

Are Extreme Right Parties Really on the Right?

A Dimensional Approach to Extreme Right Political Parties and Voters

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Introduction

Today's extreme right is said to be 'right-wing' in two respects. First, reacting to the rise of post-material politics of the 1960s and 70s, it is nationalistic, authoritative, anti-cosmopolitan and especially anti-immigrant. Secondly, responding to the growth of the welfare state and the subsequent tax burden, the extreme right is seen as right-wing in opposing the involvement of the state in the economy.

Only one of these statements is valid. This article uncovers and explains a marked and surprising discrepancy between expert judgments of extreme right party positioning and extreme right voter preferences. While party experts indeed place extreme right parties on the extreme economic right, extreme right voters espouse economic positions that are, not infrequently, to the *left* of socialist parties. This finding is not just surprising, but challenges some basic postulates of classical spatial theory, including the assumption that voters support parties which are closest to their ideal position.

To make sense of this puzzle, this article turns to a dimensional conception of political competition and argues that the party-voter discrepancy results from the dimensional nature of political competition not captured by spatial models. The article suggests that a disadvantaged political party seeks to gain a political following by competing on a limited set of novel political issues which do not neatly fit into the standing ideological packages of the party system. The strategy of highlighting non-economic issues, such as nationalism and anti-immigration, may increase the salience of these issues, creating a competitive niche for the extreme right and undermining the electoral dominance of established parties. At the same time, extreme right protagonists must underplay the major (economic) issues of their party system in order to

circumvent their mainstream competitors and attract a wider range of voters. Consequently, the discrepancy between expert judgments and voter preferences on economic issues stems from the deliberate vagueness with which extreme right parties present their economic platforms. I test these propositions by studying election manifestos, expert placement of political parties and voter preferences in six Western European party systems: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany and Italy – systems which have relatively strong and well documented extreme right parties.

Where Do Extreme Right Parties Stand?

Contemporary extreme right parties derive their label from their reputed stances against socially liberal, cosmopolitan, values, as well as against the involvement of the state in the economy. Consequently, they are expected to represent socially traditional voters disgruntled with state encroachments in the marketplace by positioning themselves on the nationalistic and authoritarian political extreme, as well as on the economic extreme right. Empirical evidence, however, suggests that while extreme right parties espouse authoritarian positions and represent socially traditional voters, their positions on the extreme economic right do not connect with the views of their voters, who are at most economically centrist, if not left-leaning.

The study of extreme right parties has disputed at length their classification and labeling, suggesting a divide between neo-fascist parties that carry the ideological and sometimes organizational heritage of inter-war fascist movements, and new right ‘populist’ parties which are a more recent response to post-industrial social challenges and a backlash against post-materialism (Taggart 1995, Mudde 1996, Mudde 2000, Ignazi 2003, Golder 2003, McGann

& Kitschelt 2005). Nevertheless, scholars of extreme right parties agree on their ideological characteristics. All extreme right parties rely on emotive appeals to national sentiments defined in ethnic terms. All reject cosmopolitan conceptions of society and react to rising non-European immigration (Betz 1994, Mudde 1996, Taggart 1995, Kitschelt & McGann 1995). Furthermore, extreme right parties brand themselves as anti-parties, criticizing domestic political elites as corrupt and removed from the ‘common people’ (Kitschelt & McGann 1995, Hainsworth 2000). Finally, extreme right parties are said to advocate increased role of free markets and a reduction of state involvement in the economy (Betz 1994, Kitschelt & McGann 1995, Taggart 1995, Mudde 2000, Ignazi 2003, McGann & Kitschelt 2005).

The economic ideology of the extreme right is expected to be a response to the failures of Keynesianism of the 1970s, to the perceived excessive role of the state in the economy, and to the power of labour unions (Ignazi 2003). The literature agrees that “the majority of radical right populist parties are radical in ... their advocacy of individual achievement, a free market, and a drastic reduction of the role of the state...” presenting “a blend of classical liberal position on the individual and the economy” (Betz 1994: 4). Kitschelt and McGann further suggest that in order to succeed, the contemporary extreme right must adopt a ‘winning formula’ consisting of authoritarian and nationalistic social appeal coupled with extreme neo-liberalism, rallying “small business on the additional pro-market and antistate slogans, calling for the dismantling of public bureaucracies and the welfare state,” demanding a “strong and authoritarian, but small” state (1995: 19-20, McGann & Kitschelt 2005). The position of extreme right parties is thus to be found on the economic right, as well as on the authoritarian and nationalistic political fringe.

This is confirmed when one looks at expert placement of political parties on the economic and social dimensions of political competition¹. However, when one consults the positioning of the extreme right voters on the same dimensions, the picture is very different. Figures 1 and 2 outline the ordinal placement² of parties and mean voters on economic and social issues. To show that these results are not an artifact of my dimensional construction, the appendix presents voter positions on individual economic issues.

Strikingly, the voters of extreme right parties stand to the left of the voters of mainstream right parties and in some cases they are even to the left of the major left-wing party voters! On the social dimension, however, both extreme right voters and parties stand near the furthestmost authoritarian end of the scale.³

These results present two concerns. The first relates to the validity of the party and voter measures. Why is there such a discrepancy in the measure of parties and voters on the economic dimension? Does the problem lie with the World Values Surveys?⁴ Or are party experts rash judges of extreme right

¹Please see the appendix for a discussion of the dimensions of political competition and their construction for the purposes of this article.

²When experts place political parties and voters outline their positioning on political issues, there is no certainty that they conceive of political space in comparable ways. It is impossible to say that distance on the voters' scale is the same as the same distance on the scale used by the party experts. As a result, it is erroneous to report the placement on a continuous scale. I rather opt to report the placement as ordinal level data, which compares voter positioning to other voters and party positioning relative to other parties.

³The standard deviations of extreme right voter positioning on both dimensions are commensurate with the standard deviations of voters of other parties.

⁴It is possible to triangulate the voter data using European Social Surveys. Unfortunately, these surveys do not provide sufficient number of economic questions to allow the construction of a dimension. However, the limited results obtained corroborated the

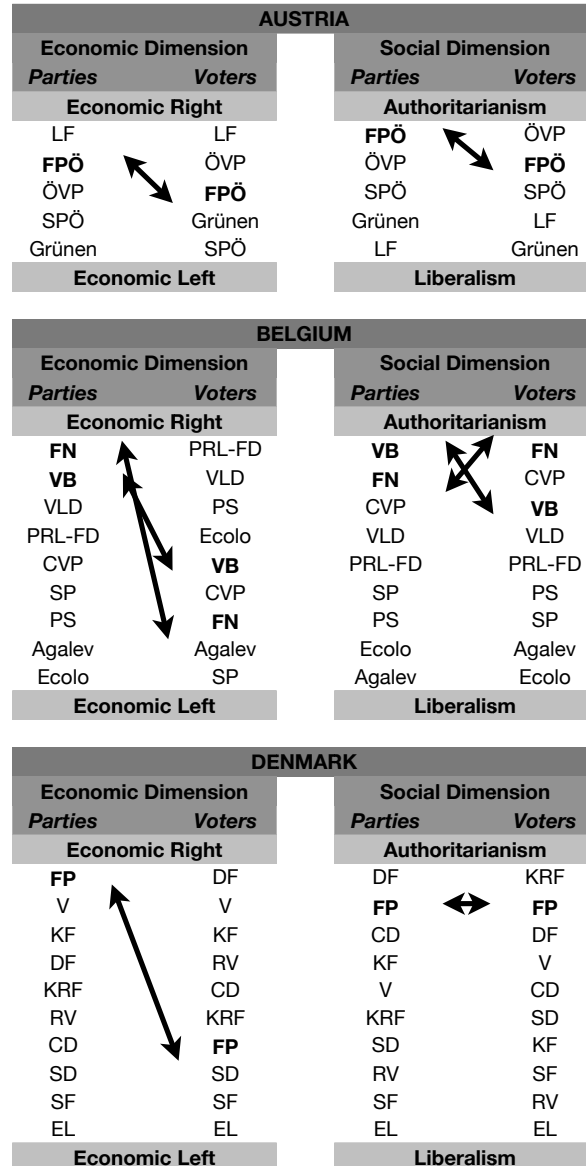


Figure 1: Party and Voter Ordinal Positioning

Extreme right parties are in bold.

1999 Chapel Hill Expert Survey and 1999-2000 World Value Surveys.

Please see appendix on details regarding the construction of dimensions.

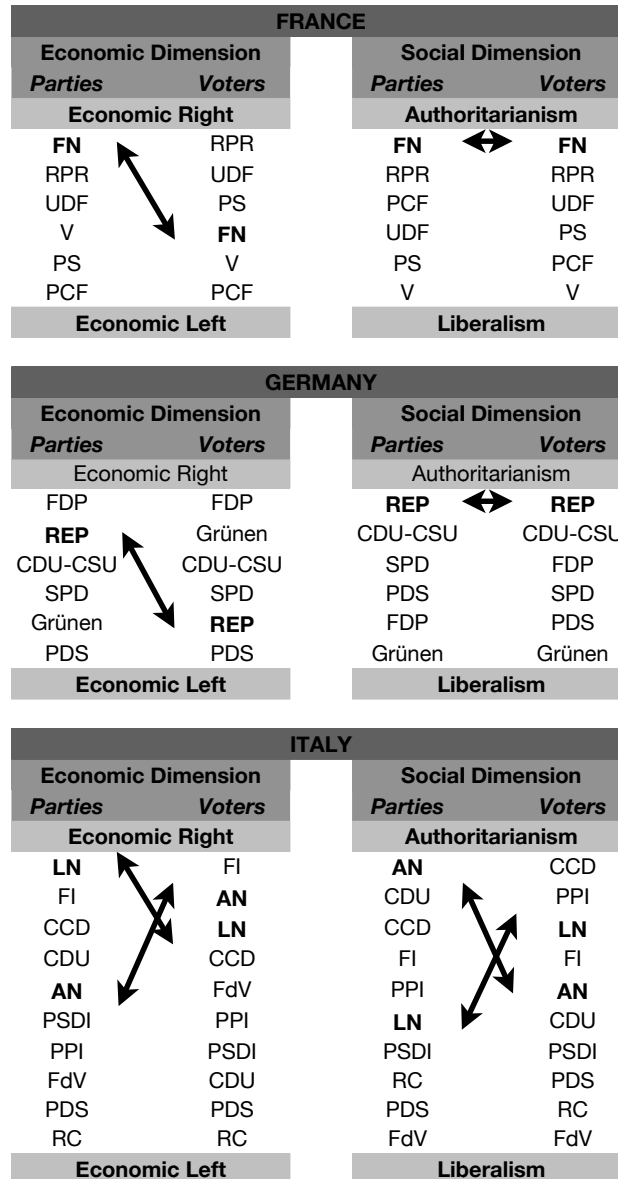


Figure 2: Party and Voter Ordinal Positioning

Extreme right parties are in bold.

1999 Chapel Hill Expert Survey and 1999-2000 World Value Surveys.

Please see appendix on details regarding the construction of dimensions.

party economic positions? Secondly, the striking finding is the discrepancy between party and voter placement on the economic dimension, compared to the relative agreement on the social dimension. Why would extreme right parties and voters be aligned on social issues, but manifest such a divide on economic issues? What accounts for the variance of party-voter alignment on the economic dimension? Is there something slippery about the right-wing nature of extreme right parties? The next section considers two alternative explanations to these questions.

Spatial Theory and Dimensional Conception of Political Competition

Spatial theory and a dimensional approach supply two competing conceptions for understanding how political parties navigate the electoral fluidity that resulted from the decline of class voting, providing keys to the puzzle of why extreme right parties appeal to economically centrist voters. Prior to the 1960s parties and voters were importantly connected by class ties. Voters, socialized in their families, neighbourhoods and occupations, supported specific political parties out of learned party loyalty (Butler & Stokes 1976, Rose & McAllister 1986). Rising levels of affluence, education, political sophistication, and a shift to post-industrial economy with reduced role of unions, diminished the impact of social class on vote choice across the developed world (Knutsen 2006). The decline of class has released voters to consider their issue preferences when casting a vote. The resulting volatility in party-voter alignment increases the competitive nature of party politics with important implications for party strategies. A successful party is one “which bases its appeal on careful assessment of the needs and wishes of the voting popula-

finding that extreme right voters are near the center, if not on the left, on economic issues.

tion, and skillfully presents its policies in terms of issues that are meaningful and salient to them” (Franklin 1985: 152).

Spatial theory conceptualizes political competition as spanning continuous issue scales, which are simplified into issue dimensions (Hotelling 1929, Downs 1957). These spatial models operate within a single dimension on which parties position themselves in the context of voters’ ideal preference points. Later models have relaxed the assumption of a single dimension; their aim, however, was only to test whether and under what conditions equilibrium solutions hold in multiple dimensions (Chappell & Keech 1986, Enelow & Hinich 1989, Schofield 1993). For spatial theory, the dimensional structure is merely the context within which competition occurs. The key assumption is that voters support the party closest to their ideal position, and as a result competition is a contest over party positioning with respect to voters. In the spatial world, extreme right parties would be appealing to a small group of fringe voters on the extreme of the political dimension. The fact that extreme right parties are supported by voters whose positions are around the center of the economic dimension, while being authoritarian on the social dimension, suggests that political competition is not merely a function of spatial distance between parties and voters.

A dimensional approach, by contrast, understands political competition as a contest over the presence and bundling of political issues. Here competition is seen as a contest over which issues or issue dimensions dominate political discourse and voter decision-making. The dimensional approach understands party-voter distance in the same way as spatial theory. However, a voter is expected to support a party which is most proximate to her ideal position only if this proximity occurs on an issue dimension salient to the voter. Since politics is played out by multiple partisan actors over a large

range of issues, political contest is inherently unstable⁵. The dimensional approach thus assumes that political parties seek to *alter the structure* of political competition to their advantage by manipulating these issues. As a result, the dimensional landscape of political competition is *itself* contested. It is continuously shaped by the rise and incorporation of new or resuscitated political issues and the primary axis of political conflict is persistently redefined. While individual parties and candidates are interested in individual political issues, their actions amount to restructuring of the dimensional composition at the aggregate level.

The key element of the dimensional approach is a tactical shift in political competition carried out by a political party by introducing novel issues into political discourse (Riker 1982, Riker 1986, Budge, Robertson, & Hearl 1987, Rabinowitz & Macdonald 1989, Rabinowitz, Macdonald, & Listhaug 1991, Carmines & Stimson 1989, Stimson 2004). Whether a political party attempts to introduce a new political issue depends on its willingness to assume risk. Parties have an incentive to introduce a new issue especially if it does not naturally fold into the standing structure of competition, since it may produce a new dimension to political competition and create a competitive niche for its protagonist. The primary incentive for parties to introduce new unaligned issues is to gain support by tapping into an insufficiently represented social concern. Furthermore, a party may wish to introduce a new issue, on which it is likely to be viewed favourably, in order to shift political attention from other issues on which it may not fare so well. Finally, a party may choose to introduce a new political issue with the aim of creating tensions within competing parties, thus weakening them. There

⁵Formally this means that political contest with multiple competitors or more issue dimensions lacks a stable equilibrium (Chappell & Keech 1986, Enelow & Hinich 1989, Shepsle 2001, Shikano 2008).

is, however, no *a priori* guarantee that a newly introduced political issue will garner voter interest, become a prominent feature of the political landscape, and be rewarded with electoral support. In fact, most newly introduced issues go unnoticed and only very few have far reaching systemic consequences (Carmines & Stimson 1989, Stimson 2004). Introducing a new political issue is thus a gamble.

The introduction of a new unaligned issue carries a number of disincentives. Firstly, it requires significant political capital. To raise a new issue, a party must invest notable resources into crafting and presenting the issue, connecting it to its political image. Secondly, in doing so, the party must convince its own members about the merit of the issue and the validity of the specific stance the party is to take on it. This may lead to intra-party divisions and even splits. Finally, in introducing a new independent issue, a party may face retaliation by other parties. Meguid (2005, 2008) argues that when confronted with a new issue, other parties have the choice to either ignore it, accommodate it, or oppose it. If they ignore it or accommodate it, the issue does not gain political salience and the party which raised it loses its potential political clout.

Risk-averse parties are those whose leaders perceive the benefits of raising new issues outweighed by the costs. These are likely to be established political parties with long-standing histories, organizational apparatuses, core constituencies and well-entrenched ideological images. These parties are less susceptible to potential retaliation by other political parties. If their new issue does not gain salience, they are likely to have other political legs to stand on. These parties, however, are likely to find it considerably harder to convince their membership and core constituents to introduce new unaligned issues. Due to their organizational and ideological heritage, their political

appeal is likely to be more sticky and new issue introduction may spark crippling divisions not worth the risk. Similarly, parties with good prospects of entering government may be unwilling to risk introducing a new independent issue which may not succeed and may pit them against their coalition partners.

On the contrary, parties which perceive themselves to be in a weaker position are more likely to accept the gamble and seek to invest salience into new unaligned political issues. Parties which may be continuously losing votes, core constituents or are slipping in the polls are more likely to accept the risks of new issue introduction. Marginal parties, especially those that are young organizations with concentrated decision-making, may find introducing new political issues easier. Parties with hierarchical structure, where decisions are made by one or few leaders are less constrained in new issue introduction. Unencumbered by organizational complexity and ideological legacy and breadth, these parties can champion new issues with greater ease. While still facing the concern of whether their new issue will spark political contention within the system, thus stirring emotion and garnering electoral support, these parties have little choice but to try introducing it.

However, even marginal parties may moderate their risk-taking in light of government participation. Government participation increases the stakes of the political game and infuses risk-taking parties with responsibility and a certain level of establishment. Governing parties have something to lose. They have responsibilities of office and responsibilities toward their coalition partners, and thus they are likely to become more risk-averse. While in government, it is against the interests of parties to rattle the system with unaligned, provocative issues.

Table 1: Partisan Willingness to Assume Risk

Risk-taking	Risk-averse
Small/young party organization	Diverse/established party organization
Narrow or unestablished ideology	Encompassing ideology
Self-perceived electoral weakness	Self-perceived electoral strength
Low coalition potential	High coalition potential
In opposition	In government

Consequently, established, mainstream parties tend to be risk-averse. Rather than gambling by bringing forth new political issues, they compete on the primary dimension of political conflict in their party system – which, given the historical conditions of European development, tends to be the economic dimension (Laver & Hunt 1992, Benoit & Laver 2006). Unestablished parties, on the contrary, struggle to find their position on the primary dimension of competition, which is populated by their entrenched opponents. Instead of competing in this dense space, they take the risk by stepping aside and emphasizing other political issues, effectively competing on different dimensions.

Extreme Right Parties and Issue Dimensions

Extreme right parties are relatively risk-seeking. They are small and centralized, and most of them were founded in the 1970s and 80s as anti-systemic parties, opposing immigration, tax and welfare policies. Furthermore, most of these parties have been ostracized by the ruling elites. Rather than contest the entrenched issues of political competition, these parties highlight nation-

alism, ethnocentrism and general opposition to the political establishment. Their primary issue domain thus lies on the social, not the economic, dimension. Extreme right parties present platforms centered on social issues, attract voters primarily on social issues, and are evaluated by experts chiefly on social issues.

However, there is variance within the extreme right camp. The Austrian FPÖ, the Italian Alleanza Nazionale, and to some extent the Italian Lega Nord do not only concentrate on social issues, but – more akin to mainstream parties – also engage economic issues. The FPÖ and Alleanza Nazionale have long standing partisan roots, originally belonging to the liberal and post-fascist party families respectively. While all developed an image of extreme right protest parties toward the late 1980s and early 1990s, their key common characteristic is that all three parties were accepted as members of governing coalitions. As a result, their political stakes have changed and with them their political tactics.

All extreme right parties are ideologically firm on social issues. While generally secular, they espouse traditional values regarding sexuality and reproduction, they highlight the role of the nation, and they vehemently oppose immigration. On economic issues, their positioning is far more slippery. Mudde finds that while extreme right parties explicitly reject support and benefits for immigrant populations, calling for their ‘own people’ to be served first, they generally do not feature socio-economic issues in their party papers (2000: 174-5). Kitschelt and McGann (1995, 2005) emphasize the fact that extreme right parties cater to very distinct socio-economic groups. On the one hand, they try to capture disenchanted industrial workers hurt by globalization and post-industrial society, who are threatened by the supply of cheap immigrant labour, but who naturally lean to the economic left. On the other

hand, these parties also try to appeal to middle classes, such as small business owners and some white-collar workers, disillusioned with the political establishment and encumbered by the welfare state. While the positioning of these two groups coincides on the social dimension, their economic interests differ. The best strategy for achieving this broad socio-economic coalition is thus to de-emphasize economic issues (McGann & Kitschelt 2005: 150, Taggart 1995).

Figure 3 summarizes the proportions of extreme right party manifestos that treat economic and social issues. With the exception of the Danish Fremskridtspartiet, all extreme right parties devote significantly more space in their manifestos to social, than to economic issues. In 2003, for example, the Vlaams Blok used 43% of its manifesto on social issues and 21% on economic issues. Even more strikingly, the French Front National used 55% of their 2002 manifesto to discuss social issues and only 14% to discuss economic issues.

Those extreme right parties that have participated in government coalitions moderated this issue imbalance after entering government. The 1994 electoral manifesto of the Italian Alleanza Nazionale devoted 62% of its manifesto to social issues and 17% to economic issues. Once the party entered government with Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia after this election, the ensuing manifestos significantly rebalanced the issues. In 1996, Alleanza Nazionale used 27% of its manifesto on social issues and 22% on economic issues. Similarly, the Austrian FPÖ contested the 1999 elections with a manifesto of which 60% covered social issues and 15% covered economic issues. The party entered the government of Wolfgang Schüssel in 2000 and proceeded to contest the 2002 elections with a manifesto in which 51% of issues were social and 30% were economic. Finally, the Italian Lega Nord initially entered Silvio Berlus-

Issue Salience in Party Manifestos

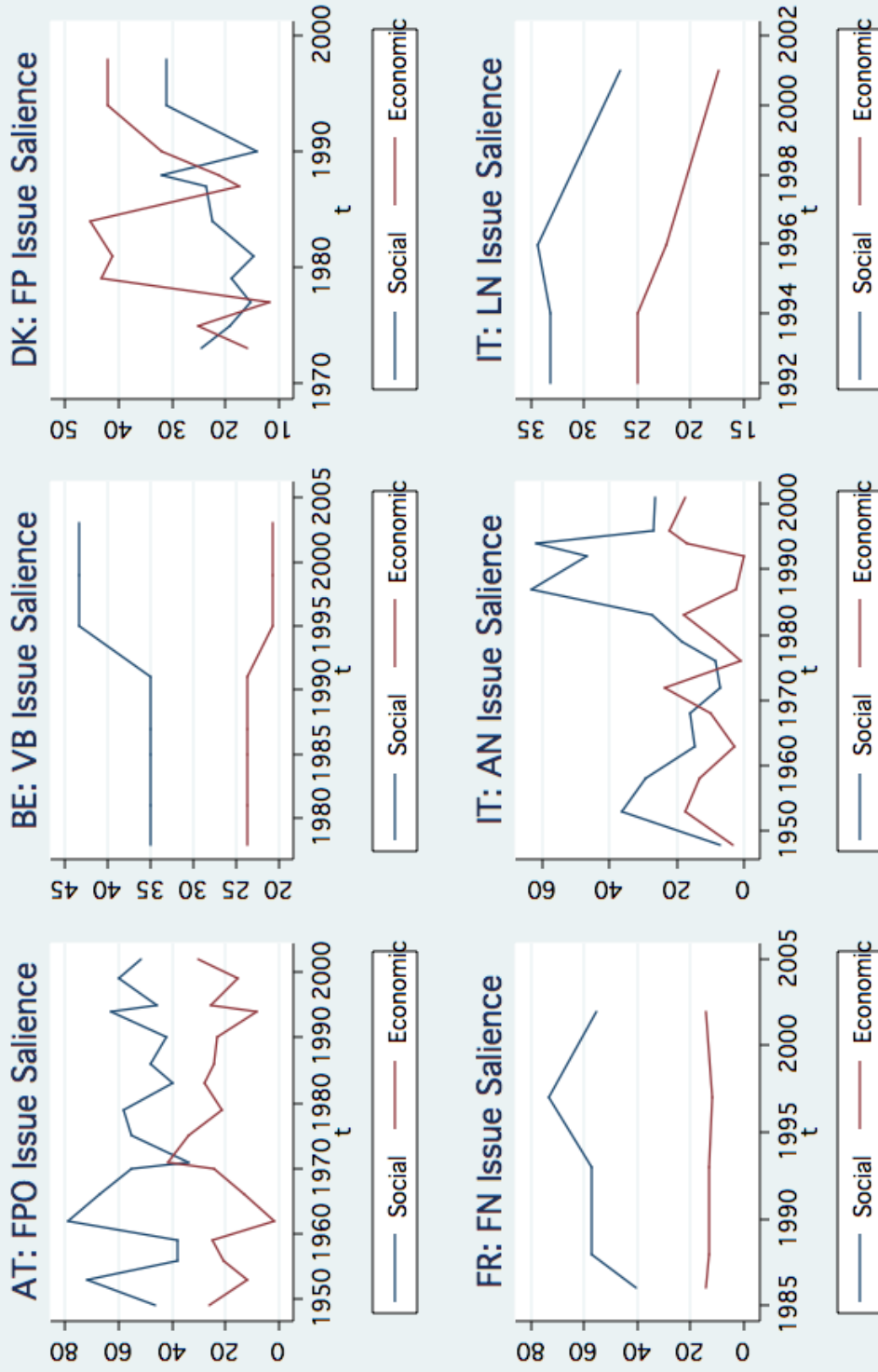


Figure 3: Issue Salience in Extreme Right Party Manifestos

Percentages of social and economic issues mentioned in party manifestos over time.

Party Manifesto Project Data. Data for the Belgian FN and German REP not available.

coni's government in 1994 only to break the coalition months later. During its ensuing 'independence,' the party increased its nationalist (and regionalist) rhetoric, announcing it would seek Northern Italian secession. This is reflected in the 1996 manifesto where social issue coverage peaked at 34%, while only 22% of the document is devoted to economic issues. Toward the late 1990s, however, the Lega moderated its views, substituting secession for devolution (Gallagher 2000). It finally reentered Berlusconi's governing coalition in 2001. Its 2001 manifesto moderated the coverage of social issues to 27%, with 17% of the document covering economic issues. If later data were available, it is likely that the party's economic issue coverage would show greater prominence. The issue rebalancing on the part of these three parties suggest that governing parties can no longer ignore economic issues. Government participation forces parties to make decisions in the economic realm, pushing them to formulate and demonstrate their economic positioning.

Voters and Issue Dimensions

Voters listen to what extreme right parties have to say. Since extreme right parties tend to mostly consider social issues, voters tend to support extreme right parties when they agree with them on social issues. Economic issues, on the contrary, play a rather limited role in voters' calculus over casting a vote for the extreme right. Figures 4 and 5 report results of a Multinomial Logit Model predicting vote choice for extreme right parties. The model, run separately for each party system, predicts party vote choice by positioning on the economic and social dimensions, while controlling for voters' age, education, income and size of community they live in. For detailed results, please see the appendix.⁶ The figures present the predicted probabilities of

⁶In the cases of Belgium, France and Italy, the core assumption of Multinomial Logit – the independence of irrelevant alternatives (IIA) – holds when tested with the Small-

voting for extreme right parties, given a voter's positioning on the economic and social dimension, while other predictors are held at their mean.

The graphs clearly show that voters of extreme right parties cast their votes primarily because of social issue considerations. It is the positioning on the social dimension that leads to the highest predicted probability that a voter will cast a vote for an extreme right party. Indeed, all of the studied extreme right parties attract voters who stand at or near the authoritarian extreme of the social dimension. On the contrary, voters do not tend to place similar emphasis on economic concerns when voting for the extreme right. The predicted probabilities stemming from the economic dimension are relatively low, and the economic left-right curves are mostly flat. Strikingly, in the case of some extreme right parties, voters who stand on the economic right are *less* likely to vote for them than those on the left. This is particularly the case with voters of the Belgian Front National, the French Front National and the German Republikaner. These are the parties whose voters fall to the left of the mainstream left-wing parties of their party system.

Furthermore, voters' considerations seem to validate the effect government participation has on extreme right parties. Extreme right parties that have participated in governing coalitions – Alleanza Nazionale, FPÖ and Lega

Hsiao test. In Austria, Denmark and Germany, the IIA assumption does not hold, which means that the obtained results may not be accurate. The alternative model – Multinomial Probit – is, however, even more problematic. This model, although not requiring the IIA assumption, is computationally complex and with a larger number of choice categories becomes intractable. Furthermore, recent methodological literature suggests that the estimates of Multinomial Probit are almost always less accurate than those of Multinomial Probit (Kropko 2008). Despite this methodological shortcoming, the results of all models – regardless of whether the IIA assumption is met or not – support my theoretical expectations.

Vote Choice for Extreme Right Parties

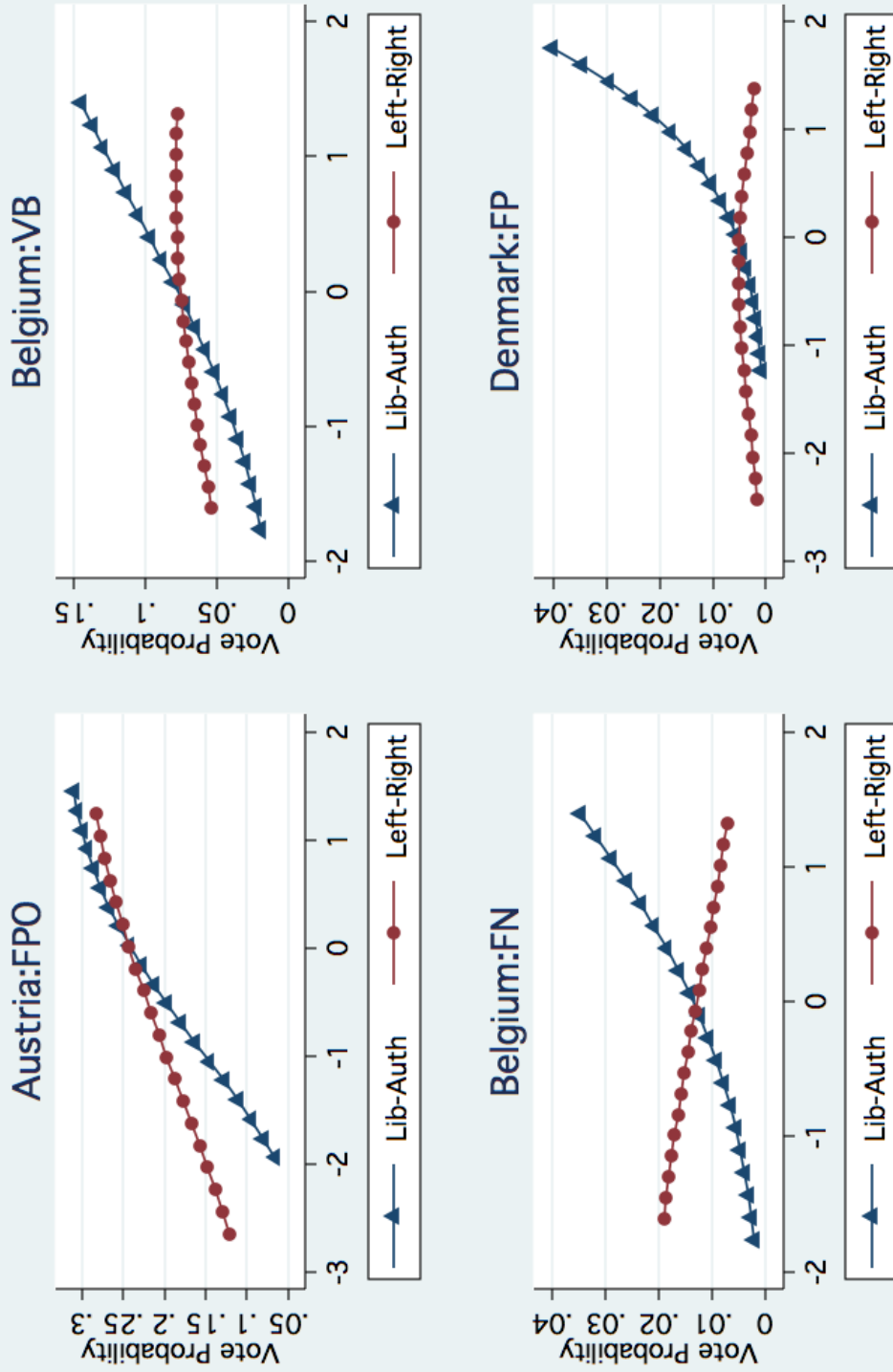


Figure 4: Dimensional Vote Choice for Extreme Right Parties

Vote choice calculated with a Multinomial Logit Model,

predicting party vote choice with positioning on economic and social dimension while controlling for age, education, income and size of community. Social Dimension ranges from Liberal to Authoritarian. Economic Dimension ranges from Left to Right.

All other variables held at their mean.

World Values Surveys 1999-2000.

Vote Choice for Extreme Right Parties

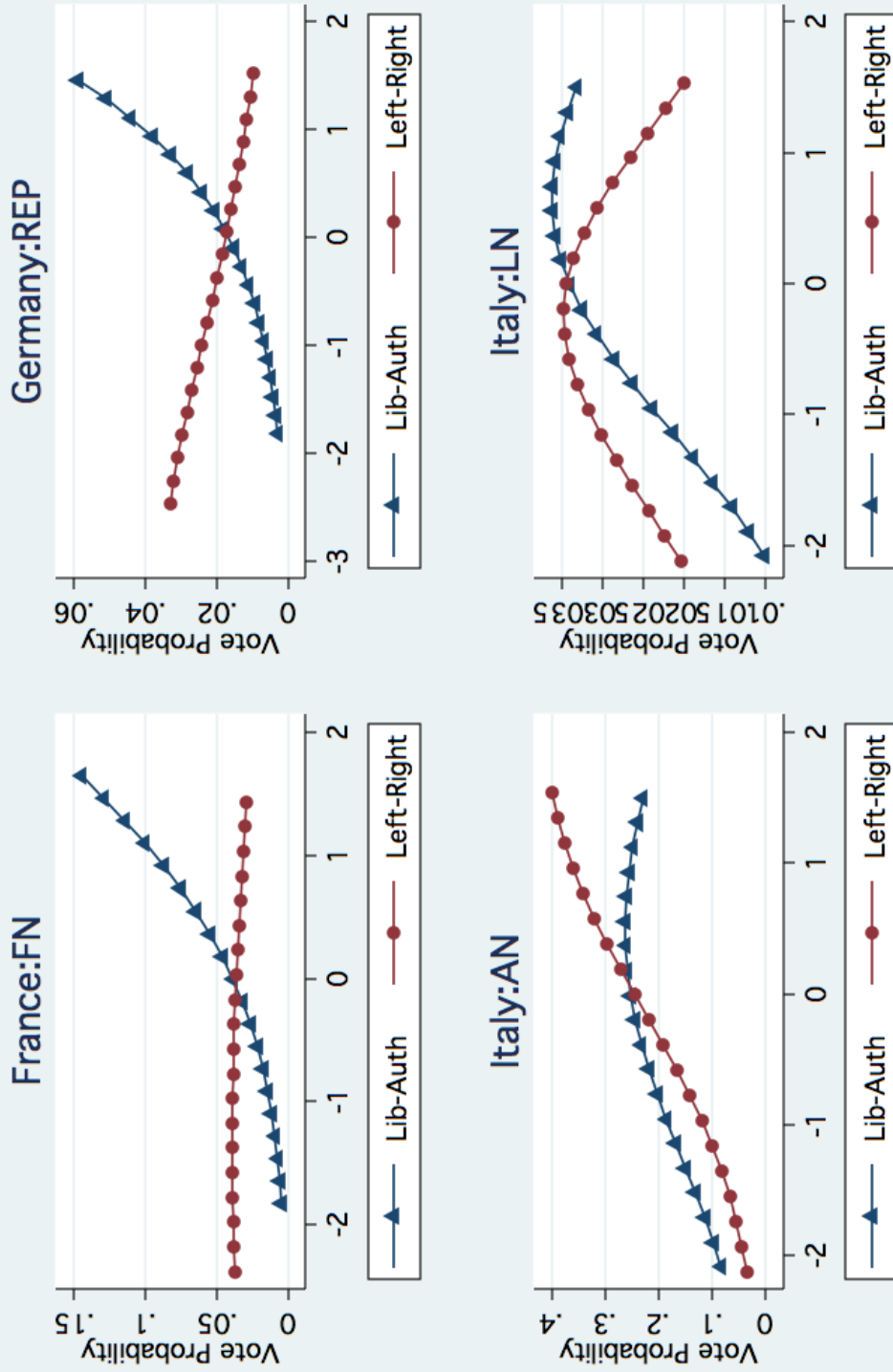


Figure 5: Dimensional Vote Choice for Extreme Right Parties

Vote choice calculated with a Multinomial Logit Model,

predicting party vote choice with positioning on economic and social dimension while controlling for age, education, income and size of community. Social Dimension ranges from Liberal to Authoritarian. Economic Dimension ranges from Left to Right.

All other variables held at their mean.

World Values Surveys 1999-2000.

Nord – seem to attract votes based on economic concerns significantly more than parties which have never participated in government and which are ostracized by the political establishment. On this account, Alleanza Nazionale seems to be a rather non-radical actor, supported by economic right-wing voters who are moderately authoritarian in their social stances. In fact Mudde argues that the AN has restrained its radicalism to such a degree that it can no longer be considered an extreme right party, but rather a conservative party akin to the French RPR (2004: 194).

Party Experts and Issue Dimensions

Now we are in a position to explain the puzzling discrepancy between extreme right party position on economic issues as assessed by party experts and extreme right voter preferences on economic issues. As outlined above, extreme right parties project themselves as parties contesting predominantly social issues. For strategic reasons, they muddy their economic outlooks and shy away from discussing economic policies explicitly and at length. This is not only picked up by voters, who tend to evaluate the extreme right on the basis of their social issue preferences, but also by party experts.

Party experts, who are routinely asked to evaluate political parties in the party systems with which they are familiar, are more certain about party placement on economic issues, which tend to be the primary dimension of conflict. When evaluating mainstream parties, experts generally agree on their economic positions, but have a slightly harder time determining their placement on the secondary, social dimension. This is, however, the reverse in the case of extreme right parties. In most cases, party experts are quite certain about the placement of extreme right parties on the social dimension, but tend to disagree on their economic positioning. Table 2 summarizes the

standard deviations of expert judgments of party positioning on the two dimensions. The French experts, for example, agree completely on the social issue positioning of the Front National (the standard deviation is zero), but disagree significantly on its economic placement. When placing the Gaullist RPR and the Parti Socialist on economic issues, they generally agree, but they have a considerably harder time placing these major parties on social issues. The extreme right parties that do not fit this pattern are again the Austrian FPÖ and the Italian Lega Nord – parties which have participated in government. The results for the Danish Fremskridtspartiet are outliers, most likely caused by the small N of experts evaluating the social positioning.

Extreme right parties primarily contest social issues. Extreme right voters listen to these cues and choose to support these parties primarily on the basis of their social issue preferences. Similarly, party experts understand extreme right parties on the basis of their social issue appeals and evaluate them primarily on this dimension. While party experts on average place extreme right parties on the right fringe of the economic spectrum, they are not very certain of this placement. Arguably, experts are swayed by the ‘extreme’ reputation of these parties – a reputation stemming from their extreme positioning on the social dimension. Consequently, the expert judgment of extreme right parties’ economic positioning has limited validity. The puzzling discrepancy between extreme right party positioning on economic issues as presented by party experts and extreme right voter economic preferences is neither caused by irrationality of extreme right voters, nor by erroneous data. This discrepancy is caused by the tactics of extreme right parties contesting the dimensional structure of political competition. It is caused by the deliberate vagueness of extreme right parties on economic issues.

Table 2: Standard Deviations of Expert judgments of Party Placement

Party	Economic Dimension	Social Dimension	N Economic	N Social
AUSTRIA				
FPO	1.34	1.75	5	5
SPO	0.80	0.71	5	5
OVP	0.80	2.00	5	5
BELGIUM				
VB	1.49	0.50	8	8
FN	1.49	0.50	8	8
VLD	0.74	2.36	8	8
PS	0.74	1.73	8	8
DENMARK				
FP	0.41	0.82	6	4
SD	0.55	0.82	6	4
V	0.55	0.50	6	4
FRANCE				
FN	1.38	0.00	7	6
PS	0.79	0.82	7	6
RPR	0.53	1.11	7	7
GERMANY				
REP	2.82	0.79	9	12
CDU	0.62	0.90	15	15
SDP	0.96	1.06	15	15
ITALY				
LN	0.41	1.72	6	6
AN	1.97	1.20	6	6
FI	2.30	2.04	6	6
PDS	1.51	1.30	6	6

Chapel Hill Expert Surveys 1999.

Conclusion

This article explores the empirical puzzle of extreme right party positioning, starting with the observation that while the literature and party experts place extreme right parties on the economic right, extreme right voters tend to hold more centrist, if not left-wing, economic outlooks. Using party manifesto data, expert data on party placement and data on voter preferences, this article argues that extreme right parties are right-wing only in the sense that they are socially authoritarian. Extreme right parties do not stand on the extreme economic right. Instead, they are deliberately vague on their economic positioning.

The theoretical contribution of this article is its explanation of this empirical puzzle through a dimensional, rather than spatial, conception of political competition. The rise of issue voting has compelled political parties to appeal to voters with carefully crafted political issues. Spatial theory has supplied a simple conceptualization of such issue competition. While spatial theory provides tools for understanding political competition along issues or issue dimensions, it fails to capture competition over the presence of new issues or the contest over the bundling of issues into dimensions. Spatial theory simply assumes that the issue space of political competition is constant, turning its attention to the strategic interaction of parties and voters on this fixed political turf. Given this assumption, spatial theory cannot adequately account for the discrepancy between extreme right party positioning on economic issues and extreme right voter preferences on the same issues. The observation that economically centrist voters support economically extreme right parties is a spatial anomaly since centrist voters have alternative centrist parties to vote for.

A dimensional conception of political competition is necessary for disentangling the empirical puzzle. The core premise of the dimensional approach is that politics is a competition *over* the issue composition of political space. Parties do not only compete for voters by taking stances on a given set of issues. Rather, parties seek to divert political competition to different issues. Established, mainstream parties, which due to their position in the system are risk-averse, compete on the primary, economic dimension. Marginal, non-entrenched parties, such as the extreme right, are forced to take risks by exploring other, independent issues. To sidestep the established heavyweights, extreme right parties thus emphasize novel issues, such as nationalism and anti-immigration, which do not neatly align with the main axis of political conflict. With respect to their economic positions, extreme right parties keep a consciously opaque profile, in order to attract a broader coalition of economic interests. Government participation tames extreme right parties. Electoral success, cooperation with coalition partners, and governmental responsibilities raise the political stakes. Extreme right parties that have been in government start behaving more like mainstream parties in that they restrain their social issue rhetoric and balance their emphasis on economic issues. Voters respond to partisan signals and vote for extreme right parties on the basis of their social issue interests, rather than economic preferences. Similarly, experts have a harder time placing extreme right parties on economic issues. The apparent discrepancy between parties and voters on economic left-right placement is therefore caused by the endemic vagueness of extreme right economic positioning.

This dimensional approach to political competition complements recent theoretical advances in the literature on party competition. It provides a framework for Bonnie Meguid's (2005, 2008) work on the electoral fortunes of niche parties in Europe, which importantly amends spatial theory by demonstrat-

ing that major parties can influence the electoral success of niche parties which they do not neighbour spatially by shifting issue salience and ownership. The dimensional approach discussed in this article frames political competition as a contest over issue composition (rather than over issue positions) in which all parties, regardless of their particular location, can participate. Furthermore, the dimensional approach specifies the conditions under which (niche) parties attempt the reconfiguration of political competition by taking the risk to introduce new issues.

Empirically, this article underscores the opportunistic nature of extreme right parties, which seek to capture a broad following of economic interests through their pliable economic stances. In terms of their strategic flexibility, today's extreme right is not different from traditional fascist parties of the 1920s and 30s. The extreme right fits Seymour Lipset's description of traditional fascist strategies which "have been extremely opportunistic in their efforts to secure support, [and] often encompassed groups with conflicting interests and values..."(1981: 137). Furthermore, given their nationalism, xenophobia and vaguely centrist economic outlooks, today's extreme right shares the ideological appeal of traditional fascist parties, which did not belong to the economic extreme right and favoured the national over economic. In fact in *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler himself condemns markets and capital as the grand foe, against which "the hardest battle would have to be fought," deploring their negative effect on the nation: "Now ... labor had sunk to the level of an object of speculation for unscrupulous ... business men; the alienation of property from the wage-worker was increased *ad infinitum*. The stock exchange began to triumph and prepared slowly but surely to take the life of the nation into its guardianship and control"(Hitler 1943: 213, 235). While different due to their acceptance of democratic politics, today's extreme right resembles traditional fascist parties by attracting disgruntled

blue-collars, white-collars and small businessmen, providing a nationalistic refuge economically wide enough to house them all.

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Appendix

Dimensional Structure of Party Competition

Scholars have suggested that political space in Europe can be depicted in two theoretically orthogonal dimensions. The first dimension relates to economics, ranging from state-directed redistribution to market allocation. The second dimension relates to social issues, concerning such factors as lifestyles, national identity, immigration or religious values, and it ranges from socially liberal, alternative politics to socially conservative and traditional politics (Kitschelt 1992; Laver and Hunt 1992; Hooghe, Marks and Wilson 2002; Kitschelt 2003; Marks et. al. 2006; Benoit and Laver 2006; Vachudova and Hooghe).

To locate parties and voters on these dimensions, I use the 1999 Chapel Hill Expert Surveys, which place parties on an economic left-right scale and on green/alternative/liberal versus traditional/authoritarian/nationalist policies. These two variables form the economic and social dimension of the party data. For voters I use the 1999-2000 round of the World Value Surveys. The economic dimension is based on factor scores of voters' position on four issues: 1) private ownership, 2) individual v. government responsibility, 3) competition and 4) state control of firms. The social dimension is based on factor scores of voters' position on five issues: 1) role of religion in politics, 2) favouring locals over immigrants in employment, 3) strictness of immigration policy, 4) the justifiability of homosexuality and 5) the justifiability of abortion.

Table 3: Voter Positions on Economic Issues

PARTY	Peoples' v. Government Responsibility (Right-Left)	Private Ownership of Business (Right-Left)	Competition is Good (Right-Left)	State Control of Firms (Right-Left)
AUSTRIA				
LF	3.6	2.9	3	2.9
OVP	3.8	3.2	3.1	4
FPO	4.2	3.2	3.0	4
SPO	4.3	3.9	3.2	4.8
Grunen	4.3	3.4	3.8	4.1
BELGIUM				
PRL-FD	4	N/A	4.0	4.4
PS	4.7	N/A	5.2	5.7
VLD	5.0	N/A	4.5	4.8
Ecolo	5	N/A	5.1	5.4
CVP	5.3	N/A	4.7	5.7
Agalev	5.5	N/A	5.3	5.9
VB	5.6	N/A	4	5.8
SP	6	N/A	5.0	6.8
FN	7	N/A	4	6.1
DENMARK				
DF	4	N/A	3.2	3.1
V	3.6	N/A	3.5	3.4
KF	4	N/A	3.1	3.6
KRF	4.3	N/A	4.6	4.4
RV	4.7	N/A	3.5	4.1
CD	4.7	N/A	3.3	5
SD	5	N/A	4.5	5.0
SF	5.4	N/A	5	5.8
FP	6	N/A	4	5
EL	6	N/A	5.8	7.1

Parties ordered by mean voter position on “Peoples’ v. Government Responsibility” from Right to Left. Extreme Right parties are in bold. World Value Surveys 1999.

Table 4: Voter Positions on Economic Issues

PARTY	Peoples' v. Government Responsibility (Right-Left)	Private Ownership of Business (Right-Left)	Competition is Good (Right-Left)	State Control of Firms (Right-Left)
FRANCE				
RPR	3.6	3.3	3.7	4.0
UDF	3.6	3.6	4.0	4.2
PS	4.0	4.3	4.8	5.1
PCF	4.4	5.1	5.5	7
V	4.6	4.3	5.3	5.0
FN	4.7	4.3	4.1	5.4
GERMANY				
FDP	4.4	3.5	3.0	4
SPD	4.4	4.1	3.7	4.9
CDU-CSU	4.5	4	3.4	4.6
REP	4.5	4.1	3.6	5.6
Grunen	4.6	4	3.4	4.5
PDS	5.9	5.3	4.3	5.9
ITALY				
FdV	4.5	4.3	4	5.0
FI	4.9	3.0	3.8	3.5
CCD	5.0	4	4.1	4.7
LN	5	4	3.7	4.9
AN	5.3	3.3	3.4	4
PSDI	5.3	4.3	4.7	5.3
CDU	5.4	4.4	4.8	5.6
PPI	5.7	5	3.9	4.9
PDS	6.0	5	4.3	5.7
RC	6.4	5.5	5.2	6.5

Parties ordered by mean voter position on "Peoples' v. Government Responsibility" from Right to Left. Extreme Right parties are in bold. World Value Surveys 1999.

Table 5: MNL model Austria

	ÖVP	FPÖ	Grünen	LF	KPÖ
Social Dimension (Liberal-Authoritarian)	0.814*** (0.16)	0.665*** (0.17)	-1.083*** (0.26)	-1.146*** (0.36)	-1.766* (0.92)
Economic Dimension (Left-Right)	0.549*** (0.14)	0.456*** (0.14)	-0.123 (0.24)	0.908** (0.37)	-0.829 (0.70)
Age	-0.00286 (0.0068)	-0.0256*** (0.0072)	-0.0107 (0.012)	-0.0296* (0.018)	0.0102 (0.039)
Education	0.198*** (0.058)	-0.0436 (0.065)	0.492*** (0.086)	0.374*** (0.12)	0.246 (0.26)
Income	0.0628 (0.041)	0.0144 (0.043)	-0.0525 (0.065)	-0.00478 (0.088)	-0.286 (0.23)
Size of Community	-0.0543 (0.043)	0.0760* (0.044)	-0.0672 (0.066)	-0.0159 (0.090)	0.261 (0.31)
Constant	-0.993** (0.48)	0.486 (0.51)	-3.064*** (0.76)	-3.288*** (1.09)	-7.113** (3.14)
Observations	721				
Pseudo R^2	0.136				
Log-likelihood	-884.309				
Baseline Category	SPÖ				

Standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table 6: MNL model Belgium

	Agalev	CVP	VLD	SP	VB	PS	PRL-FD	FN
Social Dimension (Liberal-Authoritarian)	0.0597 (0.23)	1.198*** (0.21)	0.673*** (0.22)	0.00547 (0.24)	1.114*** (0.26)	0.116 (0.20)	0.687*** (0.21)	1.338*** (0.47)
Economic Dimension (Left-Right)	-0.658** (0.27)	-0.242 (0.22)	0.261 (0.24)	-0.521* (0.27)	0.121 (0.27)	0.0878 (0.23)	0.644*** (0.23)	-0.334 (0.47)
Age	-0.0184* (0.011)	0.0221*** (0.0084)	-0.000637 (0.0092)	0.0108 (0.010)	0.00189 (0.010)	0.0234*** (0.0084)	0.0233*** (0.0084)	-0.0302 (0.019)
Education	-0.0611 (0.097)	-0.130 (0.081)	-0.106 (0.089)	-0.337*** (0.096)	-0.387*** (0.098)	-0.170** (0.081)	0.0390 (0.085)	-0.254 (0.17)
Income	0.206*** (0.066)	0.264*** (0.062)	0.173*** (0.064)	0.267*** (0.074)	0.233*** (0.076)	0.0438 (0.060)	0.110* (0.060)	-0.0636 (0.13)
Size of Community	0.174 (0.12)	-0.331*** (0.10)	-0.281*** (0.11)	-0.218* (0.12)	0.162 (0.12)	-0.0816 (0.099)	-0.0984 (0.10)	0.0707 (0.21)
Constant	-1.753* (1.01)	-0.261 (0.82)	0.674 (0.87)	0.0616 (0.97)	-0.970 (1.04)	-0.226 (0.82)	-1.638* (0.84)	0.177 (1.85)
Observations	754							
Pseudo R^2	0.084							
Log-likelihood	-1445.897							
Baseline Category	Ecolo							

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 7: MNL model Denmark

	SD	RV	KF	SF	DF	FP
Social Dimension	-0.578***	-1.204***	-0.815**	-0.781***	0.590	0.903
(Liberal-Authoritarian)	(0.21)	(0.39)	(0.33)	(0.29)	(0.39)	(0.76)
Economic Dimension	-1.381***	-0.744**	-0.176	-2.125***	0.359	-0.995
(Left-Right)	(0.22)	(0.35)	(0.35)	(0.28)	(0.43)	(0.65)
Age	0.00169	0.00311	0.0232*	-0.00155	0.00620	-0.0253
	(0.0085)	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.011)	(0.015)	(0.026)
Education	-0.104	0.179	-0.0513	0.0754	-0.00891	-0.379
	(0.072)	(0.11)	(0.11)	(0.088)	(0.13)	(0.39)
Income	-0.133***	-0.0788	0.00164	-0.0263	-0.0564	-0.272
	(0.051)	(0.073)	(0.077)	(0.061)	(0.096)	(0.21)
Size of Community	-0.0292	0.0348	0.0413	0.146*	0.147	-0.116
	(0.061)	(0.096)	(0.092)	(0.079)	(0.11)	(0.22)
Constant	1.176*	-2.473**	-2.570**	-1.853**	-2.843**	0.705
	(0.66)	(1.09)	(1.08)	(0.87)	(1.27)	(2.21)
Observations	450					
Pseudo R^2	0.139					
Log-likelihood	-618.628					
Baseline Category	V					

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Small parties EL, CD and KrF were omitted from the model due to conformability issues

Table 8: MNL model France

	PC	UDF	V	RPR	FN
Social Dimension	-0.494*	0.598**	-0.511***	0.860***	1.131***
(Liberal-Authoritarian)	(0.28)	(0.24)	(0.19)	(0.21)	(0.36)
Economic Dimension	-0.524**	0.434**	-0.142	0.614***	-0.0194
(Left-Right)	(0.26)	(0.22)	(0.19)	(0.18)	(0.28)
Age	0.00257	-0.00422	-0.0144	0.00628	-0.0469***
	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.0089)	(0.0085)	(0.015)
Education	-0.274**	0.112	0.0130	-0.00442	-0.157
	(0.11)	(0.080)	(0.066)	(0.069)	(0.13)
Income	-0.0347	-0.0437	-0.121**	0.123*	-0.0148
	(0.093)	(0.074)	(0.061)	(0.063)	(0.11)
Size of Community	-0.0104	-0.0650	0.00560	-0.0916*	-0.0308
	(0.076)	(0.060)	(0.053)	(0.051)	(0.079)
Constant	-1.208	-1.324*	-0.185	-1.614***	0.428
	(0.94)	(0.70)	(0.60)	(0.61)	(0.97)
Observations	516				
Pseudo R^2	0.087				
Log-likelihood	-706.432				
Baseline Category	PS				

Standard errors in parentheses

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Table 9: MNL model Germany

	SPD	FDP	Grünen	LF	REP
Social Dimension	-0.330***	-0.315	-0.985***	-0.443**	0.761*
(Liberal-Authoritarian)	(0.13)	(0.39)	(0.29)	(0.20)	(0.41)
Economic Dimension	0.184*	0.839**	0.0148	-0.676***	-0.345
(Left-Right)	(0.11)	(0.41)	(0.24)	(0.17)	(0.31)
Age	-0.00987*	-0.0334*	-0.0577***	0.00248	-0.0392**
	(0.0055)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.0082)	(0.015)
Education	-0.0669	0.0524	0.285**	0.174**	0.165
	(0.050)	(0.15)	(0.11)	(0.073)	(0.14)
Income	-0.0767	0.115	-0.0622	-0.206**	-0.300*
	(0.054)	(0.14)	(0.099)	(0.093)	(0.17)
Size of Community	0.110***	0.0326	0.225**	0.0369	0.0444
	(0.035)	(0.11)	(0.095)	(0.056)	(0.097)
Constant	-0.155	-2.951**	-2.692***	-2.134***	-1.187
	(0.47)	(1.40)	(1.04)	(0.73)	(1.24)
Observations	742				
Pseudo R^2	0.092				
Log-likelihood	-821.612				
Baseline Category	CDU-CSU				

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 10: MNL model Italy

	AN	CCD	FI	CDU	LN	PPI	PSDI	RC
Social Dimension	0.822***	1.634***	1.193***	0.645*	0.868**	0.827***	-0.0227	-0.594**
(Liberal-Authoritarian)	(0.22)	(0.35)	(0.24)	(0.39)	(0.43)	(0.31)	(0.73)	(0.26)
Economic Dimension	1.276***	0.690**	1.422***	0.313	0.613*	0.234	0.654	-0.149
(Left-Right)	(0.21)	(0.27)	(0.22)	(0.33)	(0.37)	(0.26)	(0.73)	(0.25)
Age	-0.00951	0.0260*	-0.000385	0.00172	-0.0146	0.0403***	0.0861**	0.00796
	(0.0098)	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.017)	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.042)	(0.013)
Education	0.0931	0.0285	-0.0117	0.0640	0.0335	0.0392	0.495*	0.0645
	(0.079)	(0.11)	(0.082)	(0.14)	(0.15)	(0.11)	(0.29)	(0.11)
Income	-0.146**	-0.0262	-0.00539	-0.190*	-0.0930	0.0227	-0.473*	-0.210***
	(0.057)	(0.079)	(0.059)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.079)	(0.25)	(0.080)
Size of Community	0.0435	-0.0380	-0.0454	-0.186	-0.384***	-0.287***	-0.200	-0.0449
	(0.073)	(0.099)	(0.075)	(0.13)	(0.14)	(0.099)	(0.29)	(0.098)
Constant	0.539	-2.264**	0.114	-0.162	0.922	-1.988*	-7.009**	-0.776
	(0.74)	(1.05)	(0.76)	(1.28)	(1.32)	(1.07)	(3.27)	(1.04)
Observations	500							
Pseudo R^2	0.130							
Log-likelihood	-827.652							
Baseline Category	PDS							

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The FdV is not included in the model due to conformability issues