that acceptance of inequality is the core disagreement of the left-right (L-R) dimension. Inequality in this theory is specified as the overall inequality between groups, which forms the basis of a political dimension. In this case, to go to the left on an inequality dimension means to accept less overall inequality between the two groups, and to go to the right means to accept more. However, inequality can take place along different dimensions because individuals can be grouped along different schemas such as gender, class, ethnicity, and religion (etc.). With each grouping (/identity) comes related issues that can be politically contentious, specifically because they have effects on the groups involved. For example, economic issues have varied impacts on economic classes (which is noticeable to those involved), in the same way that language policy in a country has clear impacts on different language groups.

Given the fact that inequality takes place along different dimensions, it becomes important to know which dimension of contestation is salient in a context before we can predict which side will be left- and which will be right-wing. As Schattschneider (1960, pp. 63-65) argues, all conflict dimensions are not equally salient. To the contrary, different conflicts displace each other, and it is rare that several different conflict dimensions are equally salient at any given time. Therefore, building on the previous suggestion in the literature that acceptance of inequality separates the Left from the Right (MacIver, 1947, p. 216; Lipset et al., 1954; Inglehart, 1990, p. 293; Lukes, 2003; Bobbio, 1996), I argue that acceptance of inequality ought to relate to specific dimensions of inequality (as implicitly suggested by Inglehart, 1990, p. 293; see also Joshi, 2021). Arguably the most important (and novel) contribution of this thesis is my argument that it is the salient inequality (/inequalities) that divides the Left from the Right in a society, because this is the inequality that individuals choose their position in the ideological landscape based on. This contribution extends and strengthens the theory because it (1) makes the theory more specific (rather than being applied to inequality in the abstract, or to all potential inequalities in a society), and it (2) means that the L-R language becomes more flexible and can be applied to many different societies which have conflicts between

different groups. This helps explain why the L-R dimension is so incredibly versatile, i.e., how it can be applied to different societies around the world no matter which particular conflict is at play in that context (albeit with a few exceptions).

In the four papers of this paper-based dissertation, I have tested this theory in multiple different contexts using several different methods. The first paper examined acceptance of inequality theory in Western and Eastern Europe, as previous research has provided doubt for that acceptance of inequality can reliably predict right-wing self-placements in Eastern Europe. The results demonstrated that the version of acceptance of inequality theory proposed in this thesis is able to explain the results in both regions, and thereby demonstrates the theory's applicability in a context that was previously understood as difficult for this theory to explain. Furthermore, the paper provided clear evidence in favour of that country-level salience moderates the relationship between acceptance of inequality and L-R self-placements, in line with the expectations of the theory. The second paper tested observable implications of this theory in eight countries (with large variation in political landscapes). Using quantitative text analysis, this paper examined open-ended survey responses explaining what survey respondents believe 'left' and 'right' in politics mean, and evaluated how well the results align with different explanations of the L-R dimension. The results were overall positive for acceptance of inequality theory, but were also in line with the expectations of two other arguments in the literature, specifically that individuals' resistance to change or their attitudes towards economic statism is the core difference between the Left and the Right. The third paper examined how well attitudes towards inequality (specifically regarding class, gender, and sexuality) predict L-R self-placements in representative democracies around the world, and compared it to how well attitudes towards the government's role in the economy predict the same self-placements. Acceptance of inequality was consistently the better predictor. In fact, acceptance of *economic* inequality alone was a better predictor of L-R self-placements. Attitudes towards change were also found to be an inferior context-independent predictor of L-R self-placements. The paper then compared the two explanations (acceptance of inequality and attitudes towards economic statism) in the Netherlands, by examining whether the correlation between an individuals' issue attitudes and L-R self-placements is stronger when individuals find the issue to be important, as should be the case if either (inequality or economic statism) was the core disagreement of the L-R dimension. However, this was only found for attitudes towards inequality, but

not for attitudes towards government involvement in the economy. The fourth and last paper examined whether acceptance of inequality separates left from right in societies where the type of inequality that is the most salient is different from more typical cases. This paper thereby tested a key prediction of the theory, namely that it is inequality itself that separates left from right, and that it does not matter which type of inequality that is the most salient. An examination of the literature found many cases that followed the predictions of the theory, and the paper thereafter conducted three case studies of Indonesia, Israel, and Moldova. The overall results demonstrated that the observable implications of acceptance of inequality theory holds in various contexts around the world. The paper also demonstrated the weaknesses of several major competing explanations. The empirical results of these four papers thus support the theory, as well as serve to demonstrate the limitations of competing perspectives.

Implications, Limitations and Future Research

The empirical results in this dissertation lead to several important implications. To begin, the findings naturally speak against the idea that ‘left’ and ‘right’ in politics are empty vessels that can be filled with anything. Although almost anything can be associated with the Left and the Right (respectively) in different contexts, I find evidence that there is a core distinction that remains the same. This points to a second important implication: it follows that there is an underappreciated stability in politics, as inequalities are very often at the centre of political competition in representative democracies, and continue to be over long periods of time. Not only is the prophesised demise of L-R politics not coming to fruition, but the political climate also seemingly keeps a stable element (political competition over inequality) even when it changes in drastic ways. This also points towards an impressive agility, as Inglehart (1990, p. 293) observes. The L-R dimension is therefore likely to survive even when new issues take over, and old divides fade away.

This agility means however that L-R competition in one context might be unrecognisable to spectators from another. A lot of politics is thus conversely not ‘stable.’ For example, many observers of politics in Western Europe have since the end of the Cold War noted strange new characteristics of different parts of both the Left and the Right. The occasional centrist/left-wing economic policies proposed by some far-right parties, as well as the liberal economic policies accepted by some centre-left parties, have contributed to scepticism of the L-R dimension as well as claims about the decline of L-

R politics. What is missing in this conversation is an understanding of what the L-R dimension actually is, and what drives these changes. I argue that the main driver has been the decline in the importance of the class divide (for a discussion on the causes of this, see Bartolini and Mair, 2007, pp. 204-205), and the rise in the importance of immigration in Western Europe. Class seemingly has less causal power today in determining parties' and voters' L-R self-placements. For observers who mistakenly view the L-R dimension as solely a class conflict, the decline in the salience of class politics thus looks like a decline in L-R politics itself. However, since L-R politics concerns inequality, and not only economic inequality, it can easily latch on to the next inequality. Voters also increasingly select their L-R position due to their views on immigration rather than economic inequality in many Western European countries (as demonstrated in the Netherlands, De Vries et al., 2013). As long as inequality is a salient political issue, whichever inequality it might be, then L-R terminology can continue to be utilized.

This has a very important implication for the Downsian view of politics and the median voter theorem. Parties move towards the median voter along the L-R continuum, in order to win elections. Downs (1957) explained this logic with attitudes towards government intervention in the economy specifically, and arguably economic policy more broadly. Given that the L-R dimension does not have to be attached to economic politics, it is possible for the median voter theorem to be able to explain politics just as well when other issues/dimensions are salient. It is important then to understand which inequality dimension is the most salient, to understand along which dimension political parties are primarily moving. Naturally, the theory will be better at explaining party positioning when one dimension is dominant, and the political landscape is not multidimensional, but the theory should be relevant in future L-R politics, nevertheless.

How relevant L-R politics will be in the future seems to be dependent, in part, on how relevant ideological competition will be. Noël and Thérien (2008, pp. 53-54) suggest that "the left-right divide is an ideological cleavage that political parties build over time, to reach voters and present meaningful competitive stances in the public sphere." They also suggest that personalism and populism⁹² may obscure partisan and ideological divisions (Noël and Thérien, 2008, p. 52). This would mean that we should expect that

⁹² In this discussion I do not define populism as an ideology, but rather as a style and/or political tactic (Moffitt and Tormey, 2013). If we define populism as an ideology then this would have different implications for the discussion here, which I refrain from delving into.

issues which detract from ideological voting will also lead to less clear L-R competition at the citizen level. The literature correspondingly suggests that, for example, clientelism hinders ideological voting, and consequently L-R voting (Ruth, 2016). Similarly, more political competition over valence issues (i.e., political issues where voters mostly agree) such as corruption (Stokes, 1963, p. 372) should also lead to less competition over ideological issues (Green, 2007).

However, the findings in this dissertation suggest that it is not just any ideological competition that keeps the L-R dimension alive, but politics that concern inequalities. If future politics concerns inequality in some fashion, then it seems as if L-R politics is likely to continue to be dominant in future political life. Hopefully the findings of this thesis are able to discourage authors from dismissing the importance of L-R politics or predicting a decline that is seemingly unlikely to happen, especially given how potent inequalities are in driving political competition.

The findings also highlight the importance of groups in political competition. There are two important components that I argue make groups so important: perceived relative group interests and relative group sympathy. I have built this claim on older findings in political science that highlight their importance (e.g., Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Converse, 2006 [1964]), but importantly, I use the term (group) in an even broader sense. A group can constitute animals or inanimate objects. Voters can certainly have sympathy for these groupings and care for their perceived interests, perhaps best exemplified by vegans and vegetarians.

While the findings are important, there are several limitations that need to be kept in mind, and that will also hopefully guide future research. The first is that this dissertation has, for obvious reasons, not been able to analyse all cases of L-R competition around the world. The dissertation provides good evidence in favour of the theory, but it is not conclusive. There is more research needed in new contexts that can test the theory, with the aim of falsifying it. Future research will hopefully be able to test this theory in new circumstances, and with new types of inequalities. Second, this thesis examines the understanding voters and citizens have of the L-R dimension, mostly ignoring L-R placements of elites and parties. I assume that the same core distinction applies to the L-R placements of parties and elites, as it does with voters, but future research will need to examine this claim. Third, because this research is limited to explaining voters' understanding of the L-R dimension, this thesis can only draw conclusions regarding

representative democracies. However, the L-R dimension also exists in many non-representative democracies (but likely then only for those individuals engaged in ideological competition). It will therefore be interesting to see whether the theory can travel to such circumstances as well. Lastly, future research will hopefully shine a light on the exact causal mechanism that creates this durable phenomenon we call the “left-right dimension of politics.” While this thesis provides suggestions of how this causal process takes place, there is much more work to be done, in order to better understand it. In summary, future research will hopefully test equality–inequality theory, build on it, as well as refine it.

Concluding Remarks

As Noël et al. (2021, p. 317) state, “no ideological cleavage is more ubiquitous than the opposition between the left and the right. When asked, most people across the world are able to locate themselves on a left-right scale.” It is therefore rather surprising that such little attention is given in contemporary political science to understanding the basis of L-R competition. Political science has much to gain from understanding this dimension of politics. For instance, one may assume that if the L-R dimension is ubiquitous, then there is something that makes it so, and that this cause may tell us something about how politics functions at a very fundamental level.

It seems as if one of the consequences of the lack of interest in understanding the L-R dimension has been that some of the earlier work in this field have been underappreciated (in particular MacIver, 1947; Lipset et al., 1954). If the test of time gives any indication of the strength of a proposition, then it seems as if the arguments made by these authors have done rather well in predicting the last 70 years of L-R politics. Equality and inequality seemingly continue to be highly divisive issues that generate strong emotions in individuals.

These terms are however unfortunately somewhat unevenly loaded. Equality has, similarly to freedom, strong positive connotations in the minds of many individuals (even those on the Right), whereas inequality has fewer positive connotations.⁹³ Most individuals on both sides value equality to some extent (although to different degrees).

⁹³ In fact, the negative connotations of inequality seems to be part of the reason that Noël and Thérien (2008, p. 16) reject this proposal.

Conversely, by the definition of equality set in this dissertation, virtually no one who demands complete equality tomorrow on any salient inequality dimension (and is willing to drastically enforce it). Furthermore, there are competing values that individuals also care about. Thus, on most issues most individuals are happy to accept some level of inequality in the short term, especially if this means that other policy goals are attained.

Given that most individuals are willing to accept inequality to some extent (at least in the short term), L-R positioning simply reflects a difference in the willingness to accept these salient inequalities (albeit not for all individuals, as explained in the theory chapter). This difference is clearly important to individuals, but it is most often a difference in degree rather than kind, despite the language of many on the Left and the Right suggesting otherwise. I hope that this fact will enable more understanding between the two sides engaged in what Lukes (2003) calls the “grand dichotomy of the twentieth century.” 22 years into the twenty-first century, it seems fair to suggest that it will be the grand dichotomy of politics for the foreseeable future as well.

Appendix A. Acceptance of Inequality Separating Left from Right?

Survey Items and Corresponding Variables

Table A.1 Survey Items and Corresponding Variables

Variable Name ⁹⁴	Year	Question Wording ⁹⁵	Response Options ⁹⁶
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	2008, 2016	“In politics people sometimes talk of ‘left’ and ‘right’. Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?”	11-point scale. 0 = Left, 10 = Right.
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	2008, 2016	“Large differences in income acceptable to reward talents and efforts.”	5-point scale. 1 = Agree strongly, 5 = Disagree strongly. ⁹⁷
			This policy proposal and the following two were merged with equal weights into

⁹⁴ Excluding self-explanatory variables.

⁹⁵ Taken from the European Social Survey (ESS, 2008; ESS, 2016).

⁹⁶ Some of the independent variables have been reversed in direction (changing low values to high). Acceptance of inequality thus always corresponds to high values in the variables used in the regression models.

⁹⁷ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

			<i>Economic Inequality.</i>
	2008, 2016	“For fair society, differences in standard of living should be small.”	5-point scale. 1 = Agree strongly, 5 = Disagree strongly. ⁹⁸
	2008, 2016	“Government should reduce differences in income levels.”	5-point scale. 1 = Agree strongly, 5 = Disagree strongly.
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	2008, 2016	“Allow many / few immigrants of different race / ethnic group from majority.”	4-point scale. 1 = Allow many to come and live here, 4 = Allow none.
			This policy proposal and the following were merged with equal weights into <i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality.</i>
	2008, 2016	“Allow many / few immigrants from poorer countries outside Europe.”	4-point scale. 1 = Allow many to come and live here, 4 = Allow none.
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	2008, 2016	“Gays and lesbians free to live life as they wish.”	5-point scale. 1 = Agree strongly, 5 = Disagree strongly.

⁹⁸ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

			This policy proposal and the following two were merged with equal weights into <i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i> (but only in the 2016 data set).
	2016	“Gay and lesbian couples right to adopt children.”	5-point scale. 1 = Agree strongly, 5 = Disagree strongly.
	2016	“Ashamed if close family member gay or lesbian.”	5-point scale. 1 = Agree strongly, 5 = Disagree strongly. ⁹⁹
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	2008, 2016	“Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce.”	5-point scale. 1 = Agree strongly, 5 = Disagree strongly. ¹⁰⁰
			This policy proposal and the following were merged with equal weights into <i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>

⁹⁹ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹⁰⁰ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

			(but only in the 2008 data set).
	2008	“Women should be prepared to cut down on paid work for sake of family.”	5-point scale. 1 = Agree strongly, 5 = Disagree strongly. ¹⁰¹
<i>Household Income</i>	2008, 2016	“Using this card, please tell me which letter describes your household's total income, after tax and compulsory deductions, from all sources? If you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate. Use the part of the card that you know best: weekly, monthly or annual income.”	10-point scale. 1 =Low, 10 =High.
<i>Education Level</i> ¹⁰²	2016	“What is the highest level of education you have successfully completed?”	The response options (see the ESS codebook) have been simplified into three categories: <i>Lower Secondary or Less</i> (reference category), <i>Upper</i>

¹⁰¹ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹⁰² For ESS 2008, this variable contains many respondents that could not be classified into any category (around a third, see ESS documentation), and therefore, this variable was substituted with *Years of Education*. This variable ranges between a minimum of 0 and a maximum capped at 18, identical to Harbers *et al.*'s approach, see (Harbers et al., 2013, p. 957).

			<i>Secondary or Vocational and Tertiary.</i>
<i>Years of Education</i>	2008	“About how many years of education have you completed, whether full-time or part-time? Please report these in full-time equivalents and include compulsory years of schooling.”	See the ESS codebook.
<i>Religiosity</i>	2008, 2016	“Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?”	11-point scale. 0 = Not at all religious, 10 = Very religious.
<i>Traditionalism</i>	2008, 2016	“Tradition is important to him[/her]. He[/she] tries to follow the customs handed down by his religion or his family.”	6-point scale. 1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all. ¹⁰³
<i>Rule-Following</i>	2008, 2016	“He[/she] believes that people should do what they're told. He[/she] thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching.”	6-point scale. 1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all. ¹⁰⁴
<i>Need for Security</i>	2008, 2016	“It is important to him[/her] to live in secure	6-point scale.

¹⁰³ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹⁰⁴ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

		surroundings. He[/she] avoids anything that might endanger his safety.”	1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all. ¹⁰⁵
<i>Openness to Experience</i>	2008, 2016	“Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him[/her]. He[/she] likes to do things in his own original way.”	6-point scale. 1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all. ¹⁰⁶ This policy proposal and the following were merged with equal weights into <i>Openness to Experience</i> .
	2008, 2016	“He[/she] likes surprises and is always looking for new things to do. He[/she] thinks it is important to do lots of different things in life”	6-point scale. 1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all. ¹⁰⁷
<i>More EU Integration</i>	2008, 2016	“Now thinking about the European Union, some say European unification should go further. Others say it has	11-point scale. 0 = Unification already gone too far, 10 = Unification should go further.

¹⁰⁵ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹⁰⁶ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹⁰⁷ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

		already gone too far. Using this card, what number on the scale best describes your position?"	
<i>Rural</i>	2008, 2016	"Which phrase on this card best describes the area where you live?"	Dichotomous 1 = A big city, 2 = Suburbs or outskirts of big city, 3 = Town or small city, 4 = Country village, 5 = Farm or home in countryside Categories 1-3 were combined as urban (0), while categories 4 and 5 were combined as rural.
<i>Union Member</i>	2008, 2016	"Are you or have you ever been a member of a trade union or similar organisation?"	Dichotomous. 1 = Yes currently or yes previously, 0 = No.
<i>Ethnic Minority</i>	2008, 2016	"Belong to minority ethnic group in country"	Dichotomous. 1 = Yes, 0 = No.

Descriptive Statistics

Table A.2. Descriptive Statistics. ESS 2008

Variable	Mean (SD)	Standardised Mean (SD)	Range	Standardised Range
Continuous Variables				
Dependent Variable				
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.13 (2.16)		0 – 10	
Independent Variables				
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	1.67 (0.76)	0 (1)	1 – 5	-2.21 – 3.08
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	2.95 (1.67)	0 (1)	1 – 6	-1.77 – 1.83
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	2.15 (1.15)	0 (1)	1 – 5	-1.01 – 2.48
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	1.55 (0.98)	0 (1)	1 – 5	-1.58 – 2.50
Control Variables				
<i>Age</i>	47.84 (17.43)		15 – 100	
<i>Years of Education</i>	12.66 (3.54)		0-18	
<i>Household Income</i>	5.63 (2.73)		1 – 10	
<i>Religiosity</i>	4.57 (2.98)		0 – 10	
<i>Traditionalism</i>	3.25 (1.34)		1 – 6	
<i>Rule-Following</i>	2.88 (1.38)		1 – 6	
<i>Need for Security</i>	3.59 (1.23)		1 – 6	
<i>Openness to Experience</i>	3.27 (1.05)		1 – 6	
<i>More EU Integration</i>	5.27 (2.53)		0 – 10	
Dichotomous Variables		Proportion of Respondents		
<i>Rural</i>		0.35		
<i>Female</i>		0.51		
<i>Ethnic Minority</i>		0.05		
<i>Union Member</i>		0.47		
<i>Religious Denomination</i>				
<i>Roman Catholic</i>		0.29		

<i>Protestant</i>	0.18
<i>Eastern Orthodox</i>	0.07
<i>Other Christian Denomination</i>	0.01
<i>Jewish</i>	0.03
<i>Muslim</i>	0.01
<i>Eastern religions</i>	0.003
<i>No Religious Affiliation</i>	0.41
<i>Other non-Christian Religions</i>	0.002

Table A.3. Descriptive Statistics. ESS 2016

Variable	Mean (SD)	Standardised Mean (SD)	Range	Standardised Range
Continuous Variables				
Dependent Variable				
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.08 (2.2)		0 – 10	
Independent Variables				
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	1.55 (0.77)	0 (1)	1 – 5	-2.0 – 3.17
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	2.84 (1.68)	0 (1)	1 – 6	-1.69 – 1.88
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	2.24 (1.02)	0 (1)	1 – 5	-1.22 – 2.71
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	1.85 (1.03)	0 (1)	1 – 5	-0.83 – 3.05
Control Variables				
<i>Age</i>	49.64 (17.79)		15 – 100	
<i>Household Income</i>	5.41 (2.71)		1 – 10	
<i>Religiosity</i>	4.35 (3.11)		0 – 10	
<i>Traditionalism</i>	3.17 (1.38)		1 – 6	
<i>Rule-Following</i>	2.74 (1.41)		1 – 6	
<i>Need for Security</i>	3.56 (1.25)		1 – 6	
<i>Openness to Experience</i>	3.26 (1.05)		1 – 6	
<i>More EU Integration</i>	5.01 (2.62)		0 – 10	
Dichotomous Variables		Proportion of Respondents		
<i>Education Level</i>				
<i>Lower Secondary or Less</i>		0.22		
<i>Upper Secondary or Vocational</i>		0.51		
<i>Tertiary</i>		0.27		
<i>Rural</i>		0.36		
<i>Female</i>		0.5		
<i>Ethnic Minority</i>		0.05		
<i>Union Member</i>		0.42		
<i>Religious Denomination</i>				
<i>Roman Catholic</i>		0.33		

<i>Protestant</i>	0.14
<i>Eastern Orthodox</i>	0.02
<i>Other Christian Denomination</i>	0.01
<i>Jewish</i>	0.03
<i>Muslim</i>	0.03
<i>Eastern religions</i>	0.004
<i>No Religious Affiliation</i>	0.44
<i>Other non-Christian Religions</i>	0.003

Multilevel Regression Models

Table A.4. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placement – ESS 2008 and 2016

	<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>			
	<u>2008</u>		<u>2016</u>	
Fixed Effects	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
<i>Intercept</i>	3.26*** (0.24)	4.62*** (0.12)	3.07*** (0.26)	4.32*** (0.13)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.59*** (0.07)	0.39*** (0.05)	0.62*** (0.08)	0.45*** (0.06)
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	0.12*** (0.03)	0.21*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.03)	0.31*** (0.05)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.15*** (0.03)	0.14*** (0.03)	0.19*** (0.06)	0.18*** (0.05)
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.13*** (0.04)	0.09** (0.04)	0.06*** (0.02)	0.06*** (0.02)
<i>Age</i>		0.001 (0.001)		0.05 (0.08)
<i>Years of Education</i>		-0.004 (0.004)		
<i>Education Level</i> ¹⁰⁸				
<i>Upper Secondary or Vocational</i>				0.16*** (0.03)
<i>Tertiary</i>				0.07* (0.04)
<i>Household Income</i> ¹⁰⁹		0.13*** (0.01)		0.05*** (0.01)

¹⁰⁸ *Lower Secondary or Less* is the reference category.

¹⁰⁹ Slovakia's income data is different from the other countries in the 2008 data, as it does not relate to income deciles. See the ESS documentation for more information. The Slovakian income data is therefore standardised before combining it with the other income data. This is an imperfect solution, but acceptable

<i>Female</i>	-0.10*** (0.02)	-0.16*** (0.03)
<i>Rural</i>	0.11*** (0.03)	0.09** (0.03)
<i>Religiosity</i>	0.07*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)
<i>Union Member</i>	-0.35*** (0.03)	-0.33*** (0.03)
<i>Ethnic Minority</i>	-0.24*** (0.06)	-0.26*** (0.06)
<i>Religious Denomination</i> ¹¹⁰		
<i>Protestant</i>	-0.08* (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)
<i>Eastern Orthodox</i>	-0.62*** (0.08)	-0.70*** (0.11)
<i>Other Christian Denomination</i>	-0.51*** (0.12)	-0.28** (0.12)
<i>Jewish</i>	-0.19 (0.34)	-0.28 (0.38)
<i>Muslim</i>	-0.82*** (0.12)	-1.05*** (0.10)
<i>Eastern Religion</i>	-0.33 (0.22)	-0.51** (0.20)
<i>Other non-Christian Religion</i>	-0.26 (0.25)	-0.62*** (0.22)
<i>No Religious Affiliation</i>	-0.29*** (0.04)	-0.20*** (0.04)
<i>Traditionalism</i>	0.06*** (0.01)	0.09*** (0.01)

for the purposes of this papers. The regression model was also run without the Slovakian data, without changing the results. These results can be supplied on demand.

¹¹⁰ *Roman Catholic* is the reference category.

<i>Rule-Following</i>		0.04*** (0.01)		0.03*** (0.01)
<i>Need for Security</i>		0.02 (0.01)		0.01 (0.01)
<i>Openness to Experience</i>		0.01 (0.01)		0.03** (0.01)
<i>More EU Integration</i>		0.04** (0.02)		-0.01 (0.02)
Variance Components				
<i>Residual</i>	3.94	3.8	3.91	3.73
<i>Intercept</i>	1.31	0.13	0.12	0.18
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.11	0.05	0.08	0.07
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	0.02	0.04	0.07	0.05
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.02	0.02	0.06	0.04
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.03	0.03	0.005	0.004
<i>More EU Integration</i>		0.005		0.005
Observations	26,897	26,897	25,403	25,403
Groups (Country)	24	24	20	20
AIC	113,526	112,535	107,005	106,032
BIC	113,699	112,928	107,176	106,431

Note: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01. Standard errors in brackets.

World Value Survey and European Values Study

To control for other factors and provide further analysis, this section deals with survey data from the third wave of the World Value Survey (WVS) in 1995–1998 (Inglehart et al., 2014b) and the European Values Study (EVS) in 1999 (Halman, 2001). The data include a few countries outside of Europe, which are included in the analysis as well. While these regions are not of specific interest for this article (which is focused on European L-R politics), the examined criteria for separating left from right (such as the equality–inequality criterion) aim at universal application, and are not meant to be region-specific. The other countries are therefore nevertheless included in the analysis here in the appendix.

Most of the analysis is the same as in the ESS data analysis.¹¹¹ In the WVS data, *Economic Inequality* is operationalised through a question asking respondents to place themselves between 1 “Incomes should be made more equal” and 10 “We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort.” The EVS operationalization of *Economic Inequality* includes this item, combined with a question asking respondents about their level of agreement with the idea that it is important to eliminate income inequality.

The variable *Immigration/Ethnic Inequality* in the EVS and WVS data is constructed with mentions of who respondents would not like to have as neighbours. If a respondent mentions an ethnic or religious group (any of the following: “people of a different race,” “Muslims,” “Jews” or “people of a different religion”),^{112, 113} then the variable is coded as 1, and 0 if not. This operationalization is far from perfect as it does not address any policy proposal and merely measures underlying racism/xenophobia. However, it measures attitudes towards these groups (which have lower social positions

¹¹¹ Other notable differences: *L-R Self-Placement* is measured on a ten-point scale. There are different dichotomous variables for different ethnic groups in the WVS data, whereas the EVS data contains the variable *Citizen*. There is also no control for union membership.

¹¹² “Immigrants/foreign workers” were also included in a subsequent analysis, without changing the results. Other groups in the codebook such as “Indian,” “coloured” and “black” neighbours were not included in the analysis because they were not asked in the countries examined in this paper.

¹¹³ The EVS *Immigration/Ethnic Inequality* variable also included a question on whether to let in people from less developed countries. See Table A.6.

in the examined societies) and as such reflect sympathy towards them. This imperfection should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

Intolerance of Homosexuality is measured in the WVS and EVS data with a variable that measures how justifiable respondents find homosexuality. The variable *Anti-Feminist Attitude* is measured with one item in the EVS data: “Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce.” The *Anti-Feminist Attitude* variable in the WVS data is constructed with the items “Men should have more right to job [sic] than women when jobs are scarce,” “on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do” and “a university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.”

The EVS and WVS data do not have the psychological variables nor a variable measuring attitudes towards the European Union, which the ESS material has. Conversely, they do have variables that can control for three other important components that are widely discussed in the literature, namely attitudes towards *Freedom* and *Privatization*, as well as *Resistance to Change*.

The WVS data is analysed with multilevel models where the independent variables have random slopes, as well as *Privatization* and *Resistance to Change*, which are potential alternative explanations. EVS 1999 only has available data (for all the selected variables) for two countries, namely the Czech Republic and Lithuania. These are analysed with ordinary least squares regressions (see Table A.11).¹¹⁴

The equality–inequality explanation holds in all countries except for Venezuela where only the *Anti-Feminist Attitude* coefficient is significantly positive, but *Economic Inequality* is negatively associated with L-R self-placements.¹¹⁵ However, additional analysis (see Table A.12) reveals that the equality–inequality hypothesis is supported in Venezuela in the fourth wave of the WVS, conducted in 2000. The radical differences between the two surveys for Venezuela, and the potential explanations, is further explored in the Venezuela section in this appendix.

¹¹⁴ One important caveat is that many observations are lost in the Lithuanian case, mainly due to missing observations for L-R self-placements (data for a third of the respondents is missing), with 61% of observations not included in the regression due to missing data.

¹¹⁵ *Privatization* and *Resistance to Change* are also not significantly correlated with L-R self-placements in Venezuela.

Table A.5. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. WVS

Variable ¹¹⁶	Question Wording ¹¹⁷	Response Options ¹¹⁸
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	"In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right." How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?"	10-point scale. 1 = Left, 10 = Right.
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	"How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between."	10-point scale. 1 = "Incomes should be made more equal," 10 = "We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort."
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	"On this list are various groups of people. Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbours?"	Binary variable, coded as 1 if any of the following groups were mentioned: "People of a different race," "Muslims," "Jews," "People of a different religion."
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	"Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card.	10-point scale. 1 = Never, 10 = Always. ¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Excluding self-explanatory variables.

¹¹⁷ Taken from the World Value Survey questionnaire (Inglehart et al., 2014b).

¹¹⁸ Some of the independent variables are reversed (changing low values to high). Acceptance of inequality thus always corresponds to high values in the variables used in the regression models.

¹¹⁹ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

	Homosexuality.”	
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	“Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce.”	1 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither. Categories 2 and 3 were collapsed, making it a dichotomous variable.
	“On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree. ¹²⁰
	“A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree. ¹²¹
<i>Household Income</i>	“Here is a scale of incomes and we would like to know in what group your household is, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in. Just give the letter of the group your household falls into, after taxes and other deductions.”	10-point scale. 1 =Low, 10 =High.
<i>Education Level</i>	“What is the highest educational level that you have attained?”	The response options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: <i>Primary or less (reference category)</i> , <i>Secondary</i> and <i>University</i> .

¹²⁰ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹²¹ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

<i>Religiosity</i>	“Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?”	The response options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: and <i>Less than once a Year</i> (reference category), <i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i> and <i>Once a Month or More</i> .
<i>Freedom</i>	“If you had to choose, which would you say is the most important responsibility of government?”	1 = “to maintain order in society,” 2 = “respect the freedom of the individual.”
<i>Resistance to Change</i>	“On this card are three basic kinds of attitudes concerning the society we live in. Please choose the one which best describes your own opinion.”	See WVS codebook. Transformed to: <i>Gradual Change</i> (reference category) = “Our society must be gradually improved by reforms,” <i>Against Change</i> = “Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces” and <i>Revolutionary Change</i> = “The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action.”
<i>Privatization</i>	“How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree	10-point scale. 1 = “Private ownership of business and industry should be increased,” 10

completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.”	= “Government ownership of business and industry should be increased.” ¹²²
--	--

¹²² Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

Table A.6. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. EVS

Variable ¹²³	Question Wording ¹²⁴	Response Options ¹²⁵
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	“In political matters, people talk of “the left” and the “the right”. How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?”	10-point scale. 1 = Left, 10 = Right.
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	“Now I'd like you to tell me your views on various issues. How would you place your views on this scale?”	10-point scale. 1 = “Incomes should be made more equal,” 10 = “There should be greater incentives for individual effort.”
	“In order to be considered “just”, what should a society provide? Please tell me for each statement if it is important or unimportant to you. 1 means very important; 5 means not important at all.	5-point scale. 1 = Very important, 5 = Not at all important.
	Eliminating big inequalities in income between citizens.”	
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	“On this list are various groups of people. Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbours?”	Binary variable, coded as one if any of the following groups were mentioned: “People of a different race,” “Muslims,” “Jews,” “Immigrants/foreign workers,” “Gypsies.”

¹²³ Excluding self-explanatory variables.

¹²⁴ Taken from the European Values Study questionnaire (Halman, 2001).

¹²⁵ Some of the independent variables are reversed (changing low values to high). Acceptance of inequality thus always corresponds to high values for the variables used in the regression models.

		This policy proposal and the following were merged with equal weights into <i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i> .
	“How about people from less developed countries coming here to work. Which one of the following do you think the government should do?”	4-point scale, ranging between: 1 = “Let anyone come who wants to,” 4 = “Prohibit people coming here from other countries.”
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	“Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card. Homosexuality.”	10-point scale. 1 = Never, 5 = Always. ¹²⁶
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	“Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? When jobs are scarce, men have more right to a job than women.”	1 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither. Categories 2 and 3 were collapsed, making it a dichotomous variable.
<i>Household Income</i>	“Here is a scale of incomes and we would like to know in what group your household is, counting all wages,	10-point scale. 1 =Low, 10 =High.

¹²⁶ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

	salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in. Just give the letter of the group your household falls into, after taxes and other deductions.”	
<i>Education Level</i>	“What is the highest level you have reached in your education?”	The response options (see the EVS codebook) have been simplified into three categories: <i>Elementary (reference category), Secondary and Tertiary.</i>
<i>Religiosity</i>	“Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?”	The response options (see the EVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: and <i>Less than once a Year</i> (reference category), <i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i> and <i>Once a Month or More.</i>
<i>Freedom</i>	“If you had to choose, which would you say is the most important responsibility of government:”	1 = “to maintain order in society,” 2 = “respect the freedom of the individual.”
<i>Resistance to Change</i>	“On this card are three basic kinds of attitudes vis-à-vis the society we live in. Please choose the one which best describes your own opinion.”	See the EVS codebook. Transformed to: <i>Gradual Change</i> (reference category) = “Our society must be gradually improved by reforms,” <i>Against Change</i> = “Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces” and

		<i>Revolutionary Change</i> = “The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action.”
<i>Privatization</i>	“How would you place your views on this scale?”	10-point scale. 1 = “Private ownership of business and industry should be increased,” 10 = “Government ownership of business and industry should be increased.” ¹²⁷
		This policy proposal and the following were merged with equal weights into <i>Privatization</i> .
	“How would you place your views on this scale?”	10-point scale 1 = “the state should give more freedom to firms” and 10 = “the state should control firms more effectively.” ¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹²⁸ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

Table A.7. Descriptive Statistics. WVS 1995-1998

Variable	Mean (SD)	Standardised Mean (SD)	Range	Standardised Range
Dependent Variable				
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.41 (2.15)		1 – 10	
Independent Variables				
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	5.36 (2.79)	0 (1)	1 – 10	-0.92 – 1.60
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	0.15 (0.35)	0 (1)	0 – 1	-0.57 – 1.77
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	6.42 (3.48)	0 (1)	1 – 10	-1.76 – 0.96
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	2.75 (2.13)	0 (1)	0 – 9	-0.46 – 2.84
Control Variables				
<i>Age</i>	43.78 (17.47)		15 – 94	
<i>Household Income</i>	5.02 (2.56)		1 – 10	
<i>Privatization</i>	4.39 (2.61)		1 – 10	
Dichotomous Variables		Proportion of Respondents		
Independent Variables				
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>		0.12		
Control Variables				
<i>City Size</i>				
<i>< 10,000</i>		0.19		
<i>10,000-100,000</i>		0.37		
<i>> 100,000</i>		0.44		
<i>Education Level</i>				
<i>Primary or less</i>		0.26		
<i>Secondary</i>		0.47		
<i>University</i>		0.27		
<i>Female</i>		0.52		
<i>Union Member</i>		0.19		
<i>Religious Attendance</i>				
<i>Less than Once a Year</i>		0.47		

<i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i>	0.20
<i>Once a Month or More</i>	0.33
<i>Ethnicity</i> ¹²⁹	
<i>White</i>	0.87
<i>Arab</i>	0.001
<i>Black</i>	0.03
<i>Brown</i>	0.07
<i>East Asian</i>	0.01
<i>Indigenous</i>	0.001
<i>Middle Eastern</i>	0.002
<i>South Asian</i>	0.01
<i>Other Minority</i>	0.02
<i>Religious Denomination</i>	
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	0.42
<i>Protestant</i>	0.25
<i>Free Church/Non-Conformist</i>	0.02
<i>Jewish</i>	0.01
<i>Muslim</i>	0.003
<i>Hindu</i>	0.002
<i>Buddhist</i>	0.004
<i>Orthodox</i>	0.004
<i>Other Christian denomination</i>	0.01
<i>Other</i>	0.03
<i>No Religious Affiliation</i>	0.27
<i>Resistance to Change</i>	
<i>Revolutionary Action</i>	0.06
<i>Gradual Change</i>	0.77
<i>Against Change</i>	0.17
<i>Freedom</i>	0.5

¹²⁹ *White* is the reference category.

Table A.8. Descriptive Statistics. EVS 1999 The Czech Republic

Variable	Mean (SD)	Standardised Mean (SD)	Range	Standardised Range
Dependent Variable				
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.96 (2.34)		1 – 10	
Independent Variables				
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	2.41 (1.19)	0 (1)	1 – 5	-1.18 – 2.17
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	3.21 (1.77)	0 (1)	0 – 6	-1.81 – 1.58
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	5.55 (3.55)	0 (1)	1 – 10	-1.28 – 1.25
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.33 (0.47)	0 (1)	0 – 1	-0.70 – 1.44
Control Variables				
<i>Age</i>	47.73 (17.13)		18 – 87	
<i>Household Income</i>	4.35 (2.70)		1 – 10	
<i>Privatization</i>	5.69 (2.20)		1 – 10	
Dichotomous Variables				
<i>City Size</i>				
< 10,000		0.33		
10,000-100,000		0.38		
> 100,000		0.29		
<i>Education Level</i>				
Elementary		0.45		
Secondary		0.41		
University		0.15		
<i>Female</i>		0.5		
<i>Union Member</i>		0.12		
<i>Religious Attendance</i>				
Less than Once a Year		0.66		
Once a Year/Special Holidays		0.23		
Once a Month or More		0.12		
<i>Citizen</i>		0.99		
<i>Religious Denomination</i>				

<i>Roman Catholic</i>	0.28
<i>Protestant</i>	0.04
<i>Free Church/Non-Conformist</i>	0.008
<i>Jewish</i>	0
<i>Muslim</i>	0
<i>Hindu</i>	0
<i>Buddhist</i>	0
<i>Orthodox</i>	0.0008
<i>Other</i>	0.005
<i>No Religious Affiliation</i>	0.67
<i>Resistance to Change</i>	
<i>Revolutionary Action</i>	0.06
<i>Gradual Change</i>	0.76
<i>Against Change</i>	0.18
<i>Freedom</i>	0.82

Table A.9. Descriptive Statistics. EVS 1999 Lithuania

Variable	Mean (SD)	Standardised Mean (SD)	Range	Standardised Range
Dependent Variable				
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.52 (2.16)		1 – 10	
Independent Variables				
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	2.17 (1.25)	0 (1)	1 – 5	-0.93 – 2.27
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	3.91 (1.62)	0 (1)	0 – 6	-2.41 – 1.29
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	9.15 (1.93)	0 (1)	1 – 10	-4.23 – 0.44
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.31 (0.46)	0 (1)	0 – 1	-0.67 – 1.48
Control Variables				
<i>Age</i>	44.34 (15.02)		18 – 87	
<i>Household Income</i>	4.66 (2.09)		1 – 10	
<i>Privatization</i>	6.39 (2.44)		1 – 10	
Dichotomous Variables				
<i>City Size</i>				
<i>< 10,000</i>		0.51		
<i>10,000-100,000</i>		0.49		
<i>> 100,000</i>		0		
<i>Education Level</i>				
<i>Elementary</i>		0.10		
<i>Secondary</i>		0.59		
<i>University</i>		0.31		
<i>Female</i>		0.47		
<i>Union Member</i>		0.03		
<i>Religious Attendance</i>				
<i>Less than Once a Year</i>		0.23		
<i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i>		0.48		
<i>Once a Month or More</i>		0.29		
<i>Citizen</i>		0.99		
<i>Religious Denomination</i>				

<i>Roman Catholic</i>	0.81
<i>Protestant</i>	0.02
<i>Free Church/Non-Conformist</i>	0
<i>Jewish</i>	0
<i>Muslim</i>	0
<i>Hindu</i>	0
<i>Buddhist</i>	0
<i>Orthodox</i>	0.02
<i>Other</i>	0.005
<i>No Religious Affiliation</i>	0.15
<i>Resistance to Change</i>	
<i>Revolutionary Action</i>	0.21
<i>Gradual Change</i>	0.69
<i>Against Change</i>	0.10
<i>Freedom</i>	0.35

Table A.10. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placement – WVS 1995-1998

Fixed Effects	<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	
	(1)	(2)
<i>Intercept</i>	3.90*** (0.50)	4.99*** (0.78)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.10** (0.04)	0.23 (0.21)
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	0.38*** (0.11)	0.40 (0.63)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.10*** (0.02)	0.25* (0.15)
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.30*** (0.05)	0.23*** (0.09)
<i>Age</i>		0.003 (0.002)
<i>Education Level</i> ¹³⁰		
<i>Secondary</i>		-0.21*** (0.08)
<i>University</i>		-0.19*** (0.09)
<i>Income</i>		0.03*** (0.01)
<i>Female</i>		-0.04 (0.06)
<i>Union Member</i>		-0.26*** (0.07)
<i>City Size</i> ¹³¹		
< 10,000		0.06 (0.08)
10,000-100,000		-0.004 (0.08)
<i>Religious Attendance</i> ¹³²		
<i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i>		0.07 (0.08)
<i>Once a Month or More</i>		0.30*** (0.07)
<i>Ethnicity</i> ¹³³		
<i>Arab</i>		-1.21 (0.81)
<i>Black</i>		-0.32* (0.18)
<i>Brown</i>		-0.05 (0.15)
<i>East Asian</i>		0.26 (0.35)
<i>Indigenous</i>		1.24 (0.97)
<i>Middle Eastern</i>		0.34 (0.63)
<i>South Asian</i>		0.06 (0.33)

¹³⁰ *Primary or less* is the reference category.

¹³¹ > 100,000 is the reference category.

¹³² *Less than Once a Year* is the reference category.

¹³³ *White* is the reference category.

<i>Other Minority</i>		0.16 (0.22)
<i>Religious Denomination</i> ¹³⁴		
<i>Protestant</i>		0.05 (0.08)
<i>Other Christian Denomination</i>		-0.67** (0.33)
<i>Jewish</i>		-1.30*** (0.38)
<i>Muslim</i>		-0.01 (0.46)
<i>Hindu</i>		-0.37 (0.70)
<i>Buddhist</i>		-0.24 (0.44)
<i>Orthodox</i>		0.31 (0.41)
<i>Other</i>		-0.25 (0.16)
<i>No Religious Affiliation</i>		-0.35*** (0.08)
<i>Resistance to Change</i> ¹³⁵		
<i>Revolutionary Action</i>		-0.57 (1.26)
<i>Against Change</i>		0.25 (1.13)
<i>Privatization</i>		0.09** (0.04)
<i>Freedom</i>		-0.29 (1.67)
Variance Components		
<i>Residual</i>	3.92	3.70
<i>Intercept</i>	1.47	3.51
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.01	0.25
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	0.04	2.4
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.002	0.12
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.002	0.04
<i>Resistance to Change</i> ¹³⁶		
<i>Revolutionary Action</i>		9.5
<i>Against Change</i>		7.6
<i>Privatization</i>		0.01
<i>Freedom</i>		16.6
Observations	5,277	5,277

¹³⁴ *Roman Catholic* is the reference category.

¹³⁵ *Gradual Change* is the reference category.

¹³⁶ *Gradual Change* is the reference category.

Groups (Country)	6	6
AIC	22,290	22,238
BIC	22,428	22,777

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in brackets.

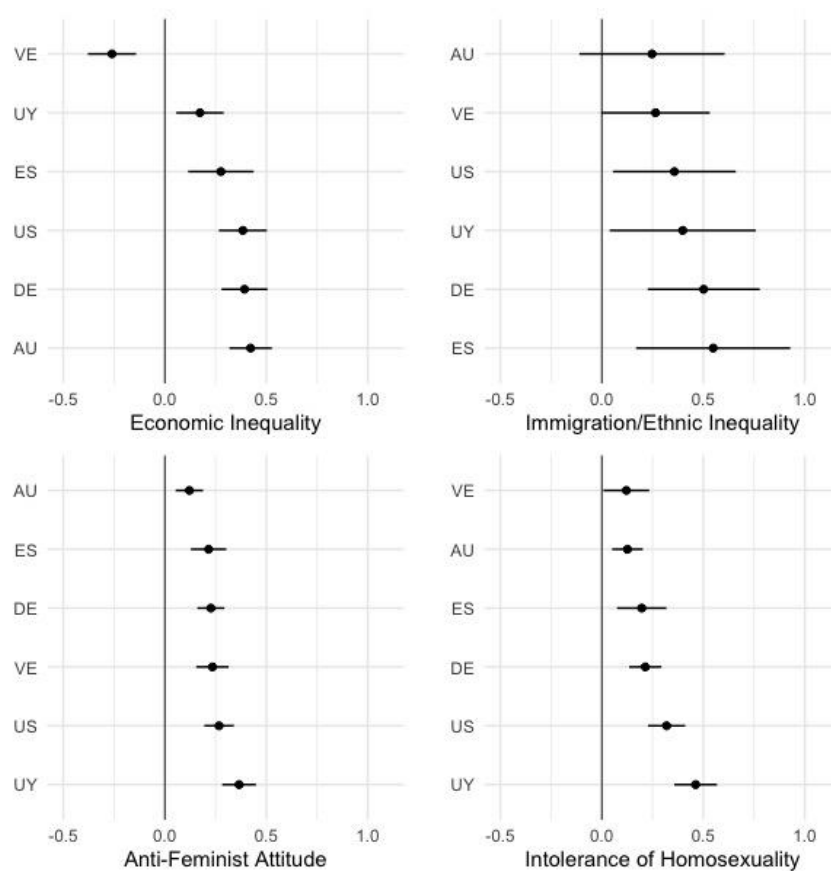


Fig. A.1. Independent Variable Coefficients by Country – WVS 1995-1998

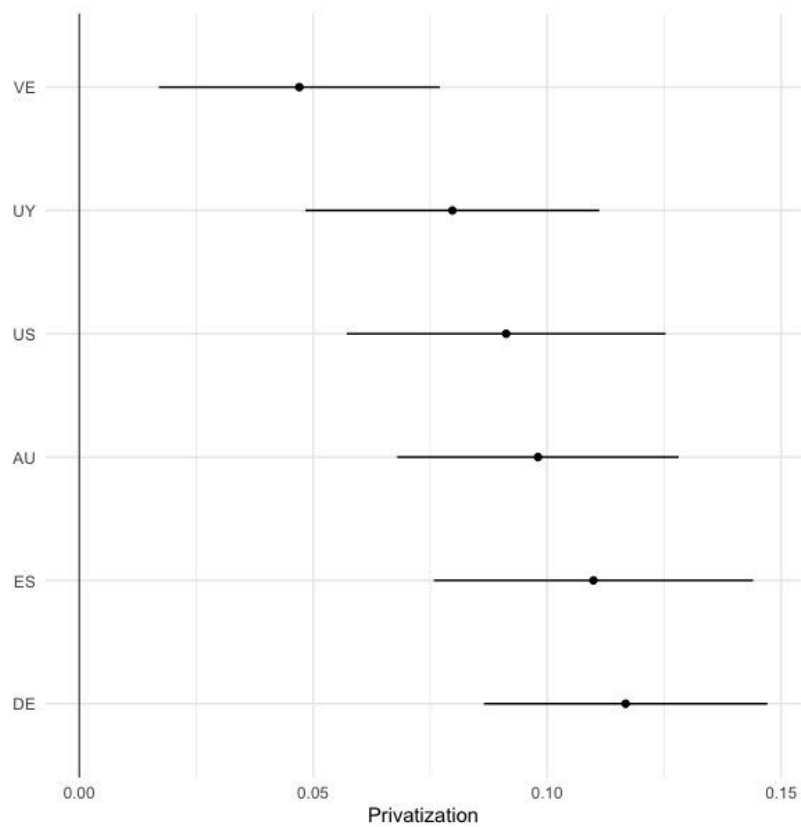


Fig. A.2. Privatization Coefficients by Country – WVS 1995-1998

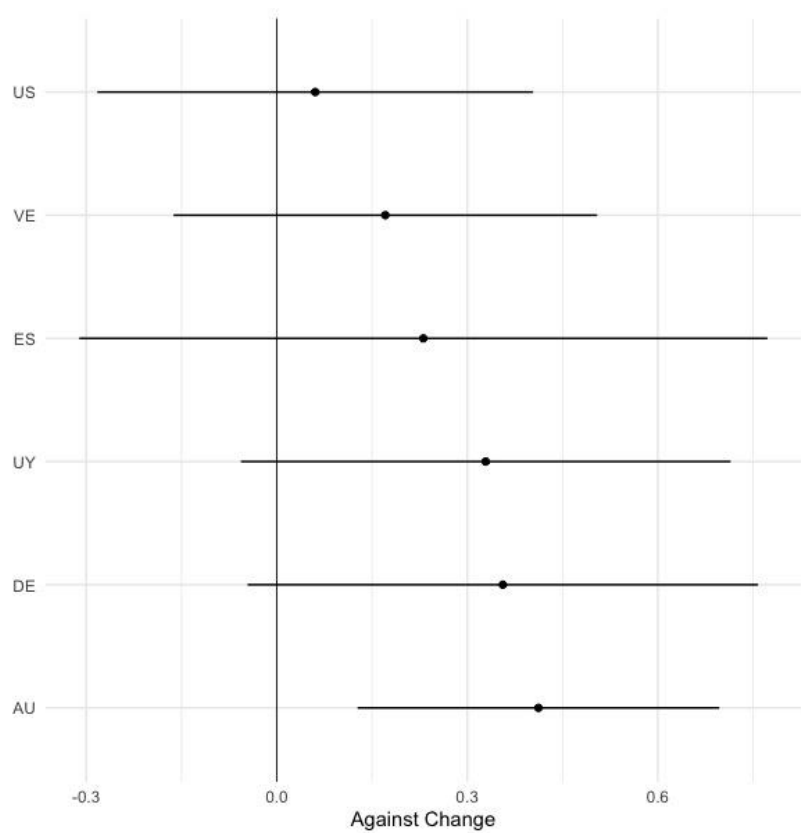


Fig. A.3. Resistance to Change Coefficients by Country – WVS 1995-1998

The Czech Republic and Lithuania

Table A.11. OLS Regression Explaining L-R Self-Placement – EVS 1999

Variables	DV: <i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	
	Czech Republic	Lithuania
<i>Intercept</i>	4.35*** (0.89)	1.67 (1.35)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.41*** (0.07)	0.21** (0.10)
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	0.06 (0.06)	-0.07 (0.10)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	-0.02 (0.06)	-0.18* (0.10)
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.06 (0.06)	0.23** (0.10)
<i>Age</i>	-0.02*** (0.004)	0.01 (0.01)
<i>Education Level</i> ¹³⁷		
<i>Secondary</i>	-0.25* (0.13)	0.18 (0.37)
<i>Tertiary</i>	-0.22 (0.19)	0.39 (0.41)
<i>Household Income</i>	0.08*** (0.02)	-0.05 (0.05)
<i>Female</i>	0.34*** (0.12)	-0.47** (0.21)
<i>City Size</i> ¹³⁸		
<i>10,000 – 100,000</i>	-0.10 (0.14)	0.29 (0.20)
<i>> 100,000</i>	0.08 (0.15)	
<i>Religious Attendance</i> ¹³⁹		
<i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i>	-0.48*** (0.15)	-0.47 (0.31)
<i>Once a Month or More</i>	-0.16 (0.22)	1.41*** (0.25)
<i>Union Member</i>	-0.41** (0.18)	0.16 (0.64)
<i>Religious Denomination</i> ¹⁴⁰		
<i>Protestant</i>	-0.36 (0.15)	-0.64 (0.81)
<i>Free Church/Non-</i>	-0.98 (0.63)	
<i>Conformist/Evangelical</i>		
<i>Jewish</i>		

¹³⁷ *Primary or less* is the reference category.

¹³⁸ *< 10,000* is the reference category.

¹³⁹ *Less than Once a Year* is the reference category.

¹⁴⁰ *Roman Catholic* is the reference category.

<i>Muslim</i>		
<i>Orthodox</i>	-0.34 (2.04)	-0.36 (0.68)
<i>Other</i>	-0.83 (0.81)	-4.62*** (1.39)
<i>No Religious Affiliation</i>	-0.91*** (0.16)	-0.14 (0.35)
<i>Citizen</i>	1.27 (0.81)	3.31*** (1.18)
<i>Resistance to Change</i> ¹⁴¹		
<i>Revolutionary Action</i>	-1.08*** (0.25)	-0.52** (0.25)
<i>Against Change</i>	-0.33** (0.15)	0.60* (0.34)
<i>Privatization</i>	0.24*** (0.03)	0.08* (0.04)
<i>Freedom</i>	0.66*** (0.15)	-0.22 (0.21)
Observations	1,295	399
<i>R</i> ²	0.26	0.24
Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	0.25	0.20

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in brackets.

¹⁴¹ *Gradual Change* is the reference category.

Venezuela

Venezuela is a peculiar case because *Economic Inequality* is negatively associated with L-R self-placements, which is not found in any other country in any of the models. This unexpected result warrants another regression analysis for Venezuela. I use the fourth wave of the WVS (Inglehart et al., 2014a) for this purpose. This data is from 2000 and includes all the same variables as the third wave of the WVS (which in Venezuela took place in 1996), except for *Freedom*. As can be seen in Table A.12, the results change substantially between the two data points. *Economic Inequality* is no longer significant, but *Immigration/Ethnic Inequality* is now positively correlated with L-R orientations, while *Privatization* and *Resistance to Change* coefficients are mostly insignificant at conventional significance levels. The most obvious explanation for these peculiar results seems to be the political turmoil in Venezuela in the early 1990s, and the rise of Hugo Chávez between the two surveys. A part of the explanation might also be that L-R self-placements in Venezuela were heavily tilted to the right in the third wave of the WVS. In the fourth wave the slant to the right had disappeared, resulting in a normal distribution. In sum, there is reason to believe that political turmoil (specifically regarding whether there will be democratic governance at all) may cause unstable L-R self-placements.

Table A.12. OLS Regression Explaining L-R Self-Placement – Venezuela

Variables	<i>DV: L-R Self-Placement</i>		
	1996		2000
	(1)	(2)	(1)
<i>Intercept</i>	7.06*** (0.94)	7.46*** (0.99)	6.51*** (0.56)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	-0.11*** (0.04)	-0.10*** (0.04)	0.12 (0.09)
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	0.22 (0.25)	0.27 (0.25)	0.23** (0.11)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.02 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.10 (0.12)
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.11** (0.11)	0.09* (0.12)	0.11*** (0.04)
<i>Age</i>	-0.001 (0.01)	-0.002 (0.01)	-0.002 (0.01)
<i>Education Level</i> ¹⁴²			
<i>Secondary</i>	-0.65** (0.33)	-0.70** (0.34)	0.04 (0.28)
<i>University</i>	-0.08 (0.39)	-0.06 (0.40)	0.02 (0.36)
<i>Income</i>	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.04)
<i>Female</i>	-0.07 (0.24)	-0.02 (0.25)	0.11 (0.21)
<i>City Size</i> ¹⁴³			
<i>10,000-100,000</i>	-0.31 (0.41)	0.20 (0.28)	0.02 (0.46)
<i>> 100,000</i>	-0.66* (0.39)	0.59 (0.40)	-0.37 (0.43)

¹⁴² Primary or less is the reference category.¹⁴³ < 10,000 is the reference category.

*Religious Attendance*¹⁴⁴

<i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i>	-0.22 (0.35)	-0.26 (0.36)	0.20 (0.28)
<i>Once a Month or More</i>	-0.33 (0.33)	-0.33 (0.34)	0.52** (0.26)

*Ethnicity*¹⁴⁵

<i>Brown</i>	-0.12 (0.25)	-0.07 (0.26)	
<i>Dark Brown</i>			-0.53* (0.29)
<i>Light Brown</i>			-0.08 (0.22)
<i>Indigenous</i>			-2.44 (1.55)
<i>Other Minority</i>			-0.83 (1.90)
<i>East Asian</i>	-0.03 (3.06)	0.07 (3.08)	
<i>Black</i>	-0.69 (0.52)	-0.66 (0.54)	-1.04** (0.47)

*Religious Denomination*¹⁴⁶

<i>Protestant</i>	0.52 (0.52)	0.50 (0.52)	0.06 (0.41)
<i>Orthodox</i>	3.72 (3.02)	3.99 (3.04)	
<i>Buddhist</i>	1.37 (3.06)	1.57 (3.08)	
<i>Hindu</i>	-1.52 (3.02)	-1.81 (3.04)	
<i>Other</i>	-0.26	-0.79	0.50

¹⁴⁴ *Less than Once a Year* is the reference category.

¹⁴⁵ *White* is the reference category.

¹⁴⁶ *Roman Catholic* is the reference category.

	(1.15)	(1.25)	(1.89)
<i>No Religious Affiliation</i>	-0.06	-0.11	-0.01
	(0.54)	(0.56)	(0.24)
<i>Resistance to Change</i> ¹⁴⁷			
<i>Revolutionary Action</i>	-0.60*	-0.55	-0.76***
	(0.36)	(0.38)	(0.29)
<i>Against Change</i>	0.25	0.28	0.21
	(0.27)	(0.28)	(0.22)
<i>Privatization</i>	0.04 (0.04)	0.06	0.02
		(0.04)	(0.03)
<i>Freedom</i>		-0.27	
		(0.25)	
Observations	653	627	774
R^2	0.05	0.06	0.07
Adjusted R^2	0.02	0.01	0.04

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in brackets.

¹⁴⁷ *Gradual Change* is the reference category.

Controlling for Partisanship

In the following models, a control for partisanship is added (otherwise the same as the models in the paper, Fig. 4.1 and 4.2 specifically). The analysis is the exact same as the main model in the paper, but with an added control for partisanship. The following survey item from the ESS is used to measure partisanship: “Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the other parties?” The respondents are then asked which party they feel closer to if they say yes. All parties are utilised as dummy variables, while anyone who does not feel close to a party is included as a non-partisan (the reference category). However, it is worth remembering that the issue with this analysis is that we expect respondents to support different parties at least partly because of their views on the independent variables. Including the partisanship control variable should therefore lead to underestimations of the effects of the independent variables. Nevertheless, the results are very similar to those without controlling for partisanship (found in the main paper).

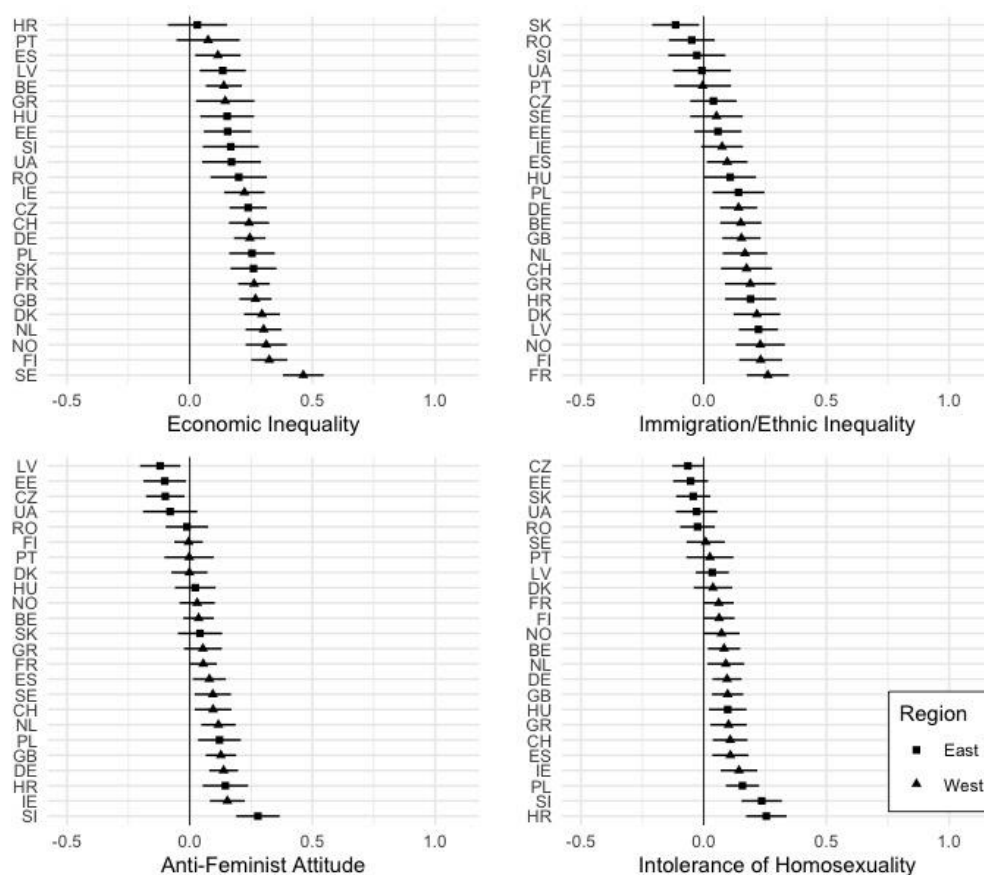


Fig. A.4. Independent Variable Coefficients. Controlling for Partisanship – ESS

2008

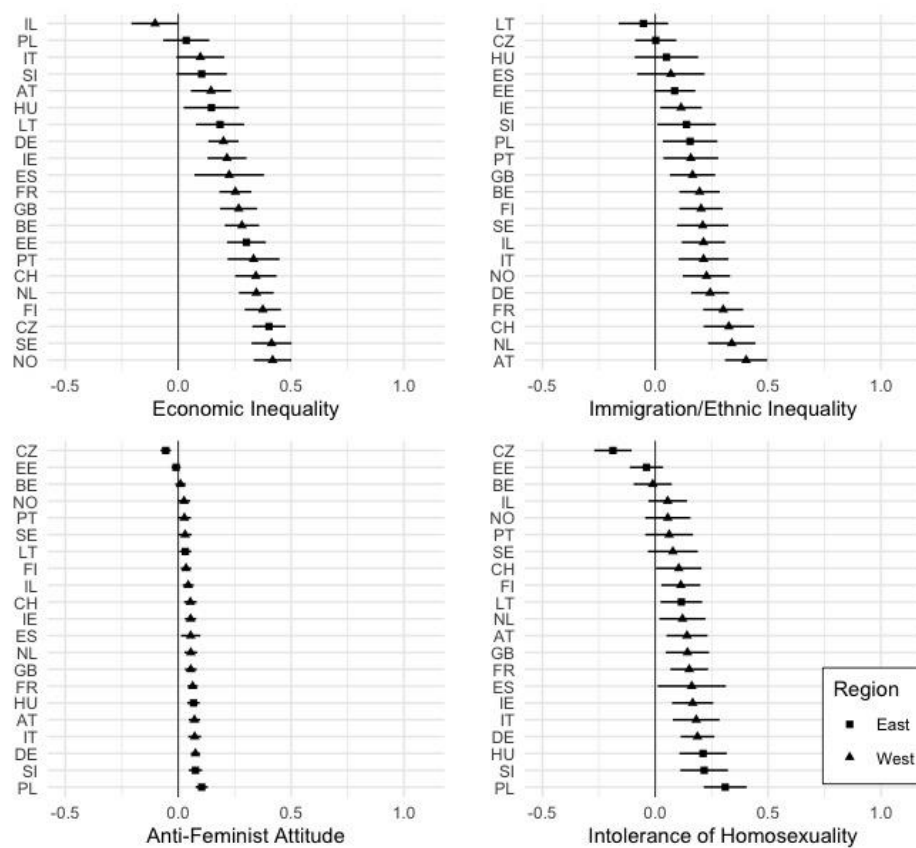


Fig. A.5. Independent Variable Coefficients. Controlling for Partisanship – ESS 2016

Changing Indicators for Independent Variables

The operationalisations of *Intolerance of Homosexuality* and *Anti-Feminist Attitude* are discussed in the paper as relying on imperfect survey items, compared to *Immigration/Ethnic Inequality* and *Economic Inequality*. As a robustness check, the same analysis is carried out with different operationalisations of *Intolerance of Homosexuality* and *Anti-Feminist Attitude* (see full explanation in the paper). *Intolerance of Homosexuality* is measured with the survey item “Gays and lesbians free to live life as they wish” and *Anti-Feminist Attitude* is measured using the survey item “Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce.” The results can be found below, and they are overall very similar to the results presented in the paper.

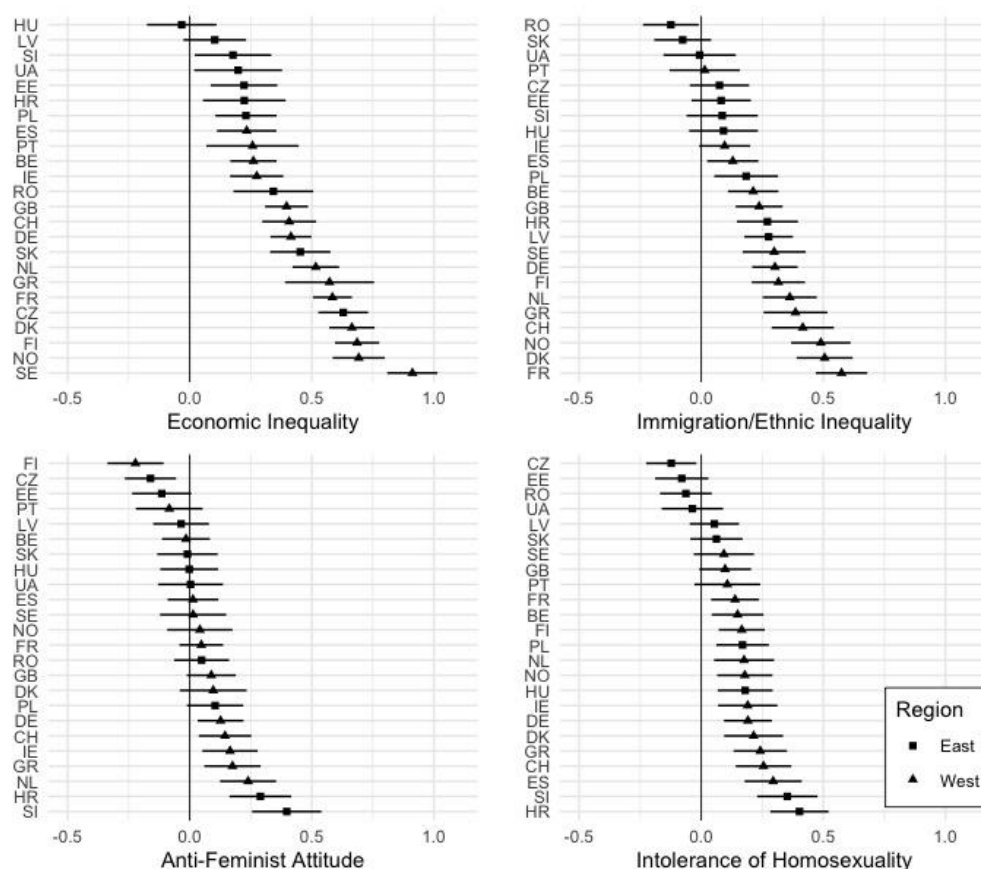


Fig. A.6. Changed Indicators. Independent Variable Coefficients – ESS 2008

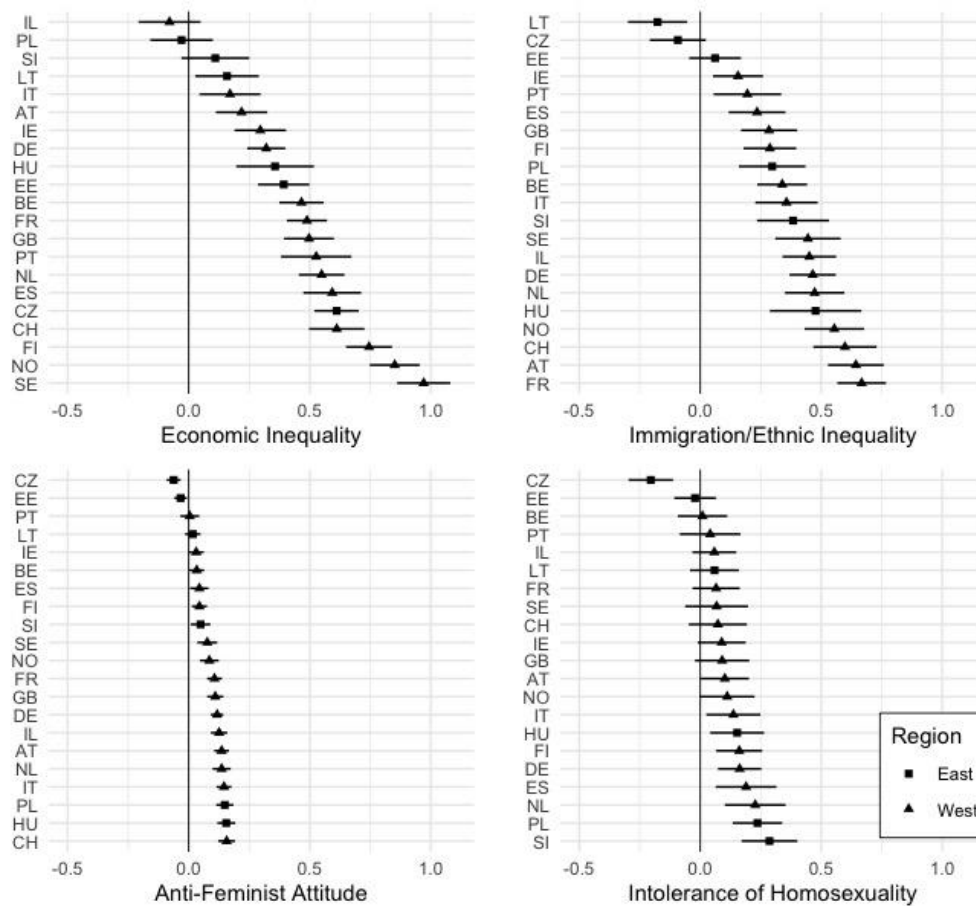


Fig. A.7. Changed Indicators. Independent Variable Coefficients – ESS 2016

Issue Salience Measure - Comparative Manifesto Project

The items that were included in the measurement of each issue salience, taken from the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP), are displayed in the table below (Volkens et al., 2020).

Table A.13. Issue Salience Measurement. CMP

Salience of	Item	Name
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per401	“Free Market Economy”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per402	“Incentives: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per403	“Market Regulation”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per404	“Economic Planning”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per405	“Corporatism/Mixed Economy”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per406	“Protectionism: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per407	“Protectionism: Negative”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per408	“Economic Goals”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per409	“Keynesian Demand Management”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per410	“Economic Growth: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per411	“Technology and Infrastructure: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per412	“Controlled Economy”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per413	“Nationalisation”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per414	“Economic Orthodoxy”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per415	“Marxist Analysis”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per416	“Anti-Growth Economy: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per504	“Welfare State Expansion”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per505	“Welfare State Limitation”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per701	“Labour Groups: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per702	“Labour Groups: Negative”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per704	“Middle Class and Professional Groups”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4011	“Privatisation: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4012	“Control of Economy: Negative”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4013	“Property-Restitution: Positive”

<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4014	“Privatisation Vouchers: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4121	“Social Ownership: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4122	“Mixed Economy: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4123	“Publicly-Owned Industry: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4124	“Socialist Property: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4131	“Property-Restitution: Negative”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per4132	“Privatisation: Negative”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per5021	“Private-Public Mix in Culture: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per5031	“Private-Public Mix in Social Justice: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per5041	“Private-Public Mix in Welfare: Positive”
<i>Economic Issues</i>	per5061	“Private-Public Mix in Education: Positive”
<i>Immigration/Multiculturalism</i>	per607	“Multiculturalism: Positive”
<i>Immigration/Multiculturalism</i>	per608	“Multiculturalism: Negative”
<i>Immigration/Multiculturalism</i>	per7062	“Refugees: Positive”

Issue Salience Measure - Chapel Hill Expert Survey

The salience of homosexuality as a political issue is measured with experts' answers to how salient "social lifestyle (e.g. homosexuality)" is, in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES). In 2006 experts judged how important the issue was for each party on a scale between 0 and 10. Country-salience is calculated as the average salience score of parties in that country. Each party score is weighted by their vote share, taken from the Comparative Manifesto Project variable *pervote*. In 2014 experts chose the three most important issues per party. To measure the average salience, a party is given a score of 3 where the salience of this issue was the most important, 2 if it was the second most important and 1 if the third most important. Like with the 2006 data, the average score is calculated per country (parties' scores weighted by vote share), resulting in an average social lifestyle salience score.

The scores (3, 2, 1) applied to the 2014 CHES (Polk et al., 2017) data for the three most important issues as classified by experts, is a simplification and arguably an arbitrary coding scheme. The distance between each score is not necessarily the 'real' distance between for example how important the most important and second most important issue is to a party. As a robustness check, I change the measurement in a subsequent model. Instead, CHES' own point system is utilised, which they specify in the CHES 2014 codebook. They choose to score the most important issue as 10, the second most important issue as 5, and the third most important issue as 1. The measurement is thus changed (labelled *Social Lifestyle Salience (2014, CHES Scores)*), and this measurement is used in model 3 in Table A.15. The results do not change the conclusions of the paper. In fact, the results are very similar to model 2 (2016) in Table A.15.

Table A.14. Country-Level Issue Salience Data

	<i>Economics Salience</i>		<i>Immigration/ Multiculturalism Salience</i>		<i>Social Lifestyle Salience</i>	
Year of Data	1998- 2008	2006- 2016	1998-2008	2006-2016	2006	2014
Data From	CMP		CMP		CHES	
Corresponding ESS Data	2008	2016	2008	2016	2008	2016
CZ	0.36	0.40	0.00	0.00	4.08	0.20
EE	0.32	0.35	0.01	0.02	2.83	0.13
HU	0.36		0.01		4.33	
LT		0.26		0.01		0.39
LV	0.32		0.01		4.90	
PL	0.32	0.29	0.00	0.00	6.23	0.43
RO	0.37		0.00		5.22	
SI	0.36	0.36	0.01	0.00	5.58	0.38
SK	0.33		0.00		4.93	
AT		0.30		0.03		0.24
BE	0.32	0.32	0.02	0.02	6.51	0.09
CH	0.31	0.31	0.03	0.02		0.26
DE	0.36	0.34	0.01	0.01	4.70	0.18
DK	0.34		0.08		4.28	
ES	0.32	0.40	0.01	0.01	6.33	0.24
FI	0.45	0.46	0.02	0.02	5.54	0.48
FR	0.25	0.31	0.01	0.01	6.43	0.29
GB	0.24	0.33	0.00	0.00	6.13	0.02
GR	0.37		0.00		5.45	
IE	0.34	0.38	0.01	0.01	4.49	0.37
NL	0.30	0.31	0.02	0.04	4.97	0.10
NO	0.38	0.39	0.01	0.03		
PT	0.35	0.41	0.01	0.00	5.49	0.14
SE	0.34	0.40	0.00	0.01	6.24	0.11

Note: This data is mean centred in the multilevel models, but not in the above table.

Table A.15. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placements. Interaction Effects Included – ESS 2008 and 2016

Fixed Effects	<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>				
	2008		2016		
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Intercept</i>	4.68*** (0.13)	4.61*** (0.15)	4.27*** (0.14)	4.28*** (0.17)	4.28*** (0.16)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.40*** (0.06)	0.40*** (0.06)	0.44*** (0.06)	0.45*** (0.06)	0.45*** (0.06)
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	0.20*** (0.04)	0.20*** (0.04)	0.29*** (0.06)	0.30*** (0.05)	0.30*** (0.05)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.12*** (0.03)	0.12*** (0.03)	0.17*** (0.06)	0.17*** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.08* (0.04)	0.08** (0.04)	0.05** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)	0.05** (0.02)
<i>Economic Salience</i>		4.84*** (1.72)		1.99 (2.17)	1.43 (2.21)
<i>Immigration Salience</i>		2.46 (5.49)		-2.13 (6.46)	-2.20 (6.30)
<i>Social Lifestyle Salience</i>		- 0.06 (0.09)		1.55*** (0.52)	0.58*** (0.20)
Interaction Effects					
<i>Economic Salience × Economic Inequality</i>		3.10*** (1.00)		4.22*** (0.86)	4.21*** (0.86)
<i>Immigration Salience × Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>		4.66** (2.07)		9.90** (3.75)	9.80** (3.66)
<i>Social Lifestyle Salience (2006) × Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>		0.06** (0.03)			
<i>Social Lifestyle Salience (2014) × Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>				0.65** (0.32)	
<i>Social Lifestyle Salience (2014, CHES Scores) × Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>					0.25** (0.12)

Variance Components					
<i>Residual</i>	3.80	3.80	3.63	3.60	3.60
<i>Intercept</i>	0.13	0.2	0.18	0.31	0.30
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.05	0.05
<i>Immigration/Ethnic Inequality</i>	0.04	0.03	0.05	0.04	0.04
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.02	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.04
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>	0.03	0.03	0.005	0.005	0.005
<i>More EU Integration</i>	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004
Control Variables Included?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	23,389	23,389	22,524	22,524	22,524
Groups (Country)	20	20	17	17	17
AIC	98,063	98,071	93,408	93,377	93,381
BIC	98,433	98,507	93,802	93,818	93,822

Note: All other variables specified in the methodology section are included in all four models in the table.

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in brackets. Model 3 in 2016 contains a changed measurement of *Social Lifestyle Salience*.

Appendix B. A Political Esperanto or False Friends?

NMF Topic Output – All Topics

Table B.1. NMF Topic Output – All Topics

<i>Country</i>	<i>Topic name</i>	<i>Top 20 Associated Words</i>	<i>R_t</i>
All	Conservatism	conserv, conserv_valu, less_govern, right_conserv, decis, corpor, oppos, gun, small, sens, militari, strengthen, old, fundament, conserv_polit, wealthi, war, mindset, explain, stupid	0.04
All	Radical Left	communism, punk, left, left_radic, autonom, sed, level, demonstr, redistribut, implement, social_left, communist, green, riot, link, left_left, far_left, former, exact, altern	-0.03
All	Xenophobia	nazi, right_radic, neonazi, xenophobia, nation_social, radic, brown, radic_right, german, bald, use_violenc, foreign, neonaz, nation_socialist, danger, violenc, germani, xenophob, skinhead, hat	0.03
All	Socialism (2)	socialist, labor, communist, socialist_communist, regim, old, irrespons, exampl, lie, unfortun, intern, conscious, reject, happen, form, behind, polit_left, increas, principl, earn	-0.02
All	Nationalism	nation_interest, christian, nation, arrog, disregard, conserv_nation, hungari, interest, perspect, christian_valu, spectrum, exploit, sit, valu, principl, extrem_case, norm, matter, famili, civil	0.02
All	Workers	worker, progress, distribut, defens, servic, social_right, utopia, equal_social, freedom_equal, social_polic, work_class, modern, wast, espec, social_class, fairer, secular, civil_right, struggl, least	-0.02
All	Social Justice	justic, social_justic, social_justic_equal, justic_equal, social_just, environment_protect, solidar, toler, equal_right, social_secur, far_left, orient_toward, social_market, social_market_economi, opporti, environment, left_left, ordinari, equal_treatment, cant_say	-0.02

All	Capitalism	capit, privileg, resourc, antisemit, competit, anarchi, restrict, intoler, conservat, violenc, polic, man, free, allianc, freedom, conserv_attitud, wish, long, bourgeois, great	0.02
All	Patriotism	patriot, order, tradit, free_market, nation, past, nation_pride, complet, free, pride, market, respect, countri, spirit, build, accept, reduc, fatherland, preserv, competit	0.02
All	Solidarity	sensit, social_sensit, represent, social_benefit, solidar, social_equal, achiev, needi, employe, color, pension, interest, safeti, benefit, social_secur, parliament, import, minor, salari, collect	-0.02
All	Entrepreneur & Upper Class	entrepreneur, upper_class, upper, church, class, compani, bank, oppress, fascism, assert, lower_class, fascist, capit, exploit, privat, capitalist, favor, member, suppress, conservat	0.02
All	Socialism	social, social_balanc, left_polit, social_democrat, social_attitud, common, normal, social_democraci, communism_social, weak, strive, liber_social, awar, social_polici, abolit, social_issu, welfar_state, commi, middl, polici	-0.02
All	Equality of Opportunity	equal_opporti, societi, general, opporti, sometim, sens, equal, high, public, school, state, larg, rule_law, section, commi, littl, influenc, common, democrat, thought	-0.02
All	Inequality	inequ, privat, richer, fear, abl, outdat, becom, low, irrespons, poorer, happi, sector, necessarili, vote, selfish, howev, keep, fraud, allow, religi	0.01
All	Israel Land	land, israel, jewish, secur, judaism, free_economi, terrorist, loyalti, greater, keep, love, reliabl, integr, defend, divis, economi, ideolog, quo, status_quo, border	0.01
All	Social Programmes	liber, program, social_program, liber_social, open, innov, open_new, allianc, member, happi, left_liber, involv, everi, ideal, higher, address, radic, regul, manipul, extrem_left	-0.01
All	Right	right, right_right, right_left, sound, find, equal_right, choos, honest, right_nazi, spirit, exist, done, right_polit,	0.01

		human_right, perform, becom, extrem_right, bit, realiz, main	
All	Big Business	big_busi, busi, big, maintain, close, quo, status_quo, status, averag, wealthi, break, wage, cours, higher, corpor, help, promot, honest, stay, main	0.01
All	Peace	peac, integr, leadership, unrealist, strive, hope, ideolog, moder, love, intellectu, sincer, weak, divis, enemi, rule_law, ed, intern, agreement, straight, cost	-0.01
All	Racism	racism, compromis, extrem, reliabl, sincer, discrimin, intellectu, move, crime, leader, hate, racial, racist, right_extrem, address, anoth, fact, cost, disregard, jew	0.01
All	The Rich	rich, strict, reduc, rich_poor, employ, poor, wealthi, red, rd, lower_tax, dictatorship, look, irrespons, mayb, money, lower, extrem_case, influenc, lean, bank	0.01
All	General Politics	dialogu, presid, promis, businessmen, front, law, crazi, strengthen, human_right, altern, compli, speak, honesti, conflict, bourgeois, hope, allianc, best, prefer, okay	0.01
All	Conflict	contrari, rebellion, oppon, conveni, oblig, gover, goe, head, march, fail, chang, manifest, impos, reform, liar, crazi, strength, fals, problem, improv	-0.01
All	Corruption	corrupt, imposit, businessmen, authoritarian, distrust, conveni, continu, presid, injustic, impos, global, lie, hypocrit, prefer, abus, religion, fraud, person, truth, abl	0.01
All	Don't Know	dont_understand, im, realli, understand, left_right, point, feel, dont_like, pay_attent, left_liber, exampl, attent, total, stand, movement, hous, green, environ, see, discuss	-0.01
All	Unclear (2)	home, place, stay, properti, goe, run, certain, christian_valu, practic, realist, allow, defend, extrem_right, fair, extrem_left, young, conservat, absolut, middl_class, consid	0.01
All	Health & Education	health, clear, educ, realist, divid, health_care, social_welfar, welfar, concern, hous, healthcar, net, safeti_net, regim, safeti, oppos, serv, right_equal, citizen, explain	-0.01

All	Government & Power	power_govern, power, favor, agreement, loyal, accord, antidemocrat, agre, reactionari, govern, imposit, organ, transpar, compli, honesti, legal, presid, usual, win, leader	0.01
All	Palestinian State	palestinian, territori, arab, hate, secular, lack, enemi, give, state, israel, judaism, terrorist, jewish, divid, favor, full, racial, pride, hat, jew	-0.01
All	Political Conflict	disagr, protest, negat, conflict, manifest, march, rebellion, otherwis, intoler, fool, cheat, popul, option, revolut, get_better, liar, violenc, oppon, crook, manipul	-0.01
All	Equality	everyon, everyon_equal, happi, commi, left_social, attempt, leftist, selfish, control, creat, given, welfar, man, regardless, els, belong, right_everyon, sector, stand, school	-0.01
All	Social Issues	gay, abort, marriag, healthcar, gun, multicultur, spend, usual, vote, immigr, big_govern, manipul, discrimin, abl, militari, reform, desir, wish, fals, realli	-0.01
All	Unclear	focus, agenda, individu, individu_right, valu, market, center, preserv, fatherland, financi, natur, posit, role, free_market, right_conserv, populist, present, point, averag, creat	0.01
All	Democracy & Freedom	democraci, democraci_freedom, honesti, truth, freedom, transpar, job, freedom_express, express, win, option, respect, feder_govern, strength, okay, honest, speak, compli, union, fight	0.01
All	Immigration Policy	econom, effort, demand, polici, immigr_polic, wealth, wellb, fascist, immigr, closer, compani, populist, law, littl, social_polic, left_left, accord, spain, great, border	0.01
All	Bourgeoise	bourgeoi, conserv_s, civil, social_orient, respons, orient, social_democrat, center, extremist, determin, red, today, cost, front, success, welfar, populist, decid, allianc, done	0.01
All	Don't Know (2)	go, norm, togeth, need, major, direct, assist, import, environment, explain, difficult, practic, find, issu, social_issu, reform, vote, dont_know, cultur, determin	0.00
All	Welfare	take_care, take, care, hand, rest, account, follow, sinc, fund, stabil, support,	0.00

		health_care, life, social_welfar, access, right_left, properti, blind, leftist, harm	
All	Less Taxes	tax, less_govern, lower_tax, involv, lower, day, earn, hold, interfer, ok, higher, low, action, innov, person, crazi, program, depend, area, wast	0.00
All	Size of Government	pro, limit, smaller, constitut, govern, big_govern, small, control, choic, big, individu_right, interfer, spend, anti, moral, life, disagre, gun, emphasi, crook	0.00
Canada	Conservatism	conserv, valu, money, support, extrem, welfar, chang, health, busi, socialist, law, polit, individu, freedom, tradit, tax, care, equal, free, govern	0.09
Canada	Socialism & Freedom	left, socialist, polit, work, extrem, money, social, chang, free, freedom, individu, care, support, law, welfar, busi, conserv, equal, govern, health	-0.09
Canada	Liberalism	liber, work, free, social, govern, extrem, program, left, busi, care, chang, conserv, equal, freedom, health, individu, law, money, person, polit	-0.07
Canada	Tradition	right, tradit, polit, busi, money, extrem, individu, care, chang, conserv, equal, free, freedom, govern, health, law, left, liber, person, program	0.07
Canada	Equality	equal, health, care, societi, welfar, valu, support, social, chang, freedom, govern, polit, tradit, liber, individu, money, left, busi, conserv, extrem	-0.04
Canada	Individualism	law, person, individu, societi, work, support, extrem, care, busi, chang, social, freedom, right, govern, socialist, conserv, equal, free, health, left	0.02
Canada	Social Programmes	program, freedom, free, busi, chang, welfar, social, money, individu, tax, left, societi, conserv, liber, care, equal, extrem, govern, health, law	-0.01
Canada	Unclear	govern, tax, social, right, person, polit, extrem, conserv, socialist, societi, busi, care, chang, equal, free, freedom, health, individu, law, left	0.00
Denmark	Socialism	socialist, communism, everyth, left, polici, social, econom, democrat, middl, govern, littl, bourgeois, tax, strong, welfar, common, money, economi, focus, freedom	-0.11
Denmark	Conservatism	conserv, bourgeois, conserv_s, freedom, everyth, liber, everyon, commi, care,	0.10

		left, take, respons, democrat, govern, polit, capit, middl, common, right, strong	
Denmark	Individual Freedom	liber, focus, economi, econom, respons, welfar, individu, money, freedom, radic, valu, polit, strong, democrat, tax, capit, bourgeoi, right, polici, littl	0.09
Denmark	Equality	commi, equal, societi, care, everyon, welfar, take, individu, govern, tax, common, focus, respons, socialist, weak, valu, strong, social, freedom, money	-0.07
Denmark	Weak vs Strong	right, middl, littl, weak, capit, societi, strong, left, care, common, individu, liber, take, freedom, tax, money, conserv, democrat, valu, respons	0.05
Denmark	Class Politics	polit, valu, everyon, equal, left, social, communism, radic, govern, right, individu, economi, liber, tax, rich, polici, bourgeoi, capit, care, commi	-0.04
Denmark	Radical Left	radic, social, conserv_s, common, weak, respons, economi, democrat, polici, communism, equal, littl, bourgeoi, tax, strong, econom, liber, societi, polit, capit	-0.03
Denmark	The Rich	rich, money, polici, capit, take, tax, strong, social, freedom, econom, care, right, govern, common, welfar, economi, socialist, everyon, conserv, societi	0.02
Germany	Social Justice	social_justic, justic, opporti, equal_opporti, balanc, equal, equal_right, social, toler, justic_equal, peac, social_just, solidar, poor, common, distribut, social_democraci, human, left_left, far_left	-0.18
Germany	Radical Right	right_radic, radic, nazi, neonazi, nation_social, brown, right, nazism, bald, violenc, xenophobia, nation, discrimin, dictatorship, riot, war, far_right, racist, radic_right, nationalist	0.17
Germany	Communism	communism, sed, redistribut, communism_social, level, socialist_communist, realiti, demand, center, communist, autonom, increas, ideal, mani, properti, state, hard, reject, expens, socialist	-0.12
Germany	Intolerance	conservat, intoler, conserv, authoritarian, conserv_attitud, reactionari, selfish, tradi, depend, fear, racism, strong, xenophobia, stupid, represent, exclus, minor, capit, fascism, capitalist	0.11

Germany	Radical Left	left, im, left_radic, keep, link, communist, former, someth, communism, implement, green, realli, tri, left_right, connect, exact, get, negat, work_class, friend	-0.09
Germany	Nationalism	nation_pride, pride, right_polit, order, patriot, law_order, upper, foreign, radic_right, secur, black, right_extrem, nation, exclus, xenophob, middl, law, already, hat, preserv	0.08
Germany	Extreme Right	extrem_right, right_nazi, perform, christian, valu, hard, need, immigr, case, see, man, far_right, famili, person, far, realli, respons, care, black, matter	0.06
Germany	Demonstrations & Anarchy	punk, demonstr, social_weak, left_polit, enforc, matter, altern, import, anarchi, margin, social_democrat, social_equal, regul, worker, welfar_state, welfar, lot, promis, red, weak	-0.06
Hungary	Solidarity	sensit, social_sensit, social, solidar, equal, social_equal, societi, care, benefit, work, liber, left, state, opporti, citizen, support, democraci, minor, privat, interest	-0.13
Hungary	Socialism	socialist, communist, old, corrupt, lie, govern, liber, left, principl, public, get, live, system, import, hungari, support, protect, social, power, valu	-0.12
Hungary	Traditional Values	tradit, opporti, nation, conservat, countri, valu, class, democrat, market, principl, system, better, corrupt, citizen, liber, individu, free, social, right, left	0.11
Hungary	National Interest	conserv, protect, nation, interest, valu, extrem, famili, ideolog, privat, conservat, life, import, market, state, benefit, individu, support, get, principl, govern	0.09
Hungary	Hungarian Politics	hungari, right, life, live, ideolog, democraci, work, democrat, govern, societi, citizen, polit, class, better, principl, interest, conservat, support, minor, left	0.07
Hungary	Free Market	free, power, market, state, individu, polit, privat, protect, democraci, better, benefit, minor, public, tradit, citizen, principl, right, social, lie, liber	0.05
Hungary	Extreme Politics	get, extrem, polit, system, care, right, countri, import, better, lie, class, famili,	0.04

		minor, govern, support, social, left, individu, power, ideolog	
Hungary	Unclear	general, public, democrat, famili, valu, democraci, equal, work, class, old, polit, system, market, liber, opporti, free, better, get, nation, social	0.01
Israel	Security/Keep Land	secur, jewish, land, keep, israel, nation, economi, judaism, religi, religion, integr, state, reliabl, love, ideolog, care, corrupt, educ, liber, power	0.13
Israel	Peace & Equality	equal, integr, peac, right, cost, love, arab, liber, reliabl, hate, care, weak, educ, economi, ideolog, secur, democraci, social, left, citizen	-0.10
Israel	Racism	racism, extrem, reliabl, corrupt, power, left, nation, cost, hate, educ, right, religi, secur, social, state, lack, economi, judaism, equal, arab	0.08
Israel	Socialism & Liberalism	social, weak, liber, peac, power, ideolog, lack, countri, keep, economi, hate, territori, nation, religi, love, racism, extrem, arab, care, citizen	-0.07
Israel	Palestinian State	palestinian, state, left, arab, religion, lack, economi, weak, cost, social, religi, hate, right, secur, care, citizen, corrupt, countri, democraci, educ	-0.03
Israel	Democracy & Corruption	democraci, care, corrupt, religi, power, hate, ideolog, economi, arab, right, religion, extrem, lack, liber, secur, judaism, equal, social, reliabl, left	0.03
Israel	Give Territories	give, territori, countri, israel, lack, left, judaism, hate, jewish, land, love, nation, arab, peac, religion, corrupt, care, right, weak, ideolog	-0.02
Israel	Support the Weak	citizen, educ, social, cost, ideolog, right, love, weak, land, care, jewish, religion, equal, reliabl, extrem, give, judaism, israel, state, arab	-0.02
Mexico	Politics & Parties	dialogu, conserv, presid, favor, promis, power, govern, fair, polit, posit, trust, law, agre, support, take, go, agreement, compli, right, honesti	0.12
Mexico	Disagreement & Violence	negat, disagr, conflict, violenc, march, corrupt, agre, know, speak, social, compli, go, intoler, problem, lie, express, otherwis, better, chang, help	-0.11
Mexico	Businessmen	businessmen, money, authoritarian, imposit, corrupt, person, interest, injustic, conveni, lie, economi, poverti,	0.11

		conserv, truth, violenc, presid, compli, democraci_freedom, act, justic	
Mexico	Political Change	contrari, conveni, chang, polit, march, interest, improv, politician, help, work, problem, strength, agreement, injustic, intoler, know, lie, act, worker, power	-0.10
Mexico	Communism	communism, popul, intoler, social, opport, valu, violenc, otherwis, disagr, poverti, go, march, interest, conveni, equal, justic, authoritarian, act, agreement, posit	-0.10
Mexico	Democracy & Freedom	job, honesti, truth, right, democraci, freedom, transpar, speak, posit, express, progress, agreement, democraci_freedom, strength, trust, work, secur, better, support, respect	0.07
Mexico	Equality	equal, justic, chang, take, worker, freedom, secur, democraci, social, poverti, valu, otherwis, opporti, improv, fight, govern, democraci_freedom, express, polit, support	-0.06
Mexico	Conflict	fight, respect, problem, conflict, progress, law, promis, power, economi, act, poverti, presid, govern, job, know, freedom, take, popul, right, equal	-0.04
Spain	Entrepreneurs & Privatization	entrepreneur, conserv, power, money, tradi, class, nation, capitalist, capit, polit, extrem, care, favor, alway, economy, work, respect, right, mani, littl	0.15
Spain	Equality	social, equal, worker, communism, freedom, servic, social_polic, progress, respect, help, social_right, protect, work, public, polic, opporti, privat, polit, equal_opporti, everyth	-0.14
Spain	Capitalism	conservat, capit, privat, tax, public, favor, compani, economi, entrepreneur, littl, freedom, class, tradi, protect, social_polic, mani, polic, countri, money, spain	0.10
Spain	The Poor	left, everyon, poor, distribut, citizen, alway, right, countri, spain, polit, social_right, mani, care, govern, help, progress, wealth, everyth, favor, extrem	-0.07
Spain	Economic Policy	econom, wealth, polic, liber, compani, right, littl, spain, mani, countri, help, social_polic, protect, worker, nation, rich, everyth, class, privat, social	0.05
Spain	Equality of Opportunity	societi, equal_opporti, opporti, democraci, care, equal, state, money,	-0.05

		littl, conservat, respect, communism, liber, countri, govern, conserv, wealth, tradit, work, everyon	
Spain	Education & Equal Opportunities	educ, system, citizen, economi, capitalist, protect, servic, equal_opporti, opporti, state, public, distribut, compani, right, nation, govern, equal, freedom, tax, social_polic	-0.03
Spain	Class Conflict	better, govern, tax, rich, democraci, extrem, conserv, everyth, poor, spain, progress, countri, help, freedom, distribut, nation, littl, communism, work, wealth	0.03
United States	Social Programmes	social, liber, program, give, chang, spend, open, take, marriag, live, concern, big_govern, care, support, money, abort, citizen, societi, big, control	-0.12
United States	Big Business	busi, power, big, conserv, individu, extrem, mind, concern, right, life, citizen, poor, polit, help, govern, chang, control, societi, get, support	0.11
United States	Progressivism	left, health, go, equal, mind, open, care, liber, societi, right, chang, help, abort, poor, live, big_govern, citizen, big, polit, marriag	-0.08
United States	The Rich	rich, lower, everyon, conserv, tax, money, power, gun, live, control, concern, get, busi, marriag, govern, care, health, take, societi, polit	0.08
United States	Traditional Social Policy	right, marriag, gun, countri, conserv, support, citizen, money, go, concern, pro, care, control, live, person, freedom, chang, tax, polit, help	0.05
United States	Workers & Social Spending	work, get, need, countri, person, lower, help, give, tax, spend, go, pro, take, health, program, care, freedom, money, everyon, right	0.03
United States	Freedom & Equality	democrat, freedom, polit, poor, equal, support, extrem, everyon, open, mind, need, conserv, societi, power, help, liber, citizen, govern, money, abort	-0.03
United States	Big Government	govern, life, pro, big_govern, individu, abort, control, spend, big, tax, take, gun, democrat, everyon, person, extrem, societi, live, liber, mind	-0.02

NMF Topic Modelling – Considering Centrists Answers

Table B.2. NMF Topic Output – R Score Only Considering Centrists' Answers

<i>Country</i>	<i>Topic Name</i>	<i>Top 5 Associated words</i>	<i>R_t</i>
All	Conservatism	conserv, conserv_valu, less_govern, right_conserv, decis, corpor, oppos, gun, small, sens, militari, strengthen, old, fundament, conserv_polit, wealthi, war, mindset, explain, stupid	0.04
All	Radical Left	communism, punk, left, left_radic, autonom, sed, level, demonstr, redistribut, implement, social_left, communist, green, riot, link, left_left, far_left, former, exact, altern	-0.04
All	Xenophobia	nazi, right_radic, neonazi, xenophobia, nation_social, radic, brown, radic_right, german, bald, use_violenc, foreign, neonaz, nation_socialist, danger, violenc, germani, xenophob, skinhead, hat	0.03
All	General Politics	dialogu, presid, promis, businessmen, front, law, crazi, strengthen, human_right, altern, compli, speak, honesti, conflict, bourgeois, hope, allianc, best, prefer, okay	0.02
All	Socialism (2)	socialist, labor, communist, socialist_communist, regim, old, irrespons, exampl, lie, unfortun, intern, conscious, reject, happen, form, behind, polit_left, increas, principl, earn	-0.02
All	Nationalism	nation_interest, christian, nation, arrog, disregard, conserv_nation, hungari, interest, perspect, christian_valu, spectrum, exploit, sit, valu, principl, extrem_case, norm, matter, famili, civil	0.02
All	Solidarity	sensit, social_sensit, represent, social_benefit, solidar, social_equal, achiev, needi, employe, color, pension, interest, safeti, benefit, social_secur, parliament, import, minor, salari, collect	-0.02
All	Entrepreneur & Upper Class	entrepreneur, upper_class, upper, church, class, compani, bank, oppress, fascism, assert, lower_class, fascist, capit, exploit, privat, capitalist, favor, member, suppress, conservat	0.02

All	Workers	worker, progress, distribut, defens, servic, social_right, utopia, equal_social, freedom_equal, social_polic, work_class, modern, wast, espec, social_class, fairer, secular, civil_right, struggl, least	-0.02
All	Equality of Opportunity	equal_opporti, societi, general, opporti, sometim, sens, equal, high, public, school, state, larg, rule_law, section, commi, littl, influenc, common, democrat, thought	-0.02
All	Right	right, right_right, right_left, sound, find, equal_right, choos, honest, right_nazi, spirit, exist, done, right_polit, human_right, perform, becom, extrem_right, bit, realiz, main	0.02
All	Inequality	inequ, privat, richer, fear, abl, outdat, becom, low, irrespons, poorer, happi, sector, necessarili, vote, selfish, howev, keep, fraud, allow, religi	0.01
All	Socialism	social, social_balanc, left_polit, social_democrat, social_attitud, common, normal, social_democraci, communism_social, weak, strive, liber_social, awar, social_polic, abolit, social_issu, welfar_state, commi, middl, polic	-0.01
All	Patriotism	patriot, order, tradit, free_market, nation, past, nation_pride, complet, free, pride, market, respect, countri, spirit, build, accept, reduc, fatherland, preserv, competit	0.01
All	Don't Know	dont_understand, im, realli, understand, left_right, point, feel, dont_like, pay_attent, left_liber, exampl, attent, total, stand, movement, hous, green, environ, see, discuss	-0.01
All	Social Justice	justic, social_justic, social_justic_equal, justic_equal, social_just, environment_protect, solidar, toler, equal_right, social_secur, far_left, orient_toward, social_market, social_market_economi, opporti, environment, left_left, ordinari, equal_treatment, cant_say	-0.01
All	Capitalism	capit, privileg, resourc, antisemit, competit, anarchi, restrict, intoler, conservat, violenc, polic, man, free,	0.01

All	Social Programmes	allianc, freedom, conserv_attitud, wish, long, bourgeois, great	-0.01
All	Corruption	liber, program, social_program, liber_social, open, innov, open_new, allianc, member, happi, left_liber, involv, everi, ideal, higher, address, radic, regul, manipul, extrem_left	0.01
All	Conflict	corrupt, imposit, businessmen, authoritarian, distrust, conveni, continu, presid, injustic, impos, global, lie, hypocrit, prefer, abus, religion, fraud, person, truth, abl	-0.01
All	Equality	contrari, rebellion, oppon, conveni, oblig, gover, goe, head, march, fail, chang, manifest, impos, reform, liar, crazi, strength, fals, problem, improv	-0.01
All	Government & Power	everyon, everyon_equal, happi, commi, left_social, attempt, leftist, selfish, control, creat, given, welfar, man, regardless, els, belong, right_everyon, sector, stand, school	0.01
All	Big Business	power_govern, power, favor, agreement, loyal, accord, antidemocrat, agre, reactionari, govern, imposit, organ, transpar, compli, honesti, legal, presid, usual, win, leader	0.01
All	Health & Education	big_busi, busi, big, maintain, close, quo, status_quo, status, averag, wealthi, break, wage, cours, higher, corpor, help, promot, honest, stay, main	-0.01
All	Don't Know (2)	health, clear, educ, realist, divid, health_care, social_welfar, welfar, concern, hous, healthcar, net, safeti_net, regim, safeti, oppos, serv, right_equal, citizen, explain	-0.01
All	Bourgeoise	go, norm, togeth, need, major, direct, assist, import, environment, explain, difficult, practic, find, issu, social_issu, reform, vote, dont_know, cultur, determin	0.01
All	Israel Land	bourgeoi, conserv_s, civil, social_orient, respons, orient, social_democrat, center, extremist, determin, red, today, cost, front, success, welfar, populist, decid, allianc, done	0.01
All		land, israel, jewish, secur, judaism, free_economi, terrorist, loyalti, greater, keep, love, reliabl, integr, defend, divis,	

		economi, ideolog, quo, status_quo, border	
All	Political Conflict	disagr, protest, negat, conflict, manifest, march, rebellion, otherwis, intoler, fool, cheat, popul, option, revolut, get_better, liar, violenc, oppon, crook, manipul	-0.01
All	Peace	peac, integr, leadership, unrealist, strive, hope, ideolog, moder, love, intellectu, sincer, weak, divis, enemi, rule_law, ed, intern, agreement, straight, cost	-0.01
All	Less Taxes	tax, less_govern, lower_tax, involv, lower, day, earn, hold, interfer, ok, higher, low, action, innov, person, crazi, program, depend, area, wast	0.01
All	Racism	racism, compromis, extrem, reliabl, sincer, discrimin, intellectu, move, crime, leader, hate, racial, racist, right_extrem, address, anoth, fact, cost, disregard, jew	0.01
All	Social Issues	gay, abort, marriag, healthcar, gun, multicultur, spend, usual, vote, immigr, big_govern, manipul, discrimin, abl, militari, reform, desir, wish, fals, realli	0.00
All	Unclear	focus, agenda, individu, individu_right, valu, market, center, preserv, fatherland, financi, natur, posit, role, free_market, right_conserv, populist, present, point, averag, creat	0.00
All	Palestinian State	palestinian, territori, arab, hate, secular, lack, enemi, give, state, israel, judaism, terrorist, jewish, divid, favor, full, racial, pride, hat, jew	0.00
All	The Rich	rich, strict, reduc, rich_poor, employ, poor, wealthi, red, rd, lower_tax, dictatorship, look, irrespons, mayb, money, lower, extrem_case, influenc, lean, bank	0.00
All	Welfare	take_care, take, care, hand, rest, account, follow, sinc, fund, stabil, support, health_care, life, social_welfar, access, right_left, properti, blind, leftist, harm	0.00
All	Immigration Policy	econom, effort, demand, polici, immigr_polici, wealth, wellb, fascist, immigr, closer, compani, populist, law, littl, social_polici, left_left, accord, spain, great, border	0.00

All	Democracy & Freedom	democraci, democraci_freedom, honesti, truth, freedom, transpar, job, freedom_express, express, win, option, respect, feder_govern, strength, okay, honest, speak, compli, union, fight	0.00
All	Unclear (2)	home, place, stay, properti, goe, run, certain, christian_valu, practic, realist, allow, defend, extrem_right, fair, extrem_left, young, conservat, absolut, middl_class, consid	0.00
All	Size of Government	pro, limit, smaller, constitut, govern, big_govern, small, control, choic, big, individu_right, interfer, spend, anti, moral, life, disagre, gun, emphasi, crook	0.00
Canada	Socialism & Freedom	left, socialist, polit, work, extrem, money, social, chang, free, freedom, individu, care, support, law, welfar, busi, conserv, equal, govern, health	-0.11
Canada	Tradition	right, tradit, polit, busi, money, extrem, individu, care, chang, conserv, equal, free, freedom, govern, health, law, left, liber, person, program	0.09
Canada	Conservatism	conserv, valu, money, support, extrem, welfar, chang, health, busi, socialist, law, polit, individu, freedom, tradit, tax, care, equal, free, govern	0.06
Canada	Equality	equal, health, care, societi, welfar, valu, support, social, chang, freedom, govern, polit, tradit, liber, individu, money, left, busi, conserv, extrem	-0.03
Canada	Social Programmes	program, freedom, free, busi, chang, welfar, social, money, individu, tax, left, societi, conserv, liber, care, equal, extrem, govern, health, law	-0.03
Canada	Liberalism	liber, work, free, social, govern, extrem, program, left, busi, care, chang, conserv, equal, freedom, health, individu, law, money, person, polit	-0.02
Canada	Unclear	govern, tax, social, right, person, polit, extrem, conserv, socialist, societi, busi, care, chang, equal, free, freedom, health, individu, law, left	0.02
Canada	Individualism	law, person, individu, societi, work, support, extrem, care, busi, chang, social, freedom, right, govern, socialist, conserv, equal, free, health, left	0.00
Denmark	Conservatism	conserv, bourgeois, conserv_s, freedom, everyth, liber, everyon, commi, care,	0.12

		left, take, respons, democrat, govern, polit, capit, middl, common, right, strong	
Denmark	Socialism	socialist, communism, everyth, left, polici, social, econom, democrat, middl, govern, littl, bourgeois, tax, strong, welfar, common, money, economi, focus, freedom	-0.10
Denmark	Class Politics	polit, valu, everyon, equal, left, social, communism, radic, govern, right, individu, economi, liber, tax, rich, polici, bourgeois, capit, care, commi	-0.05
Denmark	The Rich	rich, money, polici, capit, take, tax, strong, social, freedom, econom, care, right, govern, common, welfar, economi, socialist, everyon, conserv, societi	-0.05
Denmark	Weak vs Strong	right, middl, littl, weak, capit, societi, strong, left, care, common, individu, liber, take, freedom, tax, money, conserv, democrat, valu, respons	0.05
Denmark	Individual Freedom	liber, focus, economi, econom, respons, welfar, individu, money, freedom, radic, valu, polit, strong, democrat, tax, capit, bourgeois, right, polici, littl	0.04
Denmark	Equality	commi, equal, societi, care, everyon, welfar, take, individu, govern, tax, common, focus, respons, socialist, weak, valu, strong, social, freedom, money	-0.03
Denmark	Radical Left	radic, social, conserv_s, common, weak, respons, economi, democrat, polici, communism, equal, littl, bourgeois, tax, strong, econom, liber, societi, polit, capit	0.02
Germany	Radical Right	right_radic, radic, nazi, neonazi, nation_social, brown, right, nazism, bald, violenc, xenophobia, nation, discrimin, dictatorship, riot, war, far_right, racist, radic_right, nationalist	0.24
Germany	Social Justice	social_justic, justic, opporti, equal_opporti, balanc, equal, equal_right, social, toler, justic_equal, peac, social_just, solidar, poor, common, distribut, social_democraci, human, left_left, far_left	-0.15
Germany	Communism	communism, sed, redistribut, communism_social, level, socialist_communist, realiti, demand,	-0.15

		center, communist, autonom, increas, ideal, mani, properti, state, hard, reject, expens, socialist	
Germany	Radical Left	left, im, left_rad, keep, link, communist, former, someth, communism, implement, green, realli, tri, left_right, connect, exact, get, negat, work_class, friend	-0.12
Germany	Intolerance	conservat, intoler, conserv, authoritarian, conserv_attitud, reactionari, selfish, tradit, depend, fear, racism, strong, xenophobia, stupid, represent, exclus, minor, capit, fascism, capitalist	0.09
Germany	Demonstrations & Anarchy	punk, demonstr, social_weak, left_polit, enforc, matter, altern, import, anarchi, margin, social_democrat, social_equal, regul, worker, welfar_state, welfar, lot, promis, red, weak	-0.05
Germany	Nationalism	nation_pride, pride, right_polit, order, patriot, law_order, upper, foreign, radic_right, secur, black, right_extrem, nation, exclus, xenophob, middl, law, alreadi, hat, preserv	0.05
Germany	Extreme Right	extrem_right, right_nazi, perform, christian, valu, hard, need, immigr, case, see, man, far_right, famili, person, far, realli, respons, care, black, matter	0.05
Hungary	Solidarity	sensit, social_sensit, social, solidar, equal, social_equal, societi, care, benefit, work, liber, left, state, opporti, citizen, support, democraci, minor, privat, interest	-0.12
Hungary	Socialism	socialist, communist, old, corrupt, lie, govern, liber, left, principl, public, get, live, system, import, hungari, support, protect, social, power, valu	-0.11
Hungary	Traditional Values	tradit, opporti, nation, conservat, countri, valu, class, democrat, market, principl, system, better, corrupt, citizen, liber, individu, free, social, right, left	0.11
Hungary	National Interest	conserv, protect, nation, interest, valu, extrem, famili, ideolog, privat, conservat, life, import, market, state, benefit, individu, support, get, principl, govern	0.09

Hungary	Extreme Politics	get, extrem, polit, system, care, right, countri, import, better, lie, class, famili, minor, govern, support, social, left, individu, power, ideolog	0.08
Hungary	Free Market	free, power, market, state, individu, polit, privat, protect, democraci, better, benefit, minor, public, tradit, citizen, principl, right, social, lie, liber	0.06
Hungary	Unclear	general, public, democrat, famili, valu, democraci, equal, work, class, old, polit, system, market, liber, opporti, free, better, get, nation, social	-0.02
Hungary	Hungarian Politics	hungari, right, life, live, ideolog, democraci, work, democrat, govern, societi, citizen, polit, class, better, principl, interest, conservat, support, minor, left	0.01
Israel	Security/Keep Land	secur, jewish, land, keep, israel, nation, economi, judaism, religi, religion, integr, state, reliabl, love, ideolog, care, corrupt, educ, liber, power	0.10
Israel	Socialism & Liberalism	social, weak, liber, peac, power, ideolog, lack, countri, keep, economi, hate, territori, nation, religi, love, racism, extrem, arab, care, citizen	-0.09
Israel	Racism	racism, extrem, reliabl, corrupt, power, left, nation, cost, hate, educ, right, religi, secur, social, state, lack, economi, judaism, equal, arab	0.06
Israel	Peace & Equality	equal, integr, peac, right, cost, love, arab, liber, reliabl, hate, care, weak, educ, economi, ideolog, secur, democraci, social, left, citizen	-0.05
Israel	Democracy & Corruption	democraci, care, corrupt, religi, power, hate, ideolog, economi, arab, right, religion, extrem, lack, liber, secur, judaism, equal, social, reliabl, left	0.03
Israel	Support the Weak	citizen, educ, social, cost, ideolog, right, love, weak, land, care, jewish, religion, equal, reliabl, extrem, give, judaism, israel, state, arab	-0.01
Israel	Give Territories	give, territori, countri, israel, lack, left, judaism, hate, jewish, land, love, nation, arab, peac, religion, corrupt, care, right, weak, ideolog	0.00
Israel	Palestinian State	palestinian, state, left, arab, religion, lack, economi, weak, cost, social, religi, hate, right, secur, care, citizen, corrupt, countri, democraci, educ	0.00

Mexico	Politics & Parties	dialogu, conserv, presid, favor, promis, power, govern, fair, polit, posit, trust, law, agre, support, take, go, agreement, compli, right, honesti	0.23
Mexico	Political Change	contrari, conveni, chang, polit, march, interest, improv, politician, help, work, problem, strength, agreement, injustic, intoler, know, lie, act, worker, power	-0.17
Mexico	Communism	communism, popul, intoler, social, opporti, valu, violenc, otherwis, disagr, poverti, go, march, interest, conveni, equal, justic, authoritarian, act, agreement, posit	-0.12
Mexico	Disagreement & Violence	negat, disagr, conflict, violenc, march, corrupt, agre, know, speak, social, compli, go, intoler, problem, lie, express, otherwis, better, chang, help	-0.08
Mexico	Businessmen	businessmen, money, authoritarian, imposit, corrupt, person, interest, injustic, conveni, lie, economi, poverti, conserv, truth, violenc, presid, compli, democraci_freedom, act, justic	0.08
Mexico	Conflict	fight, respect, problem, conflict, progress, law, promis, power, economi, act, poverti, presid, govern, job, know, freedom, take, popul, right, equal	-0.07
Mexico	Democracy & Freedom	job, honesti, truth, right, democraci, freedom, transpar, speak, posit, express, progress, agreement, democraci_freedom, strength, trust, work, secur, better, support, respect	0.03
Mexico	Equality	equal, justic, chang, take, worker, freedom, secur, democraci, social, poverti, valu, otherwis, opporti, improv, fight, govern, democraci_freedom, express, polit, support	-0.03
Spain	Entrepreneurs & Privatization	entrepreneur, conserv, power, money, tradit, class, nation, capitalist, capit, polit, extrem, care, favor, alway, economi, work, respect, right, mani, littl	0.12
Spain	Equality	social, equal, worker, communism, freedom, servic, social_polici, progress, respect, help, social_right, protect, work, public, polici, opporti, privat, polit, equal_opporti, everyth	-0.11
Spain	Capitalism	conservat, capit, privat, tax, public, favor, compani, economi, entrepreneur,	0.11

		littl, freedom, class, tradit, protect, social_polic, mani, polici, countri, money, spain	
Spain	The Poor	left, everyon, poor, distribut, citizen, alway, right, countri, spain, polit, social_right, mani, care, govern, help, progress, wealth, everyth, favor, extrem	-0.08
Spain	Equality of Opportunity	societi, equal_opporti, opporti, democraci, care, equal, state, money, littl, conservat, respect, communism, liber, countri, govern, conserv, wealth, tradit, work, everyon	-0.08
Spain	Class Conflict	better, govern, tax, rich, democraci, extrem, conserv, everyth, poor, spain, progress, countri, help, freedom, distribut, nation, littl, communism, work, wealth	0.06
Spain	Economic Policy	econom, wealth, polici, liber, compani, right, littl, spain, mani, countri, help, social_polic, protect, worker, nation, rich, everyth, class, privat, social	0.02
Spain	Education & Equal Opportunities	educ, system, citizen, economi, capitalist, protect, servic, equal_opporti, opporti, state, public, distribut, compani, right, nation, govern, equal, freedom, tax, social_polic	0.00
USA	Big Business	busi, power, big, conserv, individu, extrem, mind, concern, right, life, citizen, poor, polit, help, govern, chang, control, societi, get, support	0.12
USA	Progressivism	left, health, go, equal, mind, open, care, liber, societi, right, chang, help, abort, poor, live, big_govern, citizen, big, polit, marriag	-0.11
USA	Social Programmes	social, liber, program, give, chang, spend, open, take, marriag, live, concern, big_govern, care, support, money, abort, citizen, societi, big, control	-0.07
USA	The Rich	rich, lower, everyon, conserv, tax, money, power, gun, live, control, concern, get, busi, marriag, govern, care, health, take, societi, polit	0.06
USA	Workers & Social Spending	work, get, need, countri, person, lower, help, give, tax, spend, go, pro, take, health, program, care, freedom, money, everyon, right	0.05

USA	Traditional Social Policy	right, marriag, gun, countri, conserv, support, citizen, money, go, concern, pro, care, control, live, person, freedom, chang, tax, polit, help	0.03
USA	Big Government	govern, life, pro, big_govern, individu, abort, control, spend, big, tax, take, gun, democrat, everyon, person, extrem, societi, live, liber, mind	-0.03
USA	Freedom & Equality	democrat, freedom, polit, poor, equal, support, extrem, everyon, open, mind, need, conserv, societi, power, help, liber, citizen, govern, money, abort	-0.02

All Countries Topic Model 2D Projection

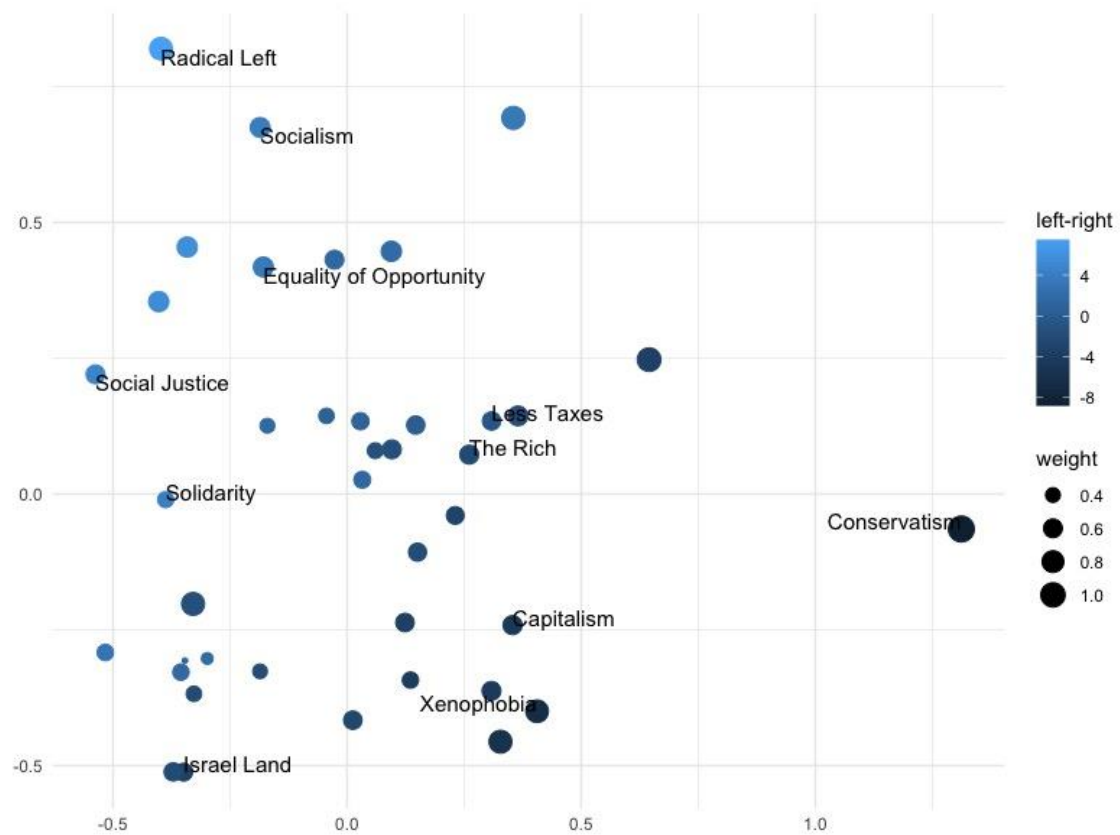


Fig. B.1. Two-Dimensional Projection of Jensen–Shannon Distances Between Topics – All Countries Model

Topic Coherence Scores

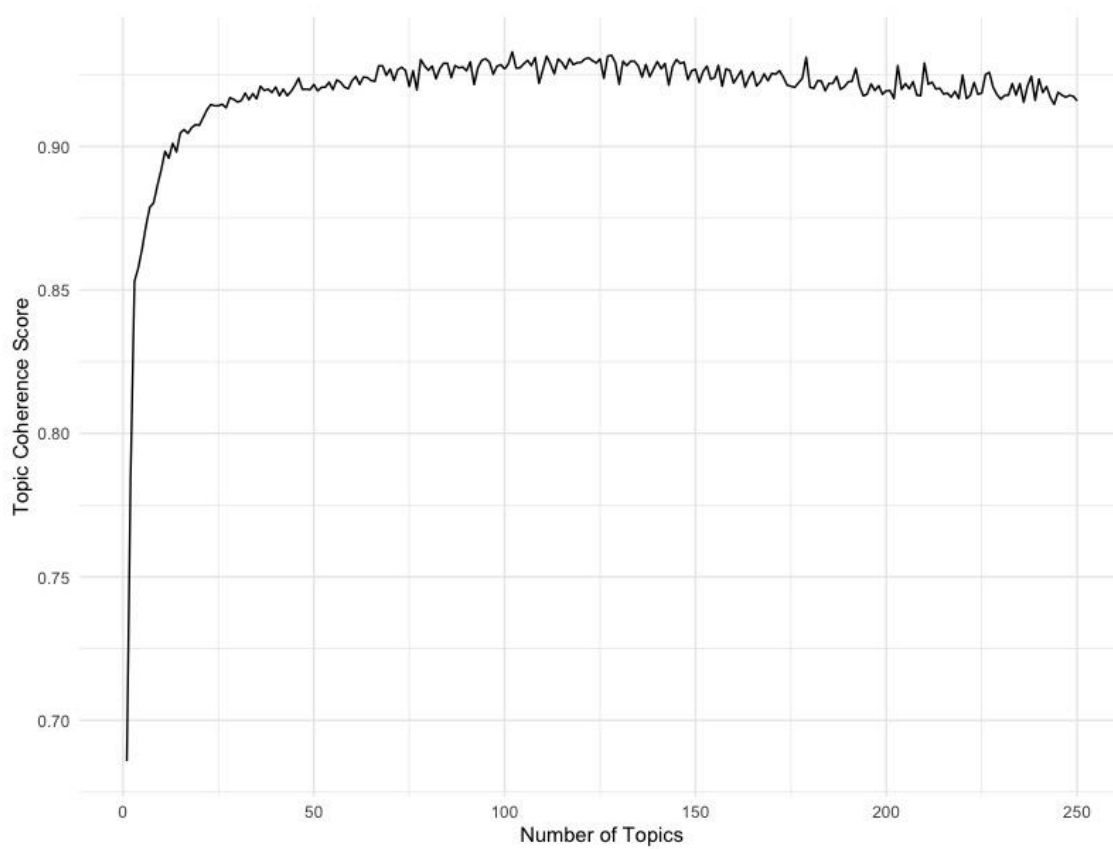


Fig. B.2. Topic Coherence Score by Number of Topics – All Text

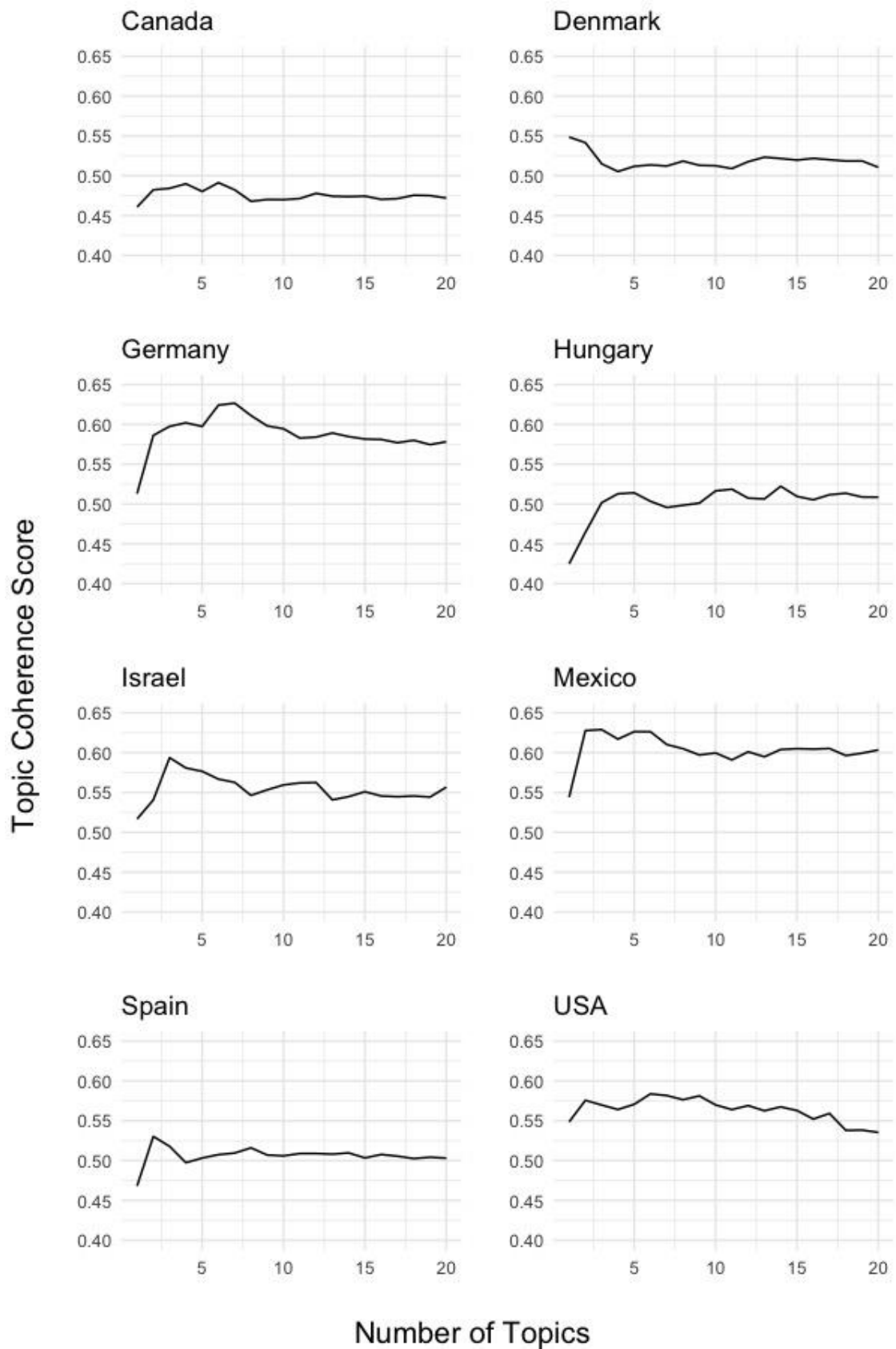


Fig. B.3. Topic Coherence Score by Number of Topics – All Country Topic Models

Appendix C. An Urban Myth?

Overview

This appendix details the operationalisations of variables, descriptive statistics and regression models that are presented in the paper as well as additional robustness checks. The variables that are included in each regression can be found in the corresponding descriptive statistics tables. The information relating to the Dutch case can be found at the end of this appendix.

Table C.1. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. WVS 6, 7, and EVS 5

Variable ¹⁴⁸	Question wording ¹⁴⁹	Response options ¹⁵⁰
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	"In political matters, people talk of "the left" and "the right." How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?"	10-point scale. 1 = Left, 10 = Right.
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	"How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between."	10-point scale. 1 = "Incomes should be made more equal," 10 = "We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort."
<i>Privatization</i>	"How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between."	10-point scale. 1 = "Private ownership of business and industry should be increased," 10 = "Government ownership of business and industry should be increased."
		Scores were reverse coded for the regression analyses.

¹⁴⁸ Excluding these self-explanatory variables: ethnicity, religious denomination, gender, geographical region, age, and union membership.

¹⁴⁹ Taken from the World Value Survey questionnaire (Inglehart et al., 2014b).

¹⁵⁰ Some of the independent variables are reversed (changing low values to high). Acceptance of inequality thus always corresponds to high values in the variables used in the regression models.

<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	“Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card. Homosexuality.”	10-point scale. 1 = Never, 10 = Always. Scores were reverse coded for the regression analyses.
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	“Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce.”	1 = Agree strongly, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neither a agree nor disagree, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree. This policy proposal and the following three were merged with equal weights into <i>Gender Inequality</i> , a 13-point variable. ¹⁵¹
	“On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree.
	“A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree.
	“Men make better business executives than women do”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree.

¹⁵¹ All four policy proposals were reverse coded so that high values become low, and vice versa. The WVS 6 data only has the first three policy proposals, and those were thus used to create a 10-point variable.

<i>Xenophobia</i>	“On this list are various groups of people. Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbours?”	Binary variable, coded as 1 if the following group was mentioned: “People of a different race”
<i>Household Income</i>	“Here is a scale of incomes and we would like to know in what group your household is, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in. Just give the letter of the group your household falls into, after taxes and other deductions.”	10-point scale. 1 =Low, 10 =High.
<i>Education Level</i>	“What is the highest educational level that you have attained?”	The response options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: <i>Primary or less (reference category)</i> , <i>Secondary</i> and <i>University</i> .
<i>Religiosity</i>	“Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?”	The response options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: and <i>Less Than Once a Year</i> (reference category), <i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i> and <i>Once a Month or More</i> .
<i>Freedom</i>	“If you had to choose, which would you say is the most important responsibility of government?”	1 = “to maintain order in society,” 2 = “respect the freedom of the individual.”

<i>Traditionalism</i>	“Tradition is important to him[/her]. He[/she] tries to follow the customs handed down by his religion or his family.”	6-point scale. 1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all. ¹⁵²
<i>Rule-Following</i>	“He[/she] believes that people should do what they're told. He[/she] thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching.”	6-point scale. 1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all. ¹⁵³
<i>Need for Security</i>	“It is important to him[/her] to live in secure surroundings. He[/she] avoids anything that might endanger his safety.”	6-point scale. 1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all. ¹⁵⁴
<i>Openness to Experience</i>	“Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him[/her]. He[/she] likes to do things in his own original way.”	6-point scale. 1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all.
		This policy proposal and the following one were merged with equal weights into <i>Openness to Experience</i> . ¹⁵⁵
	“He[/she] likes surprises and is always looking for new things to do. He[/she] thinks it is important	6-point scale. 1 = Very much like me, 6 = Not like me at all.

¹⁵² Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹⁵³ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹⁵⁴ Recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

¹⁵⁵ Both variables were recorded like this in the original data, but reverse coded for the models (high values become low, and vice versa).

	to do lots of different things in life”	
<i>Post-Materialism</i>		Post-Materialist index, see WVS documentation on how these are created. Notably, the WVS 6 and WVS 7 variables are 6-point scales, whereas the joint WVS and EVS data constructs this variable as a categorical variable with three alternatives that I labelled “materialist,” “post-materialist,” and “both.”
<i>Not a World Citizen</i>	“I see myself as a world citizen”	Dichotomous. 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree. 1 and 2 were collapsed (1), as well as 3 and 4 (0), making it a dichotomous variable
<i>Resistance to Change</i>	“On this card are three basic kinds of attitudes concerning the society we live in. Please choose the one which best describes your own opinion.”	“1.- The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action. 2.- Our society must be gradually improved by reforms. 3.- Our present society must be valiantly

		defended against all subversive forces.”
		Answer option 2 is the reference category, whereas 3 represent <i>Against Change</i> .
<i>Partisanship</i>	“If there were a national election tomorrow, for which party on this list would you vote?. If ‘Don't know’: Which party appeals to you most?”	All parties are used as dummy variables, while non-partisan is the reference category. This variable is only included in the model controlling for partisanship (see later section).

Table C.2. Descriptive Statistics. WVS 6

Variable	Mean (SD)	Range
Continuous Variables		
Dependent Variable		
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.69 (2.40)	1-10
Independent Variables		
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	5.21 (2.99)	1-10
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	6.66 (3.39)	1-10
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	3.12 (2.44)	0-9
<i>Privatization</i>	5.32 (2.75)	1-10
<i>Traditionalism</i>	3.34 (1.45)	0-5
Control Variables		
<i>Post-Materialism</i>	2.15 (1.17)	0-5
<i>Income</i>	4.87 (2.16)	1-10
<i>Rule-Following</i>	3.41 (1.41)	0-5
<i>Need for Security</i>	2.85 (1.18)	0-5
<i>Openness to Experience</i>	3.61 (1.33)	0-5
Dichotomous Variables		Proportion of Respondents
Control Variables		
<i>Xenophobia</i>		0.15
<i>Not a World Citizen</i>		0.17
<i>Religiosity</i>		
<i>Less Than Once a Year</i>		0.35
<i>Once a Year / Special Holidays</i>		0.22
<i>Once a Month or More</i>		0.42
<i>Age</i>		
<20		0.05
20-29		0.24
30-39		0.21
40-49		0.18
50-59		0.15
60-69		0.10

<i>70-79</i>	0.06
<i>>79</i>	0.02
<i>Female</i>	0.52
<i>Union Member</i>	0.14
<i>Education Level</i>	
<i>Primary or less</i>	0.23
<i>Secondary</i>	0.52
<i>University</i>	0.25
<i>Size of City</i>	
<i>< 10,000</i>	0.39
<i>10,000-100,000</i>	0.27
<i>> 100,000</i>	0.34

Note: The table displays the statistics for the unstandardized material. The many different ethnic and religious groups are excluded from the table, but are used as control variables in the models.

Table C.3. Descriptive Statistics. WVS 7

Variable	Mean (SD)	Range
Continuous Variables		
Dependent Variable		
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.72 (2.48)	1-10
Independent Variables		
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	6.26 (3.02)	1-10
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	7.35 (3.21)	1-10
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	5.29 (3)	0-12
<i>Privatization</i>	5.29 (2.88)	1-10
Control Variables		
<i>Post-Materialism</i>	2.01 (1.19)	0-5
<i>Income</i>	4.76 (2.08)	1-10
Dichotomous Variables		Proportion of Respondents
Independent Variables		
<i>Resistance to Change</i>		
<i>Revolution</i>		0.16
<i>Gradual Change</i>		0.68
<i>Against Change</i>		0.16
Control Variables		
<i>Not a World Citizen</i>		0.51
<i>Religiosity</i>		
<i>Less Than Once a Year</i>		0.34
<i>Once a Year / Special Holidays</i>		0.22
<i>Once a Month or More</i>		0.44
<i>Age</i>		
<i><20</i>		0.04
<i>20-29</i>		0.21
<i>30-39</i>		0.21
<i>40-49</i>		0.19
<i>50-59</i>		0.16
<i>60-69</i>		0.11

<i>70-79</i>	0.04
<i>>79</i>	0.01
<i>Female</i>	0.53
<i>Union Member</i>	0.15
<i>Xenophobia</i>	0.18
<i>Education Level</i>	
<i>Primary or less</i>	0.34
<i>Secondary</i>	0.34
<i>Post-Secondary</i>	0.31
<i>Size of City</i>	
<i>< 10,000</i>	0.29
<i>10,000-100,000</i>	0.29
<i>> 100,000</i>	0.41

Note: The table displays the statistics for the unstandardized material. The many different ethnic religious groups are excluded from the table, but are used as control variables in the models.

Table C.4. Descriptive Statistics. WVS 7 and EVS 5 combined data

Variable	Mean (SD)	Range
Continuous Variables		
Dependent Variable		
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.53 (2.39)	1-10
Independent Variables		
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	6.0 (2.85)	1-10
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	5.83 (3.55)	1-10
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	4.12 (2.87)	0-12
<i>Privatization</i>	5.48 (2.63)	1-10
Control Variables		
<i>Income</i>	4.95 (2.36)	1-10
Dichotomous Variables		Proportion of Respondents
Control Variables		
<i>Not a World Citizen</i>		0.49
<i>Post-Materialism</i>		
<i>Materialist</i>		0.24
<i>Post-Materialist</i>		0.16
<i>Both</i>		0.60
<i>Religiosity</i>		
<i>Less Than Once a Year</i>		0.36
<i>Once a Year / Special Holidays</i>		0.22
<i>Once a Month or More</i>		0.41
<i>Age</i>		
<20		0.03
20-29		0.17
30-39		0.18
40-49		0.19
50-59		0.17
60-69		0.15
70-79		0.07
>79		0.03

<i>Female</i>	0.51
<i>Union Member</i>	0.17
<i>Xenophobia</i>	0.08
<i>Education Level</i>	
<i>Primary or less</i>	0.14
<i>Secondary</i>	0.48
<i>Post-Secondary</i>	0.15
<i>Tertiary</i>	0.23
<i>Size of City</i>	
< 10,000	0.40
10,000-100,000	0.20
> 100,000	0.41

Note: The table displays the statistics for the unstandardized material. The many different ethnic and religious groups are excluded from the table, but are used as control variables in the models. Which region respondents are from are also excluded from this table but used in the final regression model.

Multilevel Regression Models

Table C.5. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placement – WVS 7

	(1)	(2) ¹⁵⁶
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.26*** (0.05)	0.26*** (0.05)
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	0.30*** (0.04)	0.25*** (0.04)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.17*** (0.05)	0.10* (0.05)
<i>Privatization</i>	0.14** (0.6)	0.12** (0.05)
<i>Resistance to Change</i>		
<i>Against Change</i>	0.33*** (0.08)	0.30*** (0.08)
<i>Revolution</i>	-0.23** (0.08)	-0.18** (0.07)
<i>Xenophobia</i>		0.30*** (0.06)
<i>World Citizen</i>		0.07*** (0.03)
<i>Post-Materialist</i>		-0.17*** (0.01)
<i>City Size</i>		
< 10,000		0.12*** (0.04)
10,000-100,000		0.02 (0.04)
<i>Age</i>		
20-29		-0.09 (0.08)
30-39		-0.08 (0.08)
40-49		0.02 (0.08)
50-59		0.04 (0.08)
60-69		0.05 (0.09)
70-79		0.01 (0.10)
> 79		0.07 (0.14)
<i>Education Level</i>		
Secondary		-0.14*** (0.04)
Post-Secondary		-0.22*** (0.05)
<i>Income</i>		0.07*** (0.01)
<i>Female</i>		0.02 (0.03)

¹⁵⁶ The table does not show coefficients for different ethnicities, even though they are controlled for in model 2.

<i>Union</i>		-0.07 (0.04)
<i>Religious Service Attendance</i>		
Once a Month or More		0.33*** (0.04)
Once a Year / Special Holidays		0.22*** (0.05)
<i>Religious Denomination</i>		
Buddhist		0.28*** (0.11)
Hindu		-0.23 (0.20)
Jew		0.14 (0.23)
Muslim		-0.19 (0.14)
Orthodox		0.07 (0.15)
Other		0.13 (0.09)
Other Christian denomination		0.31*** (0.09)
Protestant		0.09 (0.06)
Roman Catholic		0.18*** (0.05)
<i>Freedom</i>		-0.07* (0.04)
<i>Intercept</i>	5.60*** (0.09)	5.84*** (0.34)
Variance Components		
<i>Residual</i>	4.97	4.84
<i>Intercept</i>	0.27	0.07
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.04	0.03
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	0.02	0.02
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.04	0.03
<i>Resistance to Change</i>		
Against Change	0.09	0.07
Revolution	0.09	0.05
<i>Privatization</i>	0.05	0.04
Observations	21,733	21,733
Groups (Country)	19	19
Log Likelihood	-48,381	-48,052
AIC	96,834	96,453
BIC	97,121	97,843

Note: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01. Standard errors in brackets.

Table C.6. Multilevel Models Explaining L-R Self-Placement – WVS 7 and EVS 5

	(1)	(2) ¹⁵⁷
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.28*** (0.05)	0.28*** (0.04)
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	0.29*** (0.03)	0.22*** (0.03)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.21*** (0.05)	0.13** (0.04)
<i>Privatization</i>	0.16*** (0.05)	0.15*** (0.05)
<i>Xenophobia</i>		0.38*** (0.05)
<i>World Citizen</i>		-0.002 (0.03)
<i>Materialist</i>		0.11*** (0.03)
<i>Post-Materialist</i>		-0.39*** (0.04)
<i>City Size</i>		
< 20,000		0.04 (0.04)
20,000-100,000		0.05 (0.04)
<i>Age</i>		
> 79		-0.06 (0.10)
20-29		-0.14* (0.08)
30-39		-0.12 (0.08)
40-49		-0.05 (0.08)
50-59		-0.05 (0.08)
60-69		0.004 (0.08)
70-79		0.03 (0.09)
<i>Education Level</i>		
Post-Secondary		-0.07*** (0.05)
Secondary		-0.14*** (0.06)
Tertiary		-0.19*** (0.05)
<i>Income</i>		0.05*** (0.01)
<i>Female</i>		0.01 (0.03)
<i>Union</i>		-0.18*** (0.04)
<i>Religious Service Attendance</i>		
Once a Month or More		0.31*** (0.04)

¹⁵⁷ The table does not show coefficients for different geographical regions, even though they are controlled for in model 2.

Once a Year / Special Holidays		0.17*** (0.04)
<i>Religious Denomination</i>		
Buddhist		0.26*** (0.11)
Hindu		-0.11 (0.24)
Jew		-0.15 (0.38)
Muslim		-0.25*** (0.11)
Orthodox		-0.25 (0.15)
Other		0.21** (0.09)
Other Christian denomination		0.37*** (0.08)
Protestant		0.12** (0.06)
Roman Catholic		0.29*** (0.04)
<i>Intercept</i>		5.57*** (1.96)
<i>Variance Components</i>		
<i>Residual</i>	5.00	5.04
<i>Intercept</i>	0.25	6.5
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.05	0.04
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	0.01	0.01
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.06	0.05
<i>Privatization</i>	0.07	0.06
Observations	27,713	27,713
Groups (Country)	26	26
Log Likelihood	-61,767	-60,933
AIC	123,577	122,854
BIC	123,750	126,919

Note: * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01. Standard errors in brackets.

Multilevel Regression Models – Alternative Datasets

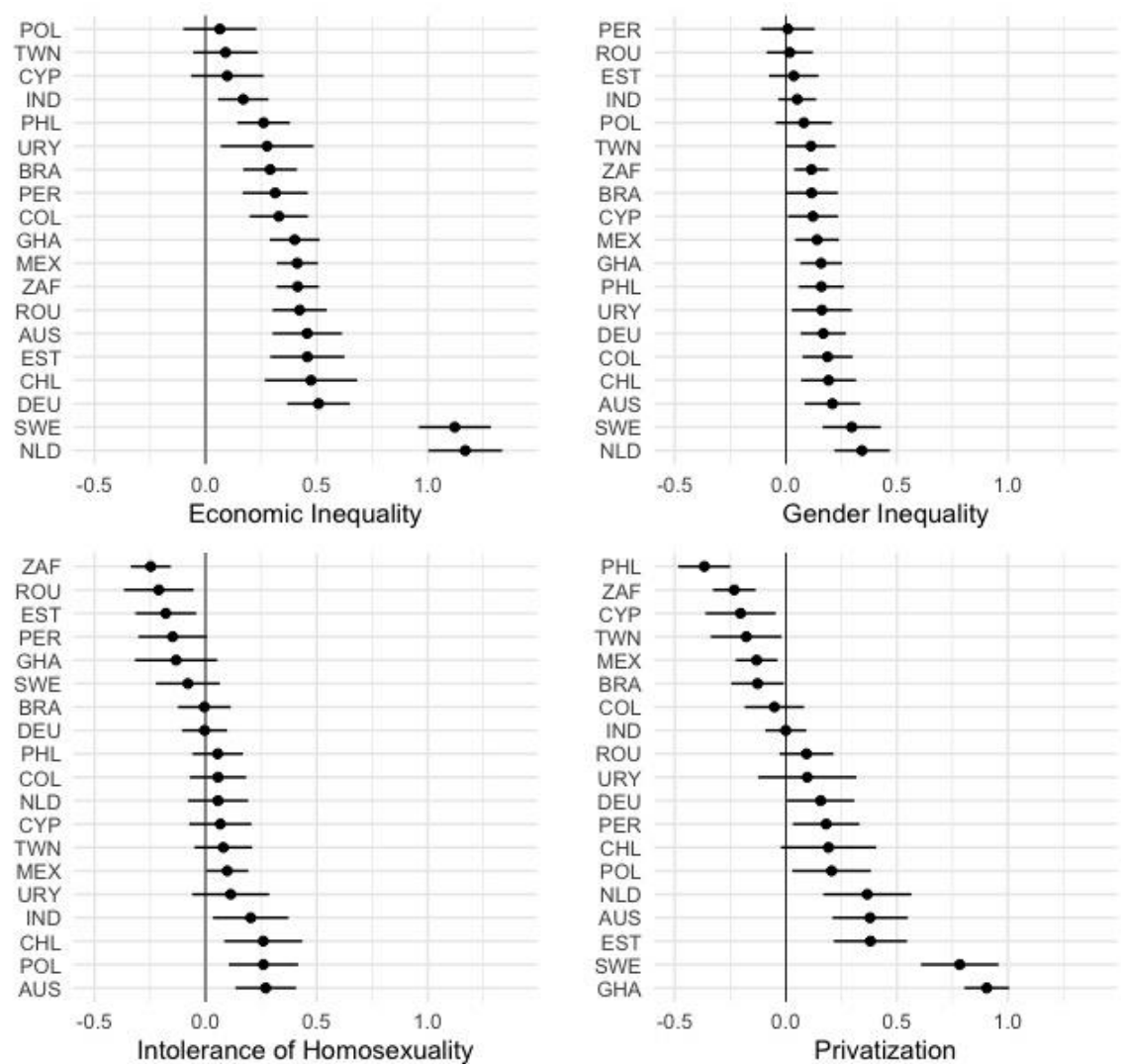


Fig. C.1. Independent Variable Country Coefficients – WVS 6¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Countries were included according to whether they had been democratic for ten years, as with the WVS 7 and EVS 5 regression models. However, only the Polity IV index was considered for WVS 6 data, and not the V-Dem index, due to data availability.

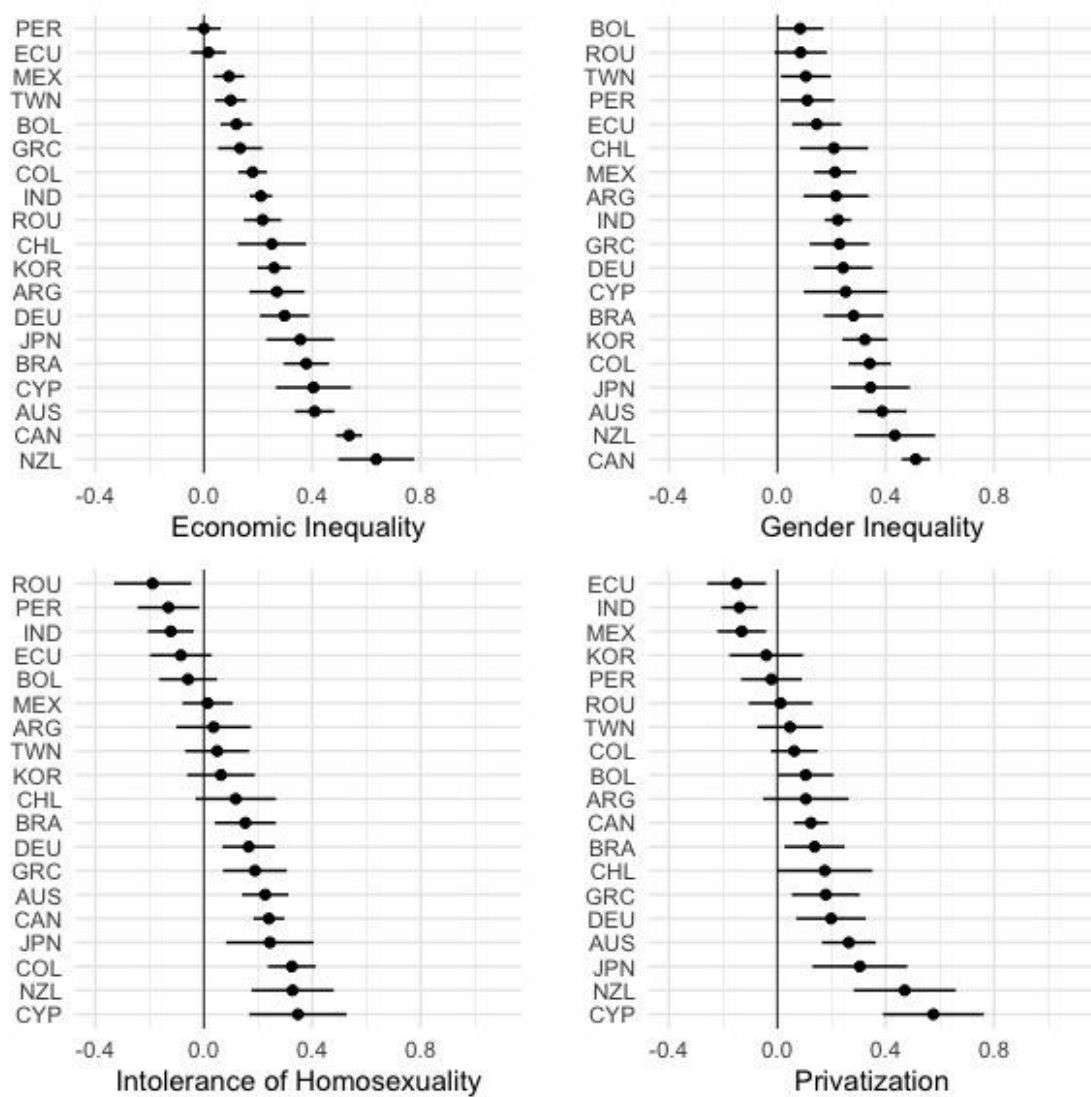


Fig. C.2. Independent Variable Country Coefficients – WVS 7

Resistance to Change

This section tests the proposition that the L-R dimension reflects preferences towards change. According to this view, the Left is the vehicle for more change, whereas the Right is more conservative. Resistance to change is an important psychological trait, and Jost et al. (2003b) demonstrate the applicability of this explanation at the individual level in many countries in a meta-analysis, with a focus on the United States and several Western representative democracies. Thorisdottir et al. (2007) demonstrate the applicability of this framework in both Western and Eastern Europe, whereas Aspelund et al. (2013) find mixed results for this hypothesis in Europe.

H6: Resistance to change correlates with right-wing self-placements.

To measure and test this hypothesis, resistance to change (H6) is measured through the variable *Resistance to Change* in the WVS 7. This ordinal variable contains three different preferences for change. H6 is tested with a comparison of individuals agreeing with “Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces” compared to “Our society must be gradually improved by reforms” (baseline category).¹⁵⁹ Fig. C.3 displays the results from multilevel models where the independent variables are allowed to have varying slopes by country. The results overall demonstrate that attitudes towards change predicts right-wing self-placements in approximately half of the countries in the sample. The coefficients are, however, most often positive, in line with the hypothesis.

¹⁵⁹ The third category is “The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action.”

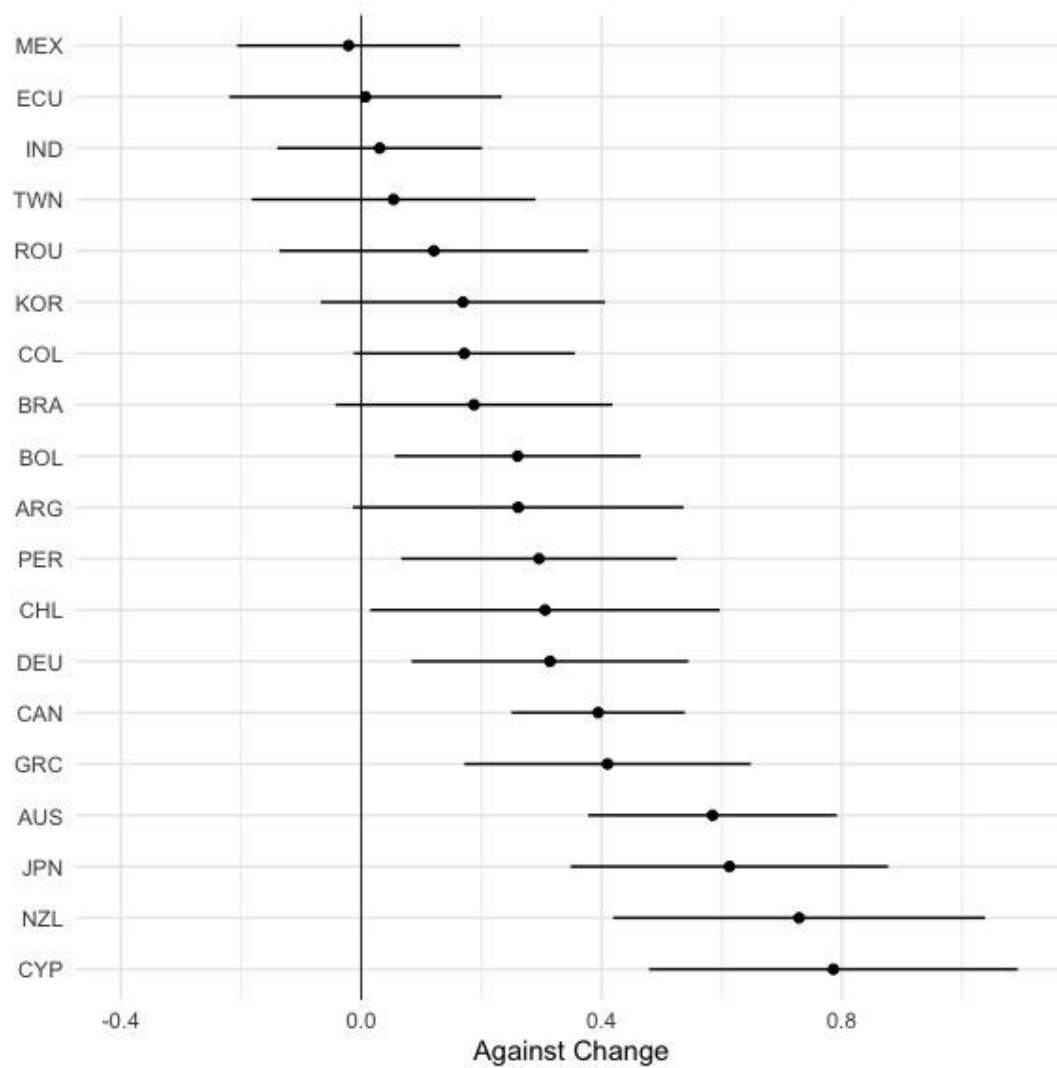


Fig. C.3. Country Coefficients for Resistance to Change – WVS 7

Controlling for Partisanship

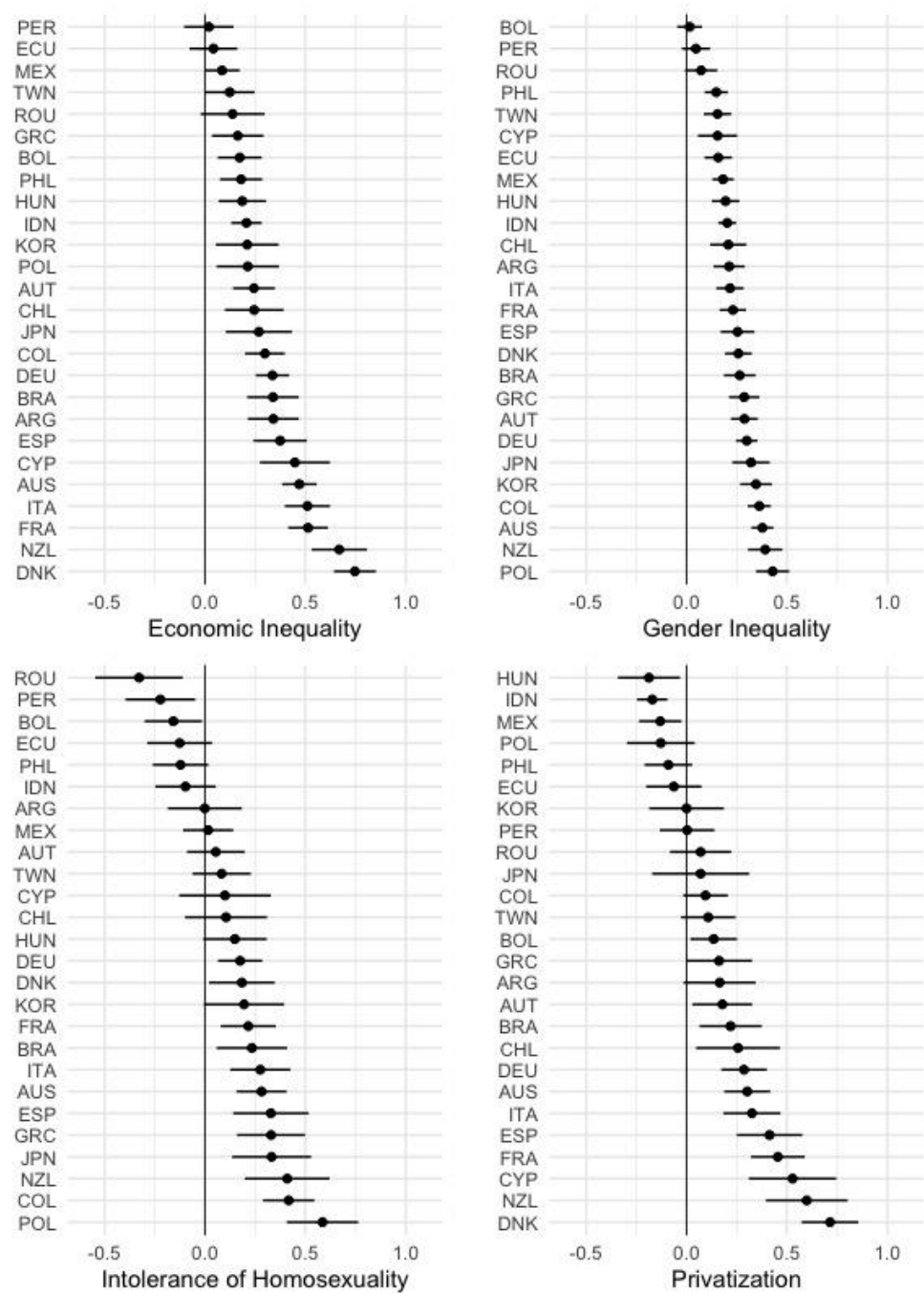


Fig. C.4. Independent Variable Coefficients by Country. Controlling for Partisanship – WVS 7 and EVS 5

Dutch Parliamentary Election Survey 2017

This section details the data material from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Survey (Meer et al., 2017), the specific variables (in Table C.7 and C.8), the long version of Table 6.1 (Table C.9), as well as three robustness checks in Table C.10. All variables that are used in the regressions in Table C.10 are reported in Table C.7 and C.8 (see also footnotes). The three robustness checks are as follows. One, when measuring the most important problem (e.g., *MIP: Minorities*) in the main paper, I include the first three mentioned problems because that is the median number of responses given by respondents. Including more responses risks including those that the survey respondents did not think were necessarily as important. Nevertheless, I use five mentions instead of the original three (as discussed in the methodological section) to test the sensitivity of this measurement. I employ this alternative measurement in Table C.10 (model 1). Noteworthy is that the interaction effect between *Economic Inequality* and *MIP (Five Mentions): Economics and Economic Inequality* goes from having an associated p-value of 0.044 in Table 6.1 in the main paper, to 0.055, thus balancing on the line of significance at the conventional 5% level.

The second robustness check is to test whether it changes the results if *Economic Inequality* and *Less Asylum Seekers* are made into binary variables (to enhance their comparability with *Less Taxes*). To make these into binary variables, we must decide what to do with the mid-point of the scales.¹⁶⁰ The significant part of the interaction effect for *Less Asylum Seekers* and *Economic Inequality*, with *MIP: Minorities* and *MIP: Economics and Economic Inequality* respectively, are at different ends of the scale, as can be seen in Fig. 6.2 and 6.3 in the paper. It is those that oppose economic inequality and finds that issue important that becomes more left-wing, while it is those that want less refugees and prioritise that issue that become more right-wing. I.e., the interaction effects are not significant at the other end of the scale in each case. I therefore create binary variables to test these effects specifically. For the immigration dimension there are no changes to the results (see model 2 in Table C.10), while the interaction effect between attitudes towards economic inequality and finding economic issues important goes from an associated p-value of 0.043 in the main model, to 0.089 when made into a binary variable (see regression model 3 in Table C.10).

¹⁶⁰ This is not a problem for *Less Taxes* since there is no mid-point on the original scale.

The third robustness check is to see whether the attitudes towards economic issues such as taxation, government spending, and economic inequality are so intertwined that they control for each other. It may be the case that we are missing some of the effect of attitudes towards economic inequality or taxation by including both attitudes (and their respective interaction effects) at the same time. Regression model 4 and 5 therefore remove each variable to see whether they have a stronger effect alone. The results demonstrate that the interaction effect between *Economic Inequality* and *MIP: Economics and Economic Inequality* is stronger when attitudes towards taxation are left out of the model, whereas the interaction effect between *Less Taxes* and *MIP: Economics and Big Government* remains insignificant (but the positive correlation is stronger).

These robustness checks thus demonstrate that the refugee issue is much more robustly correlated with L-R self-placements compared to the economic dimension. Economic inequality nevertheless remains an L-R issue in the Netherlands while attitudes towards taxation and government spending are not found to be at the core of the L-R dimension.

Table C.7. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. DPES 2017

Variable ¹⁶¹	Question wording ¹⁶²	Response options ¹⁶³
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	“When you think of your own political beliefs, where would you place yourself on this line? Please tell the number that applies to you.”	10-point scale. 0 = Left, 10 = Right.
<i>Less Taxes</i>	“Taxes should be cut, even if that is at the expense of the standard of the services.”	4-point scale. 1 = “Fully agree,” 2 = “Agree,” 3 = “Disagree,” 4 = “Fully disagree.” Made into a binary variable. 1 = Agree, 0 = Disagree.
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	“Some people think that the differences in incomes in our country should be increased. Others think that they should be decreased. Where would you place the following parties and yourself on a line from 1 to 7, where 1 means differences in income should be increased and 7 means that differences in income should be decreased.”	7-point scale. 1 = “Bigger,” to 7 = “Smaller.” This policy proposal and the following (both reverse coded) were merged with equal weights into <i>Economic Inequality</i> , a 9-point variable.
	“Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statement: The	5-point scale. 1 = “Strongly agree,” 2 = “Somewhat agree,” 3 =

¹⁶¹ Excluding the self-explanatory variables *Female* and *Age*.

¹⁶² Taken from the 2017 Dutch Election Survey Codebook.

¹⁶³ Some of the independent variables are reversed (changing low values to high). Acceptance of inequality thus always corresponds to high values in the variables used in the regression models.

	government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.”	“Neither agree nor disagree,” 4 = “Somewhat disagree,” 5 = “Strongly disagree.”
<i>Binary Rejecting Economic Inequality</i>	“Some people think that the differences in incomes in our country should be increased. Others think that they should be decreased. Where would you place the following parties and yourself on a line from 1 to 7, where 1 means differences in income should be increased and 7 means that differences in income should be decreased.”	Originally a 7-point scale. 1 = “Bigger,” to 7 = “Smaller.” Recoded into a binary variable where respondents received 1 if 4 or above, and 0 if below 4.
<i>Less Asylum Seekers</i>	“Some people think that the Netherlands should allow more asylum seekers to enter. Others believe that the Netherlands should send asylum seekers already residing here back to their country of origin. Where would you place yourself in a line from 1 to 7, where 1 means that more asylum seekers should be allowed to enter and 7 means that asylum seekers should be sent back?”	7-point scale. 1 = “Admit More,” 7 = “Send back more.”
<i>Binary Less Asylum Seekers</i>	“Some people think that the Netherlands should allow more asylum seekers to enter. Others believe that the Netherlands should send asylum seekers already residing here back to their country	Originally a 7-point scale. 1 = “Admit More,” 7 = “Send back more.” Recoded into a binary variable where

	of origin. Where would you place yourself in a line from 1 to 7, where 1 means that more asylum seekers should be allowed to enter and 7 means that asylum seekers should be sent back?"	respondents received 1 if 5 or above, and 0 if below 5.
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	"Homosexual couples should no longer be able to adopt a child."	4-point scale. 1 = "Fully agree," 2 = "Agree," 3 = "Disagree," 4 = "Fully disagree."
		This policy proposal and the following one (both reverse coded) were merged with equal weights into <i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i> , a 7-point variable.
	"Gay marriage should be forbidden."	4-point scale. 1 = "Fully agree," 2 = "Agree," 3 = "Disagree," 4 = "Fully disagree."
<i>Employed</i>	"Do you currently have a paid job? A job of 1 hour per week or a short period also counts, as does freelance work."	Binary variable. 1 = Yes, 0 = No.
<i>Origin</i>	Country of origin.	Three response options. "Dutch" (reference category), "Western," "Non-Western."
<i>Female</i>	Sex of respondent.	Binary. 1 if female, 0 if male.

<i>Age</i>	Age of respondent.	Coded into the following age categories: < 20, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49 (reference category), 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, >79.
<i>Urbanization</i>	Degree of urbanization. From the Statistics Netherlands (CBS).	Three response options. “Very high,” “High,” “Medium” (reference category), “Low,” “Very Low.”
<i>Social Class</i>	“One sometimes speaks of the existence of various social classes and groups. If you were to assign yourself to a particular social class, would you assign yourself to:”	Five categories. “Upper Class,” “Upper middle class,” “Middle class” (reference category), “Upper working class,” “Working class.”
<i>Education Level</i>	“What is the highest educational level that you have attained?”	The response options (see the codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: “Elementary”, “Vocational,” “Higher Secondary or Tertiary Vocational” (reference category), and “University.”
<i>Religiosity</i>	“Do you consider yourself to be religious?”	Binary. 1 if yes.
<i>Religious Denomination</i>	“Do you consider yourself to be a member of a particular church or	Six response options.

	religious community and if yes, to which one?"	"None" (reference category), "Calvinist," "Roman-Catholic," "Dutch Reformed," "Protestant," "Islam," "Other."
<i>Most Important Problem (MIP)</i>	"What do you think are the most important problems in our country?"	See methodological section in the paper for details on the coding of MIP categories. The different coding categories can be found in the codebook for the DPES 2017.

Table C.8. Descriptive Statistics. DPES 2017

Continuous Variables	Mean (SD)	Range
Dependent Variable		
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.19 (2.35)	0-10
Independent Variables		
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	2.88 (1.93)	0-8
<i>Less Asylum Seekers</i>	4.66 (1.69)	1-7
Control Variables		
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	1.37 (1.51)	0-6
<i>More EU</i>	2.61 (1.87)	0-6
Dichotomous Variables	Proportion of Respondents	
Independent Variables		
<i>Less Taxes</i>	0.21	
<i>MIP</i>		
<i>Economics and Big Government</i>	0.16	
<i>Economics and Economic Inequality</i>	0.23	
<i>Minorities</i>	0.52	
Control Variables		
<i>Age</i>		
<i><20</i>	0.01	
<i>20-29</i>	0.08	
<i>30-39</i>	0.10	
<i>40-49</i>	0.13	
<i>50-59</i>	0.19	
<i>60-69</i>	0.24	
<i>70-79</i>	0.21	
<i>>79</i>	0.04	
<i>Female</i>	0.47	
<i>Employed</i>	0.55	
<i>Origin</i>		
<i>Dutch</i>	0.89	
<i>Western</i>	0.08	

<i>Non-Western</i>	0.03
<i>Urbanization</i>	
<i>Very low</i>	0.12
<i>Low</i>	0.25
<i>Medium</i>	0.22
<i>High</i>	0.27
<i>Very High</i>	0.14
<i>Union</i>	0.22
<i>Education Level</i>	
<i>Elementary</i>	0.02
<i>Vocational</i>	0.43
<i>Higher Secondary or Tertiary</i>	0.39
<i>Vocational</i>	
<i>University</i>	0.16
<i>Religious</i>	0.41
<i>Religious Denomination</i>	
<i>Calvinist</i>	0.03
<i>Dutch Reformed</i>	0.04
<i>Islam</i>	0.007
<i>None</i>	0.63
<i>Other</i>	0.04
<i>Protestant Church of the Netherlands</i>	0.06
<i>Roman-Catholic</i>	0.20
<i>Social Class</i>	
<i>Working class</i>	0.10
<i>Upper working class</i>	0.09
<i>Middle class</i>	0.53
<i>Upper middle class</i>	0.25
<i>Upper class</i>	0.03

Note: The table displays the statistics for the unstandardized material.

Table C.9. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in the Netherlands 2017 – Table 6.1**Long Version**

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Less Taxes</i>		0.54*** (0.13)	0.50*** (0.15)	0.52*** (0.13)	0.47*** (0.15)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>		0.94*** (0.06)	0.95*** (0.06)	0.86*** (0.06)	0.86*** (0.06)
<i>Less Asylum Seekers</i>		0.55*** (0.06)	0.55*** (0.06)	0.37*** (0.08)	0.38*** (0.08)
<i>Employed</i>	0.36** (0.17)	0.23* (0.14)	0.23 (0.14)	0.23* (0.14)	0.23* (0.14)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	0.24*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.17*** (0.04)	0.15*** (0.04)	0.16*** (0.04)
<i>Female</i>	-0.37*** (0.12)	-0.17 (0.11)	-0.18* (0.11)	-0.18* (0.11)	-0.18* (0.11)
<i>Age</i>					
< 20	0.25 (0.62)	0.18 (0.52)	0.14 (0.52)	0.21 (0.52)	0.20 (0.52)
20-29	0.19 (0.27)	0.01 (0.23)	0.01 (0.23)	-0.01 (0.23)	-0.001 (0.23)
30-39	0.10 (0.25)	-0.04 (0.21)	-0.01 (0.21)	0.01 (0.21)	0.02 (0.21)
50-59	-0.01 (0.22)	-0.13 (0.18)	-0.13 (0.18)	-0.13 (0.18)	-0.12 (0.18)
60-69	-0.64*** (0.22)	-0.36* (0.19)	-0.36* (0.19)	-0.37** (0.19)	-0.37* (0.19)
70-79	-0.01 (0.26)	0.16 (0.22)	0.16 (0.22)	0.16 (0.22)	0.17 (0.22)
> 79	0.31 (0.39)	0.61* (0.33)	0.60* (0.33)	0.63* (0.33)	0.63* (0.33)
<i>Origin</i>					
<i>Non-Western</i>	-0.72* (0.40)	-0.59* (0.34)	-0.59* (0.34)	-0.62* (0.34)	-0.61* (0.34)

<i>Western</i>	-0.44*	-0.30	-0.28	-0.27	-0.26
	(0.23)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
<i>Urbanization</i>					
<i>Very low</i>	0.06	0.13	0.14	0.12	0.13
	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
<i>Low</i>	0.07	-0.03	-0.02	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.18)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
<i>High</i>	0.05	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.03
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
<i>Very High</i>	0.02	0.02	-0.002	-0.0001	-0.01
	(0.21)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
<i>Union</i>	-0.70***	-0.37***	-0.35***	-0.36***	-0.35***
	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.13)
<i>Education Level</i>					
<i>Elementary</i>	0.51	0.37	0.35	0.29	0.29
	(0.46)	(0.39)	(0.39)	(0.39)	(0.39)
<i>Vocational</i>	0.19	0.11	0.35	0.09	0.08
	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.39)	(0.13)	(0.13)
<i>University</i>	-0.74***	-0.43***	-0.43***	-0.42**	-0.42**
	(0.19)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.16)
<i>Religious</i>	-0.10	0.05	0.06	0.07	0.08
	(0.24)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.20)	(0.20)
<i>Religious Denomination</i>					
<i>Calvinist</i>	0.24	0.52	0.51	0.55	0.55
	(0.44)	(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.37)
<i>Dutch Reformed</i>	0.38	-0.002	-0.01	-0.02	-0.02
	(0.37)	(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.31)	(0.31)
<i>Islam</i>	-1.15	-0.47	-0.49	-0.52	-0.54
	(0.85)	(0.73)	(0.73)	(0.72)	(0.72)
<i>Other</i>	0.02	0.32	0.30	0.32	0.32
	(0.37)	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.32)	(0.32)
<i>Protestant Church of the Netherlands</i>	0.73**	0.74***	0.70**	0.73***	0.72**
	(0.33)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)	(0.28)

<i>Roman-Catholic</i>	0.64**	0.39*	0.38*	0.37*	0.37*
	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)
<i>Social Class</i>					
<i>Working class</i>	-0.63***	0.01	0.04	0.04	0.06
	(0.22)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
<i>Upper working class</i>	-0.38*	-0.15	-0.14	-0.18	-0.18
	(0.22)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.18)
<i>Upper middle class</i>	0.51***	0.08	0.09	0.06	0.06
	(0.16)	(0.14)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.13)
<i>Upper class</i>	0.71*	0.10	0.08	0.12	0.11
	(0.38)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.32)	(0.33)
<i>More EU</i>	-0.25***	-0.10***	-0.09***	-0.08***	-0.08***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
<i>Less Taxes * MIP:</i>			0.35		0.29
<i>Economics and Big</i>			(0.32)		(0.31)
<i>Government</i>					
<i>Economic Inequality * MIP:</i>				0.23*	0.25**
<i>Economics and Economic</i>				(0.12)	(0.13)
<i>Inequality</i>					
<i>Less Asylum Seekers * MIP:</i>				0.27**	0.27**
<i>Minorities</i>				(0.11)	(0.11)
<i>Intercept</i>	5.61***	5.02***	5.09***	4.94***	4.96***
	(0.31)	(0.26)	(0.26)	(0.28)	(0.28)
Observations	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338
R ²	0.16	0.39	0.39	0.40	0.41
Adjusted R ²	0.14	0.37	0.38	0.39	0.39

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. OLS Regressions. Data from the DPES 2017.

Table C.10. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in the Netherlands 2017 – Robustness Checks

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>Less Taxes</i>	0.48*** (0.15)	0.59*** (0.15)	0.55*** (0.15)	0.60*** (0.16)	
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.86*** (0.06)		0.89*** (0.06)		0.87*** (0.06)
<i>Less Asylum Seekers</i>	0.39*** (0.08)	0.40*** (0.09)		0.58*** (0.09)	0.39*** (0.08)
<i>Binary Rejecting Economic Inequality</i>		-1.39*** (0.13)			
<i>Binary Less Asylum Seekers</i>			0.54*** (0.16)		
<i>Less Taxes * MIP (Five Mentions): Economics and Big Government</i>	0.27 (0.31)				
<i>Economic Inequality * MIP (Five Mentions): Economics and Economic Inequality</i>	0.24* (0.12)				
<i>Less Asylum Seekers * MIP (Five Mentions): Minorities</i>	0.24** (0.11)				
<i>Less Taxes * MIP: Economics and Big Government</i>		0.39 (0.32)	0.25 (0.31)	0.49 (0.34)	
<i>Economic Inequality * MIP: Economics and Economic Inequality</i>			0.23* (0.13)		0.25** (0.12)
<i>Less Asylum Seekers * MIP: Minorities</i>		0.29*** (0.11)		0.30** (0.12)	0.30*** (0.11)
<i>Binary Rejecting Economic Inequality * MIP: Economics and Economic Inequality</i>		-0.46* (0.27)			
<i>Binary Less Asylum Seekers * MIP: Minorities</i>			0.62*** (0.21)		

<i>Intercept</i>	5.97*** (0.72)	6.81*** (0.75)	5.64*** (0.73)	6.14*** (0.80)	6.09*** (0.73)
Control Variables					
Sociodemographic Controls	+	+	+	+	+
Attitudinal Controls	+	+	+	+	+
Observations	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338	1,338
R ²	0.40	0.37	0.40	0.28	0.40
Adjusted R ²	0.39	0.35	0.38	0.26	0.38
Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Data from the Dutch Parliamentary Election Survey 2017.					

Appendix D. The Left-Right Chameleon

Overview

This appendix details descriptive statistics, operationalisations, robustness checks and full regression models (of shortened versions presented in the main document). Assumptions checks were conducted for regression models in the main paper, but they are not detailed in this appendix as no substantial issues were found (with the exception of North Macedonia, see Table D.10).

Table D.1. Examples of Different Types of L-R Competition. Table 7.1 Continued

Main Salient Group Divide(s)	Context	Weak – Left	Strong – Right	Reference
Class	Argentina	Lower class	Middle/upper class	Rosas and Zechmeister (2000)
Class	Ireland 2020s	Lower class	Middle/upper class	Müller and Regan (2021) ¹⁶⁴
Centre-periphery and class	Basque Country and Catalonia	Lower class and periphery	Middle/upper class and centre	Dinas (2012)
Religion	France 1905	Secularism	Christianity	Bréchon (2017)

¹⁶⁴ See also Elkind and Farrell (2021).

Indonesia

Table 7.2 in the main paper contains six different OLS regression models, performed for the Indonesian case. All variables in Table D.2 below are included in the models in Table 7.2 of the main paper, when it states that control variables were included. For the descriptive statistics reported in Table D.3, I use the respondents that are included in model 2 in the regression table for Indonesia in the main paper (that which examines the isolated correlation between *My Religion* and *L-R Self-Placement*). The reported descriptive statistics for *Theocracy* and *Religion Essential to Democracy* are taken from the values of the respondents included in their respective regression models.

Table D.2. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. WVS 7

Variable	Question wording or explanation ¹⁶⁵	Response options and coding ¹⁶⁶
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	“In political matters, people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right.’ How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?”	10-point scale. 1 = Left, 10 = Right.
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	“How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.”	10-point scale. 1 = “Incomes should be made more equal,” 10 = “We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort.”
<i>Privatization</i>	“How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on	10-point scale. 1 = “Private ownership of business and industry

¹⁶⁵ Taken from the World Values Survey questionnaire (Haerpfer et al., 2020).

¹⁶⁶ Some of the independent variables are reversed (changing low values to high). Acceptance of inequality thus always corresponds to high values in the variables used in the regression models.

	the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.”	should be increased,” 10 = “Government ownership of business and industry should be increased.”
		Scores were reverse coded for the regression analyses.
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	“Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card. Homosexuality.”	10-point scale. 1 = Never, 10 = Always. Scores were reverse coded for the regression analyses.
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	“Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce.”	1 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither. Categories 2 and 3 were both coded as 0, making it a dichotomous variable. This policy proposal and the following two were merged with equal weights into <i>Gender Inequality</i> . ¹⁶⁷
	“On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree.

¹⁶⁷ All three policy proposals were reverse coded so that high values become low, and vice versa.

	“A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree.
<i>Xenophobia</i>	“On this list are various groups of people. Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbours?”	Binary variable, coded as 1 if the following group was mentioned: “People of a different race”
<i>Household Income</i>	“Here is a scale of incomes and we would like to know in what group your household is, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in. Just give the letter of the group your household falls into, after taxes and other deductions.”	10-point scale. 1 =Low, 10 =High.
<i>Education Level</i>	“What is the highest educational level that you have attained?”	The response options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: <i>Primary or less (reference category)</i> , <i>Secondary</i> and <i>University</i> .
<i>Religiosity</i>	“Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?”	The response options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: <i>Less than once a Year</i> , <i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i> (reference category) and <i>Once a Month or More</i> .

<i>Size of City</i>	The interviewer coded the size of the city where the interview was conducted.	The options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: <i>1 < 10,000</i> , <i>10,000-100,000</i> and <i>> 100,000</i> .
<i>Female</i>	Gender of respondent.	Dichotomous. 1 if female.
<i>Union</i>	Union Member.	Dichotomous. 1 if member of a union.
<i>Ethnicity</i>	Ethnicity of respondent.	See WVS codebook.
<i>Region</i>	Region where interview took place.	See WVS codebook.
<i>Post-Materialist</i>	Post-Materialist index.	6-point scale. See WVS codebook.
<i>Freedom</i>	“If you had to choose, which would you say is the most important responsibility of government:”	1 = “To maintain order in society,” 2 = “Respect the freedom of the individual.”
<i>Not a World Citizen</i>	“I see myself as a world citizen.”	Dichotomous. 1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree. 1 and 2 were collapsed (1), as well as 3 and 4 (0), making it a dichotomous variable.
<i>Resistance to Change</i>	“On this card are three basic kinds of attitudes concerning the society we live in. Please choose the one which best describes your own opinion.”	“1.- The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action.”

		2.- Our society must be gradually improved by reforms. 3.- Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces.” The second category is used as the reference category. Category 3 is called <i>Against Change</i>, while category 1 is called <i>Radical Change</i>.
<i>My Religion</i>	“The only acceptable religion is my religion.”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree. 1 and 2 were collapsed (1), as well as 3 and 4 (0), making it a dichotomous variable.
<i>Theocracy</i>	“Having a system governed by religious law in which there are no political parties or elections.”	1. Very good, 2. Fairly good, 3. Bad, 4. Very bad. 1 and 2 were collapsed (1), as well as 3 and 4 (0), making it a dichotomous variable.
<i>Religion Essential to Democracy</i>	“Religious authorities interpret the laws.”	10-point scale.

(0) “It is against
democracy
(spontaneous)”

(1) “Not an essential
characteristic of
democracy”

(10) “An essential
characteristic of
democracy.”

0 were converted to 1
before the analysis.

Table D.3. Descriptive Statistics. Indonesia WVS 7

Continuous Variables	Mean (SD)	Range
Dependent Variable		
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	6.36 (2.72)	1-10
Independent Variables		
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	6.67 (3.05)	1-10
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	9.38 (1.66)	1-10
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	7.25 (2.17)	0-12
<i>Privatization</i>	4.42 (3.07)	1-10
<i>Religion Essential to Democracy</i>	6.47 (2.93)	1-10
Control Variables		
<i>Post-Materialist</i>	2.05 (0.99)	0-5
<i>Income</i>	4.21 (2.42)	1-10
Dichotomous Variables	Proportion of Respondents	
Control Variables		
<i>Xenophobia</i>		
<i>Not a World Citizen</i>		0.44
<i>Age Categories</i>		
<i><20</i>		0.04
<i>20-29</i>		0.22
<i>30-39</i>		0.27
<i>40-49</i>		0.23
<i>50-59</i>		0.13
<i>60-69</i>		0.07
<i>70-79</i>		0.01
<i>> 79</i>		0.004
<i>Level of Education</i>		
<i>Primary or Less</i>		0.55
<i>Secondary</i>		0.34
<i>Post-Secondary</i>		0.10
<i>Female</i>		0.53
<i>Union</i>		0.18

<i>Size of City</i>	
<i>< 10,000</i>	0.69
<i>10,000-100,000</i>	0.27
<i>> 100,000</i>	0.03
<i>Religiosity</i>	
<i>Less than Once a Year</i>	0.05
<i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i>	0.17
<i>Once a Month or More</i>	0.78
<i>Religious Denomination</i>	
<i>Muslim</i>	0.81
<i>Buddhist</i>	0.003
<i>Hindu</i>	0.04
<i>Jewish</i>	0.0004
<i>Other</i>	0.003
<i>Protestant</i>	0.10
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	0.04
<i>Freedom</i>	0.04
<i>Resistance to Change</i>	
<i>Radical Change</i>	0.25
<i>Gradual Change</i>	0.62
<i>Against Change</i>	0.13
<i>My Religion</i>	0.84
<i>Theocracy</i>	0.58

Table D.4. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Indonesia. Only Muslims Included – WVS 7

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
<i>My Religion</i>	0.56*** (0.17)	0.37** (0.08)				
<i>Theocracy</i>			0.11 (0.12)	0.07 (0.12)		
<i>Religion Essential to Democracy</i>					0.14*** (0.02)	0.09*** (0.02)
<i>Privatization</i>		-0.07*** (0.02)		- 0.07*** (0.02)		-0.06*** (0.02)
<i>Radical Change</i>		0.12 (0.14)		0.11 (0.14)		0.10 (0.14)
<i>Against Change</i>		0.03 (0.17)		0.04 (0.18)		-0.03 (0.17)
<i>Intercept</i>	5.81*** (0.16)	5.29** (0.66)	6.24*** (0.09)	5.67*** (0.65)	5.42*** (0.14)	5.11*** (0.65)
<i>Control variables included?</i>	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	2,116	2,116	2,090	2,090	2,108	2,108
R^2	0.01	0.07	0.0004	0.07	0.02	0.08
Adjusted R^2	0.004	0.05	-0.0001	0.05	0.02	0.06

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in brackets. Sociodemographic and other control variables are all included in models 2, 4 and 6.

Controlling for Partisanship

The following table displays the results from running the exact same regression models as in Table 7.2, but with an added control for partisanship. This is measured with the question “If there were a national election tomorrow, for which party on this list would you vote?. If "Don't know": Which party appeals to you most?”. All parties are utilised as dummy variables, while anyone who does not feel close to a party is included as a non-partisan (the reference category).

Table D.5. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Indonesia. Controlling for Partisanship – WVS 7

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>My Religion</i>	0.47*** (0.17)		
<i>Theocracy</i>		0.13 (0.12)	
<i>Religion Essential to Democracy</i>			0.08*** (0.02)
<i>Privatization</i>	-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.02)
<i>Radical Change</i>	0.03 (0.14)	0.01 (0.14)	0.01 (0.14)
<i>Against Change</i>	0.07 (0.17)	0.05 (0.18)	0.04 (0.17)
<i>Intercept</i>	5.22** (2.07)	5.64*** (1.09)	5.22** (1.09)
<i>Control variables included?</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Partisanship Controlled for?</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,295	2,282	2,292
R^2	0.08	0.07	0.08
Adjusted R^2	0.05	0.04	0.05

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in brackets. Sociodemographic and other control variables are all included in models 1, 2 and 3.

Table D.6. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Indonesia 2018 – Table 7.2 Long Version

	(1)	(2)	(3)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)	0.08*** (0.02)
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	0.05* (0.03)	0.06** (0.03)	0.05** (0.03)
<i>Xenophobia</i>	0.17 (0.19)	0.18 (0.19)	0.18 (0.19)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.03)
<i>Not a World Citizen</i>	-0.31*** (0.11)	0.32*** (0.11)	0.29*** (0.11)
<i>Post-Materialist</i>	0.11** (0.05)	0.11* (0.05)	0.10* (0.05)
<i>Age Categories</i>			
20-29	-0.52* (0.28)	-0.54* (0.28)	-0.55** (0.28)
30-39	-0.44 (0.28)	-0.47* (0.28)	-0.47* (0.28)
40-49	-0.20 (0.28)	-0.23 (0.28)	-0.26 (0.28)
50-59	-0.11 (0.30)	-0.06 (0.30)	-0.16 (0.30)
60-69	0.47 (0.33)	0.46 (0.33)	0.34 (0.33)
70-79	-0.30 (0.51)	-0.26 (0.51)	-0.28 (0.51)
> 79	0.12 (0.89)	0.15 (0.89)	0.14 (0.89)
<i>Level of Education</i>			
Post-Secondary	0.20 (0.20)	0.22 (0.20)	0.26 (0.20)

<i>Secondary</i>	-0.02 (0.13)	-0.02 (0.13)	-0.02 (0.13)
<i>Income</i>	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)	0.02 (0.02)
<i>Female</i>	-0.27** (0.11)	-0.30*** (0.11)	-0.29** (0.11)
<i>Union</i>	0.08 (0.14)	0.05 (0.14)	0.05 (0.14)
<i>Size of City</i>			
<i>< 10,000</i>	0.35 (0.30)	0.32 (0.30)	0.33 (0.30)
<i>10,000-100,000</i>	-0.08 (0.31)	-0.09 (0.31)	-0.07 (0.31)
<i>Religiosity</i>			
<i>Less than Once a Year</i>	-0.14 (0.27)	-0.14 (0.27)	-0.12 (0.27)
<i>Once a Month or More</i>	0.10 (0.14)	0.10 (0.14)	0.09 (0.14)
<i>Religious Denomination</i>			
<i>Buddhist</i>	1.47 (0.94)	1.26 (0.94)	1.30 (0.94)
<i>Hindu</i>	0.52 (0.47)	0.31 (0.47)	0.50 (0.47)
<i>Jewish</i>	-2.43 (2.68)	-2.41 (2.69)	-1.98 (2.67)
<i>Other</i>	0.94 (1.07)	0.71 (1.07)	0.74 (1.07)
<i>Protestant</i>	0.32 (0.28)	0.17 (0.28)	0.24 (0.27)
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	0.45 (0.36)	0.29 (0.36)	0.40 (0.35)
<i>Freedom</i>	0.19 (0.26)	0.19 (0.26)	0.18 (0.26)

<i>Privatization</i>	-0.06*** (0.02)	-0.07*** (0.02)	-0.06*** (0.02)
<i>Radical Change</i>	0.10 (0.13)	0.09 (0.13)	0.08 (0.13)
<i>Against Change</i>	-0.01 (0.16)	0.01 (0.16)	-0.04 (0.16)
<i>My Religion</i>	0.44*** (0.15)		
<i>Theocracy</i>		0.11 (0.11)	
<i>Religion Essential to Democracy</i>			0.09*** (0.02)
<i>Intercept</i>	5.13*** (0.97)	5.60*** (0.97)	5.08*** (0.97)
Observations	2,601	2,573	2,593
R^2	0.07	0.07	0.07
Adjusted R^2	0.05	0.04	0.05

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Data from WVS 7. Standard errors in brackets.

Sociodemographic and other control variables are all included in models 2, 4 and 6. The coefficients for different ethnic groups are not reported in the table, even though they are controlled for in all three models.

Moldova

One OLS regression model performed for the Moldovan case in the main paper contains control variables. These, as well as the dependent and independent variables, are displayed in Table D.7 below.

Table D.7. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. WVS 4

Variable	Question wording or explanation ¹⁶⁸	Response options and coding ¹⁶⁹
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	“In political matters, people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right.’ How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?”	10-point scale. 1 = Left, 10 = Right.
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	“How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.”	10-point scale. 1 = “Incomes should be made more equal,” 10 = “We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort.”
<i>Privatization</i>	“How would you place your views on this scale? 1 means you agree completely with the statement on the left; 10 means you agree completely with the statement on the right; and if your views fall somewhere in between, you can choose any number in between.”	10-point scale. 1 = “Private ownership of business and industry should be increased,” 10 = “Government ownership of business and industry should be increased.”

¹⁶⁸ Taken from the fourth World Value Survey questionnaire (Inglehart et al., 2014a).

¹⁶⁹ Some of the independent variables are reversed (changing low values to high). Acceptance of inequality thus always corresponds to high values in the variables used in the regression models.

		Scores were reverse coded for the regression analyses.
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	“Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between, using this card. Homosexuality.”	10-point scale. 1 = Never, 10 = Always. Scores were reverse coded for the regression analyses.
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	“Men should have more right to job than women when jobs are scarce.”	1 = Agree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither. Categories 2 and 3 were collapsed, making it a dichotomous variable. This and the following two survey items were then merged with equal weights into the 10-point variable <i>Gender Inequality</i> (0-9). Scores were reverse coded for the regression analyses.
	“On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do.”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree.
	“A university education is more important for a boy than for a girl.”	1 = Strongly agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly disagree.

<i>Xenophobia</i>	“On this list are various groups of people. Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbours?”	Binary variable, coded as 1 if the following group was mentioned: “People of a different race.”
<i>Household Income</i>	“Here is a scale of incomes and we would like to know in what group your household is, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in. Just give the letter of the group your household falls into, after taxes and other deductions.”	10-point scale. 1 =Low, 10 =High.
<i>Education Level</i>	“What is the highest educational level that you have attained?”	The response options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: <i>Primary or less (reference category)</i> , <i>Secondary</i> and <i>University</i> .
<i>Religiosity</i>	“Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?”	The response options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: <i>Less than once a Year</i> , <i>Once a Year/Special Holidays</i> (reference category) and <i>Once a Month or More</i> .
<i>Size of City</i>	The interviewer coded the size of the city where the interview was conducted.	The options (see the WVS codebook) have been collapsed into three categories: <i>1 < 10,000</i> , <i>10,000-100,000</i> and

		(reference category) > 100,000.
<i>Female</i>	Gender of respondent.	Dichotomous. 1 if female.
<i>Ethnicity</i>	Ethnicity of respondent.	See WVS codebook.
<i>Against Change</i> <i>Radical Change</i>	“On this card are three basic kinds of attitudes concerning the society we live in. Please choose the one which best describes your own opinion.”	“1.- The entire way our society is organized must be radically changed by revolutionary action. 2.- Our society must be gradually improved by reforms. [reference category] 3.- Our present society must be valiantly defended against all subversive forces.”

Table D.8. Descriptive Statistics. Moldova WVS 4

Continuous Variables	Mean (SD)	Range
Dependent Variable		
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	5.82 (2.64)	1-10
Independent Variables		
<i>Economic Inequality</i>	6.78 (2.61)	1-10
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>	8.35 (2.48)	1-10
<i>Gender Inequality</i>	4.61 (2.22)	0-9
<i>Privatization</i>	5.02 (2.77)	1-10
Control Variables		
<i>Income</i>	4.11 (1.92)	1-10
Dichotomous Variables	Proportion of Respondents	
<i>Resistance to Change</i>		
<i>Radical Change</i>	0.27	
<i>Gradual Change</i>	0.61	
<i>Against Change</i>	0.12	
Control Variables		
<i>Xenophobia</i>	0.09	
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
<i>Moldovan/Romanian</i>	0.84	
<i>Russian</i>	0.11	
<i>Ukrainian</i>	0.02	
<i>Gagauz</i>	0.02	
<i>Bulgarian</i>	0.02	
<i>Age Categories</i>		
<i><20</i>	0.07	
<i>20-29</i>	0.18	
<i>30-39</i>	0.15	
<i>40-49</i>	0.28	
<i>50-59</i>	0.17	
<i>60-69</i>	0.10	
<i>70-79</i>	0.04	

> 79	0.008
<i>Level of Education</i>	
Primary or Less	0.08
Secondary	0.61
University	0.32
<i>Female</i>	0.57
<i>Size of City</i>	
< 10,000	0.54
10,000-100,000	0.21
> 100,000	0.25
<i>Religiosity</i>	
Less than Once a Year	0.13
Once a Year/Special Holidays	0.56
Once a Month or More	0.32

Note: Does not include different religious denominations, even though they are included in the regression models.

Table D.9. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Moldova 2002 – Table 7.3 Long Version

	(1)	(2)
<i>Economic Inequality</i>		0.22*** (0.05)
<i>Anti-Feminist Attitude</i>		-0.09 (0.06)
<i>Intolerance of Homosexuality</i>		-0.03 (0.15)
<i>Xenophobia</i>		0.27 (0.45)
<i>Ethnic Minority</i>		-1.02*** (0.38)
<i>Privatization</i>		0.13*** (0.05)
<i>Radical Change</i>	0.31 (0.30)	-0.10 (0.31)
<i>Against Change</i>	-0.05 (0.41)	0.13 (0.40)
<i>Age Categories</i>		
20-29		0.57 (0.59)
30-39		-0.23 (0.60)
40-49		0.50 (0.56)
50-59		0.10 (0.60)
60-69		0.21 (0.67)
70-79		1.02 (0.88)
> 79		0.75

		(1.64)
<i>Education Level</i>		
<i>Secondary</i>		0.45 (0.58)
<i>University</i>		0.93 (0.61)
<i>Income</i>		-0.03 (0.07)
<i>Age</i>		0.002 (0.01)
<i>Female</i>		-0.55** (0.27)
<i>Size of City</i>		
< 10,000		-1.02*** (0.34)
10,000-100,000		-0.52 (0.38)
<i>Religiosity</i>		
<i>Less than Once a Year</i>		-0.13 (0.41)
<i>Once a Month or More</i>		0.20 (0.28)
<i>Intercept</i>	5.75*** (0.17)	3.06** (1.40)
Observations	400	400
R^2	0.003	0.20
Adjusted R^2	-0.002	0.14

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Data from WVS 4. Standard errors in brackets. The coefficients for different religious denominations are not reported in the table, even though they are controlled for in model 2.

Table D.10. OLS. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Post-Communist Countries in Eastern Europe. Attitudes Towards Change

WVS Wave	4 th	7 th	
Country and Year	North Macedonia 2001 ¹⁷⁰	Serbia 2017	Romania 2017
<i>Radical Change</i>	0.21 (0.26)	0.15 (0.16)	0.55* (0.30)
<i>Against Change</i>	0.13 (0.22)	-0.13 (0.28)	0.29 (0.35)
<i>Intercept</i>	4.24*** (0.84)	5.07*** (0.88)	4.72*** (1.20)
<i>Control variables included?</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	720	714	623
R^2	0.10	0.17	0.12
Adjusted R^2	0.06	0.10	0.08

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in brackets. The control variables are the same as those used when examining Moldova and Indonesia, using WVS 4 and 7 survey data respectively.

¹⁷⁰ Using the Breusch-Pagan test, it was detected that this regression model contains heteroscedasticity. This means that the results are less reliable and ought to be evaluated with this in mind.

Israel

The control variables utilized in the OLS regression models in the main paper, as well as the dependent and independent variables, are displayed in Table D.11 below. One thing to note is that even though the models control for both self-identified social class and income (which naturally correlate), excluding either variable from the analyses have negligible impacts on the overall results.

Table D.11. Survey Items and Corresponding Variables. INES 2013

Variable ¹⁷¹	Question wording or explanation ¹⁷²	Response options and coding ¹⁷³
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	“In political matters, people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right.’ How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?”	10-point scale. 1 = Right, 7 = Left. Reverse coded in the analysis, so that low values indicate the left side, and higher values indicate right-wing positions.
<i>No to Palestinian State</i>	“In your opinion, should Israel consent or not consent to the establishment of a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza strip under the framework of a permanent agreement?”	“1. Definitely should consent 2. Think they should consent 3. Think they should not consent 4. Definitely should not consent.”

¹⁷¹ Excluding self-explanatory variables.

¹⁷² Taken from the 2013 Israel National Election Study questionnaire (Shamir, 2013).

¹⁷³ Some of the independent variables are reversed (changing low values to high). Acceptance of inequality thus always corresponds to high values in the variables used in the regression models.

		Made into a binary variable. Alternative 1 and 2 coded as 0, 3 and 4 coded as 1.
<i>No Tax Increase</i>	“Would you be prepared or not prepared to have taxes in the country raised, meaning that you would also pay more taxes, in order to take care of the different problems facing the country?”	“1. Yes 2. No.”
<i>Age Categories</i>	Age of respondent.	Recoded to the following categories: <20, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, >79.
<i>Female</i>	Gender of respondent.	Dichotomous. 1 if female.
<i>Level of Education</i>	“Highest Level of Education”	Ordinal variable. Original categories collapsed into the following categories: <i>High School or Less</i> , <i>Post High School</i> (reference category), <i>University</i> . See original categories in the INES codebook.
<i>Social Class</i>	“What is your societal status?”	Ordinal variable. Categories copied from the INES codebook. <i>Upper class, Upper middle class, Middle</i>

		<i>class, Lower class</i> (reference category).
<i>Religious Denomination</i>	Respondent's religion.	Nominal variable. <i>Jewish</i> (reference category), <i>Muslim</i> , <i>Christian</i> , <i>Druze</i> , <i>Other</i> .
<i>Religiosity</i>	"Do you define yourself as?"	Nominal variable. Categories copied from the INES codebook. <i>Secular, Traditional, Religious</i> (reference category), <i>Very Religious</i> .
<i>Income</i>	"What is your household income from all sources, after taxes and other obligatory deductions?"	Ordinal variable. Original categories collapsed into the following categories: <i>Below 8,000</i> , <i>8,000-16,000</i> (reference category) and <i>Above 16,000</i> . See original categories in the INES codebook.
<i>Place of Residence</i>		See INES codebook for more details.
<i>Arab Sample</i>	The survey was administered to a stratified sample of Arabs (/Palestinians) and Jewish individuals. See full explanation on the INES website.	1 if Arab (/Palestinian), 0 if Jewish.
<i>Continue to Occupy</i>	"Under a permanent agreement with the Palestinians should Israel be prepared to return or should it	"1. Definitely should return 2. Should return 3.

continue to occupy the Arab
neighborhoods of Jerusalem, even
if the price is prevention of a
permanent agreement?”

Should continue to
occupy
4. Definitely should
continue to occupy.”

Dichotomous coding. 1
and 2 collapsed into “0”.
3 and 4 collapsed into
“1”.

Table D.12. Descriptive Statistics. INES 2013

Continuous Variables	Mean (SD)	Range
Dependent Variable		
<i>L-R Self-Placement</i>	3.27 (1.77)	0-6
Dichotomous Variables		
Proportion of Respondents		
<i>No to Palestinian State</i>	0.71	
<i>No Tax Increase</i>	0.35	
<i>Continue to Occupy</i>	0.35	
Control Variables		
<i>Social Class</i>		
<i>Lower class</i>	0.10	
<i>Middle class</i>	0.66	
<i>Upper middle class</i>	0.16	
<i>Upper class</i>	0.08	
<i>Age Categories</i>		
<20	0.03	
20-29	0.13	
30-39	0.19	
40-49	0.21	
50-59	0.18	
60-69	0.15	
70-79	0.08	
> 79	0.03	
<i>Level of Education</i>		
<i>High School or Less</i>	0.45	
<i>Post High School</i>	0.21	
<i>University</i>	0.34	
<i>Female</i>	0.50	
<i>Religious Denomination</i>		
<i>Jewish</i>	0.77	
<i>Christian</i>	0.03	
<i>Druze</i>	0.02	
<i>Muslim</i>	0.16	

<i>Other</i>	0.02
<i>Religiosity</i>	
<i>Secular</i>	0.45
<i>Traditional</i>	0.29
<i>Religious</i>	0.21
<i>Very Religious</i>	0.06
<i>Arab Sample</i>	0.20

Note: Does not include place of residence, even though the variable is included in the regression models.

Table D.13. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Israel 2013 – Table 7.4 Long**Version**

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
<i>No to Palestinian State</i>		1.63*** (0.14)		1.14*** (0.17)	1.14*** (0.17)
<i>No Tax Increase</i>	-0.04 (0.17)		0.05 (0.19)		-0.05 (0.18)
<i>Female</i>			-0.13 (0.17)	-0.20 (0.16)	-0.19 (0.16)
<i>Level of Education</i>					
<i>High School or Less</i>			0.31 (0.22)	0.23 (0.21)	0.23 (0.21)
<i>University</i>			-0.06 (0.23)	-0.06 (0.22)	-0.06 (0.22)
<i>Age Categories</i>					
20-29			-0.26 (0.54)	-0.35 (0.51)	-0.35 (0.51)
30-39			-0.70 (0.52)	-0.69 (0.49)	-0.69 (0.49)
40-49			-0.25 (0.52)	-0.25 (0.49)	-0.25 (0.49)
50-59			-0.82 (0.52)	-0.82 (0.50)	-0.82* (0.50)
60-69			-0.79 (0.53)	-0.55 (0.50)	-0.55 (0.50)
70-79			-0.90 (0.58)	-0.76 (0.55)	-0.77 (0.55)
> 79			0.33 (0.68)	0.13 (0.65)	0.13 (0.65)
<i>Social Class</i>					
<i>Middle Class</i>			-0.41 (0.28)	-0.42 (0.26)	-0.42 (0.26)
<i>Upper Middle Class</i>			-0.35	-0.05	-0.42

			(0.35)	(0.40)	(0.26)
<i>Upper Class</i>			-0.17	-0.42	-0.06
			(0.43)	(0.33)	(0.40)
<i>Income</i>					
<i>Above 16,000</i>			0.07	0.15	0.15
			(0.25)	(0.23)	(0.23)
<i>Below 8,000</i>			-0.13	-0.11	-0.11
			(0.20)	(0.18)	(0.18)
<i>Religious Denomination</i>					
<i>Christian</i>			-0.06	-0.06	0.07
			(0.72)	(0.68)	(0.68)
<i>Druze</i>			1.64	1.78	1.79
			(1.82)	(1.72)	(1.73)
<i>Muslim</i>			-2.18***	-1.94***	-1.94***
			(0.63)	(0.60)	(0.60)
<i>Other</i>			-0.17	-0.44	-0.44
			(0.55)	(0.52)	(0.52)
<i>Religiosity</i>					
<i>Secular</i>			-0.79***	-0.56***	-0.57**
			(0.25)	(0.24)	(0.24)
<i>Traditional</i>			-0.10	-0.07	-0.07
			(0.25)	(0.23)	(0.23)
<i>Very Religious</i>			0.51	0.30	0.30
			(0.43)	(0.41)	(0.41)
<i>Intercept</i>	3.29***	2.70***	7.01***	5.98***	6.04***
	(0.14)	(0.08)	(1.72)	(1.62)	(1.63)
Observations	547	547	547	547	547
R^2	0.0001	0.19	0.48	0.53	0.53
Adjusted R^2	-0.002	0.19	0.22	0.30	0.30

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Data from INES 2013. Standard errors in brackets. The table does not include the coefficients for *Place of Residence*.

Robustness Checks

There are two robustness checks conducted in the Israeli case study. First, the original models initially only control for religion, and not whether the respondent was sampled from the Arab (/Palestinian) or Jewish part of the population. There is naturally a high degree of correlation between these two variables, but one could control for who was sampled rather than religion. Table D.14 includes models where the variable *Arab Sample* is included instead, and controlling for this and religion simultaneously. Second, instead of using the variable *No to Palestinian State*, models in Table D.15 include the variable *Continue to Occupy*.

Table D.14. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Israel. Controlling for Arab Sample – INES 2013

	(1)	(2)
<i>No to Palestinian State</i>	1.12*** (0.18)	1.12*** (0.17)
<i>No Tax Increase</i>	-0.05 (0.18)	-0.07 (0.18)
<i>Arab Sample</i>	-2.41*** (0.66)	-2.28 (1.41)
<i>Muslim</i>		-0.12 (1.27)
<i>Christian</i>		0.78 (0.81)
<i>Druze</i>		3.60* (2.05)
<i>Other</i>		-0.40 (0.52)
<i>Intercept</i>	5.94*** (1.64)	6.03*** (1.63)
<i>Control variables included?</i>	Yes	Yes
Observations	547	547
R^2	0.52	0.53
Adjusted R^2	0.30	0.30

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in brackets.

Table D.15. Explaining L-R Self-Placements in Israel. Changed Independent Variable – INES 2013

	(2)	(5)
<i>Continue to Occupy</i>	1.63*** (0.14)	1.14*** (0.17)
<i>No Tax Increase</i>		-0.05 (0.18)
<i>Intercept</i>	2.70*** (0.08)	6.04*** (1.63)
<i>Control variables included?</i>	No	Yes
Observations	547	547
R^2	0.19	0.53
Adjusted R^2	0.19	0.30

Note: * $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. Standard errors in brackets.

Bibliography

- Achterberg, P., Houtman, D. & Derks, A. 2011. Two of a Kind? An Empirical Investigation of Anti-Welfarism and Economic Egalitarianism. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74:4, 748-760.
- Adcock, R. & Collier, D. 2001. Measurement Validity: A Shared Standard for Qualitative and Quantitative Research. *The American Political Science Review*, 95:3, 529-546.
- Ananta, A., Arifin, E. N. & Suryadinata, L. 2004. *Indonesian Electoral Behaviour: A Statistical Perspective*, Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Andreß, H.-J., Diekmann, A. & Feger, H. 2015. ALLBUS/GGSS 2008 (Allgemeine Bevölkerungsumfrage der Sozialwissenschaften/German General Social Survey 2008).
<https://dbk.gesis.org/DBKSearch/SDESC2.asp?no=4600&tab=3&db=E&dab=0>
[Accessed October 13, 2018].
- Andrews, J. T. & Money, J. 2009. The Spatial Structure of Party Competition: Party Dispersion within a Finite Policy Space. *British Journal of Political Science*, 39:4, 805-824.
- Ansell, B. W. 2019. The Politics of Housing. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22:1, 165-185.
- Anwar, M. 2001. The participation of ethnic minorities in British politics. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27:3, 533-549.
- Arian, A. & Shamir, M. 1983. The Primarily Political Functions of the Left-Right Continuum. *Comparative Politics*, 15:2, 139-158.
- Arian, A. & Shamir, M. 2008. A Decade Later, the World Had Changed, the Cleavage Structure Remained. *Party Politics*, 14:6, 685-705.
- Aspelund, A., Lindeman, M. & Verkasalo, M. 2013. Political Conservatism and Left-Right Orientation in 28 Eastern and Western European Countries. *Political Psychology*, 34:3, 409-417.
- Aspinall, E. 2016. The New Nationalism in Indonesia. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies*, 3:1, 72-82.
- Aspinall, E., Fossati, D., Muhtadi, B. & Warburton, E. 2018. *Mapping the Indonesian political spectrum* [Online]. New Mandala. Available:

- <https://www.newmandala.org/mapping-indonesian-political-spectrum/>
[Accessed April 18, 2021].
- Aydogan, A. & Slapin, J. B. 2015. Left–right reversed. *Party Politics*, 21:4, 615-625.
- Azmanova, A. 2011. After the Left-Right (Dis)continuum: Globalization and the Remaking of Europe’s Ideological Geography. *International Political Sociology*, 5:4, 384-407.
- Bäckelie, J. & Larsson, G. 2013. Political Opinions and Participation among Young Muslims in Sweden: A case study. In: Nielsen, J. (ed.) *Muslim Political Participation in Europe*. Great Britain: Edinburgh University Press. 61-82.
- Banerjee, A., Gethin, A. & Piketty, T. 2019. Growing Cleavages in India? Evidence from the Changing Structure of Electorates, 1962-2014. *World Inequality Lab*.
- Barnes, S. H. & Kaase, M. 2006. Political Action: An Eight Nation Study, 1973-1976. <https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/web/ICPSR/studies/7777> [Accessed June 27, 2022].
- Barrera, O., Leiva, A., Martínez-Toledano, C. & Zúñiga-Cordero, A. I. 2021. Social Inequalities, Identity, and the Structure of Political Cleavages in Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru, 1952-2019. *World Inequality Lab*. HAL.
- Bartolini, S. & Mair, P. 1990. *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability: the stabilisation of European electorates 1885-1985*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Bartolini, S. & Mair, P. 2007. *Identity, competition and electoral availability*, United Kingdom, ECPR Press.
- Bauer, P. C., Barberá, P., Ackermann, K. & Venetz, A. 2016. Is the Left-Right Scale a Valid Measure of Ideology? *Political Behavior*, 39:3, 553-583.
- Beattie, P., Chen, R. & Bettache, K. 2021. When Left Is Right and Right Is Left: The Psychological Correlates of Political Ideology in China. *Political Psychology*, 43:3, 457-488.
- Behr, D. 2019. Open-ended answers to cognitive probes - from the CICOM study. <http://doi.org/10.7802/1795> [Accessed 23 October, 2020].
- Benoit, K. & Laver, M. 2006. *Party Policy in Modern Democracies*, New York, Routledge.

- Benoit, K. & Laver, M. 2007. Estimating party policy positions: Comparing expert surveys and hand-coded content analysis. *Electoral Studies*, 26:1, 90-107.
- Berenschot, W. 2018. The Political Economy of Clientelism: A Comparative Study of Indonesia's Patronage Democracy. *Comparative Political Studies*, 51:12, 1563–1593.
- Bergh, J. & Bjørklund, T. 2010. The Revival of Group Voting: Explaining the Voting Preferences of Immigrants in Norway. *Political Studies*, 59:2, 308-327.
- Berry, W. D., Golder, M. & Milton, D. 2012. Improving Tests of Theories Positing Interaction. *The Journal of Politics*, 74:3, 653-671.
- Bienfait, H. F. & Beek, W. E. A. v. 2001. Right and Left as Political Categories. An Exercise in "Not-so-Primitive" Classification. *Anthropos*, 96:1, 169-178.
- Bille, L. & Rüdiger, M. 2011. *Venstre* [Online]. danmarkshistorien.dk & denstoredanske.dk. Available: <https://danmarkshistorien.dk/leksikon-og-kilder/vis/materiale/venstre/> [Accessed September 19, 2020].
- Bishop, G. F., Barclay, A. M. & Rokeach, M. 1972. Presidential Preferences and Freedom-Equality Value Patterns in the 1968 American Campaign. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 88:2, 207-212.
- Black, D. 1948. On the Rationale of Group Decision-making. *Journal of Political Economy*, 56:1, 23-34.
- Blaydes, L. & Linzer, D. A. 2012. Elite Competition, Religiosity, and Anti-Americanism in the Islamic World. *American Political Science Review*, 106:2, 225-243.
- Blei, D. M. 2012. Probabilistic topic models. *Communications of the ACM*, 55:4, 77-84.
- Blei, D. M., Ng, A. Y. & Jordan, M. I. 2003. Latent Dirichlet Allocation. *Journal of Machine Learning Research*, 3:Jan, 993-1022.
- Blom, P. 2017. *Wat op het spel staat*, Amsterdam, De Bezige Bij.
- Blühdorn, I. 2004. 'New Green' Pragmatism in Germany – Green Politics beyond the Social Democratic Embrace? *Government and Opposition*, 39:4, 564-586.
- Bobbio, N. 1996. *Left and Right*, Great Britain, Polity Press.
- Bornschier, S. 2010. The New Cultural Divide and the Two-Dimensional Political Space in Western Europe. *West European Politics*, 33:3, 419-444.
- Boussalis, C. & Coan, T. G. 2016. Text-mining the signals of climate change doubt. *Global Environmental Change*, 36, 89-100.

- Braithwaite, V. 1982. The structure of social values: Validation of Rokeach's two-value model. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 21:3, 203-211.
- Brambor, T. & Lindvall, J. 2017. The ideology of heads of government, 1870–2012. *European Political Science*, 17:2, 211-222.
- Bréchon, P. 2017. *The evolution of France's left and right politics, from the 1789 French Revolution to this year's election* [Online]. HAL. Available: <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01510747> [Accessed 8 February, 2021].
- Budge, I. 2013. *The Standard Right–Left Scale* [Online]. Available: https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/down/papers/budge_right-left-scale.pdf [Accessed June 8, 2022].
- Budge, I., Klingemann, H.-D., Volkens, A., Bara, J. L. & Tanenbaum, E. 2001. *Mapping Policy Preferences: Estimates for Parties, Electors, and Governments, 1945–1998*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Cain, B. E., Kiewiet, D. R. & Uhlman, C. J. 1991. The Acquisition of Partisanship by Latinos and Asian Americans. *American Journal of Political Science*, 35:2, 390-422.
- Castles, F. G. & Mair, P. 1984. Left-Right Political Scales: Some 'Expert' Judgments. *European Journal of Political Research*, 12, 73-88.
- Caughey, D., O'Grady, T. & Warshaw, C. 2019. Policy Ideology in European Mass Publics, 1981–2016. *American Political Science Review*, 113:3, 674-693.
- Cavazza, N., Colloca, P. & Roccato, M. 2022. Left and right in the age of populism: has the populist zeitgeist permeated citizens' representation of ideological labels? *Contemporary Italian Politics*, 14:1, 68-86.
- Charnock, D. 2010. What Do Australian Voters Mean by 'Left–Right'? *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 45:3, 491-499.
- Chinn, J. 1994. The politics of language in Moldova. *Demokratizatsiya*, 2:2, 309-315.
- Christiansen, F. J. 2016. The Danish People's Party. In: Akkerman, T., De Lange, S. L. & Rooduijn, M. (eds.) *Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe: Into the Mainstream?* Abingdon: Routledge. 94-112.
- Chudy, J. 2021. Racial Sympathy and Its Political Consequences. *The Journal of Politics*, 83:1, 122-136.
- Cochrane, C. 2015. *Left and Right: The Small World of Political Ideas*, Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press.

- Cochrane, R., Billig, M. & Hogg, M. 1979. Politics and Values in Britain: A test of Rokeach's two-value model. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18:2, 159-167.
- Converse, P. E. 2006 [1964]. The nature of belief systems in mass publics (1964). *Critical Review*, 18:1-3, 1-74.
- Corbetta, P., Cavazza, N. & Roccato, M. 2009. Between ideology and social representations: Four theses plus (a new) one on the relevance and the meaning of the political left and right. *European Journal of Political Research*, 48:5, 622-641.
- Crowther, W. 1998. Ethnic Politics and the Post-Communist Transition in Moldova. *Nationalities Papers*, 26:1, 147-164.
- Crowther, W. 2013. Moldova. In: Berglund, S., Ekman, J., Deegan-Krause, K. & Knutsen, T. (eds.) *The Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe*. Third ed. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. 733-774.
- Culpepper, P. D. & Reinke, R. 2014. Structural Power and Bank Bailouts in the United Kingdom and the United States. *Politics & Society*, 42:4, 427-454.
- Cunningham, K. & Elkind, J. A. 2018. Ideological dimensions in the 2016 elections. In: Marsh, M., Farrell, D. M. & Reidy, T. (eds.) *Post-Crisis Irish Voter: Voting Behaviour in the Irish 2016 General Election*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 33-62.
- Dalton, R., Farrell, D. M. & McAllister, I. 2011. *Political parties and democratic linkage*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- Dalton, R. J. 2006. Social Modernization and the End of Ideology Debate: Patterns of Ideological Polarization. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 7:1, 1-22.
- Dalton, R. J. 2010. Left–Right Orientations, Context, and Voting Choices. In: Dalton, R. J. & Anderson, C. J. (eds.) *Citizens, Context, and Choice*. New York: Oxford University Press. 103–22.
- Dalton, R. J. & McAllister, I. 2015. Random Walk or Planned Excursion? Continuity and Change in the Left–Right Positions of Political Parties. *Comparative Political Studies*, 48:6, 759-787.
- Däubler, T. & Benoit, K. 2021. Scaling hand-coded political texts to learn more about left-right policy content. *Party Politics*.

- De Leon, C., Desai, M. & Tuğal, C. 2009. Political Articulation: Parties and the Constitution of Cleavages in the United States, India, and Turkey. *Sociological Theory*, 27:3, 193-219.
- De Regt, S., Mortelmans, D. & Smits, T. 2011. Left-wing authoritarianism is not a myth, but a worrisome reality. Evidence from 13 Eastern European countries. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 44:4, 299-308.
- De Tocqueville, A. 1955 [1856]. *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*, United States, Anchor.
- De Vries, C. E., Hakhverdian, A. & Lancee, B. 2013. The Dynamics of Voters' Left/Right Identification: The Role of Economic and Cultural Attitudes. *Political Science Research and Methods*, 1:2, 223-238.
- De Vries, E., Schoonvelde, M. & Schumacher, G. 2018. No Longer Lost in Translation: Evidence that Google Translate Works for Comparative Bag-of-Words Text Applications. *Political Analysis*, 26:4, 417-430.
- Deegan-Krause, K. 2006. New Dimensions of Political Cleavage. In: Dalton, R. & Klingemann, H.-D. (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Denny, M. J. & Spirling, A. 2018. Text Preprocessing For Unsupervised Learning: Why It Matters, When It Misleads, And What To Do About It. *Political Analysis*, 26:2, 168-189.
- Dinas, E. 2012. Left and Right in the Basque Country and Catalonia: The Meaning of Ideology in a Nationalist Context. *South European Society and Politics*, 17:3, 467-485.
- Diskin, A. 1999. The New Political System of Israel. *Government and Opposition*, 34:4, 498-515.
- Doron, G. 2005. Right as Opposed to Wrong as Opposed to Left: The Spatial Location of "Right Parties" on the Israeli Political Map. *Israel Studies*, 10:3, 29- 53.
- Downs, A. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Boston, Addison-Wesley.
- Driver, S. & Martell, L. 2000. Left, Right and the third way. *Policy & Politics*, 28:2, 147-161.
- Dunn, K. 2011. Left-Right identification and education in Europe: A contingent relationship. *Comparative European Politics*, 9:3, 292-316.

- Duriez, B., Hiel, A. V. & Kossowska, M. 2005. Authoritarianism and Social Dominance in Western and Eastern Europe: The Importance of the Sociopolitical Context and of Political Interest and Involvement. *Political Psychology*, 26:2, 299-320.
- Elkink, J. A. & Farrell, D. M. 2021. Predicting vote choice in the 2020 Irish general election. *Irish Political Studies*, 36:4, 521-534.
- Endres, D. M. & Schindelin, J. E. 2003. A new metric for probability distributions. *IEEE Transactions on Information Theory*, 49:7, 1858-1860.
- ESS. 2008. ESS Round 4: European Social Survey Round 4 Data. <https://doi.org/10.21338/NSD-ESS1-2002>.
- ESS. 2016. ESS Round 8: European Social Survey Round 8 Data. <https://doi.org/10.21338/NSD-ESS8-2016>.
- Evans, G., Heath, A. & Lalljee, M. 1996. Measuring Left-Right and Libertarian-Authoritarian Values in the British Electorate. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47:1, 93-112.
- Evans, G. & Whitefield, S. 1998. The evolution of left and right in Post-Soviet Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 50:6, 1023-1042.
- Farag, M. 2019. Mass-Elite Cleavages in Tunisia: The Revolution as a Critical Juncture (2010-2016). *ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops*, 8-12 April 2019, Mons, Belgium.
- Ford, R. & Jennings, W. 2020. The Changing Cleavage Politics of Western Europe. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23:1, 295-314.
- Fossati, D. 2019. The Resurgence of Ideology in Indonesia: Political Islam, Aliran and Political Behaviour. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 38:2, 119-148.
- Fossati, D., Aspinall, E., Muhtadi, B. & Warburton, E. 2020. Ideological representation in clientelistic democracies: The Indonesian case. *Electoral Studies*, 63, 1-12.
- Franzmann, S. & Kaiser, A. 2006. Locating Political Parties in Policy Space. *Party Politics*, 12:2, 163-188.
- Franzmann, S. T. 2013. Towards a real comparison of left-right indices. *Party Politics*, 21:5, 821-828.
- Freedon, M. 2003. *Ideology*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

- Freire, A. 2006a. Bringing Social Identities Back In: The Social Anchors of Left-Right Orientation in Western Europe. *International Political Science Review*, 27:4, 359-378.
- Freire, A. 2006b. Left-right ideological identities in new democracies. *Pôle Sud*, 25:2, 153-173.
- Freire, A. & Kivistik, K. 2013. Western and non-Western meanings of the Left–Right divide across four continents. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 18:2, 171-199.
- Furnham, A. & Cheng, H. 2019. Personality Traits and Socio-Demographic Variables as Predictors of Political Interest and Voting Behavior in a British Cohort. *Journal of Individual Differences*, 40:2, 118-125.
- Gabel, M. J. & Huber, J. D. 2000. Putting Parties in Their Place: Inferring Party Left-Right Ideological Positions from Party Manifestos Data. *American Journal of Political Science*, 44:1, 94-103.
- Gall, C. L. & Berton, R. M. 2013. Left-Right vs. Traditional and New Cleavages: Testing Durability of an Old Political Category. In: Rosas, J. C. & Ferreira, A. R. (eds.) *Left and Right: The Great Dichotomy Revisited*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 255-268.
- Giger, N. & Lefkofridi, Z. 2014. Salience-Based Congruence Between Parties & their Voters: The Swiss Case. *Swiss Political Science Review*, 20:2, 287-304.
- Gorban, A. 2013. Ethnic and Socio-Cultural Aspects of Political Culture in Moldova. In: Brie, M., Horga, I. & Şipoş, S. (eds.) *Ethnicity and Intercultural Dialogue at the European Union Eastern Border*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 120-139.
- Gordon, U. 2007. Anarchism reloaded. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 12:1, 29-48.
- Green, J. 2007. When Voters and Parties Agree: Valence Issues and Party Competition. *Political Studies*, 55:3, 629-655.
- Green-Pedersen, C. 2013. Partier i nye tider. Den politiske dagsordensfastsættelse i Danmark. *Politica*, 45:1, 6-17.
- Green-Pedersen, C. & Otjes, S. 2019. A hot topic? Immigration on the agenda in Western Europe. *Party Politics*, 25:3, 424-434.
- Greenberg, J. & Jonas, E. 2003. Psychological motives and political orientation--the left, the right, and the rigid: comment on Jost et al. (2003). *Psychological Bulletin*, 129:3, 376-382.

- Greene, D. 2020. *dynamic-nmf: Dynamic Topic Modeling* [Online]. Available: <https://github.com/derekgreene/dynamic-nmf> [Accessed August 5, 2020].
- Haerpfer, C., Inglehart, R., Moreno, A., Welzel, C., Kizilova, K., J., D.-M., Lagos, M., Norris, P., Ponarin, E. & Puranen, B. 2020. World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile. <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV7.jsp>.
- Hakhverdian, A. 2010. Political Representation and its Mechanisms: A Dynamic Left–Right Approach for the United Kingdom, 1976–2006. *British Journal of Political Science*, 40:4, 835-856.
- Halman, L. 2001. The European values study: A third wave. Sourcebook of the 1999/2000 European values study surveys.
- Harbers, I., de Vries, C. E. & Steenbergen, M. R. 2013. Attitude Variability Among Latin American Publics. *Comparative Political Studies*, 46:8, 947-967.
- Häusermann, S., Picot, G. & Geering, D. 2012. Review Article: Rethinking Party Politics and the Welfare State – Recent Advances in the Literature. *British Journal of Political Science*, 43:1, 221-240.
- Hazan, R. Y. 2005 [1999]. Israel and the consociational model. In: Luther, K. R. & Deschouwer, K. (eds.) *Party Elites in Divided Societies*. Taylor & Francis e-Library: Routledge. 164-189.
- Heaven, P., Stones, C., Nel, E., Huysamen, G. & Louw, J. 1994. Human values and voting intentions in South Africa. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 33:2, 223-231.
- Heaven, P. C. L. 1991. Voting Intention and the Rvo-Value Model: A Further Investigation. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 43:2, 75-77.
- Hellström, A. & Nilsson, T. 2010. ‘We Are the Good Guys’. *Ethnicities*, 10:1, 55-76.
- Hermann, T. & Anabi, O. 2019. Pre-Election Survey January 2019. <https://dataisrael.idi.org.il/>.
- Hiel, A. V. & Kossowska, M. 2007. Contemporary attitudes and their ideological representation in Flanders (Belgium), Poland, and the Ukraine. *Int J Psychol*, 42:1, 16-26.
- Hloušek, V. & Kopeček, L. 2008. Cleavages in the Contemporary Czech and Slovak Politics Between Persistence and Change. *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*, 22:3, 518-552.

- Hooghe, L., Bakker, R., Brigeovich, A., De Vries, C., Edwards, E., Marks, G., Rovny, J. A. N., Steenbergen, M. & Vachudova, M. 2010. Reliability and validity of the 2002 and 2006 Chapel Hill expert surveys on party positioning. *European Journal of Political Research*, 49:5, 687-703.
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G. & Wilson, C. J. 2002. Does Left/Right Structure Party Positions on European Integration? *Comparative Political Studies*, 35:8, 965-989.
- Hotelling, H. 1929. Stability in Competition. *The Economic Journal*, 39:153, 41-57.
- Huber, J. & Inglehart, R. 1995. Expert Interpretations of Party Space and Party Locations in 42 Societies. *Party Politics*, 1:1, 73-111.
- Inglehart, R. 1984. The changing structure of political cleavages in Western society. In: Dalton, R., Flanagan, S. & Beck, P. A. (eds.) *Electoral change. Realignment and dealignment in advanced industrial democracies*. Princeton, New Jersey; Guildford, Surrey: Princeton University Press. 25-69.
- Inglehart, R. 1990. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*, New Jersey, Princeton University Press.
- Inglehart, R., Haerpfer, C., Moreno, A., Welzel, C., Kizilova, K., Diez-Medrano, J., M., L., Norris, P., Ponarin, E. & Puranen, B. e. a. 2014a. World Values Survey: Round Four - Country-Pooled Datafile
<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV4.jsp>.
- Inglehart, R., Haerpfer, C., Moreno, A., Welzel, C., Kizilova, K., Diez-Medrano, J., M., L., Norris, P., Ponarin, E. & Puranen, B. e. a. 2014b. World Values Survey: Round Three - Country-Pooled Datafile
www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV3.jsp.
- Inglehart, R. & Klingemann, H.-D. 1976. Party Identification, Ideological Preference and the Left-Right Dimension Among Western Mass Publics. In: Budge, I., Crewe, I. & Farlie, D. J. (eds.) *Party Identification and Beyond. Representations of voting and party competition*. London: Wiley. 243-275.
- Jacobi, C., van Attevelde, W. & Welbers, K. 2015. Quantitative analysis of large amounts of journalistic texts using topic modelling. *Digital Journalism*, 4:1, 89-106.
- Jaeger, M. M. 2008. Does Left-Right Orientation have a Causal Effect on Support for Redistribution? Causal Analysis with Cross-sectional Data Using Instrumental Variables. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 20:3, 363-374.

- Jahn, D. 2010. Conceptualizing Left and Right in comparative politics. *Party Politics*, 17:6, 745-765.
- Jahn, D. 2014. What is left and right in comparative politics? A response to Simon Franzmann. *Party Politics*, 20:2, 297-301.
- Johansson, S. 2008. Unga Värderingar – Är de Annorlunda? In: Holmberg, S. & Weibull, L. (eds.) *Skilda världar. Trettioåtta kapitel om politik, medier och samhälle*. Göteborg: SOM-institutet.
- Joshi, D. K. 2021. A New Conceptualization of the Political Left and Right: One Dimension, Multiple Domains. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 54:3, 1-21.
- Jost, J. T. 2006. The end of the end of ideology. *American Psychologist*, 61:7, 651-70.
- Jost, J. T. & Amodio, D. M. 2011. Political ideology as motivated social cognition: Behavioral and neuroscientific evidence. *Motivation and Emotion*, 36:1, 55-64.
- Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W. & Sulloway, F. J. 2003a. Exceptions that prove the rule--Using a theory of motivated social cognition to account for ideological incongruities and political anomalies: Reply to Greenberg and Jonas (2003). *Psychological Bulletin*, 129:3, 383-393.
- Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W. & Sulloway, F. J. 2003b. Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129:3, 339-75.
- Jost, J. T., Krochik, M., Gaucher, D. & Hennes, E. P. 2009. Can a Psychological Theory of Ideological Differences Explain Contextual Variability in the Contents of Political Attitudes? *Psychological Inquiry*, 20:2-3, 183-188.
- Jost, J. T., Napier, J. L., Thorisdottir, H., Gosling, S. D., Palfai, T. P. & Ostafin, B. 2007. Are needs to manage uncertainty and threat associated with political conservatism or ideological extremity? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33:7, 989-1007.
- Jost, J. T., Nosek, B. A. & Gosling, S. D. 2008. Ideology: Its Resurgence in Social, Personality, and Political Psychology. *Perspectives On Psychological Science*, 3:2, 126-136.
- Jou, W. 2010a. Continuities and changes in left-right orientations in new democracies: The cases of Croatia and Slovenia. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 43:1, 97-113.

- Jou, W. 2010b. The Heuristic Value of the Left—Right Schema in East Asia. *International Political Science Review*, 31:3, 366-394.
- Jou, W. 2010c. Political cleavages in Serbia: changes and continuities in structuring left–right orientations. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 10:2, 187-206.
- Jou, W. 2011. How do Citizens in East Asian Democracies Understand Left and Right? *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 12:1, 33-55.
- Jou, W. & Dalton, R. J. 2017. Left-Right Orientations and Voting Behavior. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*.
- Jurkynas, M. 2004. Emerging Cleavages in New Democracies: The Case of Lithuania. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 35:3, 278-296.
- Kerlinger, F. 1984. *Liberalism and Conservatism*, Hillsdale, N.J, L. Erlbaum.
- Kinder, D. R. 2003. Belief Systems after Converse. In: Rabinowitz, G. & Mackuen, M. B. (eds.) *Electoral Democracy*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. 13-46.
- Kitschelt, H. & Hellemans, S. 1990. The Left-Right Semantics and the New Politics Cleavage. *Comparative Political Studies*, 23:2, 210-238.
- Klingemann, H.-D., Hofferbert, R. & Budge, I. 1994. *Parties, policies, and democracy*, Boulder, CO, Westview Press.
- Knutsen, O. 1995. Value orientations, political conflicts and left-right identification: A comparative study *European Journal of Political Research*, 28:1, 63-93.
- Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschier, S. & Frey, T. 2006. Globalization and the transformation of the national political space: Six European countries compared. *European Journal of Political Research*, 45:6, 921-956.
- Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Lachat, R., Dolezal, M., Bornschier, S. & Frey, T. 2008. *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Laponce, J. 1981. *Left and right: The Topography of Political Perceptions*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.
- Lasswell, H. D. 2018 [1936]. *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*, Papamoa Press.
- Laver, M. 1997. In Search of the ‘Big’ Model of Political Competition. *European Journal of Political Research*, 31:2, 179–182.

- Laver, M. & Budge, I. 1992. Measuring Policy Distances and Modelling Coalition Formation. In: Laver, M. & Budge, I. (eds.) *Party Policy and Government Coalitions*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 15-40.
- Laver, M. & Hunt, B. 1992. *Policy and Party Competition*, Great Britain, Routledge.
- Lefkofridi, Z., Wagner, M. & Willmann, J. E. 2014. Left-Authoritarians and Policy Representation in Western Europe: Electoral Choice across Ideological Dimensions. *West European Politics*, 37:1, 65-90.
- Lesschaeve, C. 2017. The predictive power of the left-right self-placement scale for the policy positions of voters and parties. *West European Politics*, 40:2, 357-377.
- Letki, N. 2013. Do Social Divisions Explain Political Choices? The Case of Poland. In: Evans, G. & Graaf, N. D. D. (eds.) *Political Choice Matters*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press. 337-359.
- Lindqvist, J. 2019. Equality as the Criterion Separating Left from Right – Evidence from Eastern and Western Europe. *9th Annual Conference of the European Political Science Association*, 20-22 June 2019, Belfast, Northern Ireland.
- Lindqvist, J. 2020. Separating Left from Right in Eastern Europe: Re-examining Attitudes Towards Inequality. In: Durnin, D. (ed.) *Geary Working Paper Series*. University College Dublin: The Geary Institute.
- Lipset, S. M. 1960. *Political Man*, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y.
- Lipset, S. M., Lazarsfeld, P. F., Barton, A. H. & Linz, J. 1954. The psychology of voting. An analysis of political behaviour. In: Lindzey, G. (ed.) *The Handbook of Social Psychology*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley. 1124–1175.
- Lipset, S. M. & Rokkan, S. 1967. Cleavage Structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction. In: Lipset, S. M. & Rokkan, S. (eds.) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*. New York: Free Press. 1–64.
- Lührmann, A., Tannenberg, M. & Lindberg, S. I. 2018. Regimes of the World (RoW): Opening New Avenues for the Comparative Study of Political Regimes. *Politics and Governance*, 6:1, 60-77.
- Lukes, S. 2003. Epilogue: The Grand Dichotomy of the Twentieth Century. In: Ball, T. & Bellamy, R. (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*. Cambridge [UK]: Cambridge University Press. 602-626.
- MacIver, R. M. 1947. *The Web of Government*, New York, Macmillan Co.

- Mair, P. 1986. Locating Irish Political Parties on a Left-Right Dimension: An Empirical Enquiry. *Political Studies*, 34:3, 456-465.
- Mair, P. 1997. E. E. Schattschneider's The Semisovereign People. *Political Studies*, 45:5, 947-954.
- Mair, P. 2009. Left-Right Orientations. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford University Press.
- Malka, A., Lelkes, Y. & Soto, C. J. 2019. Are Cultural and Economic Conservatism Positively Correlated? A Large-Scale Cross-National Test. *British Journal of Political Science*, 49:3, 1045-1069.
- Manning, C. D., Raghavan, P. & Schütze, H. 2008. *Introduction to Information Retrieval*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- March, L. 2007. From Moldovanism to Europeanization? Moldova's Communists and Nation Building. *Nationalities Papers*, 35:4.
- Marshall, M. G., Gurr, T. R. & Jaggers, K. 2014. Polity IV project: Political regime characteristics and transitions, 1800–2013. <https://www.systemicpeace.org/p4creports.html>.
- Martin, L. W. & Vanberg, G. 2003. Wasting Time? The Impact of Ideology and Size on Delay in Coalition Formation. *British Journal of Political Science*, 33:02.
- Massetti, E. & Schakel, A. H. 2015. From class to region. *Party Politics*, 21:6, 866-886.
- Mavrogordatos, G. T. 1987. Downs Revisited: Spatial Models of Party Competition and Left-Right Measurements. *International Political Science Review*, 8:4, 333-342.
- McRae, K. D., Helander, M. & Luoma, S. 1999. *Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies: Finland, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada*, Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press.
- Mearsheimer, J. 2001. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company.
- Meer, T. v. d., Kolk, H. v. d., Brug, W. v. d. & Rekker, R. 2017. Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 2017. <https://doi.org/10.17026/dans-xby-5dhs> [Accessed August 27, 2021].
- Middendorp, C. 1989. Models for Predicting the Dutch Vote along the Left-Right and the Libertarianism-Authoritarianism Dimensions. *International Political Science Review*, 10:4, 279-308.

- Mietzner, M. 2008. Comparing Indonesia's party systems of the 1950s and the post-Suharto era: From centrifugal to centripetal inter-party competition. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 39:3, 431-453.
- Miller, G. & Schofield, N. 2003. Activists and Partisan Realignment in the United States. *The American Political Science Review*, 97:2, 245-260.
- Moffitt, B. & Tormey, S. 2013. Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatisation and Political Style. *Political Studies*, 62:2, 381-397.
- Mondon, A. 2016. *The Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right in France and Australia: A Populist Hegemony?*, New York, Routledge.
- Mouffe, C. 2016. *In defence of left-wing populism* [Online]. The Conversation. Available: <https://theconversation.com/in-defence-of-left-wing-populism-55869> [Accessed September 24, 2021].
- Mudde, C. 2000. *The ideology of the extreme right*, Manchester, Manchester University Press.
- Müller, S. & Regan, A. 2021. Are Irish voters moving to the left? *Irish Political Studies*, 36:4, 535–555.
- Negură, P. 2021. Moldova's thirty-year search for independence. *Current History*, 120:828, 268-273.
- Nelson, T. E. & Kinder, D. R. 1996. Issue Frames and Group-Centrism in American Public Opinion. *The Journal of Politics*, 58:4, 1055-1078.
- Noël, A. & Thérien, J.-P. 2008. *Left and Right in Global Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Noël, A., Thérien, J.-P. & Boucher, É. 2021. The political construction of the left-right divide: a comparative perspective. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 26:3, 317-334.
- Norris, P. 2019a. Global Party Survey. www.globalpartysurvey.org [Accessed 28 September, 2021].
- Norris, P. 2019b. Varieties of populist parties. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 45:9-10, 981-1012.
- Nosek, B. A., Smyth, F. L., Hansen, J. J., Devos, T., Lindner, N. M., Ranganath, K. A., Smith, C. T., Olson, K. R., Chugh, D., Greenwald, A. G. & Banaji, M. R. 2007. Pervasiveness and correlates of implicit attitudes and stereotypes. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 18:1, 36-88.

- O'Callaghan, D., Greene, D., Carthy, J. & Cunningham, P. 2015. An analysis of the coherence of descriptors in topic modeling. *Expert Systems with Applications*, 42:13, 5645-5657.
- Obinger, H., Schmitt, C. & Zohlnhöfer, R. 2013. Partisan Politics and Privatization in OECD Countries. *Comparative Political Studies*, 47:9, 1294-1323.
- Österreicher, F. & Vajda, I. 2003. A New Class Of Metric Divergences on Probability Spaces and its Applicability in Statistics. *Annals of the Institute of Statistical Mathematics*, 55:3, 639-653.
- Otjes, S. 2018. What's Left of the Left-Right Dimension? Why the Economic Policy Positions of Europeans Do Not Fit the Left-Right Dimension. *Social Indicators Research*, 136:2, 645-662.
- Otjes, S. & Rekker, R. 2021. Socialised to think in terms of left and right? The acceptability of the left and the right among European voters. *Electoral Studies*, 72, 1-9.
- Piketty, T. 2018. Brahmin Left vs Merchant Right: Rising Inequality & the Changing Structure of Political Conflict. *Working Paper Series*. World Inequality Database.
- Piurko, Y., Schwartz, S. H. & Davidov, E. 2011. Basic Personal Values and the Meaning of Left-Right Political Orientations in 20 Countries. *Political Psychology*, 32:4, 537-561.
- Polk, J., Rovny, J., Bakker, R., Edwards, E., Hooghe, L., Jolly, S., Koedam, J., Kostelka, F., Marks, G., Schumacher, G., Steenbergen, M., Vachudova, M. & Zilovic, M. 2017. Explaining the salience of anti-elitism and reducing political corruption for political parties in Europe with the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey data. *Research & Politics*, 4:1, 1–9.
- Potrafke, N. 2010. Does government ideology influence deregulation of product markets? Empirical evidence from OECD countries. *Public Choice*, 143:1-2, 135-155.
- Prina, F. 2015. Linguistic Justice, Soviet Legacies and Post-Soviet Realpolitik: The Ethnolinguistic Cleavage in Moldova. *Ethnopolitics*, 14:1, 52-71.
- Raymond, C. 2014. Party Agency and the Religious—Secular Cleavage in Post-Communist Countries: The Case of Romania. *Political Studies*, 62:2, 292-308.

- Raymond, C. & Arce, M. 2011. The politicization of indigenous identities in Peru. *Party Politics*, 19:4, 555-576.
- Rindermann, H., Flores-Mendoza, C. & Woodley, M. A. 2012. Political orientations, intelligence and education. *Intelligence*, 40:2, 217-225.
- Roberts, M. E., Stewart, B. M., Tingley, D., Lucas, C., Leder-Luis, J., Gadarian, S. K., Albertson, B. & Rand, D. G. 2014. Structural Topic Models for Open-Ended Survey Responses. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58:4, 1064-1082.
- Rohrschneider, R. & Whitefield, S. 2009. Understanding Cleavages in Party Systems: Issue Position and Issue Salience in 13 Post Communist Democracies. *Comparative Political Studies*, 42:2, 280-313.
- Rokeach, M. 1973. *The Nature of Human Values*, New York, The Free Press.
- Rokeach, M. 1979. The two-value model of political ideology and British politics. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18:2, 169-172.
- Rokkan, S. 1967. Norway: Geography, Religion and Social Class. In: Lipset, S. M. & Rokkan, S. (eds.) *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*. New York: Free Press. 367-444.
- Rosas, G. & Zechmeister, E. 2000. Ideological dimensions and left-right semantics in Latin America. *2000 Meeting of the Latin American Studies Association*, March 16-18 2000, Hyatt Regency Miami.
- Rous, G. L. & Lee, D. E. 1978. Freedom and Equality: Two Values of Political Orientation. *Journal of Communication*, 28:1, 45-51.
- Rovny, J. & Edwards, E. E. 2012. Struggle over Dimensionality: Party Competition in Western and Eastern Europe. *East European Politics and Societies: and Cultures*, 26:1, 56-74.
- Rusandu, I. & Cărbune, R. 2008. Evoluția Eșichierul Politic Moldovenesc: Esență Și Controverse. *Revista de Filosofie, Sociologie și Științe*, 146:1, 51-59.
- Ruth, S. P. 2016. Clientelism and the Utility of the Left-Right Dimension in Latin America. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 58:1, 72-97.
- Santen, J. H. V. 2002. Sinds wanneer zit men links en rechts in de Tweede Kamer? Een raadselachtig probleem. *De Moderne Tijd*, 26, 122-142.
- Sartori, G. 1969. From the Sociology of Politics to Political Sociology. *Government and Opposition*, 4:2, 195-214.
- Sartori, G. 1976. *Parties And Party Systems*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

- Schattschneider, E. E. 1960. *The Semisovereign People*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Seawright, J. & Gerring, J. 2008. Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options. *Political Research Quarterly*, 61:2, 294-308.
- Secretaría de Gobernación. 2008. Encuesta Nacional de Cultura Política. http://www.encup.gob.mx/en/Encup/Cuarta_ENCUP_2008 [Accessed October 13, 2018].
- Shamir, M. 2013. Israel Election Study. <https://www.tau.ac.il/~ines/2013.html> [Accessed October 15, 2021].
- Shim, J. 2020. Left is right and right is left? Partisan difference on social welfare and particularistic benefits in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 36:1, 25-41.
- Silverman, L. 1985. The Ideological Mediation of Party-political Responses to Social Change. *European Journal of Political Research*, 13 1, 69-93.
- Slapin, J. B. & Proksch, S.-O. 2008. A Scaling Model for Estimating Time-Series Party Positions from Texts. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52:3, 705–722.
- Smithies, A. 1941. Optimum Location in Spatial Competition. *Journal of Political Economy*, 49:3, 423-439.
- Solt, F. & Hu, Y. 2021. *interplot: Plot the Effects of Variables in Interaction Terms* [Online]. Available: <https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/interplot/vignettes/interplot-vignette.html?fbclid=IwAR0u4nJhPzq5gO11JpLBukCyFYRIWtMxRmyOcJ21CnqzEP64V9QFSdrR4tQ> [Accessed May 12, 2021].
- Stecker, C. & Tausendpfund, M. 2016. Multidimensional government-citizen congruence and satisfaction with democracy. *European Journal of Political Research*, 55:3, 492-511.
- Stimson, J. A., Mackuen, M. B. & Erikson, R. S. 1995. Dynamic Representation. *The American Political Science Review*, 89:3, 543-565.
- Stokes, D. E. 1963. Spatial Models of Party Competition. *The American Political Science Review*, 57:2, 368-377.

- Tanuwidjaja, S. 2010. Political Islam and Islamic Parties in Indonesia: Critically Assessing the Evidence of Islam's Political Decline. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 32:1, 29-49.
- Tavits, M. & Letki, N. 2009. When Left Is Right: Party Ideology and Policy in Post-Communist Europe. *American Political Science Review*, 103:4, 555-569.
- Tetlock, P. E., Vieider, F. M., Patil, S. V. & Grant, A. M. 2013. Accountability and ideology: When left looks right and right looks left. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 122:1, 22-35.
- Thannhauser, D. & Caird, D. 1990. Politics and values in australia: Testing rokeach's two-value model of politics - a research note. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 42:1, 57-61.
- Thomassen, J. 2012. The Blind Corner of Political Representation. *Representation*, 48:1, 13-27.
- Thorisdottir, H. 2012. The left-right dimension in the minds of Icelandic voters 1987-2009. *Stjórnmal & Stjórnsýsla*, 8:2, 199-220.
- Thorisdottir, H., Jost, J. T., Liviatan, I. & ShROUT, P. E. 2007. Psychological Needs and Values Underlying Left-Right Political Orientation: Cross-National Evidence from Eastern and Western Europe. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 71:2, 175-203.
- Ufen, A. 2012. Party Systems, Critical Junctures, and Cleavages in Southeast Asia. *Asian Survey*, 52:3, 441-464.
- Ufen, A. 2019. Lost in translation? Vanishing cleavages and growing mass-elite discrepancies in Indonesia. *ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops*, 8-12 April 2019, Mons, Belgium.
- Van de Werfhorst, H. G. & de Graaf, N. D. 2004. The sources of political orientations in post-industrial society: social class and education revisited. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 55:2, 211-35.
- Van Der Brug, W. & Van Spanje, J. 2009. Immigration, Europe and the 'new' cultural dimension. *European Journal of Political Research*, 48:3, 309-334.
- Van der Eijk, C., Schmitt, H. & Binder, T. 2005. Left-Right Orientations and Party Choice. In: Thomassen, J. (ed.) *The European Voter: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 166-190.

- Van Elsas, E. J., Hakhverdian, A. & van der Brug, W. 2016. United against a common foe? The nature and origins of Euroscepticism among left-wing and right-wing citizens. *West European Politics*, 39:6, 1181-1204.
- Vegetti, F. 2019. The Political Nature of Ideological Polarization: The Case of Hungary. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 681:1, 78-96.
- Volkens, A., Burst, T., Krause, W., Lehmann, P., Matthieß, T., Merz, N., Regel, S., Weißels, B. & Zehnter, L. 2020. The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR). Version 2020b.
- Walczak, A., van der Brug, W. & de Vries, C. E. 2012. Long- and short-term determinants of party preferences: Inter-generational differences in Western and East Central Europe. *Electoral Studies*, 31:2, 273-284.
- Weber, W. 2012. *Behind Left and Right. The Meaning of Left-Right Orientation in Europe*. Ph.D, Universitat Pompeu Fabra.
- Weber, W. & Saris, W. E. 2014. The relationship between issues and an individual's left-right orientation. *Acta Politica*, 50:2, 193-213.
- Wegner, E. & Cavatorta, F. 2019. Revisiting the Islamist-Secular divide: Parties and voters in the Arab world. *International Political Science Review*, 40:4, 558-575.
- White, J. 2011. Left and Right as political resources. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 16:2, 123-144.
- Wiesehomeier, N. & Doyle, D. 2012. Attitudes, Ideological Associations and the Left-Right Divide in Latin America. *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, 4:1, 3-33.
- Yi-ching Hsiao, Su-feng Cheng & Achen, C. H. 2017. Political Left and Right in Taiwan. In: Achen, C. H. & Wang, T. Y. (eds.) *The Taiwan Voter*. United States of America: University of Michigan Press. 198-222.
- Zechmeister, E. 2006. What's Left and Who's Right? A Q-method Study of Individual and Contextual Influences on the Meaning of Ideological Labels. *Political Behavior*, 28:2, 151-173.
- Zuell, C. & Scholz, E. 2019. Construct Equivalence of Left-Right Scale Placement in a Cross-National Perspective. *International Journal of Sociology*, 49:1, 77-95.