SOCIOLOGY IN SWITZERLAND

WOLRD SOCIETY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The limits of ideological globalization

Current patterns of "left and right" in different geographical regions

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September 2008

Abstract

Political thinking in terms of "left and "right" has successfully expanded from its originating Western European context all over the globe. In all included world regions except the Middle East, at least 60 percent of the total population are ready to place themselves on a respective LR-scale. In all regions, left-right self identifications are particularly widespread among the more educated and politically active strata. However, very significant regional divergences cannot be explained neither by different micro-characteristics on the level of respondents nor with the degree of macroeconomic development. Thus, they are likely to emerge from differences in endogenous political culture. In conformity with previous studies, it was found that issue positions are better in predicting LR values on the left half of the scale, while differences between moderate and extreme rightist positions cannot be grasped well with the indicators at hand. However, this regularity is not valid in East Asia where the right scale section is more highly associated with specific political stances. Highly educated strata show more interregional variance in their degree of ideology than population with less schooling. This result evidently contradicts the widespread theoretical notion that educated strata are more likely to adopt a homogeneous Westernized culture all over the world.

Bibliographic Citation:
Geser Hans: The limits of ideological globalization.. In: Sociology in Switzerland: World Society and International Relations. Online Publications. Zuerich, September 2008... http://socio.ch/internat/t_hgeser5.pdf

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1. The Left-Right Axis: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

1.1 Introduction

Over the last 40 years, many empirical studies have shown that there is one major ideological dimension along which political life is organized in a wide range of different countries (Castles and Mair 1984; Gross and Sigelman 1984; Janda 1980; Laver & Budge 1993; Warwick 1992). A wealth of empirical evidence shows that the left-right axis is almost ubiquitously salient in two ways: as a *polarity* that structures bipolar political conflicts and as a *continuum* that allows comparisons on an ordinal or interval scale. Thus, most citizens in most developed democratic countries are willing and able to place themselves on the left-right dimension: a scale usually ranging from 1-10 or from 0-10. (Inglehart and Klingemann 1987; Colomer and Escatel 2003: 3). Similarly, voters as well as political elites use the LR scale for characterizing social movements, political parties, candidates, news media, issue positions, political programs and governing regimes.

> *"The left-right dimension has been found to be the most common one across developed democratic countries. The organizing role of the left-right aggregative or synthetic dimension facilitates basic exchanges between voters and party leaders." (Colomer and Escatel 2003:3).*

The left-right scheme has been called the "political Esperanto of our times" (Laponce 1981) and its relevance for comparative evaluations is sufficiently manifested in the fact that LR judgments have a significant impact on political behaviour: e. g. voting decisions or support given to political parties (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Fleury and Lewis-Beck 1993; Evans, Heath, and Lalljee 1996).

> *"Studies of electoral behavior have shown that individuals' left-right self placement is a major predictor of their voting choices, and that its importance has been increasing in many countries over recent decades." (Franklin et al. 1992; Gunther and Montero 2001).*

However, the basic character as well as the intra- and international diffusion of the left-right scheme is the result of dynamic historical processes shaped by political, cultural and socio-economic as well as educational and stratificational factors.

Given the accelerating changes in political culture following the rise of "New Social Movements" as well as the neoliberal turns on economic policy and the end of the Cold War, there is much need for more detailed research concerning current changes and divergences related to

1) the degree to which the LR scheme is established within different nations and geographic regions;
2) the unequal distribution of LR-thinking among different population segments within nations;
3) the evolving semantics of "left" and "right" through time and space, and the changing associations between LR placements and political issue positions.

Using data from the most recent World Values Surveys (1994-2004), this article will give priority to the first of these questions, but relate it to the remaining two - by analyzing the current divergences in the usage patterns and meanings of the categories called "left" and right" between various countries and regions.

1.2 Inhomogeneities and asynchronicities of international diffusion

It is well known that the political left-right dimension has originated in France at the time before the revolution, some weeks after the convention of the Estates General in June 1789 (Laponce 1981: 47). As an intuitive variable derived from the seat order in parliament, it filled the vacuum created by the disappearance of estate membership as a dominant criterion of classification. Like

the top-bottom model of social stratification, the LR scheme is a simple spatial metaphor that has the characteristic of being translatable in all languages and being potentially adopted by all human cultures (Laponce 1981: 27).
During the 19th century, the LR pattern spread to the rest of continental Europe, especially driven by socialist parties who loaded the terms with elaborated ideological content (Laponce 1981: 54).

In European countries, left-right thinking is a stable feature of political processes since many decades. By comparing studies from the late sixties with the recent data from World value survey, it can be shown that the percentage of respondents ready to place themselves on the 1-10 scale has remained stable at about 75-90 percent. A conspicuous exception is Switzerland were the exclusion of women from voting rights (until 1971) caused earlier rates (in the total population) to be below 60% (Inglehart and Sidjanski 1976).
Outside Europe, however, the left-right dimension is less established even in democratic countries, because it interplays with other classification schemes established in domestic political culture. In the United States and Japan for instance, the reigning polarity is still "liberal vs. conservative"; but it has been increasingly overlaid and reshaped by left-right considerations (Laponce 1981: 56). As Nie and Anderson have demonstrated in a longitudinal study, the general American public became “ideologized” in the years between 1964 and 1972, when different individual attitudes of liberalism and conservatism became more tightly intercorrelated (Nie and Anderson 1972; LeBlan and Merrin 1977). Left-right classifications became increasingly salient at least since the rise of the "New left Movements" and especially since the 1972 elections, where Nixon and McGovern represented for the first time quite neatly the two ideological poles (Inglehart 1989: 367). Characteristically, it was found that the rising tendency to identify political positions in left-right terms was expanding mainly within elites, while the general population remained largely unaffected. In 1980, about ninety percent of highly educated American respondents were found to grasp the meaning of left and right, while among less educated citizens, this share was lower than 30% (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990).

Many comparative studies and much impressionistic observations have shown that the salience of LR-thinking extends widely beyond the sphere of Western democracies, but that it is of significantly lower importance in less developed and less democratic nations.
In a study including political experts of 42 countries, Huber and Inglehart (1995) found that left and right were basically used to define the political sphere in all countries except one. However,

> *“…the dimension was most salient in the 22 advanced countries, where more than 85% per cent of the experts used the terms left and right to define the major poles of political party conflicts, (compared to 70 per cent in the remaining 20 nations).” (Huber and Inglehart 1995).*

Finlay et. al. have analyzed the meaning of the concept of left and right in both developed and developing countries. They concluded that

> *“...the stability and meaningfulness of the concept of Left-Right political orientation are to a large extent a function of the level of development of the country." (Finley et al. 1974).*

Given the fact that these findings are based on samples of university students (who tend to represent a rather Westernized population segment), it might be guessed that even larger differences would be found in comparisons between integral national populations. As Zechmeister argues, the salience of LR scales in underdeveloped countries is often reduced by a strong emphasis on “valence issues” that focus on ultimate ends rather than political strategies:

> *"Valence issues are about ends, rather than the means indicated by a policy stance. Campaigns in Mexico and other young democracies often focus significantly on issues such as ending corruption, reducing poverty, ensuring social justice, etc. While these issues do not fit obviously on a left-right dimension, extant literature suggests that parties or other political*

groups can claim ownership of such issues. Thus, if the left or the right in a country succeed in establishing ownership of a valence issue, by convincing citizens that their side is most capable of 'handling' that issue, then individuals in that society are likely to associate that priority to that ideological label." (Zechmeister 2005).

In many poorer countries, ideological divisions are additionally diminished by the overriding need of governments to conform to the standards set by extra- and supernational actors (like the US, EU, World Bank or IMF) (Krastev 2002). Similarly, ideological polarization can also be reduced by an overriding focus on the fight against corruption:

"In addition to political instability, the perceptions of widely spread corruption in a society, and especially of political corruption, has the effect of clouding the public's understanding of what it would take to tackle other national priorities such as a country's bankrupt educational system, malfunctioning hospitals, or stagnating economy. As a result, public's obsession with one dominant topic, which cannot be simplified more, or approximated in terms of left and right, could be another factor that discourages public and politicians to structure their communication by using left-right dimension." (Badescu and Sum 2005).

However, other findings suggest that apart from economic development, the usage of LR patterns is strongly conditioned by socio-structural, political, institutional and cultural factors.
In his comparative study on Algeria, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa, Rivera has found that also in Africa, high percentages of elites as well as of the general population place themselves readily on a LR-scale – except in the Algeria, where only the elite resulted to be ideologically sensitized, while the share of self-placers among the general population was less than 50% (Rivero 2004).
In fact, Islamic Maghreb and Middle East countries seem particularly deviant from the Western pattern for three reasons:

- the need for the LR scheme is reduced because these countries rank on the lowest level of democracy and party competition;
- politics is still heavily shaped by tribalistic and religious cleavages which tend to cross-cut ideological left-right divisions;
- fundamentalist Islamic movements are particularly "hybrid" phenomena because they combine typically leftist positions (opposition against US domination and Western capitalism) with repressive moral attitudes and discriminatory orientations characteristic for the far right.

Such hypotheses are corroborated *ex negativo* in the case of Turkey which combines rather high democracy and low Islamism with pronounced party cleavages in terms of left and right.
The Middle East also demonstrates that the international diffusion of LS-thinking is not an irreversible process, but that it can turn backwards as well. Thus,

"In 1976 President Sadat introduced a hint of political pluralism by allowing the ASU to Split into competing "forums" representing the left, right and centre, which later became separate political parties. This experiment was short-lived." (Economist 1988).

Similarly, Palestinian politics was shaped heavily by left right considerations in the 1970ies, while the current clash between Hamas and Fatah cannot be modelled in such terms. To the degree that political parties are allowed, however, there are at least niches where Western LR polarizations can be maintained:

"While the fundamentalists remain the single most popular political force in general, there is still a presence for leftist and nationalist parties in those countries where parties are allowed. Furthermore, Green parties or environmental associations have now been formed and legalised in Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon" (As' Ad Abukhalil 1997) .

In *Latin America*, the relevance of the left-right dimension has traditionally been neglected by many political scholars because it has been supposed that political parties are not strongly committed on the ideological level, but rather leaning toward populist, personalistic and clientelistic orientations (Colomer and Escatel 2003: 3). Calculations based on data from Latinobarometer annual surveys from 1995 to 2002 suggest that many Latin American voters tend to maintain pronounced ideological views and locate themselves rather consistently on the left-right dimension, but that they at the same time express high levels of political alienation regarding the party system. Highest percentages of self raters were found in Uruguay (92%) and Brazil (85%), while lowest proportions were observed in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, Bolivia and Argentina (between 71 and 76 percent) (Colomer and Escatel 2003: 4).
Latin American countries also stand out by astonishingly low correlations between readiness for left-right-placement and the level of interest in political matters. On the one hand, there are many self-placers who are very alienated from the existing party system; on the other hand, we find highly politicized people who don't identify with the LR-dimension, because they maintain an opportunistic ("clientelistic") relationship to political parties (Colomer and Escatel 2003: 6). As a second reason, it may be argued that in authoritarian regimes without free parties, the LR-dimension is not needed as a guide for political orientation, so that no correlations between scale placements and issue positions exists. (Colomer and Escatel 2003: 6).

Even more complicated conditions are found in the former communist countries of Eastern Europe and the former USSR.
First of all, they have just recently been exposed to Western influences and may still be in the process of adopting basic democratic values and ideological orientations. Thus, Badescu and Sum (2005) have shown that in postsocialist countries, only 55% percent of respondents were able to place themselves (as well as the three major domestic parties) on the LR scale - compared with 73% in established Western democracies. The same authors also found that Romanians were more likely to place themselves when they were frequently travelling abroad. Evidently, travelling increases their chances of getting into contact with Western political culture (Badescu and Sum 2005). However, major differences have to be expected between middle European countries (like Czech republic, Hungary or Poland) which have come under socialist rule after WW II, and the Ex USSR countries which - often lacking any endogenous democratic tradition - experienced more than 70 years of Bolshevik rule. Thus, the first category of countries was generally quicker to establish Western type party systems, to denationalize their economies and to qualify for full membership in the EU. Unsurprisingly, Badescu and Sum have found much higher self placement percentages in Czechia, Hungary and Poland then in Russia and Belarus (with less then 30%) (Badescu and Sum 2005).
Secondly, the particular history of these countries has resulted in paradox semantic reversals of the two ideological poles. In a way, the most leftist (ex communist) parties are "conservative" or even "reactionary" insofar as they still cling to values or institutions stemming from the earlier societal system; and the liberals and conservatives are most "revolutionary" insofar as they aim at a radical transformation according to western standards (Evans/Whitefield 1998).
As Pippa Norris remarks:

> *"... the traditional 'conservative' appeal of maintaining familiar social values and a nostalgic return to the past has often been most strongly associated with orthodox Communist parties or their successor movements on the left which have not reconstructed themselves into social democratic organizations. The most suitable equivalent to the 'radical right' in Western Europe is probably the more extreme ultranationalist parties, which have established a presence although often achieving marginal electoral success in most countries in the region." (Norris 2004, chapter 3).*

Third, the adoption of the LR scheme could also be slowed by the fact that successful reforms demand a national interparty consensus, so that divisive ideological elements have less weight. More

generally, oligarchic tendencies of decision making may have the effect of reducing public deliberation and political participation, so that less socialization into ideological value systems occurs and there is less need to use the LR scale for political orientation (Badescu and Sum 2005).
By comparing data from 1996-01 and 2001-2005, Badescu and Sum conclude that

> *"Data show no tendency of convergence between East and West in using and consistency of use of the left-right concepts. On the contrary, whereas in the West reliance on the left-right one dimensional representation of the political parties has known a slight increase, in the East the proportion of people able to place in order main parties on a left-right scale, as well as proportion of people showing consistency between ideological distance and party preference, has decreased. (Badescu and Sum 2005).*

While many intersocietal differences in the salience of left-right thinking may be caused by historical, institutional and cultural factors, some of them may be more rigorously explained by theoretical propositions that refer to the functional needs for left-right scales in various political systems.
In shortest term, this functionalist theory states that the salience of the LR continuum is highest under conditions of high political complexity and low political information.
As a starting premise, the theory assumes that most people spend little efforts for acquiring and synthesizing political information, because they have no skills to do this or no available time. However, under conditions of political democracy, all citizens are called to make decisions despite the fact that most of them are unable or unwilling to collect much detailed information on the political sphere. Given these conditions, they have a great need for simplifying stereotypes helping them to decide which parties, leaders or political programs they should endorse.

> *"In a political context, the left-right dimension represents a typical form of social cognition: When people reflect on politics, they tag themselves and others (people, groups, institutions, etc.) as 'left' or 'right'. Acting on this understanding, they usually vote for parties and candidates they perceive as being close to their own left-right placement and also usually take policy views in line with their left-right position." (Kroh 2005.)*

Especially when political conditions are highly complex and non-transparent, citizens tend to rely on rather simple heuristic shortcuts in order to gain orientation and to come to non-ambiguous voting decisions with a minimum of personal efforts (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; McKelvey and Ordeshook 1986; Neuman 1986; Popkin 1994; Hinich and Munger 1994). Such labels facilitate also political communication, because they create a common background of meaning that can be presupposed ex ante, so that it has not to be created on every single occasion.

> *"In modern politics and mass media-dominated political communication, it is usually assumed that, by using a simplified, encompassing ideological dimension, party leaders and candidates can transmit useful information on policy programs which can be understood by voters without paying high costs. It has, thus, been postulated that a party position on the left-right dimension can synthesize a number of party policy positions on many issues (Downs 1957) – an intuition that has repeatedly been submitted to scrutiny and empirically tested" (Colomer/Escatel 2004)*

In a general sense, the salience of the left-right dimension can be minimal in political systems with a low number of highly consolidated political parties, because party preferences can easily be built up without referring to ideological notions. In more complex and competitive party systems, however, many voters will feel a need to locate themselves on the left-right scale in order to identify the parties and candidates most akin to his own views (Inglehart/Hochstein 1972; Inglehart/Klingemann 1976; Huber and Inglehart 1995; Knutsen 1998).
This regularity certainly explains why the new dimension was established more rapidly in France than in bipartisan Anglo-Saxon countries:

> *"Because England and the United States already possessed a two-party system and had experience very few changes in the names of their two parties, they had a lesser need than France for an overarching duality that could be used to describe party coalitions and splinter groups at a given time as well as over a period of history. France's unstable multiparty system contributed to the entrenchment of the LR terminology (Laponce 1981: 54).*

Similarly, the theory explains why LR thinking is less articulated in authoritarian systems (e. g. in the Middle East): because when opportunities for exerting political choices are lacking, there is little demand for decision-supporting cognitive schemes.
The need for simplifying LR labels may be most pronounced in new democracies characterized by a manifold of not yet clearly profiled personalities, programs and political parties:

> *"In young democracies citizens face perhaps the most confusing of political environments: competitive elections, and the issues, parties, and candidates that compete in them, may be relatively new and are often still in flux. With respect to decision-making purposes, useful heuristic aids are particularly important in such contexts." (Zechmeister 2005:1).*

On the other hand, these same needs for orientations are less likely to be fulfilled, because

> *"…in young democracies, where the components of democratic politics are relatively new and often in flux, the meanings of ideological labels are likely to be less developed and evolving." (Zechmeister 2005: 4).*

Thus, it may well be that citizens in ex socialist countries experience a desperate need for one-dimensional ideological self-placements in order to generate clear preferences among a manifold of parties and candidates, but that these same chaotic conditions are an obstacle for the emergence of such consolidated schemes.

1.3 Inhomogeneities within national populations

It is a trivial notion that the salience as well as the semantic contents of the left-right dimension are evoked and transmitted in processes of political communication.
Following Inglehart, we may say that political communication is the most basic sociological substrate from which all political processes draw their energy and direction. As many studies since Almond and Verba (1963) have shown, political communication tends to rise with the country's GNP per capita as well as with the individual level of education, while differences between men and women tend to decline (Inglehart 1989: 326ff.)

Many theoretical arguments and at least some empirical findings support the hypothesis that politically sophisticated individuals are better able to make use of political labels like "left" and "right" because they are better informed about their meaning (Sniderman et.al. 1991; Kitschelt/Hellemans 1990; Klingeman 1979 etc.). Thus, Badescu and Sum have found that people who reported to participate in votings were more likely to place themselves on the LR-scale (Badescu and Sum 2005).

In the early 1960ies already, Converse has observed that highly educated and politically interested individuals were more inclined to think in ideological terms (Converse 1964), and various studies have shown that issue positions and left-right self placements are more tightly correlated when the level of political cognition is high (e. g. Inglehart/Klingemann 1976).
This *level of political cognition* has been shown to be critically dependent on political interests and activities on the one hand and the educational level on the other (Inglehart/Klingemann 1976).

> *"In short, the greater the sophistication of an individual, the better her capacity for capturing meanings most commonly assigned to left-right labels by that society, that is for sharing the dominant conception of left-right-terms. Second, assuming that it requires greater cognitive capacity to understand and link policy stances, as opposed to symbolic components, to left-*

> *right semantics, we should expect that, the more sophisticated the individual, the more she should define ideological terms along policy lines and vice versa for the less sophisticated." (Zechmeister 2005:11).*

However, this of course presupposes that there exists a relatively consensual, culturally anchored conception of "left" and "right" in the given national society: so that it is just a question of cognitive capacity whether it is perceived adequately or not. Nie and Andersen have found consistency and intercorrelation among elites' responses on a wide range of issues concerning the scope of government activity enabling them to identify clear "liberals" and "conservatives." On the level of uneducated strata, however,

> *"there is little or no interdependence … in mass attitudes, because mass publics have neither the educational background, the contextual knowledge nor the capacity to deal with abstract concepts that sustain an organized set of beliefs over a wide range of political issues" (Nie & Anderson 1974).*

Given the high causal relevance of political interest and political communication, it is to be expected that political elites are most likely to maintain tight relationships between left-right self placements and issue positions. In fact, Eurobarometer studies have shown that within a sample of political candidates, the statistical variance explained was four times as high than within a sample of ordinary voters (Inglehart 1989: 368). Similarly, Lambert et. al. have found in a large Canadian sample that respondents with low education were least able to connect left-right self placements with specific political attitudes and issue positions (Lambert et., al. 1986).

In countries which have only recently been affected by left-right ideologies or where the diffusion process is still going on, we may expect that the elites act as pioneers and opinion leaders: so that larger elite-non-elite differentials in the usage of left-right patterns should be found than in countries where this same thinking is established since very long.

This hypothesis is corroborated by Rivero's comparative study on four African countries where it was found that the predictive power of political and economic attitudes on LR self-placement was much higher among elites than among the general population (Rivero 2004).
However, all these considerations cannot explain why left-right self placement is also widely common among people who lack any interest and practical involvement in political matters, so that they attach more affective than cognitive meaning to these two terms. This rather emotional content has been found among many Canadian voters who are less socialized than European citizens to use the LR dichotomy in the political realm:

> *"Even when they were unable to define the concepts verbally, a significant portion of the sample could nonetheless use the terms and express feelings toward them. Taken together, these findings point to some of the ways in which left and right labels function to connect voters to the party system. At a minimum, they provide cues to distinguish good parties from bad parties and "us" from "them." (Lambert et. al. 1986)*

1.4 The divergent and changing meanings of left and right

The astonishing permanency of the spatial left-right metaphor contrasts sharply with extreme variations of the meanings associated with these two terms during history and across different cultures.
Whoever identifies leftism with socialism should well remember that in the beginning 19th century, it was mainly associated with individualism, free enterprise, national independence and - following Rousseau - an endeavour to restore a more perfect form of human society as it had presumably existed in the past (Laponce 1981: 118ff.). Between about 1850 and 1960, leftism was almost exclusively amalgamated to socialist and communist ideologies associated with the various labour

movements - thus giving priority to questions of economic organization, class relations and social welfare.
Given the long duration of this phase, several scholars have tried to identify the "invariant core" of substantive values and political issues that define difference between left and right. While S M. Lipset (1954) defined leftism as the fight for more equality, Downs has tied it down to governmental economic interventions (Downs 1957). More recently, Knutsen has suggested a similar approach by counterpositioning a "leftist materialism" and a "rightist materialism" that differ in the role they give to free market forces vs. governmental controls. (Knutsen 1995). In conformity with such formulations, Eurobarometer studies have found that leftist self placements are associated with support for more equality and more efforts for implementing human rights, for reducing poverty and active fight against all kinds of racism in society. (Falter and Schumann 1992: 201).
A comprehensive attempt to identity the transnational semantics of left-right ideologies was made by Laver and Budge on the level of Paneuropean manifesto data. Applying factor analysis, they have extracted 26 items defining leftist and rightist party positions. On the left side, the list includes issues like governmental control of capitalism, nationalization of enterprises, internationalism and the expansion of social services, while rightist parties were consistently characterized by an emphasis on traditional morality, law and order, free enterprise and national autonomy (Laver and Budge 1993).
During the Cold War, most - developed and underdeveloped - countries were highly affected by exogenous determinants of LR divisions. "Leftism" was essentially connected with political forces supporting the communism and the UDSSR, while "rightism" was a label given to explicitly "anti-communist" movements, personalities and political parties. Thus, the studies based on Eurobarometer 30 (1988) could show that in many European countries, rightism was strongly correlated with proudness of nationality as well as with nearness to fascist movements. (Falter and Schumann 1992: 200)
However, such findings are not providing the whole picture, because they neglect the absorption of feminist, pacifist and ecological values into the canon of leftist values – as a result of the "New Social movements" of the late sixties and seventies which brought a shift from materialist to postmaterialist orientations (Inglehart 1984). This becomes manifested in pronounced discrepancies between age cohorts. In the late eighties, it was found that older generations were still anchoring their left-right views in classical economic problems, while younger cohorts related it to "postmaterialist" (e. g,. ecological, feminist or pacifist) dimensions (Inglehart 1989: 372).
Subsequently, the end of the Cold War has caused the solidified international system of leftist ideology to erode: replacing it with that a manifold of leftisms deeply shaped by national and regional cultures. As Lagos remarks,
"...there are many lefts in Latin America, there is Michelle Bachelet´s left, there isLula´s left, Castro´s left, Chavez´s left, Morales´s left. (Lagos 2006).

Evidently, the LR-dimension has an astounding capacity to absorb new political values, issues and strategic goals (e. g. of social movements; Mair 1997: 26; Inglehart 1984; Knutsen 1995). However, these new aspects seem to complement and overlay the old ones without replacing them.

Research has also made evident that the meanings of left and right vary between societies as well as between different individuals within the same society. Thus it has been shown by open-ended survey questions that individuals in a given society associate quite different meanings to the terms 'left' and 'right' (e.g. Van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983, 225-247; Fuchs and Klingemann 1990).
Between nations, even more profound differences can be detected. Thus, Rivero has found that in South Africa as well as in Algeria, rightist elites are more inclined to fight for more equality and support strong governmental intervention when they define themselves as more rightest than when their self-placement is on the left (Rivero 2004). In Canada, it has been found that LR identifi-

cations are focusing completely on economic issues, while moral and religious positions do not correlate (Lambert et. al. 1986: 561).
There is also empirical support for the hypothesis that postmaterialist values are not related to leftism in underdeveloped countries. The results of Rivero African study, for instance, show that neither abortion nor environmental issues are of any significance in countries like Uganda, Zimbabwe and Algeria – not even on the elite levels. (Rivero 2004). Only in the case of South Africa (the wealthiest of the compared nations) a modest impact of environmental values on left-right self placement can be found.
Less developed countries also show rather remarkable cleavages between elites and mass publics: e. g. in the case of Uganda where the elites tend to see the LR dimensions in terms of economic issues, while the masses associate it with aspects of the political order (Rivero 2004). Contrasting with post-materialist trends in developed Western countries, Zechmeister has found that in Mexico, the meaning of "left" was increasingly shifting toward economic issues between 2001 and 2004 (Zechmeister 2005: 18). Interestingly, party elites were giving much more weight and sympathy to the term "left" than "right", while "rightism" was more popular than leftism among the lower social strata (Zechmeister 2005: 10ff.). "Rightism", on the other hand, seems to be more frequently used for characterizing political parties than political programs or issue stances (Zechmeister 2005: 12).

As a general rule, the meaning of left-right polarities seems to be profoundly determined by the social and cultural cleavages predominant within a specific national society. In several East Asian countries, for instance, the weakness of class divisions implies that ideological conflicts focus mainly on questions of international relations and the domestic political order:

> *"As in the Middle East, few Asian countries followed Western European cleavage patterns. Although Japan comes closest to the Western European model, its relatively prominent left-right divide 'had more to do with foreign policy and defense' than with class issues, and upheavals in Japanese party politics in the mid-1990s led 'the demise of left-right ideological politics in Japan' (Weisberg 2001, 90). In Korea and Taiwan, politics experienced even weaker socio-economic divides and tended instead toward democracy-related and nation-related issue divide." (Deegen-Krause 2006).*

Nevertheless, the search for transcultural and transhistorical invariants doesn't seem totally futile, because at least one generalization may be tentatively made: Under most conditions, there seems to be a positive relationship between rightism and religiosity, while leftism goes along with distance - ore even open enmity - toward established religious beliefs, practices and organizations.

In all twelve countries covered by the Eurobarometer 30, rightism was found to be associated with religious participation and subjective religiosity, while leftist and green parties were preferably chosen by people who declared themselves to be areligious and who didn't belong to any religious confession (Falter and Schumann 1992: 205). This conforms well with the earlier finding of Inglehart and Klingemann that leftism was much more pronounced among nonreligious strata than among members of catholic or protestant churches. In addition, frequent churchgoers showed more rightism than more passive adherents in both confessions (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976).
The argument that secularization trends may wipe away such correlation doesn't seem warranted, As Inglehart argues, religiosity is one among the subjective factors gaining importance when class and party identifications decline. Its impact on left-right identifications has may have increased recently because many left-right issues are no longer dealing with economic questions, but with moral issues (e. g. abortion or immigration) which are heavily shaped ethical and religious views (Inglehart 1989: 381).

1.5 Variable relationships between LR placements and political issue positions

Individual self-placements on the left-right scale can be the result of two fundamentally opposed processes.

1) Attitudes toward specific political issues are synthesized to a "super issue" on an ideological level (Inglehart and Sidjanski 1976). By inductive generalization, an individuals conclude that they are "far left" when they favour redistribution of wealth, open immigration and the nationalization of key industries, or "far right" when they combine proudness of nationality with a demand for degressive taxes and a conservative attitudes toward abortion. Such inductive generalizations have of course to be based on adequate cognitions about what is considered to be left or right in the domestic national society and political order. Evidently, such knowledge will be more sophisticated when somebody is highly interested in politics and engages in frequent political communication. Apart from that, higher education may help to become aware of such cultural patterns because it goes along with more extensive reading and larger contact networks with other people who are adequately informed.

2) Individuals have ties with particular parties which are known to occupy specific positions on the left-right dimension. By logical deduction, they tend to transfer the party's position to themselves:

> *"One may prefer a given party because of family tradition or religious and other affiliation. One is also aware of the conventional label attached to one's party. For decades, the mass media have spoken of the communists as a party of the extreme left, the Socialists as the moderate left and so on. Knowing this, the voter locates himself on the left-right scale at about the same location as the party he prefers (Inglehart and Sidjanski 1976: 228).*

In this latter case**,** there will of course be a more reduced relationship between LR placement and individual attitudes on political issues. Arian and Shamirargue argue that left and right are cues provided fully by political parties. According to their view,

> *"there is no ideological thinking or conceptualization, and nothing that can be called a super issue, or ideology, for a large portion of the public,… and no stability over time in the public's position on issues", so that the left-right continuum is just denoting a party space, not an ideological space, for the electorate." (Arian/Shamir 1983)*

In classical industrial societies as they have existed until the 1960ies, there was a strong predominance of social and organizational factors: rightism and leftism was primarily defined by the belongingness to societal population segments and formalized institutions. Since the seventies, however, these structural determinants characteristic of "old politics" have declined in importance: giving way to a "new politics" where ideological left-right standings are much more determined by individual values and preferences (Inglehart 1984: 32; 1991: 279–85; Knutsen and Scarbrough 1995: 496).

The general decline of class voting has not at all contributed to a decline of such ideological factors. To the contrary, it has caused voting behaviour to be more determined by subjective attitudes, among which ideological concepts of leftism and rightism are of paramount importance (Knutsen 1988; Kim/Fording 1998; Freire 2006: 367). As a consequence, individual traits and skills become more important in shaping ideological attitudes. For instance, the correlations between LR-self-placements and political attitudes may be highly conditioned by individual education and individual political exposure: because individuals have to learn the exact meanings of left and right in their respective society, and because they have to synthesize different values and issue positions in order to get an overall value on the one-dimensional LR scale. As Inglehart and Klingemann have found out already in the seventies, individuals with higher education are better able to work out their left-right placement in accordance with their issues positions, so that institutional influences (stemming from religious adherence or political partisanship) decline (Inglehart/Klingemann 1976).

In many non-western countries, "deductive" left-right self-placements are still the rule insofar as party membership is based more on regionalist and tribalist identifications, or clientelism than on ideological affinities. South Korean parties, for instance, were found to be

> *"…personality dominated, clientelistic parties, built on the basis of vast networks of patron-client relations and informally institutionalized intra-party factions." (Croissant 2002).*

Some researchers dealing with the semantics associated with the LR scale have also indicated that basic asymmetries exist between the two poles. Thus, it has been found that postmaterialist values are strong predictors of placements on the *left*, while opinions on materialist are more determinative for *rightist* positions (Potter 2001).

In several other empirical studies, it was found that rather tight correlations between issue positions and left-right self ratings exist for the left half of the continuum, while on the right side, the explanatory power of political attitudes is much reduced. As Laponce concludes from a meta-analysis of such studies, this is true for most issues conventionally related to the LR-continuum: e.g. attitudes toward economic regulation, nationalism or gender equality (Laponce 1981: 158ff.). As the author himself has verified in a study on local parties in Switzerland, the same is also true for items related to financial policy, immigration policy or environmental protection (Geser 1992).
Such "heteroscedasticities" seem to mirror the more fundamental difference concerning the dimensionality of leftist and rightist ideological systems. When somebody confesses to be a leftist, this statement implies a lot of information because it can be deduced that he or she favors redistribution of wealth and income, the implementation of affirmative action, the reduction of military expenses, the liberalization of immigration, the abandoning of nuclear energy and more aggressive measures against climate change. While these issues are not intrinsically connected, attitudes about them tend to cluster rigidly (e. g. in the sense that there are almost no conservative greens, anti-green feminists or pacifists on the far right).
On the other hand, defining somebody as a "rightist" is not so informative, because such a label can refer to at least three rather independent meanings: nationalism, economic conservatism or strict religious morality. While this asymmetry can easily be verified in Western countries (even on the basis of qualitative methods), it is of course speculative whether it does similarly apply to other world regions.

2. Data **and Methodology**

The following empirical analysis is based on the World values Surveys in 62 countries that have been conducted in the period 1994-2004. Generally, the survey tries to provide a picture of the national populations aged 18 or older. In many cases, however, complicated stratified procedures instead of straightforward representative sampling methods for various reasons: e. g. because of national concerns with minority regions (Serbia, Switzerland) or because rural populations could not effectively be reached (Venezuela). As a consequence, it cannot be assumed that the sample provides a 1:1 proxy of the entire national population.

2.1 The left-right scale

In all of the WV surveys, respondents were asked to place themselves on an ideological left-right scale ranging from 1 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). This measurement corresponds with the Eurobarometer scale (introduced in 1976), but deviates from many other questionnaires (e. g. the European Social Survey) where an alternative eleven point scale (0-10) is used. As well known, the 0-10 point scale has come under attack because it was hypothesized that whenever a midpoint (5) is offered, it will not only be chosen by respondents with a truly centrist stance, but also by all

those who want to hide that they don't know where to place themselves (Inglehart and Klingemann 1987; Schumann and Presser 1981, 162). In fact, Deutsch et al. have demonstrated midpoints are particularly used by respondents who rank low on political interest (Deutsch et. al. 1966).
Theoretically at least, the WVS avoids these problems by using a scale that forces all respondents to "take sides". However, the same problem seems to persist, as it is found that the value 5 is chosen much more frequently than 6 – maybe because many respondents falsely thought that 5 is the midpoint of the scale.
On a general level, the practicability of Left-Right scales is rather uncontested, because when compared with most other political scales, they have been consistently found to be highly valid and reliable (usually above .75; Alwin and Krosnick 1991; Kroh 2005:8).

2.2. The semantic constituents of "left" and "right"

Following the rich international literature on semantic meanings associated with political leftism and rightism, a sample of nine variables were selected which seem to grasp a wide range of (materialist as well as post-materialist issues usually connected with this political polarity. Unfortunately, the choice was narrowed by the fact that some rather central aspects have not been tapped in the questionnaires of some important countries.

1) Attitude toward Equality:
"Incomes should be made more equal" vs. "We need larger income differentials as incentives" (ten point scale).
2) Attitude toward economic Ownership:
"Private Ownership of Business should be increased" vs. "Government ownership of business should be increased" (ten point scale).
3) Attitude toward self-responsibility:
"People should take more responsibility" vs. "Government should take more responsibility" (ten-point scale)
4) Approval/disapproval for discrimination of foreigners:
"When jobs are scarce, should nationals be preferred?" (three-point scale)
5) Attitude toward environmental protection:
"Would you be ready to pay higher taxes for preventing environmental pollution?" (four-point scale)
6) Feelings of Patriotism:
"Are you proud of your nationality?" (four-point scale)
7) Attitude toward traditional gender roles:
"Being a housewife is just as fulfilling s being a working woman." (four-point scale).
8) Approval/disapproval of abortion:
"Do you find abortion justifiable?" (ten-point scale)
9) Religiosity:
"How often do you attend religious services?" (eight point scale).

2.3 The independent variables

Apart from gender and age, the following potential predictors of left-right thinking have been included:
1) Level of national wealth and development: quantified by the Gross Domestic Product per capita.
2) Individual Education: operationalized as the "highest educational level ever attained" (eight point scale) ("low"= primary; "middle"=secondary; "high"=tertiary).
3) Income level: decile rankings.
3) Rurality vs. urbanity*:* measured by the population size of the city, town or village where the respondent lives (eight point scale).
4) Level of political interest: measured by the "degree to which politics is important in life" (four point scale) and the frequency a respondent engage in political discussions with friends (three-point scale).

2.4 Regions and countries

While every single country would deserve its individual treatment based on its idiosyncratic political history, culture and institutions, available research results (reported above) provide enough reasons for grouping them into categories based on their belongingness to particular cultural regions. While the criteria of classification are certainly questionable for various reasons, we have decided to form the following eight divisions:

1) Anglo-Saxon countries*:* Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, United Kingdom, United States.
2) Western European countries speaking Germanic languages*:* Austria, Denmark, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden.
3) *Western European countries speaking Romanic languages:* France, Italy, Portugal, Spain.
4) Post socialist Eastern European countries; Albania, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia-Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia.
5) Ex USSR countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine.
6) Islamic countries in the Maghreb and the Middle East*:* Algeria, Iran, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan
7) East Asian countries: Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam
8*)* Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Rep. El Salvador, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, Venezuela

European countries like Ireland, Finland, Belgium, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Malta and Greece were excluded because they either belong to both or to other linguistic groups; the few African countries outside the Maghreb has been left out because they seem not sufficient to represent the "black continent"; and India and Bangla Desh have been eliminated because they could not be included in any of the selected regions.

2.5 Weights

In order to draw descriptive statistical inferences to regional populations as a whole, it is crucial to take the unequal size of national populations and national samples into account. Thus, cases have been weighted by a factor resulting from dividing population size with sample size, so that a respondent gets the value 1.0 when he represents 10 000 people, and a value of 10.0 when he is a proxy for 100 000 individuals.

3. Empirical results

3.1. Prevalence of LR self-placements

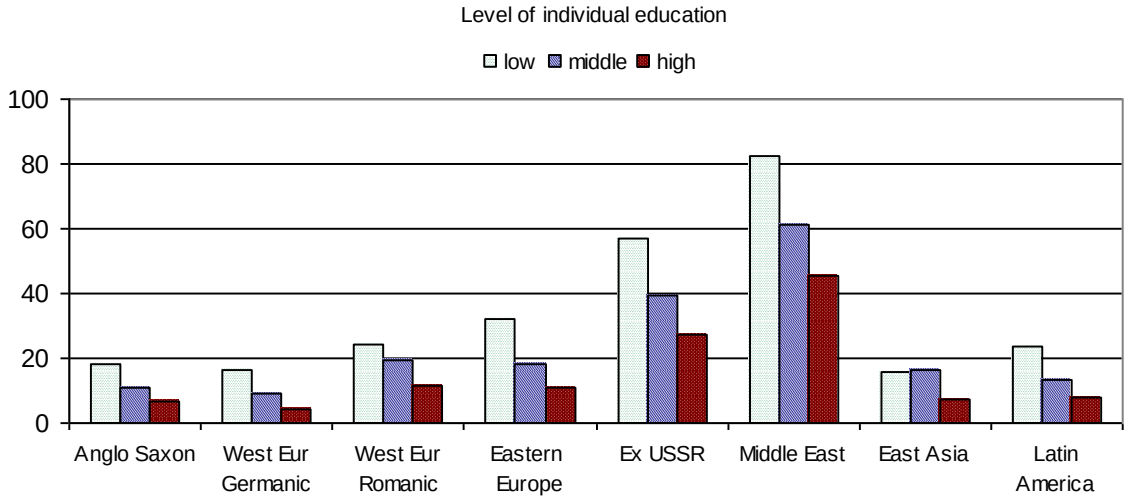
Among all the missing answers in the scale question, we tried to identify all cases in which the question was factually asked, but was either answered by "don't know" or not answered at all. It can be argued that in such cases, respondents were aware that a self-placement on the LR scale was demanded, but either unwilling or unable to follow these instructions. This implies that the sample may also include an unknown number of respondents who maintain a well-defined scale position subjectively, but who refused to communicate it to the interviewer. Nevertheless, we think that most refusals are caused by cognitive factors: by ignorance about the meaning of left and right or by personal insecurity and/or indecisiveness about one's own political position.
As seen in Table 1, the lowest refusal rates are found in -Anglo-Saxon and Germanic continental European countries: closely followed by East Asian nations where the share of positive respondents also approximates 90%. Latin America, Romanic European countries and post-socialist nations in Eastern Europe constitute a second cluster: with response rate of about 80%. Significantly lower percentages are found in former member states of the Soviet Union, and by far the lowest values in Islamic countries of the Maghreb and the Middle East.

Table 1: Percentages of respondents who were ready to place themselves on the LR scale: according to geographic region (cases weighted).

Anglo Saxon	Continent Europe Germanic	Continent Europe Roman	Eastern Europe	Ex-USSR	Middle East	East Asia	Latin America
89.4	89.3	79.2	77.8	60.7	32.9	88.2	82.0

Within all regions, refusals of self-placement are most prevalent among respondents with lowest educational degrees, and across the regions, divergences shrink with increasing level of education (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Percentage of Respondents refusing to place themselves on the left-right scale: according to region and level of individual education (cases weighted).



From this, we can tentatively conclude that a worldwide left-right culture exists into which educated classes from all regional cultures become socialized, while uneducated strata have remained more attached to autochthonous culture where this ideological dimension is less reliably established. This pattern is particularly evident in countries of the Middle East and former members of the USSR, where more than half of all less educated respondents abstain from a self-placement.
In all other regions, however, left-right ideology seems to be so pervasive that it has been effectively internalized even by the less educated (and politically less active) parts of the national populations.
To an astonishing degree, East Asian and Latin American nations conform with the pattern found in Anglo-Saxon and Western European countries. Finally, Figure 1 confirms that a large gap exists between Ex USSR nations and post-socialist Eastern European countries which have successfully assimilated Western political culture (especially on medium and higher educational levels).

Table 2: Explanatory power of different predictors on the willingness of respondents to place themselves on the left-right scale (logistic regression equations; total World sample (cases weighted in proportion to the sample size and the population size of the country).

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV	Model V	Model VI
	Odd's Ratio	Odd's Ratio	Odd's Ratio	Odd's Ratio	Odd's Ratio	Odd's Ratio
Constant	*.025****	*.036****	*.004****	*8.268****	*8.180****	*.068****
Education	1.225***	1.174***	1.159***	--	--	1.129***
Income level	1.099***	1.080***	1.092***		--	1.017***
Age	1.012***	1.009***	1.004***	--	--	.996***
Gender (Male)	1.429***	1.283***	1.340***	--	--	1.516***
Size of city	1.033***	1.036***	1.002	--	--	1.098***
Importance of Politics in life	--	1.746***	1.734***	--	--	1.488***
Frequency of political talks	--	1.251***	1.252***	--	--	1.473***
GDP per capita (ln)	--	--	1.515***	--	1.001	1.197***
Anglo-Saxon	--	--		.985	.985	.868*
Western Europe Germanic	--	--		--	--	-
Western Europe Romanic	--	--		.464***	.464***	.655***
Ex-socialist Eastern Europe	--	--		.408***	.408***	.657***
Ex-USSR	--	--		.183***	.183***	.235***
Maghreb, Middle East	--	--		.057***	.057***	.054***
East Asia	--	--		.754***	.756***	1.731***
Latin America	--	--		.613***	.614***	.814***
Total Model	3.147***	3.147***	3.147***	3.140***	3.140***	2.907***
Nagelkerkes R2	.097	.168	.241	.230	.230	.410
(N =)	*83402*	*83402*	*83402*	*126678*	*126678*	*83402*

**** p < .001 ** P < .01*

The logistic regression results presented in Table 2 provide insight into the combined causal impact of individual and societal factors on the readiness for left right self-placements in the total world sample.

Looking across these six multivariate models, the following major conclusions can be drawn:

1) When the analysis is restricted to *objective individual status characteristics*, about ten percent of total variance (indicated by Nagelkerkes R-square) can be accounted for (Model I). Male gender and higher education stand out as the two most potent (mutually independent) predictors, while income level, urban background and age are of minor importance.
2) Statistical explanation rises to about 17% when in addition to objective characteristics, *subjective variables related to political interest* are included (Model II). Evidently, self- placements are far more prevalent among respondents who are frequently involved in political discussions and for whom politics is a central part of personal life. The impact of higher education and male gender seems to be partially mediated by the higher political involvement of these groupings, because the coefficients of these two predictors are considerably lowered when political interest factors are controlled.
3) Explanation power raises to 24% when in addition to all individual variables, *the level of national development* (Gross Domestic Product per Capita) is introduced into the model (Model III). Interestingly, this large effect is only seen when the logarithm of GDP (instead of the linear variable) is included. This conforms to the notion that the same absolute increments of GDP lose significance on higher development levels, because they affect wealth levels by much smaller percentages than when a country is rather poor.
4) About the same share of total variance (23%) can be explained when just the *regional dummy variables* are considered (Model IV). Taking Germanic Western European nations as baseline, Anglo-Saxon countries share about the same level, while all other regions rank much lower (as already illustrated by Table 1). Interestingly, adding the *GDP variable* does not contribute anything to explanatory power (Model V). Thus, it might by hypothesized that the huge impact on GDP seen in Model III is just an artefact caused cultural by the relative lower economic level of non European regions.
5) However, this bold interpretation is only partially supported by Model VI in which all individual and societal variables are included. This most inclusive equation is very powerful, as more than 40% of the whole variance are explained. As a major result, it can be seen that all predictors retain some independent explanatory power when all other predictors are statistically controlled. In particular, this is also true for the GDP variable which regains some of its significance it has lost when (Model V) no individual variables have been considered. However, its contribution to the model is marginal because almost the same explanatory power (.409) is achieved when it is eliminated. Model VI also corroborates the significant causal impact of gender and urbanity because the respective coefficients are even higher when confounding societal variables are controlled. In addition, it shows that the higher nonresponse rates in regions outside Western Europe are only marginally explained by lower levels of political interests –except in East Asia, where such variables are of highest importance.

While the absolute levels of self placements are so different, these levels are determined everywhere by the same pervasive predictors (Table 3). In all regions, between 11 and 21 percent of the statistical variance can be explained by taking into account seven individual characteristics, among which gender and the two political interest variables exert the strongest impacts, particularly in Anglo-Saxon, European and East Asian countries. The extremely pronounced gender impact in Northwestern European countries is particularly remarkable because gender equality – in a social and cultural sense – is known to have reached higher levels there than in any other regions.

Table 3: Explanatory power of different predictors on the willingness of respondents to place themselves on the left-right scale (logistic regression equations; total World sample; cases weighted).

	Odd's Ratios							
	Anglo Saxon	**Western Europe German**	**Western Europe Roman**	**Eastern Europe**	**Ex-USSR**	**Middle East**	**East Asia**	**Latin America**
Constant	.175***	.111***	.133***	.133***	.128***	.016***	.961	.279
Education (8)	1.112***	1.204***	1.086***	1.086***	1.131***	1.167***	1.035***	1.141***
Income level (10)	1.057***	1.154***	1.119***	1.040**	1.042***	.905***	.844***	1.032**
Age (6)	1.073***	1.069**	1.011***	.979**	.940***	.931***	.833***	1.020
Gender (Male)	1.526***	1.796***	1.383***	1.646***	1.575***	1.228***	1.787***	1.297***
Size of city (8)	1.088***	1.008	1.027**	1.035***	1.035**	1.332***	1.177***	1.102***
Importance of politics in life (4)	1.534***	1.589***	1.684***	1.424***	1.333***	1.325***	2.010***	1.353***
Frequency of political talks (3)	1.680***	1.640***	1.695***	1.932***	1.345***	1.212***	1.642***	1.472***
Nagelkerkes R2	.111	.143	.144	.178	.115	.211	.193	.098
(N=)	*8073*	*10178*	*8226*	*25703*	*19886*	*6750*	*3956*	*14089*

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

By contrast, causal influences stemming from education and income status are rather modest and – concerning the income variable – somewhat inconsistent. Controlling for education, high income strata in Middle East and East Asian regions are evidently less likely to think in LR terms than middle and lower classes. City size is most decisive in Middle Eastern countries, while its significance is almost nil in continental Europe and the Ex USSR.
While LR self-placements occur more frequently with increasing age in Anglo-Saxon and European regions, the contrary is true in Ex USSR, Middle East and East Asian countries. This accords well with the hypothesis that left-right ideology has diffused rather recently into these geographical spaces, so that the younger cohorts (who tend to be more open toward all kinds of transnational influences) are more likely to be affected.

As a summary, we may conclude that at the turn to the 21th century, political orientations organized on the axis of left-right ideology are not only rather ubiquitous in developed Western nations, but have diffused significantly into non-western spheres, particularly East Asian and Latin American countries. Despite decades of authoritarian rule, postsocialist Eastern European countries have extensively approached Western European and Anglo-Saxon standards - possibly because they have internalized this culture already before Warsaw pact rule after World War II. By contrast, former USSR member states are still lagging behind – but considerably less than Islamic countries of North Africa and the Middle East where a majority of the population is still unable or unwilling to express political opinions in such one-dimensional ideological terms. On the level of societal determinants, it is evident that cultural factors associated with geographical regions are far more decisive than the level of economic development, because the explanatory power of GDP per capita vanishes when regional variables are controlled.
Within all regions, left-right self-placements are determined by the same set of individual status characteristics and attitudes, among which gender and political interest show the most pronounced and most consistent effects. While the significance of political interest seems trivial, the

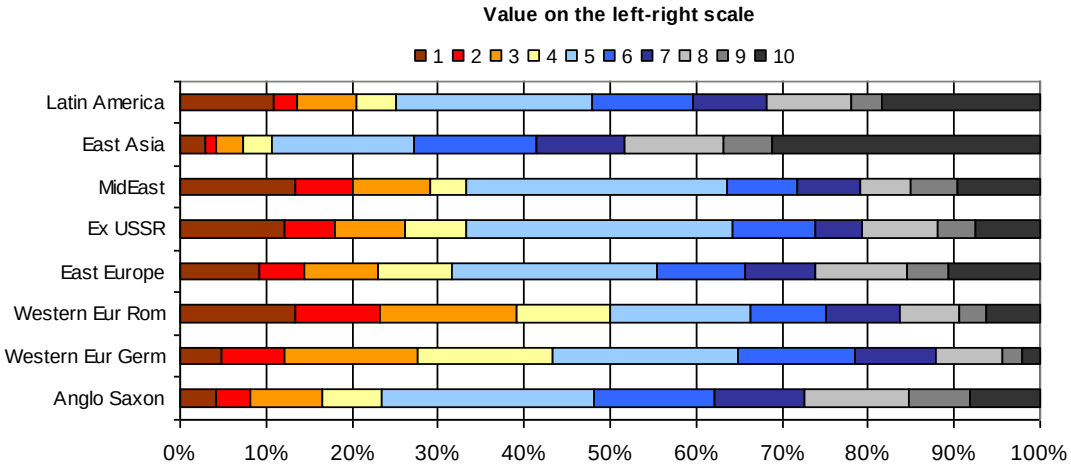
huge impact of gender deserves some additional comments. Evidently, males are much more likely than females to classify themselves on the left right polarity even when education, political interest (and other variables known to be correlated with gender) are statistically controlled. This makes it hard to evade the conclusion left-right thinking is primarily an ingredient of a masculine culture, while women may be more inclined to identify with more specific issues, without relating them to an overarching, simplifying ideological scale.

3.2. Divergences in scale distributions and means

As comparative international studies have shown, the responses to left-right scales do not necessarily follow the rules of a normal distribution. Arithmetic average, modes and medians may deviate from the theoretical midpoint, and distributions may be skewed to the left or the right. Given the lack of calibration procedures, it is questionable to what degree such patterns mirror any corresponding biases on the level of specific political values and issue positions. However, they may still reflect social norms and expectations reigning in specific cultural settings: e. g. the asymmetric antipathy for Rightists widely prevalent in European countries (as a fall out of National Socialism), or a general positive evaluation of centrist positions (as an expression of rational neutrality and peaceful moderation).

As seen in Figure 2, the Anglo-Saxon and Latin American countries approach most closely the ideal of a normal distribution: with a broad focus on the middle values and rather low frequencies both on the extreme left and right. While rather similar conditions hold in Eastern Europe, the Ex-USSR member states and Middle Eastern countries, Western European populations deviate sharply by their skewness to the left and East Asian nations by their even more pronounced bias toward the right. Evidently, extreme leftism has its maximum in Southern Europe and rightism its global minimum in Northwestern European countries.

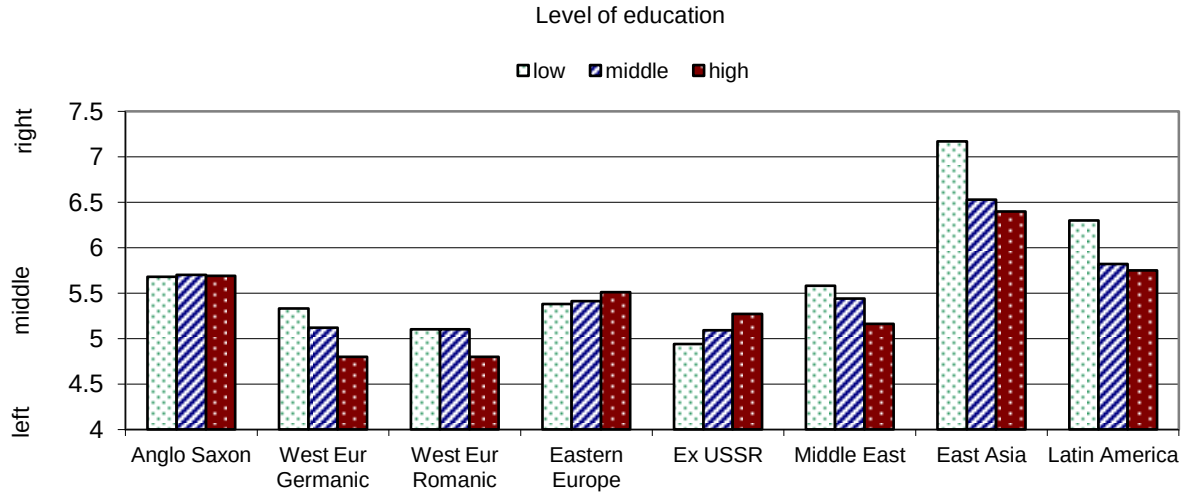
Figure 2: Frequency distribution of respondents on the left-right scale: according to World regions (only respondents with high political interest / communication)



Looking at the arithmetic means resulting from these frequency distributions, Figure 3 shows that they vary significantly between different strata of the population. In Western Europe as well as in the Middle East, East Asia and Latin America, mean values shift to the left with rising level of education, while the reverse is true in Ex-USSR countries, and almost no differences are found in Eastern Europe and the Anglo-Saxon sphere. Evidently, educated Europeans represent a particular leftist segment of global society, while uneducated East Asian populations tend to the opposite extreme. Eastern Europe and Anglo-Saxon countries most closely approach the midpoint (5.5) of the

scale: contrasting with Western Europeans and Middle East populations who lean definitely to the left, and East Asian and Latin American nations whose respondents display a pronounced bias to the right.

Figure 3: Average values on the left-right scale: according to individual education (cases weighted)



In the case of post-communist countries, the rightest leanings of educated strata may be explained by their particular abhorrence of former authoritarian regimes because of their conspicuous deficits in civil rights and intellectual freedom.

And for explaining the astonishing convergence of Middle Eastern countries with Western Europe, we have to consider that the sample comprises only the thirty- something percent of respondents who have answered the scale question: a minority that may well be rather Westernized in political culture.

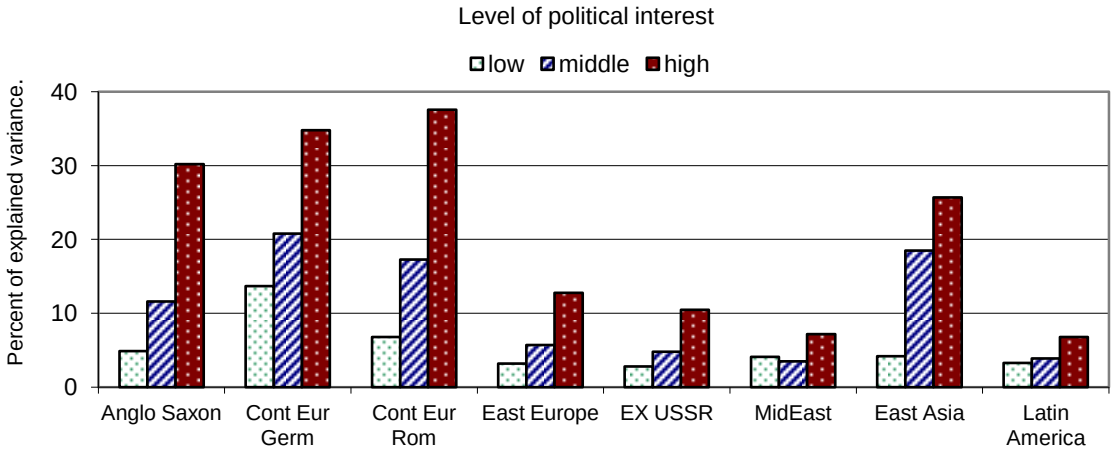
3.3 LR placements and various political issue positions

In order to assess the meaning given to leftist, centrist and rightist positions, it is useful to correlate scale-self-placement with the respondent's positions on various political issues – attitudes that have been found empirically associated with this ideological dimension (see 2.3).

However, such an analysis has to taken into account three basic limitations.
First of all, it cannot be expected that all respondents derive their scale position "inductively" from synthesizing their political opinions. As we have seen above, LR placements can also originate "deductively" by deriving one's own position from the position attributed to an affiliated political party (see 2.4).
Secondly, identifying the "leftist" or "rightist" connotation of political issue positions requires a cognitive capacity that is not likely to be accomplished by people who are very uneducated, structurally unable to acquire the relevant information or very disinterested in political matters. Consequently, we hypothesize that if any national or regional differences in the meaning of left and right exist, they will be most clearly expressed by respondents ranking high in political interest and political participation.
For testing this assumption, we create an index of political interest by summing up the two variables that have already been found decisive whether any self placements are made or not: the scale measuring the "importance of politics in life" (1-4) and the variable capturing the frequency of involvement in political discussions (1.3). Respondents with the two highest index values (7 or 6)

are ranked as “high”, those with values 5, 4, or 3 as “medium”, and those with 2 or 1 as “low”. When these three subsamples are analyzed according to the degree to which left-right self placement is statistically explained by all the nine issue predictors (discussed in 3.3), we get the results presented in Figure 4. We see that within all eight world regions, respondents high on political interest have a much larger percentage of the total variance explained than those ranking medium or low. As a consequence, we decide to eliminate the politically disinterested populations from our sample and to continue the empirical analyzes just with the 20'969 respondents who reach index values of 6 or 7.

Figure 4 : Combined explanatory power of nine individual attitudes on the self placement on the left-right scale (1-10): according to region and level of political interest: (Corrected R2 of the linear regression equation * 100; cases weighted)



Third, previous research results let us expect that considerable asymmetries between the left and the right part of the continuum exist (see .2.4) There, it is advisable to analyze the two sections of the scale separately.

1. Economic equality

According S. M. Lipset's early definition, the major constitutive element of leftism is the fight for more economic equality (Lipset 1954). While such materialist/socialist demands have been supplemented by various post-materialist issues since the late sixties, they have remained a basic ingredient of leftist policies, particularly in countries where the respective political parties are still tightly connected to labour unions and the working class. On the rightist pole, the same issues have regained salience in the course of neoliberal ideologies which have reinforced positive attitudes toward inequality because it is seen as a natural correlate of free market structures and a driving force of economic growth.

Thus, we are not surprised to find that attitudes toward income equalization are most consistently associated with self-placements on the LR scale: even in regions of the Ex-USSR and the Middle East where many other dimensions are uncorrelated (Table 4). In the whole Western hemisphere (including Latin America), however, such attitudes are more far better apt to separate leftists from centrists than centrists from adherents of the political right. In Eastern Europe and East Asia, correlations are about the same in both scale sections, while in the Middle East, equality issues are evidently more salient for differentiating centrists from rights. In the former member states of the Soviet Union, correlations within both sections are zero: an indication that attitudes toward equality or only (weakly) associated with a simple dichotomous understanding of "left" vs. "right".

Table 4: Correlations between disapproval/approval of more income equality and self-placement on the left-right scale, on the left-center scale and the center-right scale (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).[1]

	Regions							
	Anglo Saxon	**Western Europe German**	**Western Europe Roman**	**Eastern Europe**	**Ex-USSR**	**Middle East**	**East Asia**	**Latin America**
left-right (1-10)	.318***	.326***	.288***	.195***	.077***	.071***	.165***	.127***
left-center (1-6)	.247***	.254***	.231***	.073*	.008	.029	.084***	.250***
center-right (5-10)	.143***	.075	.163***	.093*	.003	.104**	.094***	.004

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

[1] *A positive correlation signifies that preferences for higher equality go along with more leftist scale positions.*

2. Business ownership

Similar to equality issues, the question of private vs. public business ownership also belongs to the classical dimensions of socialist ideology. Until the end of the Cold War, it was especially salient in countries where leftist parties still maintained narrow ties to Marxist-communist ideologies: e. g. in Italy and France. On the other hand, the issue has also regained salience in the course of Thatcherism and other neoliberalist reforms that aimed at the privatization of hitherto governmental enterprises (e. g. in the Public Utility and telecommunication sectors).

As seen from Table 5, the privatization question resembles the equality issue in being a potent predictor of leftism and rightism in several regions of the world.

Table 5: Correlations between attitude toward private vs. governmental business ownership and self-placement on the left-right scale, the left-center scale and the center-right scale (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).[1]

	Regions							
	Anglo Saxon	**Western Europe German**	**Western Europe Roman**	**Eastern Europe**	**Ex-USSR**	**Middle East**	**East Asia**	**Latin America**
left-right (1-10)	.218***	.250***	.338***	.213***	.269***	.116***	.127***	.027*
left-center (1-6)	.177***	.183***	.202***	.162***	.192***	.025	.060**	.077***
center-right (5-10)	.089***	.181***	.203***	.047	.000	.068	.114***	.084***

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

[1] *A positive correlation signifies that preferences for more governmental business ownership go along with more leftist scale positions.*

Considering the classical link to communist ideologies, we are not surprised to find the highest correlations in Southern European countries as well as in the Ex-USSR. In all post socialist countries, however, privatization seems exclusively a matter dividing leftists from all others: from centrists as well as from adherents of the extreme right. This contrasts with the conditions in Western Europe where the issue is equally correlated within both scale sections, and with the situation in East Asia and Latin America where questions of economic ownership are somewhat more associated with divisions between center and right.

3. Individual responsibility vs. governmental control

While the first leftists (living at the time of the French revolution) were eager to preserve individual freedom against interferences by an authoritarian state, things have turned to the contrary since the later 19th century when leftist parties began to identify with socialist ideologies and to catalyze the expansion of the welfare state which was seen as legitimated to curtail individual freedom in order to enhance the security and well-being of all. In the era of communism, leftists in Western countries were often discredited as advocates of authoritarian governmental control, while later on, Neoliberalists have actively pursued strategies of deregulation and "de-welfarization" in order to ease tax burdens and to free private business from stifling governmental restrictions. However: important divergences within the Western hemisphere stand out: while on the European continent, the welfare states still enjoys high acceptance, it is more seen as a threatening leftist project in Anglo-Saxon countries.

Under these provisions, it is not surprising that this item stands out as a particularly strong predictor of leftism and rightism in the English speaking nations: especially as a separating factor between the left and the political center (Table 6). In post-socialist countries, the responsibility item is similar to the privatization issue in showing no correlation between center and right. The Middle East is the only region where the responsibility issue shows absolutely no correlations with self placements on the LR scale. This finding is consistent with the notion that in Islamic countries, "individual responsibility" cannot be a relevant issue because it is not a genuine constituent of the reigning endogenous religion and culture.

Table 6: Correlations between attitude toward more individual vs. more governmental responsibility and self-placement on the left-right scale, the left-center scale and the center-right scale (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).[1]

	Regions							
	Anglo Saxon	**Western European German**	**Western European Roman**	**Eastern European**	**Ex-USSR**	**Middle East**	**East Asia**	**Latin America**
left-right (1-10)	.335***	.273***	.189***	.188***	.180***	.029	.219***	.091***
left-center (1-6)	.302***	.162***	.108***	.141***	.112***	.036	.148**	.076***
center-right (5-10)	.173***	.156***	-.010	.056	.044	-.031	.141***	.044**

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

[1] *A positive correlation signifies that preferences for more governmental control (=less individual responsibility) go along with more leftist scale positions.*

4. Ecologism

As a result of the postmaterialist "New Social Movements" flourishing in the late sxities and the seventies of the 20th century, ecologism has become part of leftist ideologies in many countries. On the one hand, Western leftist parties have usually given high priority to ecological goals, and on the other hand, "Green parties" usually go along with socialist parties also in many nonecologist issues: e. g. in social policy, immigration laws, gender rights or internationalism. However, it is evident that the diffusion of such ecologist values has occurred very unevenly: not only across continents, but even within the hemisphere of highly developed Western countries. Thus, "Green parties" of national significance or only found in some continental European countries north of the Alps, while they have never gained momentum in Southern Europe and in Anglo-Saxon countries. Unfortunately, the World value Surveys provide only rather unsatisfactory data for analyzing ecologist ideology in worldwide cross-national perspective. In the context of this study, one of the survey questions seemed viable despite the fact that it was not posed in Middle East countries: the

question whether the respondent would be willing to pay higher taxes if this money would be spent for purposes of environmental protection.

Table 7: Correlations between unwillingness to pay more taxes for ecological purposes and self-placement on the left-right scale, the left-center scale and the center-right scale; (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).[1]

	Regions							
	Anglo Saxon	**Western Europe German**	**Western Europe Roman**	**Eastern Europe**	**Ex-USSR**	**Middle East**	**East Asia**	**Latin America**
left-right (1-10)	.295***	.167***	.109***	*-.057**	*-.060**	--	*-.180****	*-.033***
left-center (1-6)	.186***	.078***	-.058***	*-.097***	*-.015*	--	.019	.047*
center-right (5-10)	.284***	.161***	.153***	*-.023*	*-.077**	--	*-.181***	*-.043**

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

[1] *A positive correlation signifies that willingness to pay ecological taxes goes along with more leftist scale positions.*

By inspecting Table 7, we must conclude that this is the most dissensual of all our left-right indicators, because the fully consistent positive correlations are only found in two regions: in Anglo-Saxon nations and in continental European countries speaking Germanic languages.
In southern Europe, a positive correlation appears only in the right scale section, and in all other regions, zero correlations or even negative relationships abound. The most spectacular inconsistency is found in East Asia where rightists give more support to ecologist taxes than adherents of the political center. In Western regions, exactly the opposite is the case: rightists are far less disposed than centrists to pay ecological taxes – while differences between centrists and leftists are less pronounced.

5. (Non)discrimination of foreigners on the job market

International solidarity and the fight for antiracist nondiscriminatory standards have always been part of socialist leftism; but such issues have recently gained significance as a consequence of increased transnational migration. Of course, their salience is low in poorer countries which are too unattractive to encourage any significant immigration; but in highly developed regions, they give rise to protectionist rightest movements eager to keep out foreigners from the job market.

Table 8: Correlations between opinion that "jobs should be given to nationals in first priority" and self-placement on the left-right scale, the left-center scale and the center-right scale; (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).[1]

	Regions							
	Anglo Saxon	**Western Europe German**	**Western Europe Roman**	**Eastern Europe**	**Ex-USSR**	**Middle East**	**East Asia**	**Latin America**
left-right (1-10)	.186***	.233***	.377***	*-.003*	*-.027*	*-.059***	.056***	.012
left-center (1-6)	.204***	.167***	.194***	.006	*-.070***	*-.075***	.101***	.016
center-right (5-10)	.023	.141***	.219***	*-.023*	*-.021*	.063	.013	*-.003*

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

[1] *A positive correlation signifies that rejection of discriminatory job recruitment practices goes along with more leftist scale positions.*

6. Gender equality

Since more than 30 years, Western leftism has been deeply shaped by feminist influences advocating gender equality on political levels as well as within all relevant societal spheres.

One of the most consensual demands is that female emancipation has to go along with a full integration of women in the job market, because only paid work roles and professional careers provide a basis for economic and social independence - as well as for the acquisition of skills and higher societal prestige. As such values have become more widespread in society, they have also been adopted by many nonleftist parties - and may now only be contested by highly conservative groups on the right. This may explain why this item is in most regions more discriminative on the right section of the scale than between the center and the political left (Table 9). In Anglo-Saxon nations as well as in the Ex-USSR and East Asia, a U-curve seems to hold: with *lower* support for traditional gender roles at the center than on the left side and to the right.

Table 9: Correlations between the opinion that "being a housewife is as fulfilling as working" and self-placement on the left-right scale, the left-center scale and the center-right scale; (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).[1]

	Regions							
	Anglo Saxon	**Western Europe German**	**Western Europe Roman**	**Eastern Europe**	**Ex-USSR**	**Middle East**	**East Asia**	**Latin America**
left-right (1-10)	.042***	.192***	.076**	.036	*-.025*	*-.001*	.076***	.035**
left-center (1-6)	*-.082****	.190***	*-.008*	*.038*	-.122***	*-.027**	*.117****	.057**
center-right (5-10)	.078***	.080*	.099*	.023	.106**	.016	.234***	.061***

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

[1] *A positive correlation signifies that low evaluation of housewife roles goes along with more leftist scale positions.*

In fact, leftists in all regions except Germanic parts of continental Europe seem to be more disposed than centrists to subscribe to the traditional housewife model of female life. They seem to be still inspired by socialist women movements in the early 20th century which fought for the liberation of women from work (by increasing governmental support for families): because work was conceived as evil capitalist exploitation (Weber 1906/1907).

7. Patriotism

In the late 18th and early 19th century, leftism was "nationalist" in the sense of advocating the rights of territorial populations against the exploitation by transterritorial actors like royal dynasties, feudal family clans or the church. The later socialist left, however, became internationalist by articulating the transterritorial solidarity of the working class and the basic rights of all human beings on this planet. Correlatively, it was the political right that was more and more opposing this trend by focussing on patriotism and nationalism – in some cases even of an openly racist nature. Thus, Western European studies usually find a significant positive relationship between rightism and support for nationalism (Falter and Schumann 1992: 200).

Table 10: Correlations between "proudness of nationality" and self-placement on the left-right scale, the left-center scale and the center-right scale; (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).[1]

	Regions							
	Anglo Saxon	**Western Europe German**	**Western Europe Roman**	**Eastern Europe**	**Ex-USSR**	**Middle East**	**East Asia**	**Latin Am**
left-right (1-10)	.267***	.320***	.216**	.001	.068***	-.046*	.216***	.187***
left-center (1-6)	*.256****	.232***	.148***	.005	.013	*-.067***	.080***	.078***
center-right (5-10)	.080***	.129****	.079	.068	.097**	*-.006*	.148***	.143***

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

[1] *A negative correlation signifies that low "proudness of nationality" goes along with more leftist scale positions.*

However, different and more complicated patterns are found outside the Western hemisphere: In the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact states of Eastern European countries, for instance, Stalinism was a movements that succeeded in "kidnapping" nationalism for purposes of the extreme left; and in Islamic countries, fundamentalist movements that show all signs of extreme rightism (e. g. on the moral plane) go not along with nationalism, but with a religious identification that transcends all territorial borders. Thus, we are not surprised that the positive relationship between patriotism and rightism holds mainly for Western (and Latin American) countries, while lower, zero or even inverse correlations are found in post socialist regions and in the Middle East (Table 10).
In the Middle East, the higher patriotism shown by leftists may be easily explained by the fact that they are less affected by Islamist ideologies which emphasize transnational religious identification; and the zero correlations in Eastern Europe may mirror transitory conditions where right-wing patriotism is neutralized by remnants of a Stalinist nationalism which is amalgamated with extremely leftist ideological positions.

8. Religiosity

There is no straightforward relationship between religion and the left-right scale. On the one hand, the teachings of Jesus have given rise to reform or even revolutionary movements, as they have flourished particularly in Latin America, and Islam propagates egalitarian values that can be subversive to traditional authoritarianism and feudal societal orders.[1] On the other hand, all major religion are the products of preindustrial societies and "conservative" in the sense that they take part for traditional values and institutions. While catholics accept church teachings accumulated in twenty centuries, orthodox and protestant populations are taught to be submissive to any political order in which they find themselves embedded. From the very beginnings, therefore, to be "extremely leftist" meant to take distance toward churches: at the time of the French revolution as well as in the era of Marxist socialism which has been built on premises of materialistic atheism. While the rise of post-materialism has reduced class voting, it has not changed the empirical regularity that (at least in European countries), much less leftists are found among regular church goers than among people not affiliated with any church (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Falter and Schumann 1992).

[1] Characteristically, an empirical study reported by Laponce shows that while the term "Godfather" is usually associated with rightism, "Jesus Christ" is more connected to the notion of centrism or even moderately leftist ideological stances (Laponce 1981).

Table 11: Correlations between frequency of participation at religious services and self-place-ment on the left-right scale, the left-center scale and the center-right scale; (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).

	Regions							
	Anglo Saxon	**West European Germanic**	**Western European Roman**	**Eastern Europe**	**Ex-USSR**	**Mid East**	**East Asia**	**Latin America**
left-right (1-10)	.237***	.263***	.336***	.220***	.136***	.085***	**.133*** **	.077***
left-center (1-5)	.118***	.251***	.269***	.232***	.061**	.131**	.075***	.013
center-right (6-10)	.095***	.007	.120**	.030	.095**	.041	**.258*** **	.036*

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

[1] *A positive correlation signifies that lower religiosity goes along with more leftist scale positions.*

By inspecting Table 11, it becomes evident that religiosity (operationalized as participation at religious services) is a potent predictor of left-right self-placements in all eras of the world. East Asia stands out as the only region where a curvilinear relationship between LR values and religiosity exists. While leftists follow the worldwide pattern of being less religious than respondents at the center, religiosity declines sharply between the center and the extreme right – resulting in a positive correlation over the whole scale. Not unexpectedly, negative relationships are weakest in areas known to be highly religious (Middle East and Latin America), while they are surprisingly strong in rather secularized countries of the Western hemisphere and post-socialist regions.

In most cases, religiosity is a variable that mainly separates leftists from incumbents of centrist positions, while its impact on rightism is lower (or even zero in the case of Germanic and Eastern European countries). However, the reverse holds in East Asia, where it is primarily the difference between centrists and rightists that is significantly based on religious factors. Similar conditions hold in the Ex USSR which deviates from post-socialist European countries by a rather weak impact of religiosity on leftist vs. centrist positions.

9. Abortion

From a leftist point of view, traditional religious morality is an obstacle for female self-determination, because measures of birth control are discouraged and abortion of an unwelcome foetus is usually strongly forbidden. In the more recent postmaterialist periods, such moral questions have become more salient: substituting classical issues related to economic organizations and class relations that have lost ground because the number of traditional working class voters has diminished (Inglehart 1989)

As seen from Table 12, the abortion issue is a potent predictor of leftism and/or rightism in all World regions, particularly in Romanic (=catholic) European countries and in the Anglo-Saxon sphere. Similar to the religiosity item, attitudes toward abortion primarily separate leftists from centrists, while differences between center and right are less affected. Outstanding exceptions are the former member states of the USSR, where the issue is only discriminating between center from right. Again, they contrast to an astonishing degree with post-socialist Eastern Europe which conform much more to Western standards.

Table 12: Correlations between disapproval for abortion and self-placement on the left-right scale, the left-center scale and the center-right scale; (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).[1]

	Pearson Correlation Coefficients							
	Anglo Saxon	West Europe Germanic	Western European Romani	Eastern Europe	Ex-USSR	Mid East	East Asia	Latin America
left-right (1-10)	.346***	.261***	.386**	.138***	-.012	.098***	.090***	.154***
left-center (1-6)	.217***	.295***	.244***	.132***	.037	.053	.107***	.244***
center-right (5-10)	.126***	.046****	.129**	.068	.092**	.029	.070***	.129**

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

[1] *A positive correlation signifies that approval for abortion goes along with more leftist scale positions.*

3.4 Issue combinations and clusterings

3.4.1. Cumulative causal impact on LR self placements

As was already shown in Figure 4, a large percentage of the variance in left-right self placements can be statistically explained when all issues are included as predictors in a multivariate regression.

Table 13: Explanatory power of nine individual attitudes on left-right self placement: (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted). *(BETA- Coefficients of the multivariate linear regressions)*

	Anglo Saxon	Western European German	Western European Roman	Eastern Europe	Ex USSR	Middle East	East Asia	Latin America
Approval of income inequality	.16***	.21*	.12***	.15***	--	.11**	.12***	.13***
Private vs. governmental business ownership	.07***	.18**	.22***	.16***	.24***	--	**-.09*** **	
More individual vs governmental responsibility	.17***	.12***	.11***	.10**	.12***	--	.14***	--
Unwillingness to pay taxes for ecological purposes	.16***	.12**	.06**	--	-.05**	--	**-.10*** **	--
Job discrimination for foreigners	.04***	.09**	.29***	--	--	--	.05***	--
Proudness of nationality	.13***	.22***	.07**	--	.05**	--	-.27***	-.17***
Being a housewife is as fulfilling as working	--	.13***	.04**	.07**	--	**--**	-	--
Participation at religious services	.08***	--	.14***	.18***	.08***	**--**	**-.23*** **	--
Disapproval of abortion	.19***	.16**	.11***	.09**	--	**--**	.05**	.12***
Percentage of explained variance (corrected R-Square)	.302	.347	**.376**	.131	.105	.001	.256	.068
(N =)	*(1193)*	*(978)*	*(493)*	*(2400)*	*(2565)*	*(608)*	*(1247)*	*(2089)*

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

Looking at Table 13, it is evident that this determination is highest in Western Europe where all nine predictors (except religiosity in the case of countries of Germanic languages) provide a contribution. Anglo-Saxon countries - where gender equality is evidently of no ideological significance - follow next. The rather high explanation level achieved in East Asia is mainly caused by the huge impact of nationalism (and shrinks very much when the "perverse" positive impact of religion is accounted for). Post communist European nations conform with Western Europe, except that nationalist and ecologist items are not associated and the relevance of religiosity is somewhat increased. Even weaker cumulative explanations are achieved in the former member states of the Soviet Union and Latin America, and in the Middle East, only a single minor impact (caused by preferences more equality) can be detected.

3.4.2 Correlative interrelations and factorial structures

In the section above, we have succeeded quite well in explaining left-right self-placements as the "inductive" result of several issue positions that make independent additive l contributions. This view does not preclude a second perspective that sees leftism and rightism as ideologies defined by rather stable and consensual configurations of political goals, opinions and beliefs. Under this second aspect, we are focussing on the horizontal relationships among issues and apply methods of factor analysis for testing to what degree these interrelations arrange themselves to dimensional structures that may be interpreted in terms of "left" and right".

Table 14a: Factorial structures of left-right issues in Anglo-Saxon and European countries (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted (Unrotated factor coefficients).

	Anglo Saxon			Western Europe Germanic			Western Europe Roman			Eastern Europe		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Left-right placement	**.74**	-.09	.05	**.74**	-.01	.10	**.76**	.09	-.12	**.67**	.20	-.08
Approval of income inequality	**.48**	-.34	.11	**.48**	**-.53**	.10	**.45**	.40	-.16	**.52**	-.10	.14
Private vs. governmental business ownership	**.44**	-.20	.45	**.50**	**-.45**	.11	.29	.66	.21	**.60**	-.37	-.07
More individual vs governmental responsibility	**.58**	-.29	.19	**.51**	**-.60**	.02	.29	.66	.20	**.62**	-.17	.25
Unwillingness to pay taxes for ecological purposes	**.48**	-.24	-.46	.23	.19	.65	.12	.21	-.56	-.24	.16	**.47**
Job discrimination of foreigners	36	-.22	-.39	.37	.50	.42	**.56**	-.18	-.32	-.10	.24	**.46**
Proudness of nationality	-**.45**	-.03	-.39	**-.48**	-.32	-.03	**-.44**	.38	-.14	-.11	**-.54**	-.18
Being a housewife is not as fulfilling as working	.15	**.41**	.42	.34	.10	-.61	.21	-.09	.73	-.09	.20	**-.72**
Participation at religious services	**-.49**	**-.64**	.07	**-.55**	-.22	.34	**-.60**	.41	-.02	-.34	**-.68**	-.03
Approval of abortion	**.61**	**.50**	-.30	**.54**	.46	-.18	**.70**	-.28	.01	.21	**.67**	-.13
Percentage of explained variance	25.1	12.0	10.3	24.3	14.9	11.8	25.4	13.5	11.8	16.8	15.6	11.0

**** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05*

As seen from Tables 14a and 14b, all regions except the Middle East are similar insofar as there is a first ideological factor that is highly associated with placements on the LR scale. In Anglo-Saxon and Western European countries, this first factor absorbs about 25% of the total variance and includes stances toward income equality, nationalism, religiosity and opinions on abortion. Evidently, Southern European countries deviate from other Western nations by associating left-right ideology more with job discrimination and less with classical socialist items related to the role of government. In fact, they also from the non-western regions where the issue of governmental control is of pervasive importance.
In all non-western regions, the Left-Right factor is much less dominant, as it explains less than 17% of totals variance and is only associated with just four (or even less of the nine items. Unsurprisingly, its lowest salience is found in the Middle East where it appears only as the third factor and is related to only two items: income equality on the one hand and abortion on the other.

Table 14b: Factorial structures of left-right issues in nonwestern regions (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted (unrotated factor coefficients).

	Ex-USSR			Middle East			East Asia			Latin Americae		
	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III	I	II	III
Left-right placement	**.63**	.24	.13	-.21	-.28	**.64**	**.65**	-.03	.12	**.52**	.09	--.25
Approval of income inequality	**.**33	.11	-.57	.27	**-53**	**.51**	**.45**	.18	**-.57**	.29	**-.65**	-.15
Private vs governmenta business ownership	**.72**	-.04	.25	**.71**	-.08	.01	-.22	-.24	-.14	-.04	-46	**.53**
More individual vs. governmental responsibility	**.63**	-.18	.-16	**.60**	-.08	.32	**.65**	.01	-.16	**.40**	**-64**	-.08
Unwillingness to pay taxes for ecological purposes	-.12	-.19	-.68	.--	--	--	**-.49**	.17	-.22	-.31	.22	.07
No job discrimination of foreigners	-.30	.21	.25	.25	**-.68**	.07	.17	-.34	**.62**	-20	-.09	**.65**
Proudness of nationality	-.04	**-.50**	.26	**.30**	-.40	-.03	**-.56**	.06	**-.43**	-.**53**	.18	.26
Being a housewife is not as fulfilling as working	.18	**.43**	.13	-.15	-.08	-.34	.11	-.70	.06	.29	-.13	-.24
Participation at religious services	-.19	**-.57**	.13	**.30**	.46	.20	.24	.04	-.28	**-.52**	.13	-.45
Approval of abortion	-.10	**.63**	.18	**-.34**	..13	**.48**	.17	-.66	.04	**.59**	-.32	-.16
Percentage of explained variance	16.1	13.4	10.9	15.1	13.7	12.8	18.0	15.3	10.5	16.3	12.6	11.4

3.4.3. The highly variable intervening impact of education

While the mere awareness of the left-right dimension has been found correlate highly with education in all world regions (see 3.1), it is expected that the relationships between issue positions and LR self placements are even more conditioned by levels of schooling. Two reasons may account for this., First of all, certain information levels are necessary in order to perceive adequately such connections as they are existing in the respective (national or regional) political culture; and secondly, capacities of mental abstraction are a prerequisite for relating specific political issues to higher

order values and ideological dimensions. As has been widely demonstrated in empirical studies, information levels as well as intellectual capabilities tend to be positively related to individual education. In addition, such a positive relationship mirrors the fact that LR- ideology is highly institutionalized in a society: insofar as it is most strongly articulated by elite strata that have the capacity to translate it into factual politics and to reinforce its societal dominance by various means (e. g. by controlling media or processes of socialization).

As seen in Tables 15a and 15b, these expectations are well borne out for Anglo-Saxon and Western European countries, while they fail to hold in all other regions. Only in the former three regions, higher education goes along with

- a much increased degree of "vertical" ideologization (seen in the high cumulative percentage of LR-variance explained by the nine issues).
- a considerably heightened degree of "horizontal" ideologization: manifested by the more dense interrelationships between issue positions as they are expressed by the higher "Eigenvalues" of the first extracted factors.

Table 15a: Combined explanatory power of nine individual attitudes on left-right self placement: according to level of education (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted). ***(Corrected R-square of the multivariate linear regression equations)***

	Anglo Saxon	Western Europe Germanic	Western Europe Roman	Eastern Europe	Ex USSR	Middle East*	East Asia	Latin America
Low Education	.11	.26	.29	.15	.12	.04	.20	.06
Medium Education	.25	.36	.35	.09	.07	.08	.32	.11
High education	.48	.39	.46	.19	.18	.08	.23	.10

Table: 15b: Percentage of total variance explained by the first factor (LR-factor)* extracted in an unrotated factor analysis: according to level of education (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).

	Anglo Saxon	Western Europe Germanic	Western Europe Roman	Eastern Europe	Ex USSR	Middle East*	East Asia	Latin America
Low Education	16.38	22.02	21.22	18.61	13.46	12.38	16.53	14.20
Medium Education	22.36	22.50	24.83	16.20	15.65	15.53	16.09	16.70
High education	31.27	28.09	29.73	17.87	17.01	14.12	14.03	19.95

** In Middle East countries, the variable focussing on ecological taxes is lacking, because it was not part of the survey*

Neither in ex-communist countries nor in the Middle East, East Asia or Latin America, any such significant differences educational levels are found. This implies that lower educational strata are similar worldwide by sharing rather low levels of ideologization, while educational elites show much higher intercultural and intercontinental divergences: between most tight LR-adherence in Anglo-Saxon nations and Western European nations and much lower ideological consistency everywhere else.

3.4.4. The low impact of gender

In Table 2 (see 3.1), it was demonstrated that males are much more prone than females to place themselves on the left-right scale – an effect that remains very strong even if level of education,

political interest and other possibly confounding variables are statistically controlled. From, this we might conclude that women - maintaining more inner distance to the LR axis will also be less inclined to organize their issue positions in such one-dimensional ideological patterns.
However, this hypothesis is not consistently borne out (Tables 16a/16b). Only in Anglo-Saxon and Southern European countries, males show a somewhat higher tendency to relate their opinions to their ideological placements as well as to cluster them on a single axis. In all other regions, no significant gender-related differences are found. Evidently, the females included in our analysis represent a more selective sample than the male respondents because larger percentages of them have been eliminated due to lacking self placement or low political interest. Those remaining, however, seem to conform with the same standards as males.

Table 16a: Combined explanatory power of nine individual attitudes on left-right self placement: according to gender (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted). ***(Corrected R-square of the multivariate linear regression equations)***

	Anglo Saxon	Western Europe Germanic	Western Europe Roman	Eastern Europe	Ex USSR	Middle East	East Asia	Latin America
Males	.35	.29	.42	.14	.18	.04	.28	.09
Females	.26	.32	.31	.16	.06	.07	.25	.10

Table: 16b: Percentage of total variance explained by the first factor (LR-factor)* extracted in an unrotated factor analysis: according to gender (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).

	Anglo Saxon	Western Europe Germanic	Western Europe Roman	Eastern Europe	Ex USSR	Middle East*	East Asia	Latin America
Males	25.63	24.02	27.21	17.33	17.32	15.29	17.83	15.55
Females	24.89	24.78	23.25	17.50	16.02	15.75	15.35	18.49

** In Middle East countries, the variable focussing on ecological taxes is lacking, because it was not part of the survey*

3.4.5. Almost no age-related divergences

While easy to measure, age-related differences are difficult to interpret because they may reflect divergences due to life cycle periods as well as changes between age cohorts and historical generations. In Table 2, it was found that the impact of age on self placement prevalence was extremely weakl, and in a similar fashion, Tables 17a and 17b demonstrate that almost no age-related differences in ideological patterns exist. A notable exception is found in Middle East countries where the oldest age cohort (over 50) show the strongest tendencies to relate issue positions to ideological scale positions and to cluster them on one dominant dimension.
This finding corroborates the hypothesis that in Islamic countries, left-righ thinking has been quite peronounced in the 60ies and 70ies of the last century, while today, it has given way to endogenenous Islamic values that deviates more sharply with Western culture (see 1.2). In all other regions, the findings provide no basis for assuming any intergenerational change. Particularly, there is no evidence that younger cohorts in postsocialist countries are more ready to adopt Western ideological culture than their parents that have been influenced by alternative communist doctrines.

Table 17a: Combined explanatory power of nine individual attitudes on left-right self placement: according to age (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted). ***(Corrected R-square of the multivariate linear regression equations)***

	Anglo Saxon	Western Europe Germanic	Western Europe Roman	Eastern Europe	Ex USSR	Middle East	East Asia	Latin America
Age: 15-29	.32	.35	.38	.03	.04	.04	.18	.10
Age 30-49	.31	.37	.41	.12	.11	.05	.28	.10
Age: 50+	.30	.33	.37	.18	.11	.23	.31	.16

Table: 17b: Percentage of total variance explained by the first factor (LR-factor)* extracted in an unrotated factor analysis: according to age (only respondents with high political interest; cases weighted).

	Anglo Saxon	Western Europe Germanic	Western Europe Roman	Eastern Europe	Ex USSR	Middle East*	East Asia	Latin America
Age: 15-29	26.66	23.42	30.45	17.19	15.59	12.59	15.91	16.43
Age 30-49	26.33	23.72	28.29	16.68	16.05	15.96	16.80	17.81
Age: 50+	23.49	24.74	26.02	17.85	16.70	17.06	17.85	16.05

** In Middle East countries, the variable focussing on ecological taxes is lacking, because it was not part of the survey*

4. Summary and Conclusions

While corroborating many empirical regularities known from extensive earlier studies, our findings offer many hitherto unknown insights that invite new theoretical interpretations and speculations.
First of all, political thinking in terms of "left and "right" is a phenomenon that has successfully expanded from its originating Western European context over the globe. In all regions except the Middle East, at least 60 percent of the total population (and over eighty percent of politically interested respondents) are ready to place themselves on a respective LR-scale. This conforms with the notion that on a global scale, Islamism represents the only salient alternative to Western political culture. Most remarkably, East Asian countries have internalized left-right thinking to a higher degree than post-socialist countries - despite their larger geographical and cultural distance from the Western world. Especially the ex-USSR countries seem to be still affected by communist (better: Stalinist) ideology (which shares with Islamism a tendency to blend leftist elements of egalitarianism with "fascist" rightist extremist features).
Secondly, in all regions, left-right self identifications are particularly widespread among the more educated and the more politically active strata: an indicator that they are highly central, institutionalized features of the respective political systems. Even Muslim populations follow neatly this trend: illustrating the degree to which alternative Islamist notions are more salient among lower endogenous strata than among the elites.
Third, irrespective of region, LR self placements are moderately more prevalent among male and urban respondents and among populations of richer countries, while individual age and income levels are less consequential. However, very significant regional divergences cannot be explained neither by different micro-characteristics on the level of respondents nor by the degree of macro-economic development. Thus, they are likely to emerge from differences in endogenous political culture.

Fourth, the populations of different regions deviate considerably in their frequency distribution across the LR scale. While continental European populations are heavily skewed toward the left and East Asian countries toward the right, the remaining regions show more equilibrated patterns. Of course, such discrepancies are hard to interpret as long as left-right scales are not internationally calibrated.
Fifth, in all regions, the politically more interested and more active strata are much more likely to associate their LR-placements with particular political issue positions. Among highly educated Western elites, more than 30% of the variance in scale placements can be explained on the basis of eight issues and individual religiosity.
Sixth, opinions on "materialist as well as "post materialist" issues are likewise associated with LR self placements in all regions. However, there are many discrepancies that reflect the varying political cultures and political problem agendas of different regions. As expected, items related to environmental protection and "job protectionism" are more salient in higher developed countries, while religiosity and the abortion issue seem to be universally decisive.
Seventh, In conformity with previous, studies, it was found that issue positions are better in predicting LR values on the left half of the scale, while differences between moderate and extreme rightist positions cannot be grasped well with the indicators at hand. However, this regularity is not valid in East Asia where the right scale section is more highly associated with specific political stances.
Eight, the inclination to relate concrete issues "vertically" to the LR dimension is largely paralleled by the tendency to relate these same issues "horizontally" to clusters along a LR axis that can be assessed by factor analytic procedures. In all regions except the Middle East, politically active strata cluster their opinions on a first major axis that absorbs from 15 to 25% of he covariance existing among the nine items.
Ninth, higher educated strata show higher "vertical" as well as "horizontal" couplings in Anglo-Saxon and Western European countries, while no differences are found in the other regions. As a consequence, highly educated strata show more interregional variance in their degree of ideology than population with less schooling. This result evidently contradicts the widespread theoretical notion that educated strata are more likely to adopt a homogeneous Westernized culture all over the world.
Tenth, neither vertical nor horizontal ideological clustering is significantly influenced by gender or age. This accords with the hypothesis that at least within politically more informed strata, left right thinking is an ubiquitous (and since decades unchanging) constituent of political culture.

Of course, many of the reported findings can be questioned by taking into account the particular methodological premises and limitations on which this study has relied.
1) The obtrusive regularity that the WVS indicators were most potent in explaining LR self placements within highly educated Western populations may be an artefact: caused by the fact that exactly these strata have designed the questionnaire. In future studies, it will be important to include issues more akin to the political agenda of uneducated populations and non-western countries. We may well find that correlations between issue positions and self placements are quite similar everywhere when the issues most salient to the respective populations are included.
2) Instead of starting with geographical regions defined *ex ante*, we may use cluster analysis in order to assess inductively how nations (or even sub national regions) group themselves in terms issue opinion patterns and ideological culture. In addition, it has to be explored how such transnational clusterings different when different national subpopulations (e. g. according to education, age or ethnicity) are considered.
3) While cross sectional studies provide some preliminary insights into historical dynamics (e. g. by comparing age cohorts), longitudinal studies are indispensable for assessing the speed, scope and deepness of ideological change.

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