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The Meaning of Left and Right
Cross-National Variation in Mass Public Value Orientations in Europe

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1. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Politics is about ideology. Democratic mass politics, therefore, is about the competition of ideologies in the public sphere. While the concept of ideology is one of the most contested in the social sciences, its core characteristic is coherence: “Ideology, at the very least, refers to a set of idea-elements that are bound together [...] in a non-random fashion” (Gerring 1997). Similarly, Sartori (1969: 401) argues that such belief systems are characterized by „a state of *boundedness*, to the fact that beliefs hang together“ (italics in the original).

From this notion of coherence, however, follows a minimum degree of complexity: value orientations are necessarily linked to each other in order to constitute an ideology. If ideologies are complex by their very nature, there is a need for simplification in the communication between actors in the political sphere of a mass democracy. Fortunately, language provides us with terms that are able to fulfill the task of simplifying the complexity of ideologies and therefore facilitate political communication. Arguably, the most prominent such terms in European democracies are those of left and right (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990; Knutsen 1995; Laponce 1981).

Dating back to the time of the French Revolution, the notions of left and right have come to function as a spatial representation of opposed ideologies. Moreover, left and right do not only denote opposite ideological poles, but they span an ideological continuum along which actors and policies can be placed (Laponce 1981: 27). On the basis of its spatial nature the left-right dimension has developed a considerable amount of “absorptive power” (Knutsen 1995: 87), that is, the capacity to accommodate a wide variety of policy issues. Therefore, one underlying assumption of this work is that the value orientations associated with the terms left and right not only changed over time (Inglehart 1977; Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990; Knutsen 2002) but also vary across political systems. In order to further examine the latter conjecture, the following research question will be addressed:

What are the differences in the meaning of the left-right dimension across Europe?

As ideological competition lies at the very heart of democratic politics, it is of considerable interest to the political sciences to clarify the extent to which European citizens refer to the same values when using the terms left and right. The greater the cross-national variation in the meaning of left and right, the more carefully this concept should be applied in a comparative perspective.

From the research question outlined above, it becomes clear that the task at hand is a genuinely comparative endeavour. As Almond et al. (2001: 39) put it, „[c]omparison is the methodological core of the scientific study of politics“. Not only does it foster our understanding of the respective case (be it a party, a political system or – as in this case – value orientations at the societal level), but it contributes to the identification of causalities that cannot be detected by investigating only single cases.

What is more, there are specific reasons why such a comparative study of ideology at the mass public level is relevant for the case of Europe. Against the background of the process of European Integration which leads some academics to expect that „the main dimension of EU politics should shift from ‘integrationists’ against ‘nationalists’ to traditional left-right divisions“ (Hix 2008: 1255), it is of great significance to examine the extent to which the left-right semantics comprise a core of shared references to certain values and beliefs. To put it simply: the higher the agreement as to the meaning of left and right across Europe, the more valuable the terms will be in describing the structure of political competition within the institutional and the public sphere of the European Union.

No less than seventeen out of 21 countries included in this study are EU member states (the non-members being Switzerland, Israel, Norway, and Russia) . Due to the absence of predominantly small countries the respective data account for more than three quarters of the European Union’s population. It can therefore be expected that the results of this study are of relevance in highlighting the utility of the left-right dimension as a European political conflict structure.

As will later be argued in more detail, one of the main functions of the left-right dimension is to serve as a communication tool by simplifying complex ideological conflicts into a bipolar spatial archetype. The value content associated with the terms

left and right is likely to vary with the specific conflicts that shaped the political landscape of a country through the course of modern history.

In order to answer the research question outlined above, I first present an overview of theoretical approaches to the functions of the left-right dimension. I distinguish between the function of spatial representation of ideological conflict on the one hand and the communication and orientation function in the public sphere on the other. It has to be borne in mind, however, that these two functions are not separable but rather represent two sides of the same medal.

These two complementary functions of the left-right continuum are, however, constrained by the fact that their respective logics are potentially conflicting. Whereas the ideological function is rooted in the capacity of the left-right semantics to accommodate a broad range of ideological conflicts, the communication function might be constrained by too great a number of policy issues being associated with left and right.

In accordance with a vast array of scholarly literature (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Knutsen 1995; Freire 2006, 2008) three components of the left-right schema are discussed: the socio-structural component refers to divisions between social groups as the basis of ideological conflict, the most prominent being the class cleavage. The partisan component reflects party identification that is translated into left-right self-placement by individuals. The focus of this study, however, is on the value component, that is, on the relation between left-right self-placement and beliefs held by individuals. This threefold component structure of the left-right dimension mirrors the concept of a cleavage as defined by a number of scholars (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Knutsen 1995). Cleavage theory (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) will, however, provide another important contribution to the theoretical groundwork that this study builds on. As the left-right semantics may refer to different political conflicts at different times, it is essential to understand the historical significance of different cleavages and their relation to different socio-structural variables such as the economic state or the religious stratifications of a given society.

That is why a part of the theoretical section in this study sketches the historical evolution of the left-right terminology. From their first use in a political context –

namely that of the French Revolution – through the nineteenth century, the terms left and right shifted from denoting republican-monarchist or secular-religious conflict lines to representing the opposing groups and ideologies in the class conflict that, reinforced by the extension of the suffrage in many Western European countries, became the most significant cleavage of European societies for most of the nineteenth century. Only in the final decades of the twentieth century has there been an increase of non-economic societal conflicts: the environment, immigration, cultural issues and the like have not only turned attention away from the typical socio-economic issues of the class conflict. They also gave rise to a new family of parties on either side of the political spectrum. Right-wing populists or radicals and left-libertarian or green parties might have little in common – but both groups attracted considerable support in the electorate on a primarily non-economic policy platform. Thus, the meaning of left and right has been transformed during the past decades from being predominantly about class issues to encompass non-material value orientations as well.

As a reflection of the most significant historical conflict lines running through European societies and in line with existing scholarly works about the left-right dimension (e. g. Knutsen 1995; Freire 2006, 2008; Middendorp 1992), three ideological dimensions are then chosen to serve as indicators for the left-right self-identification of individuals: religiosity, socio-economic values and authoritarian-libertarian beliefs.

Finally, the theoretical part concludes with a discussion of different theoretical approaches to the changing meaning of the left-right dimension (Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990) and a section concerned with the causal direction between value orientations and self-placement on the left-right scale. It is argued that the former influences the latter rather than the other way round.

Based on this theoretical groundwork, the third chapter presents six hypotheses to be tested empirically – two pertaining to each of the three value dimensions. All of the hypotheses refer to patterns of similarity and difference between European societies. For instance, a division between predominantly Protestant and non-Protestant countries is conjectured on the basis of cleavage theory. Further, there are assumptions referring to the role of the communist legacy in Eastern Europe and the effects of postwar economic prosperity in most parts of Western Europe.

Survey data from the most recent European Social Survey (ESS) are used to operationalize the research question and the respective variables will then be employed multivariate regression analyses. On the basis of these first results, I will discuss cross-national similarities and differences in the value orientations that are associated with the left-right dimension. At this point, some preliminary outcomes indicating whether to accept or reject the reasoning behind some of the six hypotheses will already be available. However, other country-level data (such as economic measures or figures about religious denominations) will be necessary to fully assess the validity of the assumptions made.

The ultimate aim of this study, however, is to identify meaningful groupings of countries. This task is performed by means of cluster analysis which categorizes the 21 European countries according to their respective left-right value profile.

The final chapter sums up the results of the analysis and draws conclusions as to the possible precautions of using the left-right dimension in a comparative perspective.

2. THEORETICAL GROUNDWORK

Left and right are, first and foremost, dichotomous terms denoting the horizontal dimension of physical space. The transfer of these terms to the political sphere is fostered not only by the fact that politics lends itself to the use of spatial metaphors (Benoit and Laver 2006: 14 ff.). What is more, the left-right duality possesses qualities that set it apart from other dichotomies: First, left-right is non-hierarchical, that is, it does not assign more value, greater power, or higher priority to either pole, as would up-down or back-front (Laponce 1975: 17); second, it can “easily be transformed into a continuum” (Laponce 1981: 27) with a centre positioned in between the two extremes (I use the terms dimension, continuum and schema more or less interchangeably in this study); and third, the notions of left and right are present in all cultures, so that the use of this spatial reference is, at least in principle, not limited geographically. The consequences implicit therein for the application of left and right as an ideological schema are discussed in the following.

2.1. The functions of the left-right dimension

Two main functions are identified in the literature on the left-right dimension, one referring to ideological conflict (e. g. Inglehart and Klingemann 1976), the other to the role of left-right semantics as a means of communication between actors in a polity (e. g. Arian and Shamir 1984). These functions, however, cannot be viewed entirely separated from each other, but have to be regarded as interdependent and mutually reinforcing. For the purpose of this work, however, it seems apt to distinguish them analytically, since it will later be argued that the communications function of left and right is possibly hampered by disagreement as to the content of the ideological conflict that is denoted by the left-right semantics.

2.1.1. The spatial representation of ideological conflict

Left and right are archetypes that perfectly lend themselves to represent ideological conflict in a one-dimensional space. Consequently, the left-right continuum comes to

serve as a political schema and thus helps „people order the elements of their environment“ (Conover and Feldman 1984: 96).

Historically, the non-hierarchical qualities of the left-right dimension rendered it a suitable tool for the illustration of political struggle at a time when the long-established dominance of the monarch, the nobility and the high clergy was questioned by the bourgeoisie. It is therefore hardly surprising that the establishment of left and right as a metaphor for ideological conflict dates back to late eighteenth century France.

Following the French Revolution, the seating arrangements in the French National Assembly of 1789 placed the high clergy and the nobility on the right, the low clergy and the members of the Third Estate on the left (for a detailed description see Laponce 1981: 47–52). This division was never solely one between groups of different social status but also one along lines of ideological conflict over the adaptation of a new constitution. The coincidence of spatial and ideological divisions provided the foundation for the transformation of left and right from purely spatial terms into an ideological concept. In the course of the nineteenth century, this concept spread from France to the rest of Europe and farther around the globe through two channels: „the language of parliamentary democracy and the language of socialism“ (Laponce 1981: 52). Thus, the primary dimension of ideological conflict was given the same name in a great number of polities.

In the wake of the French Revolution, the right became linked with support for the *ancien régime*, whereas the left stood for ideas of revolutionary change. The fact that left and right are still used more than 200 years after the first meeting of the French National Assembly shows that, while the specific meaning of left and right has without doubt changed considerably since the late 18th century, the function as a spatial representation of ideological conflict remains the same. In other words, the ideological function of the left-right dimension is to represent „a super-issue which summarizes the programmes of opposing groups“ (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976: 244).

It has to be added, however, that the vast majority of individuals today do not as a rule think of left and right in strictly ideological terms but rather have an „understanding of those labels [...] at a basic and unsophisticated level“ (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990: 205). Nevertheless, a great share of the populace in European countries (and elsewhere)

can make use of the terms left and right – whatever the meaning associated with them. What is more, despite a majority of voters not exhibiting an ideologically consistent set of preferences, Feld and Grofman (1988) have shown that the likelihood of a group to display ideological consistency is greater than that of individual members of that group. The nature of the ideological conflict associated with left and right varies considerably over time. Knutsen (1995: 66), for instance, holds that “religious/secular values were the central conflict line emerging from pre-industrial society” and therefore closely connected to the left-right dimension – a view that is supported by Laponce’s (1970, 1972) findings. In contrast, Lipset et al. (1954: 1135) do not refer to specifically secular value orientations when characterizing the left as “advocating social change in the direction of greater equality – political, social or economic”. Summing up all such phenomena, Arend Lijphart (1990) identifies no less than seven dimensions of ideological conflict that are present in Western European polities, all of which are possibly related to the left-right dimension in one way or another.

From these examples it becomes clear that the left-right dimension can accommodate quite different sorts of ideological conflict and owes much of this “absorptive power” (Knutsen 1995: 87) to its primal meaninglessness in ideological terms, that is, the fact that the left-right semantics do not literally account for ideological content. In contrast, the labels “liberal” and “conservative” (for an in-depth discussion see Conover and Feldman 1981), whilst being seen as “functional equivalents” (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990: 203, footnote 2) to left and right, are by their very nature much less flexible as to the incorporation of a vast variety of ideological conflict lines, because they represent ideological labels themselves.

Yet, the versatility of the left-right dimension is additionally furthered by its possible application to a wide variety of objects: individuals, social groups, political actors, institutions, parties, governments, but also single statements, policies, values, ideologies, et cetera. We can therefore conclude that not only the *absorptive* but also the *applicative power* of left and right adds to the terms’ prevalence as the most important denotations of opposing political objects.

2.1.2. Left and right as a means of communication and orientation

Supplementary to its role as a dimension of ideological conflict, the left-right schema serves as a tool for communication and orientation in the political sphere. In general, schemata are „used by individuals to process efficiently new information and retrieve memories“ (Langford 1991: 478). As Fuchs and Klingemann (1990: 203) put it, the left-right continuum can be considered an instrument “that citizens can use to orient themselves in the political world“. Knutsen (2002: 31) holds a similar view but further specifies that the left-right dimension “for individuals [...] has primarily orientation functions, and for the political system communication functions”.

Some scholars, most notably Arian and Shamir (1983) would even go so far to say that the communication and orientation function is the only function that the left-right continuum has for mass publics: “The left-right concept for most people is not ideology, nor does it influence their vote” (ibid.: 140). Consequently, left and right hardly ever refer to ideological beliefs held by individuals or groups, but must be seen as “political labels” denoting objects in the political sphere, most frequently parties.

The underlying assumptions of this work, however, are less rigid. In accordance with most research, the function of the left-right dimension as a “political esperanto” (Laponce 1981: 54) must be seen both as complementary to and dependent on the ideological function. The logics of both functions, however, are potentially conflicting. Whereas the semantic versatility of left and right was highlighted before as a precondition of its universal use in denoting ideological conflict, the communication function may be hampered by the concept becoming too flexible. To put it simply: if left and right can refer to anything, the meaning of the terms will be lost.

Thus, for the left-right dimension to function properly as a communication tool across sociological strata and even cultures, the middle ground between two extremes needs to be occupied. On the one hand, ideological conflicts in general must be simplified in order to fit the plain dichotomy of left and right. This means that complex patterns of struggle over value beliefs have to be broken down into a unidimensional form. Oversimplification, on the other hand, can lead to uncertainty as to the boundaries of the left-right-schema.

In Fuchs and Klingemann's (1990: 206 f.) words, there is a tension between the „symbolic generalization“ and the „limitation“ of the left-right concept, the former referring to its absorptive capacities outlined above, the latter to the need for specification of its content. The research question driving this work is ultimately sparked by this tension, for it aims to highlight whether the amount of generalization necessary for a shared understanding of left and right by different social entities (in this case: national populations) allows for sufficient limitation of the concept as required for efficient communication.

2.1.3. The left-right semantics as a cognitive schema

The two functions of the left-right dimension that have been presented here roughly reflect two strands of a scientific argument about the nature of belief systems in mass publics. To put it simply, the core of the debate is about ideological consistency of individuals' beliefs and value orientations. For instance, the seminal work of Converse (1964) implied that, in order for the left-right (or liberal-conservative) dimension to make sense beyond well-informed elite groups, there must be consistency between ideological self-placement and political values and beliefs amongst large portions of the electorate (e. g. Nie and Andersen 1974).

Other authors stress the fact that only a minority of individuals tend to display ideologically consistent political views, which is why the left-right dimension should be „disconnected from their close linkage with the concept of ideological thinking“ (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990: 204).

If, however, we cannot expect to find at the individual level a connection between value orientations and left-right self-identification, the research task of this study appears to be in vain. Yet, some qualifications have to be made concerning the question of ideological consistency. First of all, Fuchs and Klingemann (1990: 205) raise an important issue in their arguing that the left-right continuum can still serve as a meaningful device: the „individual-level function must be augmented by a social or systemic perspective“.

It is therefore important to clarify at this point that the analysis here is not concerned with ideological consistency at the individual level, but that the object of interest is the

relation between left-right self-identification and certain beliefs and political attitudes at the societal level.

That said, it is essential to point out that individuals and (large) groups differ considerably in their tendencies to display preferences that are ideologically consistent. Feld and Grofman (1988) provide theoretical arguments and empirical evidence for the phenomenon that (1) the ideological consistency of a group is not necessarily a linear function of the share of individuals with single-peaked preference orderings in that group; and (2) that collectivities tend to exhibit ideologically consistent preferences even when a large portion of individuals do not fulfill this criterion.

Feld and Grofman (1988: 786) make an important distinction in their explaining argument:

It is important to distinguish between the question whether members of a society agree with each other about preferences and the question whether they agree with each other about the continuum along which alternatives are to be evaluated. In other words, collectivities can agree, in the aggregate, on what we might call the „terms of the debate,“ while having great disagreement as individuals about what is the best choice.

Given the long-standing use of the left-right dimension for denoting structures of political conflict, there is good reason to believe that this continuum is profoundly established and therefore represents a well-known background against which to evaluate political actors, policies or political views.

Such a background has been termed „schema“ by cognitive psychologists. A schema can be described as a formation of previously obtained knowledge by which new perceptions are ordered and connected to older information. As Conover and Feldman (1984: 96) put it, schemas „lend organization to an individual's experience in the sense that people order the elements of their environment to reflect the structure of relevant schemas“.

The findings of Feld and Grofman (1988) clearly indicate that the left-right dimension serves as such a schema, especially at the societal level, where it represents a widely „shared continuum“ (Feld and Grofman 1988: 786).

However, while constituting one of the most relevant schemas for an individual's organization of political views, the left-right continuum is far from being the only

belief-related schema that people use. What is more, the schema concept basically applies to the individual level. Since the concern here is the group or societal level of value orientations, I do not posit that all value orientations examined at the individual level relate to the left-right schema. It will, however, be argued that the left-right dimension due to its long-standing history is sufficiently established in European societies so that there is considerable agreement as to the relevance of this schema.

In other words, the results of this analysis might highlight the extent of agreement concerning the relevance or usefulness of the left-right schema in organizing and evaluating certain sets of value orientations.

2.1.4. Left and right as social representations

In a recent article, Corbetta et al. (2009) put forward another way of interpreting the political terms left and right. Drawing on social psychology, they argue that the left-right semantics bear the characteristics of social representations which they describe as follows:

They are forms of social knowledge: systems of values, beliefs, opinions, semantic repertoires and theories of common sense resulting from a process of reconstruction of reality into a symbolic system elaborated in relation to socially relevant objects through communicative exchanges between people in groups and communities (Corbetta et al. 2009: 625)

Similar to a *schema*, social representations serve as a means for organizing knowledge by reducing complexity in patterns of information. Therefore they function as a common semantic ground to which communication between individuals can refer.

However, in addition to fulfilling these tasks, social representations are characterized by the fact that they are made up of a stable semantic core and a periphery of meanings that is prone to change across time and space. This concept bears similarities with Laponce's (1981) model of stable meanings at the core of the left-right dimension and an altering set of variable terms and objects located more distant from the core.

Corbetta et al. (2009) present empirical evidence from mass surveys conducted in Italy between 1968 and 2006, thus suggesting that such a core-periphery structure exists for the left-right dimension. Respondents were asked open-ended questions about their associations with the terms left and right. While abstract notions in respondents'

answers remain stable and even increase in importance over the observed time period, the number of peripheral – that is: more concrete – associations with left and right declines.

This appears logical considering the massive rearrangements the Italian party and political system underwent during the early nineties. With party ties loosened and the political system in turmoil, the peripheral elements (e. g. parties or party leaders) associated with the left-right semantics are likely to be even more unstable and individuals increasingly associate more abstract core elements with the left-right dimension.

Corbetta et al. (2009: 630 f.) define four levels of abstraction between the core and the periphery meanings of the left-right dimension: references to (1) political actors (e. g. government/opposition), (2) social groups and class/religious cleavages (e. g. the workers/the rich/the clerics), (3) the state or social order (e. g. an economic dimension/democracy/social change), and (4) general or ideological principles (e. g. equality/socialism/fascism). For the purpose of this study it can be contended that the operationalization of the research question works at the two intermediate levels of abstraction. As will be outlined in section 3.2, specific issues such as church attendance, state intervention in the economy, or immigration – equivalent to the second level of abstraction in Corbetta et al. (2009) – will be used to capture the role of three more abstract dimensions: a religious, a socio-economic, and a libertarian-authoritarian one – corresponding to the third level of abstraction.

This intermediate strategy seems apt for the task at hand since a too concrete mode of operationalization would obstruct cross-national comparison whereas a more abstract approach runs the risk of yielding too little variation between countries.

2.2. The components of the left-right dimension

The terms left and right can be applied to different classes of objects. Following a vast array of scholarly literature (e. g. Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Huber 1989; Knutsen 1989, 1995, 1997; Freire 2006, 2008), I distinguish between a socio-structural, a partisan, and a value component of the left-right dimension. These three elements reflect the structure of a cleavage as defined by Bartolini and Mair (1990): empirical,

organizational, and normative. As the research question here refers to the normative, that is, the value component of the left-right dimension, the former two are only briefly discussed.

2.2.1. The socio-structural component of the left-right dimension

Social conflict lines more often than not run along socio-structural divisions, most typically the class cleavage during the industrial era. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that these divisions are incorporated into the left-right schema. As Freire puts it, the socio-structural component of the left-right dimension refers to „connections between citizens' locations in the social structure, plus their corresponding social identities, and their left–right orientation“ (Freire 2006: 360).

In the days of the French Revolution, the Third Estate embodied the left, the nobles and the clergy the right. Following the Industrial Revolution, the manual workers became the social basis of the left pole, the employers and producers found themselves on the right.

As a consequence of the expansion of the third sector and the decrease of the manual labour force in European societies, there is widely held belief amongst scholars that the role of the socio-structural component as a determinant of political orientation and voting behaviour is declining in importance (Inglehart and Flanagan 1987; Bartle 1998; Nieuwbeerta and Ultee 1999; Hellwig 2008; see however Elff 2007) or undergoing major shifts (Kriesi 1998). By contrast, Freire (2006) notes that social factors contribute a great deal to the left-right self-placement of individuals and argues therefore that in previous studies „the models for social anchors were underspecified“ (Freire 2006: 371) in not accounting for social identities that are linked to socio-structural characteristics.

However, while there may be a decline in the importance of the industrial class cleavage, there are well-founded claims that other socio-structural indicators such as education (Stubager 2005, 2006, 2009) have come to serve as the social divisions from which new cleavages emerge.

For the purpose of this study, however, socio-structural factors are of minor importance since they indicate at most indirectly the meaning that is given to the left-right dimension in different polities.

2.2.2. The partisan component of the left-right dimension

Contrary to the debate about social and socio-structural factors and their influence on the left-right dimension, there is little disagreement amongst scholars as to the importance of the partisan component. Parties are not only the main actors in most Western democracies, but they are manifestations of ideological conflict lines that are or were present in a society (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

It is therefore hardly surprising that parties are easily associated with the terms left and right. Throughout Europe a number of parties even bear the names left and right, such as the Norwegian „Høyre“ (“Right”) or the Danish „Venstre“ (“Right”). Moreover, indirect reference to the left-right dimension is made by the names of agrarian parties such as the Swedish „Centerpartiet“ (“Centre Party”) or the Finnish „Suomen Keskusta“ (“Finnish Centre”); for a brief discussion of Scandinavian party names see Knutsen (2002: 32 f.).

As Inglehart and Klingemann (1976: 244) put it „party loyalties could lead members of the public to adopt ideological labels for themselves that are unrelated to their current issue positions“. We can therefore assume that the partisan component of left and right is to a greater degree associated with the communication function of the left-right dimension. Since left and right are „cues given by the political system, in particular political parties, with respect to political objects“ with the „major political objects“ being parties themselves (Arian and Shamir 1983: 140), it is obvious that individuals associate parties more easily with the left-right dimension than ideological content.

Good empirical evidence for the link between party preference and left-right self-placement is delivered by Inglehart and Klingemann (1976: 257) who conclude that „one’s self location on the left-right dimension is simply often a reflection of where one perceives one’s favourite political party“. In ten out of eleven countries covered in their study the correlation coefficients between left-right self-placement and party identification range from 0,33 to 0,78, with only Ireland (0,19) deviating from the general pattern.

Further evidence comes from Knutsen (1995, 1998b) who finds that, although value orientations play a bigger role than suggested by Inglehart and Klingemann’s (1976)

survey, party identification still outperforms other variables as an indicator of individuals' left-right self-placement: „it is evident that the partisan component is considerably larger than the value-based component“ (Knutsen 1995: 199).

A valuable contribution furthering the understanding of the link between party identification and the left-right dimension is made by Freire (2008). Applying a multi-level approach he shows that the explanatory power of both the value and the partisan component increases with party polarization: „the higher the polarization the more weight that socio- economic values and partisan orientations have explaining citizens' left–right self-placement“ (Freire 2008: 199).

From a comparative perspective it must of course be reckoned that parties and party systems constitute country-specific features that can hardly be held constant in cross-national research. In the light of the research question of this study, it therefore seems apt not to include party identification as an indicator of the meaning of the left-right dimension and rather focus on value orientations. After all, cross-national variation in the dependent variable (left-right self-placement) might otherwise only reflect cross-national variation in the independent variable (party system).

2.2.3. The value component of the left-right dimension

Ideology encompasses value orientations. Therefore, if left and right serve as ideological labels within the political sphere of mass publics, there must be value orientations associated with them. Clearly, the ideological concept of left and right would become shallow if there were no beliefs, worldviews, political programs, issue preferences, or simply opinions about certain policies linked to it.

After all, the meaning of left and right, as understood throughout this work, is given to the terms by beliefs that (groups of) individuals are more or less likely to hold when describing themselves as being more to the left or to the right.

Societal cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) are one major source of value orientations being incorporated into the left-right dimension. For the purpose of this study, however, it is of minor importance if the cleavages represented by the left-right continuum are of a more interest-based or ideological kind. Indeed, hardly any social division that can be empirically traced is constituted purely of one or the other type.

While a cleavage in the narrow sense of the word encompasses a socio-structural, an organizational, and an ideological component (Bartolini and Mair 1990), it is obvious that value orientations that correlate with left-right self-identification need not necessarily stem from the presence of all three elements of a cleavage. This is especially true when considering the erosion of the social basis of the class cleavage due to major changes taking place in Western societies during the post-war era. Inglehart and Flanagan (1987: 1296) therefore argue that the late twentieth century is witnessing a development „from class-based to value based political polarization“.

The implications of this development for the research question presented here are crucial. If enduring economic prosperity and social peace as well as significant changes in the social structure of the labour force drive the decline in importance of the class cleavage in industrial societies and hence render more salient a new set of values and beliefs, there is good reason to assume that the degree to which this shift is taking place depends on the amount of economic prosperity and social stability that has been present in a country.

Presupposing that new value orientations and policy issues – be they labelled postmaterialist, New Politics, libertarian-authoritarian, or GAL/TAN (see below for further explanation) – are at least partially incorporated into the semantics of left and right (an assumption that is supported by inter alia Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990, and Knutsen 1995), it can further be conjectured that such a shift in the individual beliefs associated with the terms left and right is more likely to take place in highly developed and prosperous societies. Eventually, this process may lead to cross-national variation in the meaning of left and right.

2.3. The meaning of the left-right dimension

The following section first reviews the specific meaning given to the left-right dimension. First, a historical overview sketches the development of these terms from late eighteenth century France to the establishment of mass democracy in large parts of Europe around 1900. Second, I identify three value cleavages which, in accord with previous research (Knutsen 1995, 2002; Freire 2006, 2008; Middendorp 1992), can be

supposed to determine individuals' left-right orientation: religious, socio-economic, and libertarian-authoritarian values and beliefs.

Third, four conceptual approaches to the changing meaning of the left-right dimension are discussed (Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990): irrelevance, persistence, transformation and pluralisation theory. The fact that the findings of Kitschelt and Hellemans (1990) as well as Knutsen (1995) are in support for the latter approach adds to the relevance of the research issue at stake.

Finally, a short subsection is devoted to the question of the causal relationship between value orientations and left-right self-identification. Following Middendorp (1992: 250) it is argued that the former causes the latter and not the other way round.

2.3.1. From the French Revolution to mass democracy

In what follows the historical development of the terms left and right is outlined from their first use as political labels in the wake of the French Revolution until their establishment as expressions of the industrial cleavage and their subsequent transformation during the twentieth century. The account given here largely reflects the findings of Laponce (1981: 47 ff.) and Eatwell (1989).

During the late spring of 1789 the French Estates General – comprising the clergy, the nobility and the commons – assembled for a discussion of a new constitution. The monarch, Louis XVI, together with his ministers presided the opening session of the so called National Assembly. A brief account of the seating arrangements is given by Laponce (1981: 47):

The king sat on a throne raised on the highest platform. [...] The clergy was on the right side, the nobility on the left. The Third Estate, further removed from the king's throne than either nobles or clergy, was linked to the two privileged orders. An up/down, close/far, and right/left space determined the order of preference: the higher, the closer to the king and the more clearly to his right, the greater the distinction.

The hierarchical order that was manifest in this spatial disposition was soon challenged by the commoners. The decision about the voting procedure proved to be a critical event in the course of these gatherings. While the members of the clergy and the nobility clearly favoured a procedure that would give each of the three Estates the same weight, the commoners argued for a *one man one vote* system.

This conflict led the Third Estate to revolt against the orders of the king who had before put the gatherings of the assembly on hold. However, even without Royal consent, the commoners congregated on their own and „proclaimed themselves to be a National Assembly“ (Laponce 1981: 47). However, they did not fail to invite the other two Estates to join them – an offer that was first only accepted by the clergy but eventually by all members of the nobility as well. With the first clergymen to arrive in the self-proclaimed National Assembly, the spatial ordering was determined for the future of the legislature:

The president answered: The deputies of the estate of the clergy at the Estates General shall be received with all the courteousness and respect owed to them. Their usual seats from the previous assembly are free to receive them. [...] The members of the clergy sat down in their seats to the right of the president (Mavidal, Laurent and Clavel 1875: 141; translation by the author).

The outcome of these events was crucial: the members of the new assembly were no longer meant to represent their Estate but were expected to act as representatives of the French nation as a whole. The hierarchical seating arrangements that structured the assembly in the beginning were replaced by two groups opposing each other: „most of the nobility and clergy could be seen to take up positions on the right, whereas the Third Estate [...] occupied the left (Eatwell 1989: 33).

Surely, the first gatherings of this new National Assembly in 1789 must have been somewhat disorganized and chaotic, but only two years later – after a renewal of the legislature through the voters – the picture had become much clearer:

The attention of the whole of France is now directed at the new legislature. Yet the tempers of the French are divided into three parties. One part, usually called the aristocrat party whose followers took the right side in the previous National Assembly, is disapproving of the whole constitution and even partly allowed itself to protest against it; another part, and that is the party which in the end gained the upper hand in the National Assembly and made the constitution, is called the moderate or the monarchic [party], because it sought to reconcile the virtues of monarchic government and the reputation of the constituted Royal decency with the rights and freedom of the people; opposed to this party is the demagogic or republican [party] which for a long time dominated the National Assembly and, had its system got through, would have eternalized anarchy. (Wiener Zeitung, October 19, 1791, translation by the author)

The identification of the aristocrats with the right side of the assembly had become more than a spatial reference – it had obtained a pejorative connotation:

During this discussion, Mr. La Croix said that some members from the right side wished to speak: this description which called to mind the right side of the previous assembly, was received by the whole chamber with such great objection that Mr. La Croix could only evade the penalty of being arrested through an excuse and a declaration that he was far from comparing the members sitting on the right side with the right side of the previous assembly. (Wiener Zeitung, October 19, 1791; translation by the author)

Within a surprisingly short – but admittedly eventful – period of time, the terms of left and right had, in addition to their literal meaning, acquired political connotations that would continuously be used in describing political conflict in France and other European countries of the nineteenth century.

However, from the citations above it becomes clear that the first conflict to be expressed by the left-right labels was about the role of the French monarchy and the adoption of a new constitution in. At later stages, other cleavages, such as the religious-secular featured more prominently under these labels.

Interestingly, the economic policies advocated by the left and the right during the pre-industrial era were the sheer opposites of what is deemed to be their contemporary economic meaning: „In economic terms, the right defended feudal relations, and government monopolies. The left tended more to defend the free market [...]“ (Eatwell 1989: 34). Also, Laponce (1981: 118) holds that at that time „the left was individualistic and opposed to group property. It was opposed to economic regulations [...]“.

Given the parliamentary environment in which the left-right semantics were established as a political vocabulary it is hardly surprising that the relevance of the terms varied with the absence or presence of parliamentary rule throughout the nineteenth century. Also, the parliamentary systems of England and the United States, which had been in place prior to the French Revolution and therefore had brought about their own labels for political groups, adopted the left-right terminology to a much lesser extent. The United States until today retain the terms liberal and conservative as functional equivalents of left and right (see e. g. Conover and Feldman 1981).

Against this background it appears logical that the industrial class cleavage would only be incorporated into the left-right schema once suffrage was extended to the working class so that socialist parties could enter the parliamentary arena and thus change the political competition all across Europe. Again, this change took place neither

simultaneously nor to the same extent in all democratic political systems. As Eatwell (1989: 34) notes „the Dreyfuss Affair in the 1890s was an especially important factor in holding back class differences“ in France.

When in the wake of the Industrial Revolution the rise of the workers' movement gave birth to the – initially extra-parliamentary – socialist parties, the introduction of mass suffrage established a new conflict line within legislatures. While still at odds with each other on many issues, the old parties suddenly found themselves on the same side of the predominant class division. In some countries this led to stronger cooperation, even merging of the right-wing parties. In others, most notably in the United Kingdom, the rise of the socialist parties resulted in the decline of one major party of the right.

While the left of the French Revolution and the socialist left of the late nineteenth century differed on a lot of issues, they shared a belief in the necessity of revolutionary change. However, as socialist parties gained more and more seats in national parliaments, they were forced to opt either for cooperation with the bourgeois parties or to remain isolated in the political process: „The choice of either alternative was at first described under a great variety of contrasting labels [...] but increasingly the choice appeared as choice between left and right“ (Laponce 1981: 55).

The socialist and communist movements helped to spread the left-right terminology from Western Europe to Russia, China and even the United States. Quite a number of socialist or communist parties officially called themselves left or parties.

Within a few decades the political objects labelled left or right and the ideological views associated with those terms had markedly changed. The confusion as to the meaning of left and right was even expanded by the ascription of the left-right terminology to the fascist and communist regimes that formed during the first half of the twentieth century. A left-right ordering of ideologies or regimes therefore usually takes the following form (see Eatwell 1989: 42):

Communism Socialism Liberalism Conservatism Fascism

There are, however, several problems with such a unidimensional approach. Considering, for instance, the role of economic issues, it can hardly be argued that

fascist regimes were non-interventionist proponents of the free market. What is more, the extent of government propaganda, mass activism and the totalitarian state that were present under communist as well as fascist rule suggest that the extremes of this scale may have more in common than indicated by this specific ordering. The major flaw of this left-right sequence, however, is the insufficient differentiation between ideologies (such as liberalism) and concrete political regimes (such as fascism).

Regardless of the lack of clarity in such ascriptions, the twentieth century, and especially the period of the Cold War, shaped the terms left and right as labels for the opposing sides of the industrial class conflict. Only in the last quarter of the twentieth century the class cleavage lines have been supplemented by other societal divisions. Inglehart (1977: 183) argues that long-time experiences of economic prosperity and stability will render quality-of-life issues more important at the expense of economic issues:

In an increasingly Post-Materialist society one might expect the most salient political questions to shift from economic to life-style issues; along with this would come a change in the political meaning of Left and Right, and we might also anticipate a fundamental shift in the social bases of political partisanship.

Although there may be many legitimate criticisms of Inglehart's post-materialism hypothesis, there are good reasons to believe that non-economic issues have increasingly shaped political competition during the past three decades and therefore also affected the meaning of left and right. As a matter of fact, Western Europe experienced the rise of a new party family that has been given labels such as „New Right“, „extreme right“, „radical right“, „right-wing populist“ or the like (for an analysis of the conceptual confusion see Mudde 1996). While there is little scholarly agreement as to the classification of these parties, it can be viewed as certain that they did not win their share of the vote on a platform of economic policies.

Similarly, the environmental or green parties that entered a number of West European legislatures during the 1980s are on the left in that “they oppose the market place and insist on solidarity and equality” (Kitschelt 1988: 197). However, these parties have at the heart of their ideology issues that are non-material: environmentalism, feminism, self-governance, pacifism, and the like.

With new parties running on non-economic issues on either side of the left-right spectrum, the structure of political competition is likely to be altered. The dominance in determining left and right of the socio-economic issues related to the class cleavage is becoming at least relatively weaker with new issues and lines of conflict featuring prominently on the political agenda of European democracies in the last two decades of the twentieth century (see Kitschelt 1988).

2.3.3. Cleavages: religious, socio-economic, and libertarian-authoritarian values

Given that the terms left and right have been used to capture major ideological conflicts during the past 200 years in Europe, it is likely that their meaning today reflects the historical development of cleavages throughout the continent. I therefore choose to examine the influence of three sets of value orientations that correspond to historical periods.

The religious-secular cleavage in the eyes of Knutsen (1995: 66) is „the central conflict line emerging from pre-industrial society“. Also, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) consider it the most important cleavage previous to the processes of industrialization that took place all over Europe. The trigger events that brought to the fore these deep divisions within numerous European societies were National Revolutions (such as the French) which challenged the Churches' authority over many realms of public life, from health care and civil law to education and science.

The fierceness of this conflict was much more outspoken in societies with an overwhelmingly Catholic or mixed belief populace than in countries with a clear dominance of Protestant followers. As confessions in the latter were organized as national churches, the shared national identity could serve as a common ground on which to compromise about the role of the church within the nation state. Such reconciliation was impeded in non- or only partially Protestant societies by the fact that a large part of the population at least implicitly questioned the authority of the national leaders by remaining loyal to a different, less profane but still political, authority: the pope in Rome.

Today, the still remarkable number (and size) of Christian-democratic and Christian-social parties present in Europe at the beginning of the twenty-first century can serve as

a rough indicator for the persistence of the religious cleavage. Taking a closer look, Lijphart holds that, while “a decline of ideology has occurred” (1990: 259), the religious dimension is still the second most significant in Western Europe.

Religious people across European countries tend “to favour values that promote conservation of social and individual order” (Saroglou / Delpierre and Dernelle 2004). From this insight, we can expect individuals with strong religious ties to be more to the right than people are on average. Similar conclusions can be drawn from Laponce’s (1970, 1972, 1981) findings which suggest that religious terms and symbols are clearly connected to the right pole of the left-right schema. Likewise, Middendorp (1992), Knutsen (1995), and Freire (2006, 2008) deliver empirical proof for the relevance of religious beliefs as to the meaning of the left-right dimension.

On these grounds, religious value orientations are included in the present study as one of three sets of determinants of left-right self-identification. Given the varying shares of non-believers and the diverse confessional composition of European countries (Cipriani 2009), we can expect to find considerable variation in the strength of the religious value component.

While the societal developments driving the establishment of the religious cleavage differed widely across countries, the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution that gave birth to the socio-economic cleavage were much more uniform. Therefore, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) hold that the class cleavage accounts for variations in the conflict structure *within* but not *among* countries.

Two crucial preconditions for the socio-economic cleavage to come into effect were the rise of parliamentary rule in Europe during the nineteenth century and the extension of the suffrage to encompass all (male) citizens within a polity. This is not to say that the ideology of the left was always in line with democratic norms:

„When mass democracy replaced bourgeois democracy, the left changed character. Its emphasis was increasingly on equality rather than on liberty, even if this required the use of authoritarian government and the abandonment of parliamentary democracy“ (Laponce 1981: 118).

Still, the majority of European countries at that time did not experience revolutionary change successfully enforced by Socialist or Communist Parties. Instead, the socio-economic conflicts of the industrial era became the major cleavage to be present *within*

the political systems of Europe. As Knutsen (1995: 65) puts it, the „key issues underlying the Left-Right polarization was the conflict over ownership of means of production and the distribution of income“. Hence, it is obvious that this division was and still is existent in most areas of social and economic policy-making. It encompasses a great number of specific policy issues such as public versus private property, state ownership versus privatization of firms, government intervention in the economy versus free enterprise, collective social responsibility versus individual rights and duties, higher versus lower tax rates, increasing versus decreasing public services, expansion versus cutback of the welfare state, government-steered redistribution versus market allocation of income, and the like.

Some indication for the importance of the socio-economic dimension is delivered by one of the most ambitious research projects in the discipline of political science: The *Comparative Manifesto Project* (Budge et al. 2006), uses twenty-six policy categories found in election manifestos to estimate the left-right position of political parties. Of these twenty-six items, twelve refer to socio-economic policies.

Anthony Downs, in his seminal work *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, outlines his spatial model of party competition along a single dimension where „the left end of the scale represents full government control [of the economy], and the right end means a completely free market“ (Downs 1957: 116). Thus, in the Downsian model, the left-right position of a voter becomes the sole determinant of his or her vote.

Throughout the twentieth century (with the exception of fascist rule during the 1930s and 1940s), the socio-economic dimension of left and right dominated political competition in most of Western Europe. Also, the structure of party systems throughout Western Europe reflects the persistence at least of the organizational element of the class cleavage (Lijphart 1990).

Taking all these arguments into consideration, it is likely that the value component of the class cleavage remains highly salient even if the ongoing transformation of European societies from an industrial to a post-industrial stage and the emergence of a broad middle class erode the social divisions at the base of the class cleavage. Empirical evidence for the continued relevance of socio-economic value orientations is presented by Knutsen (1995, 1997) and Kitschelt and Hellemans (1990).

However, starting with the works of Ronald Inglehart (most notably 1977) there has been growing scholarly attention to the emergence of a new political conflict line in Western societies. Confusingly, this cleavage has been given different names such as materialist-postmaterialist (e. g. Inglehart 1977; Middendorp 1992), New Politics (Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990; Rohrschneider 1993), libertarian-authoritarian (e. g. Evans / Heath and Lalljee 1996; Flanagan and Lee 2003), GAL-TAN (short for green/alternative/libertarianism-traditionalism/authority/nationalism, e. g. Marks et al. 2006), or simply „cultural dimension“ (Van der Brug and Van Spanje 2009).

The variety of labels used can be taken as an indicator of the variety of issues that have been associated with this dimension: environmentalism, quality of life, anti-immigration sentiment, strengthening of participatory democracy, support for authoritarian ideas, permissive policies on homosexuals and abortion, gender equality, nationalism, support for upholding traditions and customs, and so forth.

Although these topics at first glance seem quite unrelated, they share a common principle in that they are no typical bread and butter issues and therefore only become salient once socio-economic issues have been settled to some extent: „[A]s scarcity diminishes, other factors shape society to an increasing degree“ (Inglehart and Flanagan 1987: 1289).

According to Kitschelt these new issues „conform neither to traditional conservative nor to socialist programs (1988: 195). By cutting across traditional cleavages they amount to a policy platform that has given rise to new parties on the left (Kitschelt 1988) as well as on the right (Kitschelt 1995) of the political spectrum.

Whereas the commonalities of these values and beliefs are not necessarily self-evident, it can be argued that some of these issues are clearly related in that they draw on the dichotomy of equality versus hierarchy that is one of the “stable elements” of the left-right dimension (Laponce 1981: 135). While socio-economic values refer to (in)equality in a more materialistic sense, authoritarian-libertarian values often relate to the (in)equality of genders, different sexual orientations, races or ethnicities, religious beliefs, and the like.

2.3.4. Four theories about the changing meaning of the left-right dimension

The wide range of social and ideological conflicts, value orientations, and policy issues discussed so far indicates that the meaning of the left-right semantics has been subject to a process of permanent alteration throughout the past 200 years. To assess the dynamics of the changing meaning of the left-right dimension more profoundly, Kitschelt and Hellemans (1990) outline four theoretical approaches dealing with the change of values linked to the terms left and right: transformation, irrelevance, persistence, and pluralisation theory (for a more systematic overview see Knutsen 1995).

Transformation theory largely reflects Ronald Inglehart's (1984) assumptions about the changing nature of political conflict structures in Western societies. Accordingly, the relatively long period of economic stability and political security that Western countries experienced after the Second World War has resulted in new political wants and needs becoming salient. These new issues (post-materialist as Inglehart calls them) are then incorporated into the ideological repertoire of the left. Thus, the predominantly socio-economic left-right dimension is transformed into a postmaterialist (left) versus materialist (right) dimension. Consequently, the socio-economic cleavage is gradually replaced by the materialist versus post-materialist conflict. However, Knutsen (1995) reminds us not to overlook the fact that the socio-economic (or materialist) meaning of left and right is a product of the Industrial Revolution. Hence, the conflict lines associated with the left-right divide prior to the Industrial Revolution have to be taken into the equation. Accordingly, transformation theory implies that the left-right dimension has changed its meaning from secular-religious to socialist-bourgeois to postmaterialist-materialist.

Irrelevance theory, on the contrary, draws on the end-of-ideology thesis which was put forward, inter alia by Bell (1960). Not only do individuals (Knutsen 1998a; Freire 2007) and political parties (Knutsen 1998c) exhibit tendencies of convergence to the centre, but the left-right dimension itself becomes less relevant to mass publics because of its strong association with the declining cleavage of the industrial age: it "cannot shed its economic connotations" (Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990: 214). Therefore, the terms left and right "are making less and less sense [sic!] to the electorate" (Knutsen 1995: 66).

Persistence theory counters these arguments and states that the left-right dimension not only remains meaningful but also gradually incorporates non-economic issues. While these new (post-materialist) issues may not be as coherent as socio-economic attitudes and do not replace them in any way, they are closely linked to the conflict issues of the traditional class cleavage according to persistence theory. „There is no trade-off between economic and noneconomic views of left and right“, as Kitschelt and Hellemans (1990: 214) argue. However, such a strong link between leftism and libertarian values as well as rightism and authoritarian beliefs is empirically questionable. On the party system level, for instance, Marks et al. (2006) find that a pattern of left-libertarian vs. right-authoritarian conflict can be detected among Western European parties, but that the alignment is reversed in Eastern Europe: „[T]he structure we do find yields an axis of party competition at a 90 degree angle to that in the West“ (Marks et al. 2006: 158). The left-authoritarian versus right-libertarian structure of party competition in the East, possibly a result of the communist past, is at odds with the implications of persistence theory.

Pluralization theory attempts to reconcile the transformation and persistence approaches. It argues that the socio-economic views remain an important determinant of left-right self-identification, but that new sets of values provide additional meaning to the terms left and right. Contrary to transformation theory, pluralization theory holds that socio-economic values are not replaced by New Politics issues. The normative content of the class cleavage continues to be salient but is not as strictly correlated with libertarian-authoritarian values as suggested by persistence theory. The findings presented by Kitschelt and Hellemans (1990) as well as Knutsen (1995) are strongly in support for pluralization theory. As a matter of fact, the historical development of the left-right dimension as outlined above implicitly corroborates pluralization theory since it suggests that „left-right distinction is an over-arching spatial dimension which tends to incorporate many types of conflicts“ (Knutsen 1995: 68).

If we accept the reasoning of pluralization theory, the relevance of the research question becomes even more obvious. Since we cannot expect the relationships amongst different dimensions of the left-right schema to be overly straightforward, the country-specific weight of each dimension deserves serious attention.

2.3.5. The causal relationship between values and the left-right dimension

Following Middendorp (1992), a brief discussion about the causal relationship between individuals' value orientations and left-right self-placement is included. Middendorp (1992: 250) asks:

„Is left-right self-identification the *expression* of values and ideological orientations behind them or is it the *source* from which these values and ideological orientations spring? [...] [T]he latter position seems theoretically less plausible than the former one, since in the latter case we have to assume that complex value orientations and ideological stands are somehow 'caused' by subjective self-placement on an imaginary continuum“ (italics in the original).

Throughout this study and in accordance with Middendorp, the causal direction between value orientations and left-right self-identification is assumed to run from the former to the latter. The left-right dimension is conceived of as a semantic container that holds different sets of ideological content corresponding to the political conflicts present during a given period in time.

Therefore, the specific values, beliefs, and attitudes held by individuals determine their self-placement along the left-right continuum rather than the other way round (see, however, Neundorff 2009: 203 f.). This causal relationship is prone to the influence of intervening variables that render the likelihood of specific value orientations to affect left-right self-identification higher or lower. However, an in-depth analysis of these intervening variables (such as socio-structural factors or party system features) which eventually establish a certain meaning of the left-right dimension within a given polity is beyond the scope of the analysis to be conducted here.

Even so, some indication as to the nature of these intervening variables may be given by the similarities and differences in the meaning of left and right amongst the 21 countries included in this study. Moreover, the hypotheses that will be drawn up in the following section and empirically tested thereafter refer to some of the intervening variables that may to a certain degree explain the cross-national variation in the significance and value content of the left-right dimension.

3. HYPOTHESES, DATA, AND METHODS

3.1. Six hypotheses about cross-national similarities and differences

A number of assumptions will be used to further specify the research question and thus guide the analysis. Therefore, all hypotheses presented here pertain to the task of highlighting similarities and differences in the meaning of the left-right dimension across Europe. However, as this study constitutes a somewhat exploratory task, mere verification or falsification of the hypotheses will not result in the research endeavour being considered as exhaustively pursued. Still, the following assumptions are deemed useful in that they serve as a means of efficient structuring of the present study.

The first set of hypotheses concerns the salience of the religious-secular dimension. Drawing on cleavage theory we can assume that the importance of this conflict line varies with the presence of certain religious denominations in a given country. Lipset and Rokkan (1990: 102) state that „[i]n the religiously mixed countries and in purely Catholic ones [...] the ideas of the French Revolution proved highly divisive“. Since Protestant societies had during the age of the reformation emancipated themselves from Rome, the thrust of the National Revolutions did not conflict with the interests of the national churches in the northern parts of Europe. Therefore, as Marks and Wilson (2000: 438) put it, “[r]eligious practice is generally a much weaker source of political competition in Protestant countries”. Similar things can be asserted for the Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe. The Orthodox churches are not centrally organized but have national branches such as the Russian, the Serbian, or the Bulgarian Patriarchate – all of which were already established during the Middle Ages. Therefore, conflict between religious and political leaders during the time of nation-building was much less likely.

On the basis of these premises, the first hypothesis can be developed:

H1 The religious dimension of the left-right schema is more salient in predominantly Catholic societies than in predominantly Protestant or Orthodox ones.

The National Revolutions which challenged the authority of the churches date back to the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Since then, a process of secularization has been going on in most European countries, by which „economic development and modernization lead to a move from traditional-religious towards secular-rational values“ (Saroglou / Delpierre and Dernelle 2004: 731). However, it is less clear whether and how secularization trends impact on the political systems of Europe. While some authors (Dogan 1995; Dalton 1996) argue that the religious cleavage is on the decline, others (Elff 2007; Brooks / Nieuwbeerta and Manza 2006: 109) find no unambiguous proof for such a conjecture. Still, from the latter study it becomes clear that the importance of the religious cleavage varies significantly across countries. Assuming also that processes of secularization vary in pace and scope, there are consequences to be expected for the relation between the importance of religion in a country and its role in explaining left-right orientations. Against this background, hypothesis number two can be formulated:

H2 The saliency of religious values in determining self-placement on the left or right corresponds to the overall importance of religion in a country.

A second set of assumptions deals with the relation of socio-economic values and the left-right dimension. As suggested by a number of scholars (e. g. Lipset et al. 1954; Lipset and Rokkan 1967; Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Fuchs and Klingemann 1989; Knutsen 1995), socio-economic conflicts are at the heart of political competition during the industrial era and therefore constitute the dominant ideological struggle of the twentieth century. Moreover, whereas other conflict lines are not necessarily present in all countries, the class cleavage structures the party system in all West European polities (Lijphart 1990). We can therefore expect socio-economic value orientations to be the most powerful predictors of left-right self-placement in this study:

H3 Of all value orientations those associated with the class cleavage have the greatest explanatory power concerning left-right self-identification in Europe.

However, as a consequence of communist rule in the Soviet sphere of influence, political competition was inexistent in large parts of Europe during the decades after World War II. Hence, we cannot expect the formation of a socio-economic cleavage to proceed as straightforward as in Western Europe but to be constrained by a number of intervening factors, such as ethnic conflict, state-building, and the respective pattern of transition to democratic rule (Evans and Whitefield 1993; Whitefield 2002). Moreover, it must be recalled that the emergence of the class cleavage was made possible only through the introduction of (male) mass suffrage around the turn of the twentieth century. With electorates deprived of these rights under communist rule, the socio-economic conflict that at the same time dominated the political arenas of Western Europe was suppressed by a monolithic and non-competitive political environment. If the emergence of a socio-economic divide is prone to such disturbances, the traditional class cleavage values can be presumed to have less effect in determining the left-right dimension:

H4 While running in the same direction, the link between socio-economic values and left-right self-placement is weaker in former communist societies than elsewhere in Europe.

As to the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, there is good reason (Inglehart 1977; Inglehart and Flanagan 1987; Calista 1984) to assume that such issues become salient only when economic wants and needs are sufficiently satisfied. At the heart of this argument lies Maslow's theory about the hierarchy of human needs, which holds that „when a need is fairly well satisfied, the next prepotent ('higher') need emerges“ (Maslow 1943: 395). Inglehart's (1977) theory about value change in advanced industrial societies transfers this axiom from the individual to the societal level. Given the predominantly non-materialist values associated with the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, we can therefore conjecture:

H5 The more economically developed a country, the more powerful the libertarian-authoritarian dimension in explaining left-right self-identification.

As was mentioned above, Marks et al. (2006) found at the party system level a relationship between economic left-right and libertarian-authoritarian policy positions that differed markedly between Eastern and Western Europe. This is partly due to the fact that Soviet-style communism combined the strive for socio-economic equality with authoritarian rule, thus possibly encouraging at the individual level the association of market liberalism and libertarian views. Since the terms left and right have been predominantly associated with socio-economic issues throughout the twentieth century, it can be assumed that the link between libertarian-authoritarian values and left-right self-identification runs in opposite directions in Eastern and Western Europe.

H6 Libertarian-authoritarian values in Eastern Europe are related to the left-right dimension in the reverse direction when compared with Western Europe.

Once these six hypotheses are empirically tested, the broader picture of similarities and differences in the meaning of the left-right dimension in European societies will emerge. Thus, the final goal of the research task – grouping countries according to their left-right value profile – will be considerably easier to attain.

3.2. Operationalizing the research question

3.2.1. Three dimensions of value orientations

The choice of items to measure the impact of different value orientations on individuals' left-right placement is of critical importance to answering the research question. The English questionnaire of the European Social Survey's Round 4 (European Social Survey Round 4 Data 2008) offers a number of possible questions to operationalize the three relevant dimensions of value orientations. In all cases, it has been attempted to identify survey items that fulfill two criteria: (1) the items for each dimension ought to display a certain degree of congruence, that is, they must be closer to each other than to those of the other two dimensions; (2) however, there should not be too great an amount

of redundancy among the items belonging to one dimension. Since the notions of congruence and non-redundancy are obviously at odds with one another, it will be discussed here to what extent these criteria are met by the selected items.

Table 1: Selected questions for three dimensions of value orientations

Dimension	Short name	Question wording	Answering scale
Religious-secular	Religiosity	Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?	0 not religious at all 10 very religious
	Attendance*	Apart from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services nowadays?	1 never 2 less often 3 only on special holy days 4 at least once a month 5 once a week 6 more than once a week 7 every day
	Praying	Apart from when you are at religious services, how often, if at all, do you pray? Please use this card.	1 never 2 less often 3 only on special holy days 4 at least once a month 5 once a week 6 more than once a week 7 every day
Socio-economic	Income equality	The government should take measures to reduce differences in income levels.	1 agree strongly 2 agree 3 neither agree nor disagree 4 disagree 5 disagree strongly
	Achievement*	Large differences in people's incomes are acceptable to properly reward differences in talents and efforts.	1 disagree strongly 2 disagree 3 neither agree nor disagree 4 agree 5 agree strongly
	Tax/Spend*	Many social benefits and services are paid for by taxes. If the government had to choose between increasing taxes and spending more on social benefits and services, or decreasing taxes and spending less on social benefits and services, which should they do? Choose your answer from this card.	0 Government should increase taxes a lot and spend much more on social benefits and services. 10 Government should decrease taxes a lot and spend much less on social benefits and services.
Libertarian-authoritarian	Homosexuals	Gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish.	1 agree strongly 2 agree 3 neither agree nor disagree 4 disagree 5 disagree strongly
	Immigration*	Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries?	0 better place to live 10 worse place to live
	Obedience*	Schools must teach children to obey authority.	1 disagree strongly 2 disagree 3 neither agree nor disagree 4 agree 5 agree strongly

Note: Scales for items marked with an asterisk () have been reversed so that the "expected" correlation with respondents' left-right self-placement will be positive. Negative coefficients will therefore indicate counter-intuitive associations.*

As to religious-secular views of the respondents, three questions have been chosen, which pertain to (1) a person's religiosity, (2) a person's public religious practice, that is, church attendance., and (3) the frequency at which a person prays. While all three questions (for exact wordings see table 1) are clearly connected to each other and therefore sufficiently congruent, this item set also exhibits a relatively high level of redundancy, as can be seen from the high correlation coefficients (up to 0.75 in some cases) between the three questions. However, it can be revealed here that multicollinearity for the religious-secular items is only low to moderate in the subsequent linear regression analysis. Moreover, the explanatory power of each item varies considerably from country to country.

The socio-economic dimension will be captured by questions concerning attitudes towards (1) government efforts to reduce income inequality, (2) the justness of income differences reflecting varying talents and efforts, and (3) the level of taxes and public services. Clearly, these three items relate to the role of the state in the economic realm and to the principles of market economy, both of which are at the core of the socio-economic conflict. However, despite the fact that the first two questions are both concerned with income equality and even provide respondents with the same answering scale, the maximum correlation found amongst these items is 0.42 in one country. Therefore, the socio-economic items are arguably the most well-balanced between sufficient congruence and little redundancy.

With all country-wise correlations below 0.3, there is evidently little overlap between the libertarian-authoritarian items. However, since the issues of (1) freedom for homosexuals to live according to their wishes, (2) immigration making a country a better or worse place to live, and (3) the importance of obeying to authority, are only loosely related to each other, the degree of congruence is rather modest. Still, all three questions are concerned with a notion of hierarchy and societal order in one way or the other.

The nine items shown in table 1 will in a first step serve as independent variables in a linear regression model. The dependent variable will be the question about individuals' self-placement on a eleven-point left-right axis. The exact wording is:

In politics people sometimes talk of “left” and “right”. Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?

As implied by the rescaling of some of the independent variables (see note in table 1), the expected finding is that the more secular, pro-government-intervention, and libertarian the views of a respondent the more to the left she places herself. The standardized coefficients yielded from the country-wise linear regression analysis will serve as new variables in a cluster analysis procedure to group countries according to the strengths of the single items. The statistical procedures are described more precisely in the following section.

3.2.2. An outline of the statistical model

All regression analyses are conducted separately for each country. In a first step, the regressions are carried out for each value dimension. These regressions take the following form:

$$y = b_0 + x_1b_1 + x_2b_2 + x_3b_3 + \varepsilon$$

The final regression model introduces each of the three sets of variables, so that the effect of each dimension's items can be compared between the three-item and the full models. From the changes in significance or direction of the regression estimators inferences can be drawn about the interrelations between the three value dimensions. The full encompassing all nine variables will then also serve as the basis for the final cluster analysis. However, in order to weight the effects of all nine items equally when clustering, standardized regression coefficients are used for this purpose. Otherwise the estimators of variables with more limited answering scales would receive more weight in the creation of the distance matrix that provides the starting point for clustering.

Cluster analysis requires two critical decisions to be made: one between measures of distance or similarity, and one about the proper clustering algorithm. The procedure adopted here will employ a Ward algorithm based on squared Euclidean distances. The latter are chosen because rather than examining the relative impact of the nine items on

left-right self-identification (as would measures of similarity), the focus here is on the absolute values of the nine coefficients. In other words, with respect to the research question it is more relevant whether a single beta coefficient is high or low, positive or negative than whether the nine standardized coefficients of two countries correlate or not.

The Ward algorithm appears to be an apt choice concerning the research question in several respects: First, it measures homogeneity within groups rather than distances among their elements, which makes it easier to make valid and meaningful statements about the characteristics of each cluster. Second, it tends to produce similarly sized clusters, which serves the purpose of identifying the major lines of division between countries as outlined in the hypotheses. Third, it produces groups displaying a similar amount of homogeneity, which makes comparison between groups more meaningful than if the spread within the clusters varies to a great degree. For a more detailed overview of the advantageous characteristics of the Ward algorithm see Blashfield (1976).

3.3. Univariate description of the sample

To give the reader a more profound insight into the structure of the data used here, this section presents some basic figures describing the ESS 2008 sample. A total of 41027 respondents from 21 countries are covered in the survey.

Table 2 presents an overview of the dependent variable for each country. Huge variation can be found as to the willingness (or possibly: the ability) of respondents to locate themselves on the eleven-point scale. Refusal or inability to reply to the left-right question resulted in a missing value being assigned to the respective person in the data set. The rate of valid responses for left-right self-placement varies between 63.3 percent in Russia and an astonishing 97.9 percent in Norway. The overall picture suggests that countries in Northern and Western Europe exhibit above-average response rates. In contrast, the seven post-communist states of Central and Eastern Europe average at a mere 77.4 percent (unweighted average of reported country means).

Table 2: Mean left-right self-placement and sample size by country					
Country	Mean	Standard deviation	N	Total N	Valid responses
Belgium	4.93	1.95	1679	1760	95.4%
Bulgaria	4.92	2.62	1608	2230	72.1%
Switzerland	4.92	1.95	1684	1819	92.6%
Cyprus	5.08	3.04	1014	1215	83.5%
Germany	4.54	1.87	2536	2751	92.2%
Denmark	5.31	2.17	1546	1610	96.0%
Estonia	5.19	1.96	1301	1661	78.3%
Spain	4.54	1.98	2068	2576	80.3%
Finland	5.72	2.01	2086	2195	95.0%
France	4.80	2.30	1949	2073	94.0%
United Kingdom	5.01	1.85	2116	2352	90.0%
Hungary	5.56	2.41	1234	1544	79.9%
Israel	6.10	2.63	2240	2490	90.0%
Netherlands	5.15	1.99	1706	1778	96.0%
Norway	5.33	2.06	1517	1549	97.9%
Poland	5.75	2.15	1347	1619	83.2%
Portugal	4.83	1.95	1598	2367	67.5%
Russia	5.39	1.96	1591	2512	63.3%
Sweden	5.12	2.22	1777	1830	97.1%
Slovakia	4.73	2.32	1551	1810	85.7%
Slovenia	4.63	2.39	1022	1286	79.5%
Total	5.12	2.22	35170	41027	85.7%
<i>Note: Figures report unweighted results.</i>					

Quite a high amount of variation is found in the mean left-right scores for the 21 countries. Germany, Spain and Slovenia are furthest to the left with values below 4.7; Israel, Poland and Finland display the right-most mean placements with values above 5.7; The most polarized country samples are found in Israel (2.63) and the south-east of Europe with Cyprus, Bulgaria, and Hungary displaying standard deviations between 2.4 and 3.1, while in the United Kingdom and the Germany the extremes are of smaller significance (standard deviations below 1.9).

Tables 3 to 5 present mean self-placements of the respondents on each of the nine item scales. As can be seen, the figures display considerably high cross-national variation. For instance, France, Estonia, Sweden, and Norway are amongst the lowest-scoring countries on all scales relating to religion, whereas the three most religious populations are clearly those of Poland, Cyprus, Slovakia, and Portugal. In general, respondents in

predominantly Protestant countries are less religious than those in Catholic or Orthodox countries (France and Finland being exceptions from this pattern).

Being a country where religion is a defining element of the political landscape, Israel reports the highest standard deviations for religiosity and attendance. The former variable even displays a trimodal distribution with peaks in the centre and at both extremes, thus indicating a fair degree of polarization within the populace as far as religiosity and religious practice are concerned.

The correlation coefficients for the country-averages of the three religious scales yield values of 0.88 and above, which underscores the coherence of the three items selected for the religious dimension.

Table 3: Mean values of religious items by country

Country	Religiosity			Attendance			Praying		
	Mean	St. Dev.	N	Mean	St. Dev.	N	Mean	St. Dev.	N
Belgium	4.77	3.01	1756	2.07	1.34	1758	2.77	2.26	1753
Bulgaria	4.26	2.52	2205	2.64	1.12	2211	2.93	1.91	2160
Switzerland	5.03	3.00	1801	2.48	1.40	1816	3.70	2.45	1800
Cyprus	6.60	2.16	1211	3.62	1.13	1211	5.01	2.05	1196
Germany	4.02	3.06	2738	2.23	1.34	2738	2.83	2.24	2704
Denmark	4.13	2.61	1605	2.11	1.12	1609	2.35	2.04	1600
Estonia	3.76	2.70	1644	2.17	1.02	1658	2.07	1.59	1647
Spain	4.51	2.81	2560	2.48	1.55	2559	3.41	2.33	2543
Finland	5.17	2.73	2190	2.31	1.13	2194	3.34	2.32	2187
France	3.61	2.86	2063	1.96	1.25	2069	2.51	2.09	2057
United Kingdom	4.05	3.00	2342	2.15	1.55	2348	3.02	2.43	2340
Hungary	4.29	3.21	1536	2.29	1.33	1538	3.11	2.35	1513
Israel	4.86	3.46	2450	2.94	2.03	2477	3.50	2.42	2463
Netherlands	4.85	3.02	1772	2.21	1.56	1778	3.14	2.55	1773
Norway	3.73	2.69	1547	2.06	1.14	1546	2.42	2.10	1538
Poland	6.41	2.38	1604	4.15	1.27	1606	5.28	1.99	1542
Portugal	5.95	2.39	2336	3.24	1.73	2304	4.73	2.36	2264
Russia	4.50	2.61	2480	2.30	1.27	2410	3.04	2.13	2305
Sweden	3.39	2.77	1824	2.04	1.12	1823	2.12	1.86	1829
Slovakia	6.08	3.15	1801	3.37	1.43	1805	4.40	2.48	1797
Slovenia	4.66	2.94	1235	2.80	1.81	1250	2.98	2.21	1232
Total	4.66	2.99	40700	2.53	1.52	40714	3.25	2.40	40243

Note: Figures report unweighted results.

As to socio-economic issues, some interesting, if not counterintuitive, patterns emerge when looking at the data. For instance, the Scandinavian welfare states of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark are among the countries least approving of government efforts to reduce income inequality – a result possibly due to the thus far considerable extent of redistribution policies in place in these political systems.

Furthermore, respondents in the former communist states of Slovenia, Poland, and Bulgaria are less likely to support higher taxes and public services than people in most other countries. Strikingly, it appears that countries with high mean values on the income equality item display low means on the tax/spend-scale and vice-versa. Of all country samples, Hungarians, for instance, are most opposed to higher levels of taxation and public services (6.41), but at the same time most favourable towards government measures aimed at reducing income inequality (1.71).

Table 4: Mean values of socio-economic items by country									
Country	Income equality			Achievement			Tax/spend		
	Mean	St. Dev.	N	Mean	St. Dev.	N	Mean	St. Dev.	N
Belgium	2.23	1.06	1753	3.37	1.05	1756	4.94	1.76	1738
Bulgaria	1.91	1.11	2148	3.35	1.14	2133	5.15	2.27	1679
Switzerland	2.32	1.01	1788	3.35	1.00	1785	4.89	1.72	1751
Cyprus	2.00	0.96	1173	3.30	1.12	1149	4.28	2.59	1061
Germany	2.29	1.04	2713	3.44	0.98	2724	5.19	1.93	2600
Denmark	2.90	1.15	1568	3.67	0.96	1590	4.02	2.09	1578
Estonia	2.23	1.01	1625	3.63	0.96	1621	4.39	2.07	1509
Spain	2.01	0.86	2509	3.36	1.06	2523	4.72	1.87	2220
Finland	2.05	0.97	2179	2.68	1.12	2182	4.11	1.78	2156
France	1.96	1.08	2069	3.21	1.26	2067	4.96	1.97	2012
United Kingdom	2.48	1.07	2327	3.51	0.97	2328	4.77	2.20	2280
Hungary	1.71	0.88	1513	2.55	1.17	1519	6.41	2.35	1350
Israel	2.03	0.96	2434	3.41	1.11	2439	4.49	2.16	2163
Netherlands	2.58	1.08	1762	3.41	0.94	1761	4.72	1.60	1732
Norway	2.47	1.00	1545	3.36	0.96	1546	4.40	1.77	1533
Poland	2.16	1.00	1590	3.62	0.93	1588	5.53	2.10	1429
Portugal	1.80	0.74	2350	3.22	1.04	2284	5.09	2.05	1758
Russia	2.10	1.02	2438	3.05	1.05	2426	4.79	2.18	2000
Sweden	2.30	0.94	1806	3.24	1.01	1805	4.56	2.05	1760
Slovakia	2.18	0.82	1767	3.02	1.07	1783	4.80	2.28	1565
Slovenia	1.84	1.04	1273	2.93	1.03	1267	5.45	2.14	1187
Total	2.16	1.03	40301	3.27	1.08	40276	4.82	2.09	37061

Note: Figures report unweighted results

It should be mentioned here that the tax/spend-question produces a somewhat higher non-response-rate than other items in a number of countries, such as Bulgaria (valid responses: 75%), Portugal (75%), and Russia (80%). Across the data set, the percentages of valid responses per country correspond closely between the tax/spend- and the left-right-item ($r=0.90$). Clearly, the tax/spend-question wording is the most complex of the nine selected items (see table 1). However, lower response rates may also indicate that respondents know little about the respective policy issue.

Table 5 presents the three variables for the libertarian-authoritarian dimension. Considering that lower values indicate more liberal views and higher values more conservative stances, Sweden stands out as one of the most liberal countries in the data set. Russians, on the other hand, are most authoritarian of all country subsets, with the highest average values for homosexuals and immigration.

Table 5: Mean values of libertarian-authoritarian items by country									
Country	Homosexuals			Immigration			Obedience		
	Mean	St. Dev.	N	Mean	St. Dev.	N	Mean	St. Dev.	N
Belgium	1.80	0.99	1748	5.10	2.05	1736	4.16	0.87	1760
Bulgaria	2.79	1.45	1841	4.46	2.45	1791	4.71	0.54	2206
Switzerland	1.89	0.97	1806	4.49	1.87	1745	3.38	1.14	1816
Cyprus	2.67	1.30	1168	5.30	2.52	1204	4.35	0.73	1212
Germany	1.98	0.97	2714	4.95	2.18	2692	3.45	1.04	2740
Denmark	1.59	0.86	1596	4.30	2.18	1593	3.85	0.93	1606
Estonia	2.96	1.23	1570	5.59	2.19	1557	3.57	1.09	1626
Spain	1.90	1.01	2502	5.10	2.18	2466	4.24	0.73	2570
Finland	2.15	1.15	2184	4.48	1.86	2170	4.07	0.89	2188
France	1.65	1.01	2059	5.29	2.13	2042	4.15	1.12	2073
United Kingdom	2.03	0.93	2332	5.51	2.49	2324	4.25	0.75	2350
Hungary	2.84	1.32	1379	6.21	2.17	1393	3.97	1.00	1532
Israel	2.44	1.31	2214	4.60	2.60	2335	4.19	0.88	2456
Netherlands	1.63	0.78	1768	4.83	1.94	1751	3.99	0.80	1775
Norway	1.97	0.98	1545	4.67	1.98	1539	3.77	0.89	1547
Poland	2.78	1.18	1523	4.03	1.97	1488	4.31	0.60	1614
Portugal	2.36	1.10	2204	5.71	2.06	2164	4.17	0.76	2359
Russia	3.39	1.28	2063	6.54	2.36	2275	4.15	0.83	2488
Sweden	1.76	0.83	1816	3.80	2.09	1794	3.44	1.03	1819
Slovakia	2.92	1.15	1694	5.49	1.82	1633	3.81	1.00	1801
Slovenia	2.62	1.24	1225	5.48	2.29	1234	3.50	1.03	1281
Total	2.26	1.21	38951	5.05	2.28	38926	3.99	0.96	40819

Note: Figures report unweighted results

In general, Scandinavian and West European respondents tend to place themselves closer towards the libertarian pole of each of the three scales whereas more authoritarian views are found in the post-communist states of Eastern Europe. An exception to this rule is found in Bulgaria and Poland, where respondents take moderate to liberal stances on immigration. Similarly, Estonians and Slovenians express rather permissive views when asked about the role of authority and obedience in school.

When examining the relationship between country averages and the respective standard deviations, it turns out that these are positively correlated for the homosexuals item ($r=0.85$) and negatively correlated for the obedience item ($r=-0.83$). These figures suggest that attitudes towards homosexuals are less divisive an issue the more liberal a society is on average, whereas the opposite applies to views of authority and obedience in school.

Following the descriptive overview of the ESS sample, the next section will apply multivariate methods – more precisely: linear regression and cluster analysis – to test the influence of the three dimensions of value orientations on left-right self-placement in the 21 countries featured in the data set. In the course of this analysis, some initial conjectures can be made about the six hypotheses outlined above.

4. MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

4.1. Testing individual dimensions: linear regression analyses

For each of the three dimensions of value orientations linear regression analyses will be conducted. On the basis of the regression coefficients and the overall explained variance, the salience of the respective dimension can be assessed for each country. Furthermore, the relative weight of each issue item can be estimated.

4.1.1. Regression analysis: the religious dimension

Table 6 shows that the strength of religion as a predictor of left-right self-placement varies considerably across Europe. While in places such as Cyprus or Sweden there seems to be no statistically significant link between the two, other countries, most notably the predominantly Catholic nations of Spain, Poland, and Slovenia, exhibit explained variances between 6.7 and 13.9 percent. In most of Europe, however, only very modest effects can be observed.

Nevertheless, when looking at the explained variances in more detail, the role of different Christian denominations becomes apparent. Four out of the five countries with the highest r-squares are largely Catholic countries, whereas the five countries with the lowest explained variance are Protestant or Orthodox (or, as in the case of Estonia, mostly unaffiliated or atheist, see Statistical Office of Estonia 2002: 30). Both, Protestantism and Orthodoxy experienced schisms from the Roman Catholic church and subsequently established national churches (e. g. the Lutheran Churches in England and the Scandinavian countries, or the Bulgarian, Russian, or Greek Orthodox Churches in Eastern Europe), which – according to Lipset and Rokkan (1967) – prevented conflict between religious and secular authorities in the course of the nation-building process. Thus, the religious-secular cleavage became much more salient in Catholic societies. The results in table 6 conform to this expectation. Still, whether there is strong support for H1 needs to be examined drawing on external data on religious denominations in the 21 countries under study.

Table 6: Regressing left-right self-placement on religious items						
Country	Intercept	Religiosity	Attendance	Praying	Adj. R ²	N
Belgium	4.42 <i>0.10**</i>	0.07 <i>0.02**</i>	0.17 <i>0.04**</i>	-0.06 <i>0.03*</i>	0.023	1673
Bulgaria	4.36 <i>0.17**</i>	-0.01 <i>0.03</i>	0.26 <i>0.07**</i>	-0.02 <i>0.05</i>	0.009	1563
Switzerland	4.36 <i>0.10**</i>	0.04 <i>0.02</i>	0.07 <i>0.04</i>	0.06 <i>0.03*</i>	0.023	1660
Cyprus	4.65 <i>0.35**</i>	-0.11 <i>0.06</i>	0.20 <i>0.11</i>	0.08 <i>0.07</i>	0.004	998
Germany	4.09 <i>0.08**</i>	0.06 <i>0.02**</i>	0.13 <i>0.04**</i>	0.00 <i>0.02</i>	0.031	2497
Denmark	4.89 <i>0.12</i>	0.09 <i>0.03**</i>	0.00 <i>0.06</i>	0.02 <i>0.03</i>	0.012	1535
Estonia	5.37 <i>0.13**</i>	-0.03 <i>0.03</i>	0.06 <i>0.07</i>	-0.11 <i>0.04*</i>	0.007	1283
Spain	3.63 <i>0.08**</i>	0.16 <i>0.02**</i>	0.13 <i>0.04**</i>	-0.03 <i>0.03</i>	0.077	2038
Finland	4.76 <i>0.11**</i>	0.17 <i>0.02**</i>	0.01 <i>0.05</i>	0.02 <i>0.03</i>	0.059	2075
France	3.89 <i>0.10**</i>	0.12 <i>0.02**</i>	0.22 <i>0.05**</i>	0.01 <i>0.03</i>	0.060	1936
United Kingdom	4.80 <i>0.07**</i>	0.08 <i>0.02**</i>	-0.04 <i>0.03</i>	0.01 <i>0.02</i>	0.008	2101
Hungary	4.94 <i>0.14**</i>	0.12 <i>0.03**</i>	0.19 <i>0.07**</i>	-0.10 <i>0.04*</i>	0.027	1216
Israel	5.31 <i>0.10**</i>	0.10 <i>0.02**</i>	0.05 <i>0.04</i>	0.05 <i>0.04**</i>	0.056	2181
Netherlands	4.63 <i>0.10**</i>	0.05 <i>0.02*</i>	0.13 <i>0.04**</i>	-0.01 <i>0.03</i>	0.021	1697
Norway	4.98 <i>0.11**</i>	0.08 <i>0.03**</i>	0.06 <i>0.06</i>	-0.03 <i>0.03</i>	0.010	1506
Poland	3.83 <i>0.21**</i>	0.11 <i>0.04**</i>	0.23 <i>0.07**</i>	0.06 <i>0.04</i>	0.067	1283
Portugal	4.05 <i>0.13**</i>	0.06 <i>0.03*</i>	0.06 <i>0.04</i>	0.04 <i>0.03</i>	0.022	1505
Russia	4.61 <i>0.11**</i>	0.14 <i>0.03**</i>	0.14 <i>0.06*</i>	-0.06 <i>0.03</i>	0.044	1459
Sweden	4.79 <i>0.11**</i>	0.09 <i>0.03</i>	0.06 <i>0.06</i>	-0.04 <i>0.04</i>	0.010	1770
Slovakia	4.41 <i>0.13**</i>	0.12 <i>0.03**</i>	0.12 <i>0.05**</i>	-0.16 <i>0.04**</i>	0.018	1534
Slovenia	2.84 <i>0.16**</i>	0.08 <i>0.03*</i>	0.47 <i>0.07**</i>	0.03 <i>0.05</i>	0.139	985
Total	4.32 <i>0.02**</i>	0.10 <i>0.01**</i>	0.14 <i>0.01**</i>	-0.02 <i>0.01**</i>	0.042	34495

Note: Weighted least squares regressions (using “dweight” for single-country models and “pweight*dweight” for the full model); reported values are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in italics; ** p-value < 0,01; * p-value < 0,05

As to the regression coefficients, it turns out that religiosity and church attendance are the more powerful predictors of left-right self-placement compared with the frequency of praying reported by the respondents. This variable is insignificant for all but two countries and – counter to our expectations – negative in half of the cases, even when conducting the regression for the whole sample.

While this effect is puzzling at first, it turns out that, when entered into the regression equation without the other two variables relating to religion, the coefficient for the praying item is positive and statistically significant for most countries. We can therefore conclude that the negative signs in table 6 are largely due to the overlap between the independent variables; indeed, the correlations between the predictors not only cause the positive sign for the praying item to disappear but result in modest amounts of multicollinearity in some country models. However, with variance inflation factors (VIF) below 2.5 in all countries but Slovakia (VIF values between 2.55 and 2.95), there is no cause for concern as to the stability of the reported coefficients.

In general, it can be held that in the majority of European countries, people tend to position themselves the more to the right (1) the more religious they consider themselves and (2) the more often they attend religious services. Furthermore, there are trends in the data suggesting that the salience of the religious dimension as a predictor of left-right self-placement varies between countries with mostly Catholic affiliates and countries with other denominations accounting for the majority of the population.

4.1.2. Regression analysis: the socio-economic dimension

Table 7 presents the results of the linear regression analysis for the socio-economic dimension. At first glance, it becomes clear that this dimension possesses greater explanatory power than the religious dimension. Each item yields a significant coefficient in at least two thirds of the countries.

Table 7: Regressing left-right self-placement on socio-economic items						
Country	Intercept	Income equality	Achievement	Tax/Spend	Adj. R ²	N
Belgium	3.49 <i>0.20**</i>	0.11 <i>0.05*</i>	0.18 <i>0.05**</i>	0.12 <i>0.03**</i>	0.030	1655
Bulgaria	3.78 <i>0.30**</i>	0.25 <i>0.07**</i>	0.17 <i>0.06**</i>	0.04 <i>0.03</i>	0.021	1265
Switzerland	2.19 <i>0.21**</i>	0.24 <i>0.05**</i>	0.29 <i>0.05**</i>	0.25 <i>0.03**</i>	0.107	1618
Cyprus	4.07 <i>0.41**</i>	0.33 <i>0.11**</i>	0.04 <i>0.09</i>	0.07 <i>0.04</i>	0.012	861
Germany	2.48 <i>0.16**</i>	0.27 <i>0.04**</i>	0.26 <i>0.04**</i>	0.12 <i>0.02**</i>	0.080	2412
Denmark	1.51 <i>0.20**</i>	0.37 <i>0.05**</i>	0.47 <i>0.06**</i>	0.25 <i>0.03**</i>	0.231	1496
Estonia	4.29 <i>0.27**</i>	0.33 <i>0.06**</i>	-0.04 <i>0.06</i>	0.08 <i>0.03**</i>	0.035	1203
Spain	3.63 <i>0.21**</i>	0.21 <i>0.05**</i>	0.12 <i>0.04**</i>	0.02 <i>0.03</i>	0.014	1815
Finland	3.46 <i>0.14**</i>	0.46 <i>0.05**</i>	0.30 <i>0.04**</i>	0.12 <i>0.02**</i>	0.136	2047
France	1.97 <i>0.18**</i>	0.43 <i>0.05**</i>	0.39 <i>0.04**</i>	0.15 <i>0.02**</i>	0.136	1902
United Kingdom	2.77 <i>0.16**</i>	0.26 <i>0.04**</i>	0.28 <i>0.04**</i>	0.12 <i>0.02**</i>	0.092	2052
Hungary	5.30 <i>0.29**</i>	-0.21 <i>0.08*</i>	-0.03 <i>0.06</i>	0.12 <i>0.03**</i>	0.018	1108
Israel	4.16 <i>0.25**</i>	0.05 <i>0.06</i>	0.46 <i>0.05**</i>	0.08 <i>0.03**</i>	0.040	1983
Netherlands	2.65 <i>0.21**</i>	0.37 <i>0.05**</i>	0.25 <i>0.05**</i>	0.14 <i>0.03**</i>	0.100	1660
Norway	1.83 <i>0.20**</i>	0.39 <i>0.05**</i>	0.42 <i>0.06**</i>	0.26 <i>0.03**</i>	0.189	1501
Poland	5.32 <i>0.30**</i>	-0.03 <i>0.06</i>	0.16 <i>0.07*</i>	-0.02 <i>0.03</i>	0.002	1220
Portugal	4.09 <i>0.25**</i>	0.14 <i>0.07</i>	0.11 <i>0.05*</i>	0.02 <i>0.03</i>	0.005	1242
Russia	5.11 <i>0.22**</i>	0.09 <i>0.05</i>	0.17 <i>0.05**</i>	-0.10 <i>0.03**</i>	0.020	1359
Sweden	1.07 <i>0.17**</i>	0.52 <i>0.06**</i>	0.50 <i>0.05**</i>	0.27 <i>0.02**</i>	0.279	1686
Slovakia	2.41 <i>0.23**</i>	0.35 <i>0.06**</i>	0.22 <i>0.06**</i>	0.22 <i>0.03**</i>	0.103	1366
Slovenia	3.23 <i>0.32**</i>	0.02 <i>0.10</i>	0.13 <i>0.08</i>	0.18 <i>0.04**</i>	0.026	959
Total	3.41 <i>0.05**</i>	0.22 <i>0.01**</i>	0.24 <i>0.01**</i>	0.07 <i>0.01**</i>	0.044	32410

Note: Weighted least squares regressions (using “dweight” for single-country models and “pweight*dweight” for the full model); reported values are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in italics; ** p-value < 0,01; * p-value < 0,05

While the total explained variance is only at four percent, the maximum adjusted r-squared value for a single country is an astonishing 0.28 for Sweden. The other Nordic countries (Norway, Finland, Denmark) and France – the mother country of left and right – complement the top five nations concerning the salience of the socio-economic dimension.

With explained variances between eight and eleven percent, a group of Central and West European countries displays a fair level of salience for class-conflict-related value orientations. The only post-communist state falling into that category is Slovakia (0.10). All other countries of the former Eastern bloc return explained variances below four percent. These states comprise the bottom half when looking at the salience of the socio-economic items – together with the Iberian countries of Portugal and Spain, and a group of states where ethnic or cultural rather than economic conflicts obviously dominate the political agenda: Cyprus, Israel, and Belgium.

As to the regression coefficients, it turns out that all three items return significant predictors in at least 16 out of 21 countries. In most cases, the coefficients are positive and significant. However, six negative figures are reported in table 7, all of which are found in post-communist states and only two of which are significant (tax/spend in Russia, and income equality in Hungary). While the latter result partially contradicts H4, there is good evidence from the regression models that the socio-economic dimension is not as closely related to left-right self-identification in the states of the former Soviet sphere of influence when compared to Western and Northern Europe.

Furthermore, the results in tables 6 and 7 imply that the socio-economic dimension is more salient than the religious-secular divide. Admittedly, the explained variances for the total models do not differ too much, but by calculating an unweighted mean across the 21 countries it can be concluded that religious dimension (0.03) is less important in determining left and right than the socio-economic dimension (0.08). These figures reflect the fact that in all but seven countries the adjusted r-squared values are higher for the socio-economic than for the religious items.

Comparison of dimensions aside, the overall picture emerging from the analysis presented in table 7 strongly suggests that people across Europe tend to view themselves the more to the left the more they support (1) government measures to reduce income

equality, (2) equal pay independent of individual talents and efforts, and (3) higher levels of taxation as well as public services.

It can therefore be concluded that the socio-economic values associated with the class cleavage that dominated (West) European politics for most of the twentieth century are still a core element in defining the meaning of left and right.

4.1.3. Regression analysis: the libertarian-authoritarian dimension

The third dimension to be tested encompasses items that relate to libertarian-authoritarian values. Table 8 presents the results. While the explained variance in the full model is a little lower than for the other two dimensions, the overall relevance of the libertarian-authoritarian items is highlighted by the fact that 42 out of 63 coefficients are significant.

As to the salience of libertarian-authoritarian issues, Central and Northern European countries yield the highest shares of explained variance, whereas Eastern and Southern European states end up on the other side of the spectrum. With Switzerland, France, and Denmark exhibiting r-squares greater than 0.10 and countries like Cyprus, Slovakia, Portugal, Estonia, and Hungary displaying explained variances below one percent, a pattern similar to that characterising the socio-economic dimension emerges. Indeed, there is a positive and reasonably high correlation between the r-squares of the socio-economic and the libertarian-authoritarian dimensions ($r=0.56$, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$).

However, even more insight can be gained from looking at the regression coefficients. All three items yield significant coefficients in at least twelve out of 21 cases. Especially the item relating to homosexuals proves to be a valid predictor of left-right self-placement in a large number of countries (18 out of 21).

Comparing table 8 with tables 6 and 7, it can be held that the number of coefficients whose direction is counter to conventional expectations – that is: negative – is considerably higher for the libertarian-authoritarian items than for the other two dimensions. More specifically, 20 out of a total of 63 coefficients in table 8 display negative signs. 14 out of these 20 coefficients are found in regression models of former communist states. The country samples of Russia, Estonia, and Bulgaria even yield a total of five coefficients that are negative and statistically significant.

Table 8: Regressing left-right self-placement on libertarian-authoritarian items						
Country	Intercept	Homosexuals	Immigration	Obedience	Adj. R ²	N
Belgium	3.46 <i>0.25**</i>	0.16 <i>0.05**</i>	0.02 <i>0.02</i>	0.26 <i>0.06**</i>	0.021	1653
Bulgaria	7.21 <i>0.65**</i>	-0.30 <i>0.05**</i>	-0.07 <i>0.03*</i>	-0.22 <i>0.13</i>	0.033	1231
Switzerland	2.68 <i>0.19**</i>	0.32 <i>0.05**</i>	0.25 <i>0.02**</i>	0.15 <i>0.04**</i>	0.104	1631
Cyprus	5.08 <i>0.63**</i>	-0.02 <i>0.08</i>	-0.07 <i>0.04</i>	0.10 <i>0.13</i>	0.001	963
Germany	3.06 <i>0.14**</i>	0.27 <i>0.04**</i>	0.07 <i>0.02**</i>	0.18 <i>0.04**</i>	0.050	2472
Denmark	2.52 <i>0.23**</i>	0.18 <i>0.06**</i>	0.18 <i>0.03**</i>	0.45 <i>0.06**</i>	0.104	1525
Estonia	5.88 <i>0.25**</i>	-0.13 <i>0.05**</i>	-0.04 <i>0.03</i>	-0.01 <i>0.05</i>	0.007	1204
Spain	2.38 <i>0.27**</i>	0.41 <i>0.05**</i>	0.08 <i>0.02**</i>	0.23 <i>0.06**</i>	0.065	1968
Finland	4.22 <i>0.22**</i>	0.27 <i>0.04**</i>	-0.05 <i>0.02*</i>	0.28 <i>0.05**</i>	0.040	2064
France	1.76 <i>0.21**</i>	0.17 <i>0.05**</i>	0.24 <i>0.02**</i>	0.36 <i>0.05**</i>	0.111	1922
United Kingdom	2.71 <i>0.23**</i>	0.15 <i>0.04**</i>	0.05 <i>0.02**</i>	0.40 <i>0.05**</i>	0.046	2085
Hungary	5.10 <i>0.36**</i>	0.20 <i>0.06**</i>	0.02 <i>0.03</i>	-0.05 <i>0.07</i>	0.009	1061
Israel	4.64 <i>0.29**</i>	0.09 <i>0.05*</i>	-0.06 <i>0.02**</i>	0.33 <i>0.07**</i>	0.015	1947
Netherlands	2.36 <i>0.27**</i>	0.33 <i>0.06**</i>	0.16 <i>0.02**</i>	0.37 <i>0.06**</i>	0.071	1677
Norway	2.75 <i>0.24**</i>	0.26 <i>0.05**</i>	0.15 <i>0.03**</i>	0.37 <i>0.06**</i>	0.081	1507
Poland	4.65 <i>0.47**</i>	0.24 <i>0.05**</i>	-0.01 <i>0.03</i>	0.12 <i>0.10</i>	0.016	1220
Portugal	4.44 <i>0.34**</i>	0.18 <i>0.05**</i>	-0.00 <i>0.03</i>	-0.02 <i>0.07</i>	0.008	1423
Russia	5.99 <i>0.33**</i>	-0.10 <i>0.05*</i>	-0.07 <i>0.02**</i>	0.06 <i>0.07</i>	0.010	1315
Sweden	3.50 <i>0.20**</i>	0.12 <i>0.07</i>	0.05 <i>0.03</i>	0.36 <i>0.05**</i>	0.037	1731
Slovakia	5.52 <i>0.31**</i>	-0.01 <i>0.05</i>	-0.07 <i>0.04</i>	-0.11 <i>0.06</i>	0.002	1417
Slovenia	3.19 <i>0.31**</i>	0.42 <i>0.07**</i>	0.06 <i>0.04</i>	-0.00 <i>0.07</i>	0.047	964
Total	3.41 <i>0.05**</i>	0.18 <i>0.01**</i>	0.04 <i>0.01**</i>	0.25 <i>0.01**</i>	0.035	32924

Note: Weighted least squares regressions (using “dweight” for single-country models and “pweight*dweight” for the full model); reported values are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in italics; ** p-value < 0,01; * p-value < 0,05

While these figures give support to H6, it must be acknowledged that a fair number of coefficients in post-communist states are positive, albeit that only three are positive and significant at the same time.

In addition to the counterintuitive findings for the post-communist states, the immigration item returns a negative coefficient for two more countries: Finland and Israel.

Finland is an outlier within the group of Nordic countries due to the relative importance of the religious dimension as compared to Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. Still, there is no ad-hoc explanation for the negative sign of the immigration predictor in this case. Admittedly, Finland has not experienced the emergence of a strong anti-immigration party on the right of the political spectrum as have, for instance, Denmark and Norway. The success of *Perussuomalaiset* (“True Finns”) has been modest at best and only recently has this party made inroads in attracting a greater share of the electorate. However, the absence of a strong anti-immigration party alone fails to explain a statistically significant and negative coefficient for the immigration variable, since the political systems of the United Kingdom or Germany have had a similar degree of right-wing radicalism in their national party structure, and still display the expected coefficients, that is, positive and significant.

Israel, on the other hand, is a country whose national identity is based on the notion of immigration. Russian-born Jews, for instance, are amongst the core constituencies of the religious-orthodox parties that are considered to be at the rightmost of the political spectrum in Israel. The country’s unique history and the special role of immigration in the process of nation-building offer a reasonable explanation for the negative and significant estimator reported in table 8. This result is consistent with a study of Rajzman et al. (2003) who find that right-wing political orientation has a negative and significant effect on attitudes towards foreigners in Germany but not in Israel.

4.1.4. Reviewing the three dimensions

After presenting the three sets of regression analyses, it appears apt to draw a few comparisons and obtain an overview of the dimensions’ salience. The graph in figure 1 plots the explained variances for each country.

Figure 1: Variance explained by dimension and country

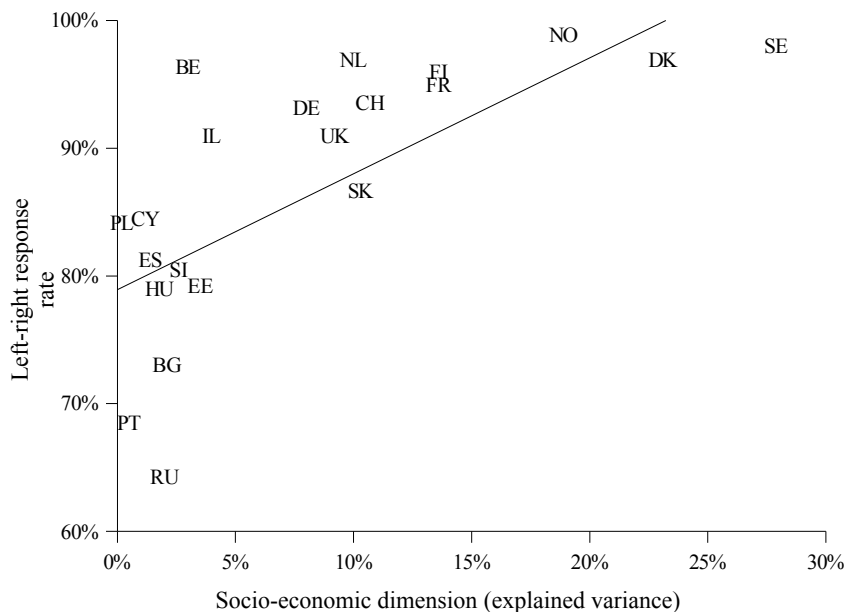


Note: Depicted values are adjusted r-squares; countries sorted by sum of all three dimensions.

It becomes visible that, in a number of countries, the three dimensions of value orientations fail to account for a reasonable amount of the variance in the distribution of the dependent variable. States such as Cyprus, Portugal, Estonia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Belgium make up this rather heterogeneous group of countries displaying only very modest model fits. Even by generous standards, the explained variances for countries like Israel or Poland are not high. Clearly, the left-right semantics are more prominent a feature of political competition in Western and Northern Europe.

This fact is further illuminated by a correlation of the explained variances of each dimension with the rate of valid responses for the left-right item (see table 2). Figure 2 depicts a scatterplot revealing the relationship between the explained variance for the socio-economic dimension and the left-right response rate.

Figure 2: Socio-economic dimension and left-right response rate



Note: $r=70.4$ ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$).

The correlation coefficient of 70.4 (the respective values are 55.6 with a $p\text{-value} < 0.01$ for the libertarian-authoritarian and -15.6 with a $p\text{-value}$ above 0.5 for the religious dimension) underscores the relationship between the common understanding of the left-

right semantics and the extent to which policy issues or value orientations are related to it. Obviously, respondents in Western Europe and the Nordic countries are much more familiar with the concept of left and right than those living in post-communist states. The more acquainted a person with a political heuristic such as left and right, the more willing she may be to place herself on the left-right scale and the more capable she is of associating to it political issues in a meaningful way.

Returning to figure 1, it becomes clear that most countries display a one- or two-dimensional account of the left-right schema. Only in France is the explained variance for each of the three value dimensions greater than 0.05. As to the aforementioned relationship between the socio-economic and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, figure 1 shows that – aside from the correlation – the former is, in general, of greater explanatory power than the latter. Also, it can be seen that, by and large, the religious dimension is more salient in countries where the other two dimensions play a less important role.

At least concerning value orientations, the concept of left and right is not as universal among mass electorates as may be expected from its wide-spread use in the discipline of political science. Whether other types of variables (e. g. socio-structural factors, party identification) are more common predictors of left-right self-placement across Europe is beyond the scope of this study.

4.1.5. Regression analysis: the three dimensions combined

In a final regression analysis all nine items are included in the model. Thus, it can be assessed how the three dimensions relate to each other, or more precisely: whether the significance or the direction of coefficients change in comparison with the three single-dimension regression models. The model specification is as follows:

$$y = b_0 + x_1b_1 + x_2b_2 + x_3b_3 + x_4b_4 + x_5b_5 + x_6b_6 + x_7b_7 + x_8b_8 + x_9b_9 + \epsilon$$

In this equation, x_1 to x_3 represent the religious items, x_4 to x_6 the socio-economic variables, and x_7 to x_9 the libertarian-authoritarian items. At a later point in this study,

the standardized coefficients reported by the nine-item-models will be used as variables for the subsequent cluster analysis. Table 9 presents the regression analyses for the models encompassing all nine independent variables.

Comparing table 9 with tables 6 to 8, some valuable insights as to the relationships between the three dimensions of value orientations can be obtained. Most strikingly, the coefficient for the homosexuals item changes from positive and significant to positive or negative insignificant in no less than seven countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, United Kingdom, Israel, Poland, and Portugal. Only in Slovakia is the coefficient rendered significant in the full model while being insignificant in the three-item-model, but then this coefficient changes from negative insignificant to negative significant.

Most likely, these interaction effects are due to the inclusion of the religious and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension in one regression model. Tolerance or intolerance vis-à-vis gays and lesbians is in many societies a question closely related to religious beliefs. Indeed, when regressing the homosexuals item on the three variables used for the religious dimension, quite a substantial amount of variance can be explained: 16.8 % in Israel, 14.1 % in the Netherlands, 13.3 % in Spain and Switzerland. Moreover, of the 63 coefficients (three independent variables in 21 countries), only eight are negative and of those only one is significant (attendance in Bulgaria). Hence, there are good reasons to assume that the weaker performance of the homosexuals variable in the nine-item-models is due to considerable overlap with variables from the religious dimension.

The picture is less clear when turning to the immigration variable. Here, we see a decrease in significance from the regression models in table 8 to those in table 9, albeit only for countries whose coefficient was negative in the first place (Bulgaria, Finland, Israel, and Russia). Fitting different regressions to immigration as a dependent variable it turns out that the religious variables possess hardly any predictive power – with Israel being a minor exception to that rule. Some modest effects can be observed from the socio-economic items, although the country-wise r-squares exceed a value of 0.05 only in the United Kingdom.

The third variable changing in an unambiguous manner through the incorporation of all nine items is the achievement variable which turns from positive and significant to positive and insignificant in three countries (Bulgaria, Spain, and Portugal).

Table 9: Regressing left-right self-placement on all three dimensions							
Country	Religious-secular				Socio-economic		
	Intercept	Religiosity	Attendance	Praying	Income equality	Achievement	Tax/spend
Belgium	2.10 <i>0.31**</i>	0.07 <i>0.02**</i>	0.15 <i>0.04**</i>	-0.07 <i>0.03*</i>	0.12 <i>0.05*</i>	0.14 <i>0.05**</i>	0.11 <i>0.03**</i>
Bulgaria	4.74 <i>0.83**</i>	0.01 <i>0.04</i>	0.30 <i>0.09**</i>	-0.01 <i>0.06</i>	0.23 <i>0.07**</i>	0.12 <i>0.07</i>	0.02 <i>0.04</i>
Switzerland	0.18 <i>0.26</i>	0.02 <i>0.02</i>	0.05 <i>0.04</i>	0.04 <i>0.03</i>	0.26 <i>0.05**</i>	0.31 <i>0.05**</i>	0.18 <i>0.03**</i>
Cyprus	3.08 <i>0.91**</i>	-0.09 <i>0.07</i>	0.39 <i>0.12**</i>	0.01 <i>0.07</i>	0.34 <i>0.11**</i>	0.06 <i>0.09</i>	0.09 <i>0.04*</i>
Germany	0.67 <i>0.21**</i>	0.07 <i>0.02**</i>	0.08 <i>0.04*</i>	0.00 <i>0.02</i>	0.29 <i>0.04**</i>	0.24 <i>0.04**</i>	0.11 <i>0.02**</i>
Denmark	-0.10 <i>0.26</i>	0.08 <i>0.02**</i>	-0.06 <i>0.05</i>	0.03 <i>0.03</i>	0.37 <i>0.05**</i>	0.38 <i>0.06**</i>	0.23 <i>0.03**</i>
Estonia	4.75 <i>0.40**</i>	-0.01 <i>0.03</i>	0.06 <i>0.07</i>	-0.08 <i>0.05</i>	0.28 <i>0.06**</i>	-0.00 <i>0.06</i>	0.08 <i>0.03**</i>
Spain	1.62 <i>0.33**</i>	0.13 <i>0.02**</i>	0.09 <i>0.04*</i>	-0.01 <i>0.03</i>	0.19 <i>0.05**</i>	0.03 <i>0.04</i>	-0.03 <i>0.03</i>
Finland	1.77 <i>0.24**</i>	0.15 <i>0.02**</i>	-0.01 <i>0.04</i>	0.04 <i>0.02</i>	0.50 <i>0.04**</i>	0.27 <i>0.04**</i>	0.12 <i>0.02**</i>
France	-0.36 <i>0.24</i>	0.08 <i>0.02**</i>	0.23 <i>0.05**</i>	0.01 <i>0.03</i>	0.41 <i>0.05**</i>	0.31 <i>0.04**</i>	0.10 <i>0.02**</i>
United Kingdom	1.29 <i>0.25**</i>	0.07 <i>0.02**</i>	-0.06 <i>0.03</i>	0.01 <i>0.02</i>	0.29 <i>0.04**</i>	0.23 <i>0.04**</i>	0.09 <i>0.02**</i>
Hungary	4.94 <i>0.49**</i>	0.11 <i>0.03**</i>	0.20 <i>0.08*</i>	-0.12 <i>0.05*</i>	-0.27 <i>0.09**</i>	-0.07 <i>0.07</i>	0.09 <i>0.03**</i>
Israel	3.15 <i>0.39**</i>	0.11 <i>0.02**</i>	0.03 <i>0.04</i>	0.13 <i>0.04**</i>	0.06 <i>0.06</i>	0.53 <i>0.06**</i>	0.07 <i>0.03*</i>
Netherlands	-0.04 <i>0.31</i>	0.06 <i>0.02**</i>	0.08 <i>0.04*</i>	-0.03 <i>0.03</i>	0.41 <i>0.05**</i>	0.22 <i>0.05**</i>	0.09 <i>0.03**</i>
Norway	0.17 <i>0.27</i>	0.04 <i>0.02</i>	0.02 <i>0.05</i>	0.01 <i>0.03</i>	0.42 <i>0.05**</i>	0.35 <i>0.05**</i>	0.21 <i>0.03**</i>
Poland	2.74 <i>0.60**</i>	0.12 <i>0.04**</i>	0.20 <i>0.08**</i>	0.03 <i>0.04</i>	0.08 <i>0.07</i>	0.17 <i>0.07*</i>	0.00 <i>0.03</i>
Portugal	3.95 <i>0.49**</i>	0.03 <i>0.03</i>	0.01 <i>0.05</i>	0.10 <i>0.03**</i>	0.16 <i>0.08*</i>	0.06 <i>0.06</i>	-0.02 <i>0.03</i>
Russia	5.04 <i>0.45**</i>	0.14 <i>0.03**</i>	0.06 <i>0.06</i>	-0.02 <i>0.04</i>	0.08 <i>0.06</i>	0.15 <i>0.06**</i>	-0.09 <i>0.03**</i>
Sweden	0.02 <i>0.23</i>	0.08 <i>0.02**</i>	0.05 <i>0.05</i>	-0.05 <i>0.03</i>	0.53 <i>0.06**</i>	0.46 <i>0.05**</i>	0.26 <i>0.02**</i>
Slovakia	2.78 <i>0.44**</i>	0.10 <i>0.03**</i>	0.24 <i>0.06**</i>	-0.14 <i>0.04**</i>	0.41 <i>0.07**</i>	0.13 <i>0.07*</i>	0.21 <i>0.03**</i>
Slovenia	1.07 <i>0.42*</i>	0.09 <i>0.03*</i>	0.38 <i>0.08**</i>	0.04 <i>0.05</i>	0.18 <i>0.10</i>	0.01 <i>0.07</i>	0.14 <i>0.03**</i>
Total	1.32 <i>0.07**</i>	0.09 <i>0.01**</i>	0.10 <i>0.01**</i>	-0.02 <i>0.01*</i>	0.27 <i>0.01**</i>	0.22 <i>0.01**</i>	0.06 <i>0.01**</i>

*Note: Weighted least squares regressions (using “dweight” for single-country models and “pweight*dweight” for the full model);*

Table 9: Regressing left-right self-placement on all three dimensions					
Libertarian-authoritarian					
Homo- sexuals	Immigration	Obedience	Adj. R ²	N	Country
0.08 <i>0.05</i>	0.03 <i>0.02</i>	0.19 <i>0.06**</i>	0.060	1631	Belgium
-0.27 <i>0.06**</i>	-0.05 <i>0.03</i>	-0.11 <i>0.14</i>	0.053	1010	Bulgaria
0.22 <i>0.05**</i>	0.20 <i>0.02**</i>	0.16 <i>0.04**</i>	0.189	1554	Switzerland
0.02 <i>0.08</i>	-0.10 <i>0.04*</i>	0.10 <i>0.15</i>	0.027	828	Cyprus
0.26 <i>0.04**</i>	0.11 <i>0.02**</i>	0.13 <i>0.04**</i>	0.158	2335	Germany
0.08 <i>0.06</i>	0.13 <i>0.02**</i>	0.29 <i>0.06**</i>	0.288	1472	Denmark
-0.11 <i>0.05*</i>	-0.00 <i>0.03</i>	-0.01 <i>0.05</i>	0.033	1129	Estonia
0.19 <i>0.05**</i>	0.10 <i>0.02**</i>	0.23 <i>0.06**</i>	0.113	1732	Spain
0.11 <i>0.04**</i>	-0.03 <i>0.02</i>	0.18 <i>0.05**</i>	0.211	2027	Finland
-0.00 <i>0.05</i>	0.22 <i>0.02**</i>	0.24 <i>0.04**</i>	0.245	1867	France
0.07 <i>0.04</i>	0.05 <i>0.02**</i>	0.28 <i>0.05**</i>	0.124	2018	United Kingdom
0.21 <i>0.06**</i>	0.01 <i>0.03</i>	-0.13 <i>0.08</i>	0.054	964	Hungary
-0.07 <i>0.05</i>	-0.05 <i>0.02</i>	0.02 <i>0.07</i>	0.096	1739	Israel
0.30 <i>0.06**</i>	0.17 <i>0.02**</i>	0.32 <i>0.06**</i>	0.186	1626	Netherlands
0.13 <i>0.05*</i>	0.11 <i>0.02**</i>	0.29 <i>0.05**</i>	0.230	1484	Norway
0.07 <i>0.06</i>	-0.00 <i>0.03</i>	0.08 <i>0.11</i>	0.064	1093	Poland
0.06 <i>0.06</i>	-0.05 <i>0.03</i>	-0.02 <i>0.07</i>	0.025	1100	Portugal
-0.18 <i>0.05**</i>	-0.03 <i>0.03</i>	0.06 <i>0.07</i>	0.074	1091	Russia
0.09 <i>0.06</i>	0.02 <i>0.02</i>	0.20 <i>0.05**</i>	0.298	1652	Sweden
-0.17 <i>0.06**</i>	-0.02 <i>0.04</i>	-0.11 <i>0.07</i>	0.138	1238	Slovakia
0.25 <i>0.07**</i>	0.06 <i>0.04</i>	-0.03 <i>0.07</i>	0.171	877	Slovenia
0.11 <i>0.01**</i>	0.08 <i>0.001**</i>	0.21 <i>0.01**</i>	0.114	30477	Total

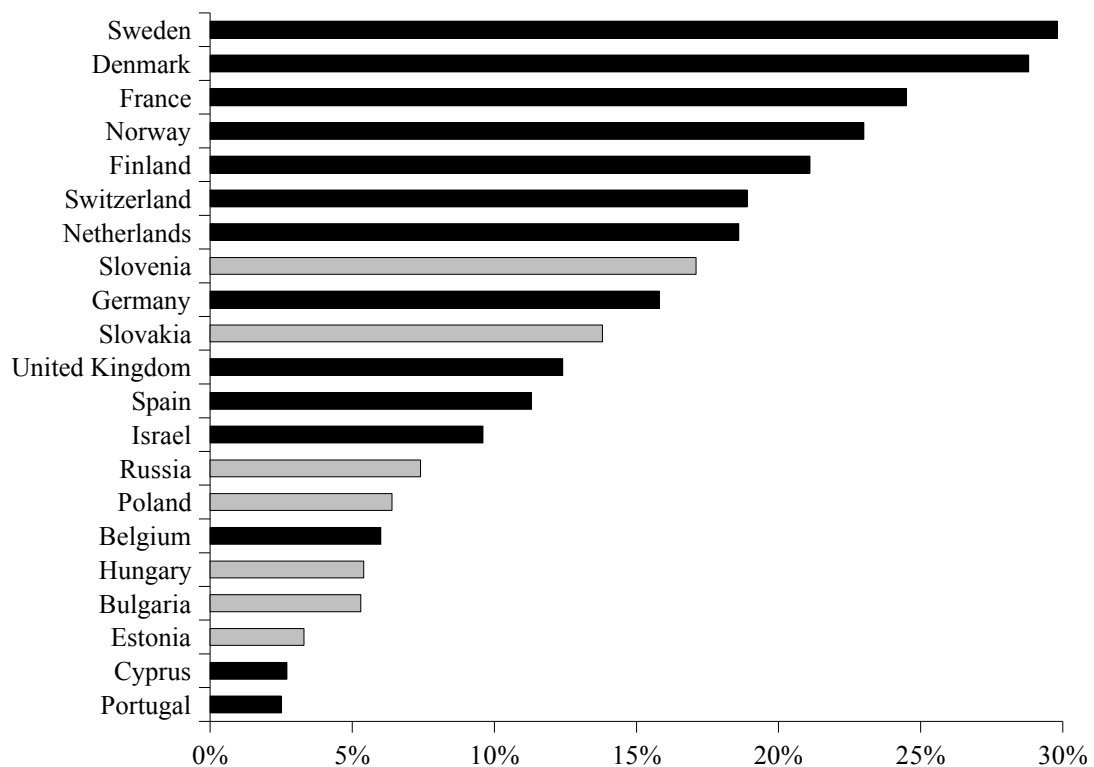
*Reported values are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in italics; ** p-value < 0,01;
* p-value < 0,05*

Again, some minor effects can be observed when regressing achievement on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, which hints at some possible interferences of the immigration and achievement variables in the full country models. The items of the religious dimension do not play a significant role in this respect.

While some changes in significance and direction of the coefficients can be observed when moving from the single dimension models to the full models in table 9, the adjusted r-squares are more or less stable. By and large, the explained variances reported here correspond to the sum of the adjusted r-squares in tables 6 to 8.

Sweden and Denmark come out on top of the field with explained variances of just under 30 percent. France, Norway, and Finland complement the group of countries with adjusted r-squares above 0.20. The prevalence of the Nordic countries is undoubtedly due to the influence of the socio-economic dimension.

Figure 3: Countries by total explained variance of left-right self-placement



Note: Light grey bars indicate post-communist states.

In figure 3 it becomes evident that the total explained variance is unevenly distributed across regions in Europe. The bottom half of the graph is predominantly made up of countries of the former communist realm, whereas the top half is largely composed of states in Northern and Western Europe.

The two most notable outliers in this respect are Slovenia and Belgium. Slovenia's position in figure 3 is owed to the considerable predictive capacities of the variables capturing the religious-secular dimension – a result that confirms the findings of Norris and Inglehart (2004: 206) who find the correlation of left-right orientation and religious values in Slovenia to be one of the highest in Europe. Moreover, their results suggest that effect of religion on left-right self-placement has increased in the almost two decades since the establishment of Slovenia as an independent state. What is more, Benoit and Laver (2006: 285) show how this relationship transforms into the realm of party politics: The correlation of eight Slovenian parties' positions on religious-secular values and their general left-right positions amounts to 0.93 (religious scale reversed).

Belgium represents the “negative” outlier of all West European countries (assuming that the younger democracies of Spain and Portugal are a class of their own) with respect to the variance explained by the three value dimensions. The most obvious explanation for this result is the emergence of a cross-cutting ethno-linguistic cleavage between Dutch-speaking Flemings and francophone Walloons which renders other social divisions less salient. Accordingly, De Winter et al. (2006: 945) hold that

[i]n recent decades, two of the three traditionally cross-cutting cleavages have lost salience for a significant part of the electorate. The denominational cleavage [...] once most structured voting behaviour. [...] From the 1960s onward, this cleavage lost weight and by the turn of the century its relevance for structuring voting behaviour was seriously restricted. [...] A similar, but less marked, development affects the [socio-economic] left-right cleavage.

This account offers a plausible explication for the comparatively poor showing of the regression models for Belgium.

While it seems probable that a similar explanation – ethnic conflict superimposed over other social divisions – applies for the case of Cyprus, the low r-square for Portugal is puzzling, especially considering that Spain – a country with a similar history of

democratization – displays a total explained variance of 11.3 percent, with variables from all three dimensions contributing significantly to the fit of the model.

4.2. Testing the six hypotheses

Drawing on the results of the regression analyses as well as external data, this section tests the six hypotheses outlined in section 3.1. Two hypotheses were proposed for each dimension of value orientations.

4.2.1. The religious dimension

H1 draws on Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) account of the emergence of the state-church cleavage. Wherever national churches were established as a consequence of schisms from the Roman Catholic Church, the potential for conflict between the nation-building ambitions of secular leaders and the claim to influence over public policies by religious authorities was considerably lowered. Hence, H1 states:

H1 The religious dimension of the left-right schema is more salient in predominantly Catholic societies than in predominantly Protestant or Orthodox ones.

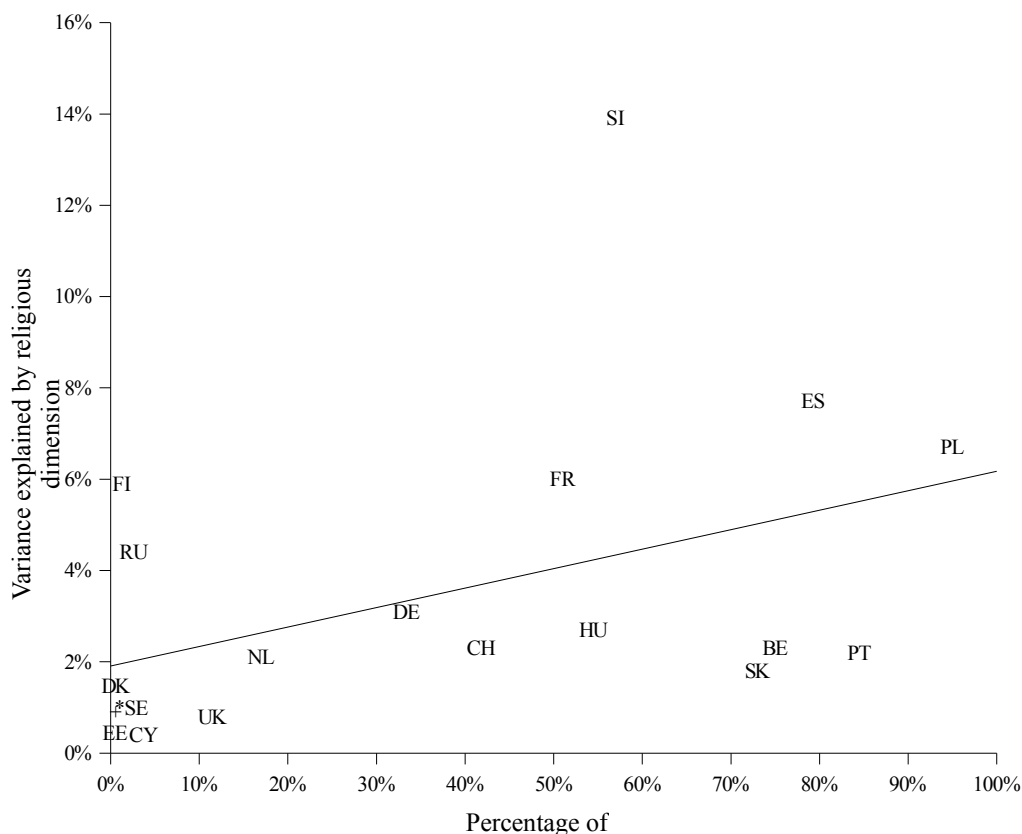
Testing this hypothesis requires establishing a correlation between the salience of the religious-secular dimension (as expressed by the explained variances in table 6) and statistics on religious denominations – more precisely: Catholics – for the 21 countries covered here. Since official international sources (such as Eurostat, the OECD, or the UN) do not collect data on religious denominations, I rely on the figures assembled by Cipriani (2009: 114). These data, however, report no percentages of Catholics for Estonia, Cyprus, and Israel.

For the two former countries, national census data can be consulted (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus 2003; Statistical Office of Estonia 2002) to get exact figures on religious beliefs. Israel is a more problematic case: Not only do the census figures fail to report numbers for separate Christian denominations; the peculiar relationship

between Judaism and Zionism suggests that Israel is an exceptional case as far as relations between religion and the state are concerned. On these grounds it appears apt to leave out Israel from the subsequent analysis.

Figure 4 displays the correspondence between the percentage of Catholics and the variance explained by the religious dimension for 20 countries. There is a positive and relatively strong correlation ($r=44.3$, $p\text{-value}=0.05$) between the two variables. When regressing the saliency of the religious dimension on the percentage of Catholics, it turns out that for each added percentage point in the latter variable, the explained variance for the religious dimension rises by 0.043 percent.

Figure 4: Catholics and the saliency of the religious dimension



*Note: Data on Catholics from Cipriani (2009: 113); Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus (2003); Statistical Office of Estonia (2002); * Norway, + Bulgaria.*

A few outliers from the depicted relationship can easily be identified. These are Finland and Russia where the salience of the religious dimension is higher as expected from the low percentage of Catholics, and Belgium, Portugal, and Slovakia which exhibit a low saliency despite a large percentage of the population being Catholic. Nevertheless, it can be concluded from the above findings that there is good support for the first hypothesis (H1).

The second hypothesis (H2) links the salience of the religious dimension to the importance of religion:

H2 The saliency of religious values in determining self-placement on the left or right corresponds to the overall importance of religion in a country.

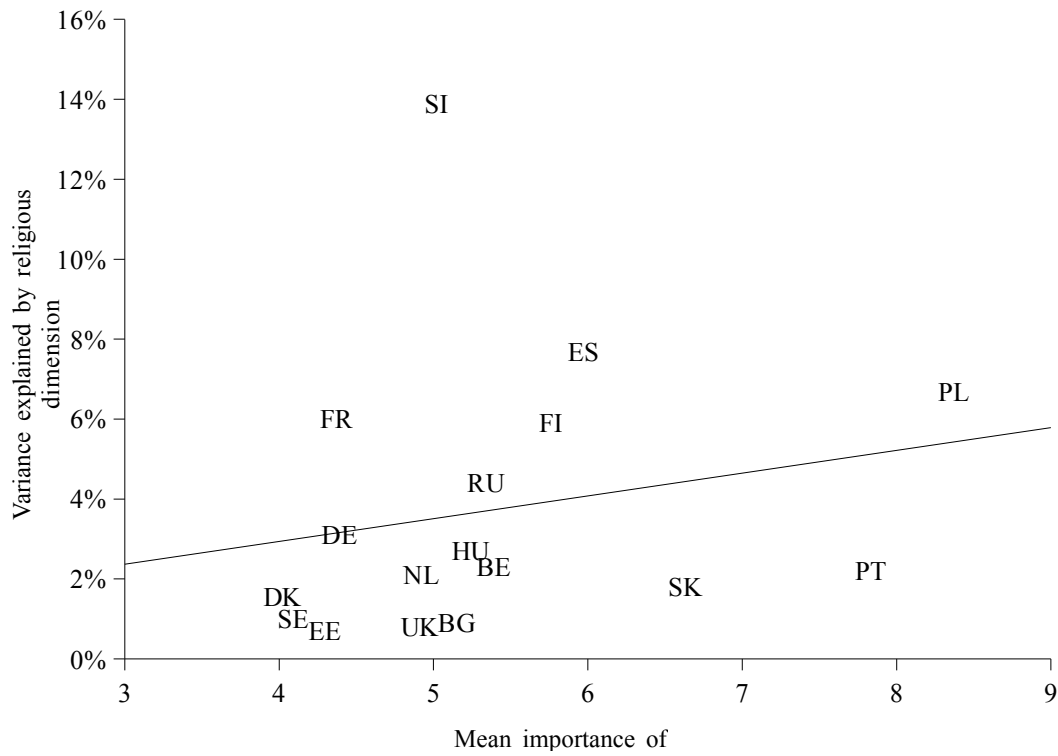
To evaluate this hypothesis, I rely on data from the European Values Study (third wave, conducted 1999/2000). Data from this survey are available for 17 of the 21 countries under study (not featured: Switzerland, Cyprus, Israel, and Norway). This survey includes a question about the importance of God in the life of the respondent. The exact question wording is:

And how important is God in your life? Please use this card to indicate – 10 means very important and 1 means not at all important.

Since all countries included in this study are dominated by monotheistic beliefs, God and religion are concepts that are inextricably linked: There is no religion without God. Therefore, the mean value for each country on this 10-point-scale can serve as a proxy for the importance of religion. When correlating these values with the r-squares of the religious dimension (see figure 5), a positive but rather weak relationship can be observed. The correlation coefficient is only 0.21, with a p-value of 0.43.

However, from figure 5 it becomes obvious that Slovenia presents a major outlier due to its exceptionally high explained variance. Taking Slovenia out of the equation, the correlation coefficient strengthens to 0.41 (p-value: 0.12).

Figure 5: Importance of God and the religious dimension



Note: Data from EVS 1999/2000; no data available for Switzerland, Cyprus, Norway, and Israel.

Still, it must be concluded that there is only a modest relationship between the overall importance of religion in a country and the salience of the religious dimension. While the data do not suggest a complete rejection of H2, the evidence is arguably too weak to justify a full confirmation of the hypothesis.

4.2.2. The socio-economic dimension

The second set of hypotheses pertains to the socio-economic dimension. Drawing on the historical development of the class cleavage and the concept of “freezing” party systems (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), it is conjectured that the socio-economic dimension is a more powerful predictor than the other two sets of value orientations:

H3 Of all value orientations those associated with the class cleavage have the greatest explanatory power concerning left-right self-identification in Europe.

To test this hypothesis, I assemble the explained variances for each of the three dimensions as well as for the religious and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension combined. Table 10 reports the exact figures. Grey shaded cells indicate that the respective figure is smaller than that for the socio-economic dimension and hence conforms to the hypothesis.

Table 10: Explained variances by value dimension				
Country	Religious	Libertarian-authoritarian	Religious + libertarian-authoritarian	Socio-economic
Belgium	0.023	0.021	0.037	0.030
Bulgaria	0.009	0.033	0.047	0.021
Switzerland	0.023	0.104	0.103	0.107
Cyprus	0.004	0.001	0.004	0.012
Germany	0.031	0.050	0.086	0.080
Denmark	0.012	0.104	0.106	0.231
Estonia	0.007	0.007	0.011	0.035
Spain	0.077	0.065	0.097	0.014
Finland	0.059	0.040	0.081	0.136
France	0.060	0.111	0.150	0.136
United Kingdom	0.008	0.046	0.051	0.092
Hungary	0.027	0.009	0.038	0.018
Israel	0.056	0.015	0.044	0.040
Netherlands	0.021	0.071	0.092	0.100
Norway	0.010	0.081	0.084	0.189
Poland	0.067	0.016	0.069	0.002
Portugal	0.022	0.008	0.019	0.005
Russia	0.044	0.010	0.049	0.020
Sweden	0.010	0.037	0.045	0.279
Slovakia	0.018	0.003	0.051	0.103
Slovenia	0.139	0.047	0.150	0.026
Total	0.042	0.035	0.065	0.044

*Note: Figures are adjusted r-squares from weighted least squares regressions (using "dweight" for single-country models and "pweight*dweight" for the full model).*

By this account, the socio-economic dimension yields higher explained variances in 15 out of 21 countries when compared with the religious dimension, in 16 out of 21

countries when compared with the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, and in 10 out of 21 countries the adjusted r-square even trumps that of both other dimensions combined. As can be easily seen from table 10, there are only four countries where the socio-economic dimension's explanatory power is inferior to that of both other dimensions: Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Slovenia. In Bulgaria, Hungary, Israel, and Russia, the socio-economic items explain more variance than one of the other two sets of variables. The fact that the 10 states fully conforming to H3 are found mostly in Central and Northern Europe certify the previous findings about the regional diversity of the prevalence and the meaning of left and right in Europe.

Taken together, the above results strongly confirm the third hypothesis. The socio-economic dimension continues to make up for a large part of the meaning of the left-right terminology in Europe, albeit with regional variation.

This notion is picked up by the fourth hypothesis which states that the socio-economic dimension is a weaker predictor of left-right self-placement in the post-communist states than in the rest of Europe:

H4 While running in the same direction, the link between socio-economic values and left-right self-placement is weaker in former communist societies than elsewhere in Europe.

Note that for this hypothesis to be confirmed, it is necessary that the signs of the coefficients point into the same direction. In order to evaluate H4, two separate regression models are set up; one for the seven post-communist countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, and Slovenia), and one for the remaining states. Table 11 reports the results.

Table 11: Socio-economic dimension: post-communist vs. other states						
	Intercept	Income equality	Achievement	Tax/Spend	Adj. R ²	N
Post-communist states	4.89 <i>0.09**</i>	0.06 <i>0.02**</i>	0.17 <i>0.02**</i>	-0.03 <i>0.01**</i>	0.010	8480
Other states	2.66 <i>0.05**</i>	0.31 <i>0.01**</i>	0.28 <i>0.01**</i>	0.11 <i>0.01**</i>	0.083	23930

*Note: Weighted least squares regressions (using "dweight" for single-country models and "pweight*dweight" for the full model); reported values are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in italics; ** p-value < 0,01; * p-value < 0,05*

While it holds that all coefficients as well as the explained variance are markedly greater in non-ex-communist countries, the tax/spend-item yields a negative predictor in the post-communist sphere. As discussed before, the question wording of this item is the most complex among the selected variables and also displays a very high non-response rate in a number of countries. For the former communist states, only 84.7 percent of all responses are valid as opposed to 93.9 percent for all other countries combined. While the negative sign for the tax/spend-coefficient in table 3 is difficult to explain in substantial terms, there might well be artefacts resulting from the question wording that contribute to this outcome.

Nevertheless, the analysis in table 11 leads to the conclusion that there is only partial support for the fourth hypothesis.

4.2.3. The libertarian-authoritarian dimension

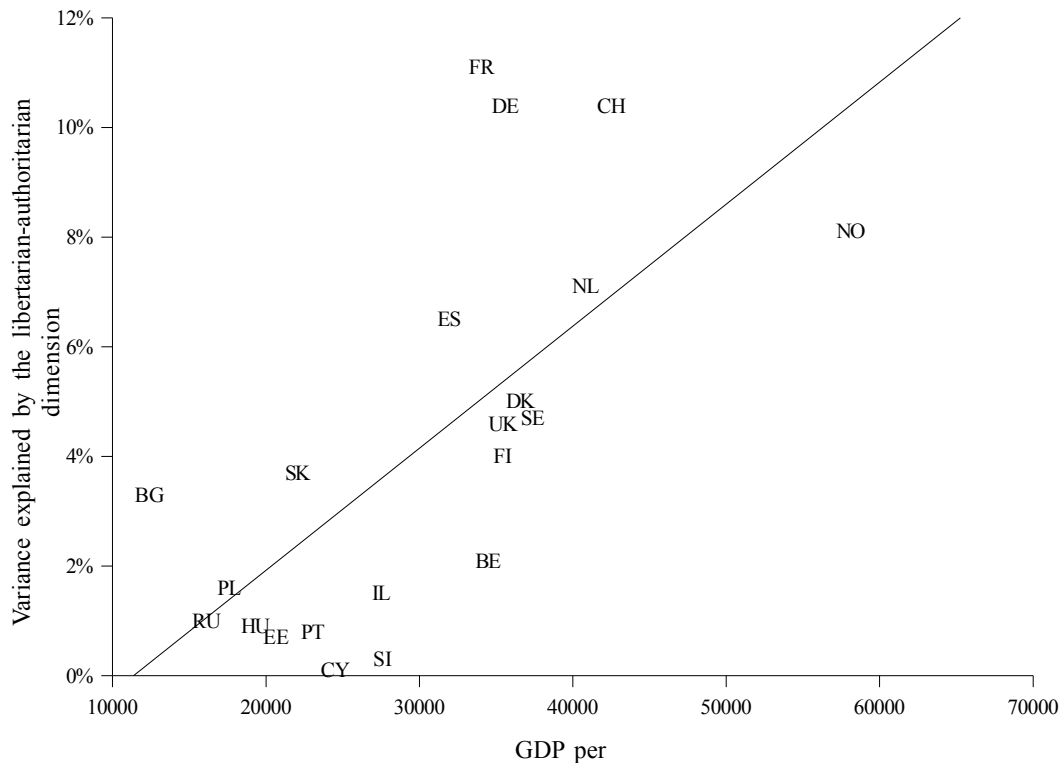
The final set of hypotheses is concerned with the third dimension of value orientations: libertarian-authoritarian beliefs. First, it is conjectured that such values only become politically salient when basic economic needs are satisfied over a longer period of time. Therefore, libertarian-authoritarian policies should be more relevant in societies where bread-and-butter issues are of less concern for a large part of the populace. Hence, the fifth hypothesis is:

H5 The more economically developed a country, the more powerful the libertarian-authoritarian dimension in explaining left-right self-identification.

A test of this hypothesis can easily be conducted by correlating the r-squares from the libertarian-authoritarian regression models with a basic measure of economic development, for example a country's gross domestic product (GDP) per capita.

Figure 6 plots the explained variance of the libertarian-authoritarian dimension against national per capita GDP figures (World Bank 2009). The correlation between the two values is a strong 0.67, with a p-value well below 0.01.

Figure 6: GDP per capita and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension



Note: GDP data from World Bank (2009), figures are per capita purchasing power parities for 2008.

The strength of the relationship is stunning: running a simple regression with GDP per capita as a predictor of the explained variance for the libertarian-authoritarian dimension yields an adjusted r-square of 0.43; a one thousand dollar increase in the GDP per capita raises the explained variance for libertarian-authoritarian items by 0.22 percentage points.

Clearly, the data presented give unambiguous support to the fifth hypothesis: the salience of the libertarian-authoritarian dimension is strongly related to a country's state of economic development.

The sixth hypothesis assumes that the relationship between libertarian-authoritarian values and the left-right semantics differs between Eastern and Western Europe – or more precisely: post-communist and other states. H6 states:

H6 Libertarian-authoritarian values in Eastern Europe are related to the left-right dimension in the reverse direction when compared with Western Europe.

Marks et al. (2006) argue that several decades of communist dictatorship have established a link between authoritarian beliefs and the political left in large parts of Eastern Europe. The following regression models – one conducted for post-communist and one for the other countries – should therefore yield coefficients pointing into different directions. Table 12 presents the results:

Table 12: Libertarian-authoritarian dimension: post-communist vs. other states						
	Intercept	Homosexuals	Immigration	Obedience	Adj. R ²	N
Post-communist states	5.68 <i>0.13**</i>	-0.06 <i>0.02**</i>	-0.05 <i>0.01**</i>	0.06 <i>0.03*</i>	0.006	8356
Other states	2.90 <i>0.06**</i>	0.24 <i>0.01**</i>	0.09 <i>0.01**</i>	0.27 <i>0.01**</i>	0.055	24568

*Note: Weighted least squares regressions (using “dweight” for single-country models and “pweight*dweight” for the full model); reported values are unstandardized regression coefficients, standard errors in italics; ** p-value < 0,01; * p-value < 0,05*

With two out of three coefficients negative in the former communist states and three positive predictors for the rest of Europe, there is good support for H6, albeit that the direction of the obedience coefficient does not differ between east and west. Also, the explained variance for the post-communist societies is rather weak.

As was observed in table 8, the negative coefficients for libertarian-authoritarian items in Eastern Europe occur predominantly in Bulgaria, Estonia, Russia, and Slovakia, whereas Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia mostly exhibit positive predictors. However, since all coefficients in table 12 are statistically significant, we can consider the sixth hypothesis to be largely confirmed.

4.3. Grouping countries: multidimensional scaling and cluster analysis

The final analytical step in this study is to group countries according to their respective left-right value profile, thus detecting clusters of countries where left and right have a

similar meaning. The starting point for the cluster analysis are the standardized (=beta) regression coefficients from the nine-item-models (see table 9). Using standardized coefficients means that all variables will receive equal weight in the calculation of the distance matrix which then serves as the input for the clustering procedure. Table 13 presents the beta coefficients for the nine items per country.

Table 13: Standardized regression coefficients									
Country	Religious			Socio-economic			Libertarian-authoritarian		
	Religiosity	Attendance	Praying	Income Equality	Achievement	Tax/spend	Homo-sexuals	Immigration	Obedience
Belgium	0.101	0.106	-0.082	0.065	0.078	0.096	0.042	0.031	0.086
Bulgaria	0.010	0.127	-0.005	0.103	0.052	0.018	-0.141	-0.046	-0.024
Switzerland	0.034	0.040	0.048	0.136	0.160	0.161	0.110	0.192	0.095
Cyprus	-0.066	0.146	0.006	0.112	0.022	0.075	0.008	-0.076	0.023
Germany	0.110	0.057	0.003	0.159	0.124	0.111	0.132	0.122	0.071
Denmark	0.090	-0.029	0.029	0.194	0.170	0.223	0.033	0.128	0.122
Estonia	-0.016	0.032	-0.064	0.145	-0.001	0.078	-0.066	-0.005	-0.006
Spain	0.188	0.072	-0.019	0.084	0.017	-0.027	0.088	0.113	0.085
Finland	0.208	-0.008	0.044	0.242	0.149	0.110	0.063	-0.030	0.079
France	0.096	0.123	0.012	0.190	0.169	0.083	-0.002	0.204	0.116
United Kingdom	0.107	-0.049	0.014	0.168	0.120	0.103	0.037	0.062	0.116
Hungary	0.147	0.107	-0.116	-0.102	-0.033	0.088	0.113	0.006	-0.053
Israel	0.138	0.018	0.118	0.024	0.223	0.056	-0.033	-0.044	0.006
Netherlands	0.086	0.061	-0.039	0.225	0.104	0.074	0.115	0.166	0.125
Norway	0.046	0.013	0.007	0.202	0.163	0.177	0.060	0.104	0.127
Poland	0.131	0.118	0.028	0.036	0.072	0.001	0.039	-0.003	0.022
Portugal	0.033	0.008	0.116	0.062	0.034	-0.017	0.031	-0.050	-0.009
Russia	0.183	0.041	-0.020	0.043	0.080	-0.089	-0.114	-0.040	0.025
Sweden	0.106	0.027	-0.046	0.224	0.211	0.240	0.032	0.019	0.095
Slovenia	0.140	0.189	-0.154	0.181	0.061	0.197	-0.088	-0.012	-0.048
Slovakia	0.107	0.224	0.040	0.062	0.005	0.123	0.121	0.053	-0.012

Note: Figures are standardized regression coefficients from weighted least squares regressions.

Standardized coefficients allow for comparison across variables and countries. It can therefore be concluded from table 13 that the strongest predictor in a single country is the income equality item in Finland (0.242). This variable yields beta values larger than 0.2 in a number of countries, as do the other items the socio-economic dimension.

For the religious dimension, attendance in Slovenia produces a beta coefficient of 0.224; the highest standardized coefficient for the libertarian-authoritarian dimension is immigration in France (0.204).

When conducting a cluster analysis two important choices have to be made: first, a measure of either distance or similarity has to be selected; second, a clustering algorithm suitable to the research task at hand must be chosen.

As to the first decision, it must be taken into consideration on what grounds clusters should be formed in the later process. A measure of similarity, for instance correlation coefficients, would group together two countries whose nine beta values display a high correlation – irrespective of whether the beta values for the two countries are close together in absolute terms. Yet, since the information carried by the absolute values of the standardized coefficients – high or low, positive or negative – should not be lost when transforming the values in table 13, the appropriate choice for the task at hand is a measure of distance rather than one of similarity.

Table 14: Country-by-country distance matrix

	BE	BG	CH	CY	DE	DK	EE	ES	FI	FR	UK	HU	IL	NL	NO	PL	PT	RU	SE	SI
BG	74																			
CH	73	178																		
CY	60	36	137																	
DE	38	144	18	109																
DK	83	178	27	158	37															
EE	54	29	128	33	99	120														
ES	41	128	94	128	45	125	106													
FI	81	150	99	143	51	58	121	93												
FR	66	135	34	142	35	50	120	76	95											
UK	48	120	43	110	26	23	74	63	30	55										
HU	69	153	200	134	141	242	131	94	216	226	177									
IL	91	93	128	122	106	120	125	123	82	130	78	172								
NL	56	165	31	132	14	48	108	54	74	27	37	195	165							
NO	60	148	19	115	22	8	95	104	55	38	19	218	116	28						
PL	28	57	108	60	61	134	72	34	87	95	72	70	51	97	109					
PT	84	62	134	54	101	155	64	86	107	154	80	131	59	141	129	35				
RU	83	56	213	125	151	203	91	78	125	155	111	140	70	176	185	44	72			
SE	72	159	67	137	53	24	113	150	45	76	42	231	118	70	22	132	172	195		
SI	51	114	101	73	64	150	110	70	136	110	124	73	137	103	122	43	97	159	149	
SK	74	86	189	109	135	159	79	160	141	139	146	150	181	154	142	118	195	150	101	112

Note: Figures are squared Euclidean distances between countries based on standardized regression coefficients, multiplied by 1000.

A number of distance measures are available (such as Euclidean distances, the Manhattan metric, or the Minkowski metric¹) of which the most apt appears to be the

1 Euclidean distance: $\sum \sqrt{(x_1 - x_2)^2}$; Manhattan: $\sum |x_1 - x_2|$; Minkowski: $\sum \sqrt[p]{(x_1 - x_2)^p}$.

squared Euclidean distance. This measure puts more weight on larger differences than on smaller ones and can therefore be expected to produce useful results.

Table 14 shows the distance matrix obtained from the standardized regression coefficients. The figures can be interpreted as the squared Euclidean distances between countries in a nine-dimensional space where each dimension corresponds to one of the nine variables used in the regression analyses. Low numbers indicate that two countries are similar cases, high numbers point to large differences in the meaning of left and right.

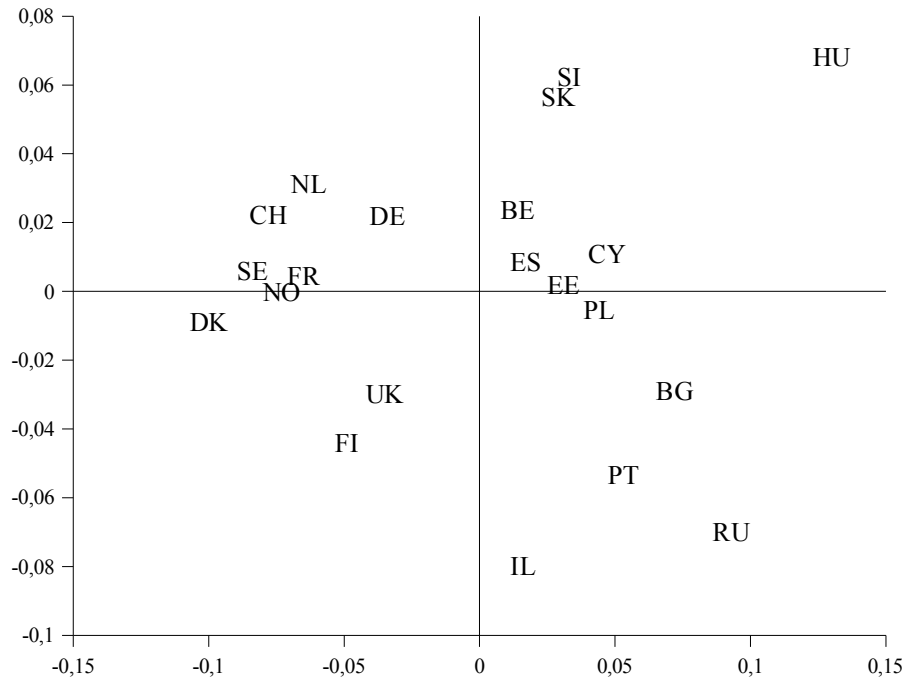
Denmark provides a very clear example of how to interpret the figures in table 14: it displays comparatively low distances to countries like Norway (8), the United Kingdom (23), or Sweden (24), whereas Hungary (242), Russia (203), or Slovakia (159) are located far from Denmark in the Euclidean space. Hence, we would expect Denmark to end up in a cluster with the former set of countries rather than with the latter one. Given that Denmark is likely to be more similar to other Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom than to states in the post-communist sphere, these are very plausible results.

Plotting the distances into a two-dimensional graph by means of a multidimensional scaling algorithm (R's *cmdscale*) yields the scatterplot shown in figure 7:

Figure 7 largely confirms the observations from table 14. Using again the example of Denmark, the distances to countries like Sweden, Norway, or the United Kingdom are much smaller than those to Hungary, Russia, or Slovenia.

What is more, figure 7 presents a first overview of similarities and differences of countries across Europe. Quite obviously, all West European countries with the exception of Belgium are found in the left half of the plot, whereas the right half is made up of the seven post-communist states, the countries on the Iberian Peninsula, Israel, Cyprus and Belgium. While the horizontal axis in figure 7 evidently maps an east-west divide within Europe, the vertical axis is somewhat more difficult to interpret. It shows, however, that the variation within the two main groups – located on either side of the horizontal axis – differs markedly: the West European countries on the left constitute a much more homogeneous cluster compared with the remaining countries on the right.

Figure 7: Multidimensional scaling of countries



Note: MDS based on squared Euclidean distances shown in table 14, goodness of fit: 0.63.

To complete the analysis, an algorithm for clustering needs to be chosen. Here, I rely on the Ward method which produces groups “producing the least impairment of the optimal value of the objective function” (Ward 1963: 238). In other words, the Ward algorithm starts out with all elements (here: countries) representing a single cluster. Subsequently, those elements are merged into a new cluster by which the “objective function” is increased the least. The objective function used by Ward is a measure for the “loss of information” (Ward 1963: 237), more precisely: the error sum of squares (ESS):

$$ESS = \sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2 - \frac{1}{n} \left(\sum_{i=1}^n x_i \right)^2$$

The Ward algorithm differs from other clustering methods (such as single linkage, average linkage, complete linkage) in that it uses this objective function to define sets of clusters. As to the performance of the Ward algorithm, Blashfield (1976: 385) concluded that this method “is generally preferable” to the three methods mentioned above. In

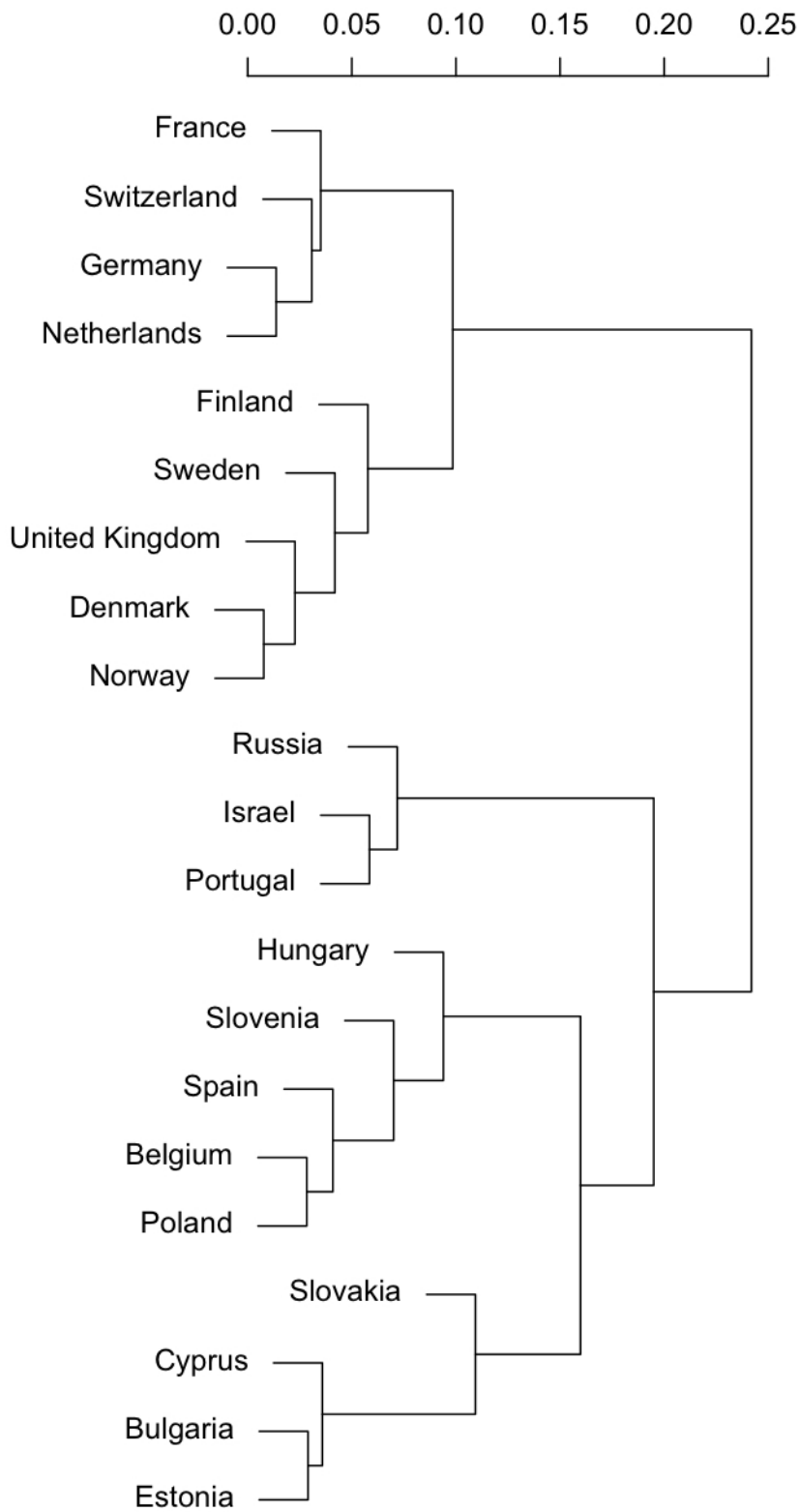
another test of different algorithms, Mojena (1977: 361) came to the result that the Ward method “gave a superior performance across all data sets”.

Given these findings and the fact that groups of countries with maximal homogeneity are desirable outcomes in this study, the Ward algorithm can be considered a reasonable choice.

Figure 8 presents the dendrogram resulting from the cluster analysis. Most clearly, a two-cluster-solution emerges, with both clusters consisting of two respectively three sub-clusters. The two-cluster-solution represents the divide between the Northern and Western European countries and the other countries in the data set, that is, the post-communist states plus those countries bordering the Mediterranean (Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Israel), as well as Belgium – an outlier from the pattern discovered in the rest of Western Europe.

The following section discusses in a more detailed fashion the groups (sub-clusters) of countries emerging from the cluster analysis.

Figure 8: Dendrogram of clustered countries



Note: Cluster analysis based on standardized regression coefficients using squared Euclidean distances and Ward algorithm.

4.4. Discussion of results: identifying cross-national commonalities in sub-clusters

The cluster algorithm applied (R's *hclust* routine) places more homogeneous groupings at the top and more heterogeneous groupings towards the bottom of the dendrogram. We can therefore conclude that, concerning the meaning of left and right, the Northern and Western European states are not only distinct from the other countries, they also display a more uniform pattern across the three dimensions.

The first sub-cluster within the top branch of the dendrogram consists of four democracies in Western Europe (France, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands). Judging by the regression analyses presented above, these are the countries most clearly displaying a three-dimensional account of left and right. Religious, socio-economic, and libertarian-authoritarian variables have a considerable impact on individual left-right self-placement in those states – a finding that is hardly surprising given the history and the socio-demographics of these societies.

As to the religious dimension, it should be noted that, in three of the four countries (Germany, Switzerland, Netherlands), there is a long-established split between Roman Catholics and Protestants, with both denominations accounting for a similarly sized proportion of the populace (Cipriani 2009: 114). The denominational cleavage – most profoundly established in the *verzuiling* of the Dutch society (Rokkan 1977) – fostered the politicization of religious issues. Even today, we find parties heavily campaigning on a religious agenda, such as the *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* and the *ChristenUnie* in the Netherlands, or the *Evangelische Volkspartei* and the *Eidgenössisch-Demokratische Union* in Switzerland. In Germany, however, the divide between Catholics and Protestants was mitigated by the foundation of the supra-denominational Christian Democratic Union after the Second World War (Pridham 1977: 26). Still, religious attitudes are by all accounts relevant in determining political orientations in Germany. France, the fourth country in the first sub-cluster, can hardly said to be denominationally mixed. Still, as Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 15) argue, the French Revolution “produced the deepest and bitterest opposition [...] between the aspirations of the mobilizing nation state and the corporate claims of the churches”. As much of the conflict in the post-revolutionary French National Assembly – where the terms left and right were first used in a political context – was about the role of the

Catholic church (Laponce 1981), it is unsurprising that the religious items are good predictors of left-right self-placement in France and hence allocate the country with the denominationally mixed countries in the cluster dendrogram.

The socio-economic cleavage impacted quite uniformly on many parts of Europe, and the four countries in the top sub-cluster are no exception to this rule. The coefficients for the three respective variables are – as expected – positive, highly significant, and of very similar size in France, Switzerland, Germany and the Netherlands. In all four countries, the variance explained by the socio-economic items surpasses that explained by the other dimensions, if only by a small margin in Switzerland. However, the socio-economic dimension is not the one distinguishing the first sub-cluster from the second. Instead, the socio-economic dimension accounts for most of the major divide between the northwest of Europe and the other countries in the analysis. The differences between the first and second sub-cluster stem from the variation in the strength of the religious and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension.

With respect to the latter, the four countries in the first sub-cluster display the strongest effect, only a little short of the socio-economic dimension. This is in line with Inglehart's (1971, 1977) hypothesis of value change as a result of continued prosperity and affluence in post-war Europe. Moreover, France, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands have experienced most profound transformations of their party systems through the increased salience of the libertarian-authoritarian cleavage (Kitschelt 1988, 1995), with parties emerging on the libertarian left (Green parties in all four countries plus *Democraten 66* in the Netherlands) and on the authoritarian right (*Front National* in France; *Republikaner*, DVU, and NPD in Germany; SVP in Switzerland; Pim Fortuyn's List and Geert Wilders' PVV in the Netherlands). Hence, the relevance of the libertarian-authoritarian dimension in explaining left-right self-placement is hardly surprising.

The second sub-cluster consists of all Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark) and the United Kingdom. Interestingly, these five countries are also put in one category by Lipset and Rokkan (1967: 38–41).

First of all, these are societies dominated by Protestant majorities and therefore lack a history of severe conflict between nation builders and church authorities. While we find

religious parties in all Scandinavian countries, the religious cleavage seems to have impacted on left-right self-identification to a greater extent only in Finland. Since it is the religiosity item that largely drives the strength of the religious dimension there, we can assume that the Finnish society is less secularized than other societies in Northern Europe. We find this assumption confirmed by the data from a 2005 Special Eurobarometer (European Commission 2005: 9): subtracting the percentage of atheists (“I don’t believe there is any sort of spirit, God or life force”) from the believers in God (“I believe there is a God”) we obtain a value of +25 for Finland, +18 for the United Kingdom, +12 for Denmark, and ± 0 for Sweden (no data available for Norway). Therefore, we can hold that Finland is still a more religious country than its Scandinavian neighbours. With respect to the United Kingdom, it can be assumed that its party and electoral systems discourage religious mobilization.

The socio-economic dimension is by a large margin the most relevant and most salient in the countries of Northern Europe. Yet historically, the industrial conflict had a quite different effect: it brought to the fore the social democratic welfare state in Scandinavia, while leading to the establishment of a more liberal regime of industrial relations in the United Kingdom. Accordingly, it is especially the Scandinavian countries where the socio-economic dimension of the left-right dichotomy prevails over all other dimensions by a large margin.

As the North of Europe is one of the most affluent and secure regions in the world, we can observe a considerable effect of the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, albeit to a smaller extent than in the Western European states assembled in the first sub-cluster. The effect is most pronounced in Denmark, which is not only the most “continental” state within the second sub-cluster, but also one where the libertarian-authoritarian cleavage has impacted strongly on the electorate and hence the national party system (Stubager 2006). Sweden, Finland, and the United Kingdom display a lower salience of the libertarian-authoritarian dimension of left-right, which is, *inter alia*, due to the relatively weak link between attitudes towards immigrants and the left-right terminology (see table 8). The absence of a significant anti-immigrant party in these countries (as opposed to Denmark and Norway) arguably accounts for this feature.

Overall, we can conclude from looking at the top half of the dendrogram that the societies of Northern and Western Europe exhibit a similar account of the meaning of left and right. Variation is mostly due to the differences in denominational characteristics between the Protestant North of Britain and the Scandinavian countries and the mixed-belief societies of continental Western Europe (with Catholic France constituting a somewhat special case). Some indication for a weaker libertarian-authoritarian dimension in parts of Northern Europe has also been found.

Devoting our attention to the lower half of the dendrogram, a few characteristics stand out at first glance. First, there is much greater heterogeneity in the branch itself as well as in its sub-clusters. Second, although some intuitive patterns can be detected from the three (or four, if Slovakia is counted as a separate singleton) sub-clusters that emerge in the dendrogram, there is no geographical or denominational logic to be found that is as convincing as was the case in the top half of the clustering tree. Third, cross-checking the dendrogram with the overall variance explained by the nine issue items (see table 9), it must be concluded that the link between the left-right terminology and certain political issues is a lot weaker in the post-communist states and the remaining countries of Southern and Eastern Europe than in the north and west of the continent. In the words of Inglehart and Klingemann (1976), the value component of left-right self-identification in those societies is extremely modest. Two possible conclusions can be drawn from this finding: the weak value component either indicates that the meaning of left and right in the respective countries is mostly determined by the other two components (socio-structural and partisan), or it reflects a lower relevance of the left-right dimension in general.

In order to fully assess both possibilities, the weight of the other two components would have to be determined – a task that goes beyond the scope of this study. However, there is some indication that the weaker showing of the nine items in the Eastern and Southern European countries reflects a more general limitation in the use of the left-right dimension.

First, drawing on an argument made by Fuchs and Klingemann (1990), the fact that the response rates for the left-right item are consistently lower in the countries found in the bottom half of the cluster tree suggests a limited acquaintance with the concept of left

and right as political labels. Also, the share of respondents placing themselves in the middle category can serve as a rough proxy of respondents' familiarity with the left-right concept, since respondents who are unsure about the meaning of the terms left and right are more likely to choose the middle category. Especially the post-communist countries display a higher share of such responses (36.9 % on average versus 28.9 % for the other country samples), thus supporting the argument of limited prevalence of left and right in these societies.

Second, it should be noted that most countries in the lower cluster are considerably young democracies. Party competition is, therefore, a comparatively recent phenomenon in most of these states. Thus, the likelihood of a strong partisan component – which requires a certain degree of stability in the national party system over a longer period of time – appears to be limited. Again, this argument applies mostly to the post-communist countries, since Freire (2006: 368; 2008: 192) shows that partisan orientations are central in explaining left-right orientations in Portugal, Spain, and Belgium.

The first sub-cluster in the lower branch of the cluster tree is comprised of Russia, Israel, and Portugal. There are hardly any obvious commonalities linking these three countries: geographically, these countries lie on (or even beyond) the edges of the European continent. Also, their political systems and denominational characteristics are far from uniform.

Still, it can be seen from figure 1 that the religious dimension is the most important one in explaining left-right self-placement for all three cases. It is well-known that religious issues feature prominently in the Israeli political arena, and provide numerous (smaller) parties with a competitive electoral platform (Cohen 2007). In the case of Russia, the relative importance of the religious dimension is more surprising, especially given the limited role of religion after decades of communist rule (Kääriäinen 1999).

Portugal is one of the countries with the lowest explained variance across all three value dimensions. This result is in line with Freire (2006: 368) who found a maximum explained variance of three percent for the value component in Portugal. In contrast, socio-structural and partisan variables accounted for almost a third of the variation in left-right self-placement.

The libertarian-authoritarian dimension is close to irrelevant in the three countries forming the top sub-cluster of the lower branch. Following Inglehart's (1971, 1977) concept of value change, the comparatively modest economic status of the three countries accounts for this finding.

Still, Israel, Russia, and Portugal are too diverse a bunch of countries to make intuitive sense as a distinct group. It should therefore be concluded that the similarities observed in the above analysis are most likely (accidental) outcomes of country-specific developments rather than the result of a general societal or political pattern found in all three states.

Quite to the contrary, the second sub-cluster in the bottom half of the dendrogram is made up of countries that are more easily identified as a group with significant commonalities. As was the case for Western and Northern Europe, religious denomination is a key variable here. Hungary, Slovenia, Spain, Belgium, and Poland are countries with large Catholic majorities. Accordingly, the religious dimension explains the largest share of left-right variance in these countries (except for Belgium where all three value dimensions are similarly weak). Connected to the Catholic tradition of the five countries is a historical link. The Habsburg Empire comprised parts of the territories on which we find the five states today. While this feature should not be overestimated in itself, the struggles of the Rome-oriented Habsburg emperors against Protestant dissidents in the course of the Counter-Reformation surely helped to lay the groundwork for a politicization of the religious cleavage.

The socio-economic dimension is hardly relevant in the five countries of the Catholic sub-cluster. In Slovenia, Poland, and Hungary, the absence of political competition during decades of communist rule in the second half of the twentieth century hindered the materialization of the class cleavage in the countries' political systems. A similar development seems to have taken place in Spain, where the value component of the socio-economic dimension is clearly weaker than the partisan or the socio-structural component (Freire 2006: 368).

Concerning the socio-economic but also the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, the results for Belgium are most stunning. The country represents a major outlier among the Western European nations that typically exhibit a high salience of the industrial as well

as the post-industrial conflict line. The most obvious explanation is that the ethno-linguistic divide between Flanders and Wallonia has become so central an element of Belgian politics that other cleavages have become less salient. Examining the figures in table 9, Belgians differ from their Dutch and French neighbours particularly with respect to the immigration issue which completely fails to predict left-right self-placement in Belgium – an unexpected outcome given that Flanders is home to one of the most successful radical right-wing parties in Europe, the *Vlaams Belang*.

Whereas the libertarian-authoritarian value dimension remains weak in Belgium, Poland, and Hungary, there are some moderate effects in Spain and Slovenia. While in the latter case the homosexuals issue – and hence possibly underlying religious orientations – mostly determines the stronger showing of the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, respondents in Spain clearly link their left-right self-placement to all of these non-economic issues.

Summing up, the left-right dimension in the five countries of the second sub-cluster in the lower branch of the dendrogram is most evidently influenced by religious attitudes, with “New Politics”-issues playing a minor role in Spain. The socio-economic dimension is more or less negligible.

The sub-cluster at the very bottom of the dendrogram consists of Bulgaria, Estonia, Cyprus, and Slovakia, albeit that the latter is clearly an outlier within this group. Again, there is no obvious commonality linking the four countries: three are post-communist states, one (Cyprus) is not; Cyprus and Bulgaria are mostly Orthodox, while Slovakia is Catholic and Estonia largely atheist – only 31.8 % of the population specified their religious affiliation in the 2000 census (Statistical Office of Estonia 2002: 30); a possible commonality is that all four countries experienced conflict over national identity to some degree. Estonia and Bulgaria have large ethnic and linguistic minorities, which is true also for Slovakia that became a sovereign state only in 1993 after the peaceful separation from the Czech Republic; finally, the division between Turkish and Greek Cypriots has been dominating the island’s political agenda for decades. As Horowitz (1985: 32) notes, ethnic struggle can prevent class conflict from becoming salient in societies where both cleavages do not reinforce each other. This argument might partly explain why the three value dimensions explain little of the

variance of the left-right dimension in the four countries in question (Slovakia being an exception due to the strong impact of the socio-economic dimension).

The case of Cyprus – the country with the lowest overall explained variance (see table 9) – is perhaps most surprising since voters' perceptions of the Cypriot political parties are very clear-cut (Freire et al. 2006: 14). Still, with the exception of socio-economic policies, party competition in Cyprus is low in most policy areas (Benoit and Laver 2006: 255).

Interestingly, the four countries display a somewhat similar profile of libertarian-authoritarian values – at least to the extent that it influences left-right self-identification at all. For all four countries, most signs of the respective coefficients are negative (see table 9). Most notably, positive attitudes towards homosexuals are significantly correlated with self-placements on the right in Bulgaria, Estonia, and Slovakia – the three post-communist countries in the lowermost sub-cluster.

From a more general perspective on the 21 countries included in the analysis, the dendrogram reveals specific commonalities in the meaning of the left-right terminology across European electorates. A number of findings stand out:

First, the major line of distinction is the one separating Western and Northern Europe from the Southern and Eastern parts of the continent, as illustrated in figure 8 by the two major branches of the clustering tree. In the Northwest, we find not only a higher prevalence of the left-right dimension in general, also the socio-economic and libertarian-authoritarian dimensions are clearly more well-established. The strength of the religious dimension varies across and within the two major groups of countries, with the mixed belief societies of Western Europe and the Catholic countries in the south and east displaying the highest explained variances.

Second, the picture emerging from the analysis shows that the terms left and right are not only more common to respondents in Northern and Western Europe, also their meaning is more homogeneous across countries in these areas. While the Protestant North displays a left-right account with hardly any impact of religious variables, the mixed belief and Catholic societies of Western Europe – most prominently France – exhibit a more multifaceted meaning of left and right: here, religious, socio-economic, as well as libertarian-authoritarian value orientations contribute strongly and

significantly to the explanation of variation in individuals' left-right self-placement. The Western European countries, therefore, come closest of all subgroups to Knutsen's (1995; 1998; 2002) three-dimensional approach to the meaning of left and right.

Third, we can conclude that the left-right dimension is not only less common and prevalent in the Eastern and Southern European countries, also its meaning is less stable and more prone to variation. Therefore, these countries present a much less homogeneous account of the meaning of left and right. However, it is noteworthy that the religious dimension is comparatively strong in the Catholic countries of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean area as well as in Russia and, of course, Israel. With a few exceptions, the other two value dimensions do not add to the understanding of left and right in Southern and Eastern Europe: the socio-economic dimension is consistently weaker than in the Northern and Western parts of Europe, except for the case of Slovakia; the libertarian-authoritarian dimension is of equally little relevance, with only Spain and Slovenia displaying a moderate effect.

What are the implications of these results? Arian and Shamir (1983) argued that the terms left and right are not extracts of individuals' ideological views but rather political labels that people attribute to certain objects, most notably political parties. We cannot fully test this assumption here, since this would require accounting for the partisan component of the left-right dimension (as done by Freire 2006, 2008). Yet, the results indicate that there are political systems where a substantive share of the electorate links their own attitudes towards religious, socio-economic, and libertarian-authoritarian issues to the concepts of left and right in a meaningful way.

To be sure, this relationship is most certainly mediated by political parties, but the analysis presented shows that a strong link between left-right self-placement and an individual's value orientations exists also if party affiliation is not considered. It can only be speculated here about the extent to which party affiliation explains left-right self-placement in countries where value orientations account only for a small share of the variance in the dependent variable. Results presented by Freire (2006; 2008) as well as Inglehart and Klingemann (1976) suggest that the partisan component is the strongest predictor of left-right orientations.

However, as Knutsen (1997) shows, the question is one of the causal order: do individual value orientations precede party choice or does party choice influence individuals value orientations? Arguably, either of the two competing theoretical models has its justifications, yet they yield significantly different outcomes (Knutsen 1997: 212–216). While this question cannot be solved here, it appears safe to assume that there is a more complex bi-directional relationship between party choice and individual value orientations. Consequently, the results presented here are conceivably more than just reflections of individuals' partisan preferences that would disappear once the respective variables are introduced into the regression models. Hence, the outcomes from the analysis can be considered valid indications of the meaning of left and right across the 21 countries in the data set.

The purpose of the concluding section is, therefore, to discuss the variation in the salience and meaning of the left-right dimension found across Europe.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Looking at the results of the above analysis, we can conclude that there are two types of variation characterising the left-right dimension in the 21 European countries under observation: variation in strength or salience, and variation in the actual content associated with the left-right terminology.

5.1. The varying salience of the left-right dimension

It is one of the most obvious results of this study that the left-right concept is not equally well-connected to individuals' value orientations across European societies. Based on cross-national variation in explained variances and response rates as well as previous findings in the literature (Inglehart and Klingemann 1976; Knutsen 1997; Freire 2006, 2008), I conclude that, on the one hand, this is due to a strong partisan component of the left-right schema which dominates the value component in a number of countries (e. g. Portugal), but on the other hand, reflects a general variation in the familiarity of the left-right concept.

Most generally, it can be held that the post-communist societies of Central and Eastern Europe as well as some of the younger democracies in the South of the continent exhibit a rather modest degree of acquaintance with the value component of the left-right terminology among respondents (cf. Badescu and Sum 2005). This connects to Laponce's (1975, 1981) argument about the non-hierarchical structure of the dichotomy of left and right. Clearly, such a non-hierarchical heuristic lends itself to denoting competition between equals rather than struggle within an ordered hierarchy. Hence, the left-right terminology is of much more use in a competitive and democratic political system than under dictatorships of any kind. It is therefore hardly surprising that the left-right dimension is most well-established in the older democracies of Northern and Western Europe.

Another reason for the divergence in the salience of the left-right dimension can be found in variation concerning conflicts about national identity, ethnic, linguistic, and territorial matters (Horowitz 1985). Whereas the terms left and right have, through the

course of centuries, absorbed meanings relating to religious, industrial, and post-industrial cleavages, ethnic conflict – particularly when it cuts across other lines of conflict – tends to de-emphasize the prevalence and familiarity of the left-right dimension.

The variation in the salience of the left-right schema hence reflects major historical and political developments in Europe. With the proper analytical tools at work, the state of the left-right dimension can be considered a reflection of a country's history of democratization and the social conflicts present in the past centuries.

5.2. The varying meaning of the left-right dimension

Three dimensions of value orientations have been hypothesized to influence individuals' left-right self-identification. Clearly, the contribution of each dimension in explaining variation in the dependent variable is substantial. But not only are there major cross-national differences in the issue orientations associated by respondents with those three dimensions, the analysis also shows that many of these differences occur in a systematic and theoretically explicable manner.

First, the religious dimension varies with the denominational characteristics of a society. As was assumed on the basis of Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) account of party system development, the role of the Catholic church is crucial in explaining the salience of the religious dimension. Wherever Catholics constitute a majority or a substantial minority of the populace, religious attitudes and practices correlate with individuals' left-right self-identification. Interestingly, the pre-industrial religious-secular cleavage even translates into a strong showing of the religious dimension of left-right in younger democracies such as Poland, Slovenia, Spain, or Russia. The variation in the religious dimension also cuts across the more general "the west versus the rest"-divide observed in the analysis. Within the group of established democracies in Northern and Western Europe, it distinguishes between the Protestant societies of Scandinavia and the United Kingdom, and the mixed belief and Catholic societies of Western Europe. Within the Southern and Eastern European countries, a distinct subgroup of post-Habsburg Catholic societies can be identified on the basis of religious value orientations. Hence,

we can conclude that Knutsen's (1995, 1997, 1998, 2002) argument for the inclusion of the religious dimension of the left-right schema is not only valid but also adds analytical insight to the study of cross-national variation in the left-right dimension.

The socio-economic dimension is still at the heart of the left-right terminology. Issues related to economic equality, taxation, and public services still prove to be among the best predictors of left-right self-placement. This is especially true for the welfare states of Scandinavia, where, as a consequence of social democratic dominance, such policy issues have been at the top of the political agenda for most of the post-war era. But also West European societies display a very high salience for socio-economic issues as left-right predictors. As the testing of hypothesis three (H3) showed, the socio-economic dimension can still be regarded as the most essential facet of the left-right schema. Wherever the socio-economic dimension is weak, this reflects a generally low salience of left and right (exceptions: Slovenia and Spain). Also, it is most interesting to find a positive correlation between the explained variances of the socio-economic and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension. While the analysis here admittedly lacks a longitudinal perspective, it can be argued that the strengths of these two dimensions are mutually reinforcing (see section 4.1.3.), which provides support for the pluralization theory of left and right (Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990; Knutsen 1995). New non-economic issues are not replacing or substituting the socio-economic dimension of the left-right concept. Rather, they add to the meaning of left and right. The continued relevance of the religious dimension further corroborates the reasoning of pluralization theory.

Still, it must be concluded that Inglehart's (1971, 1977, 1984) assertion about a change in the meaning of left and right was at least partially accurate. While, contrary to his assumptions, materialist issues have not lost their significance, the libertarian-authoritarian issue dimension clearly makes up a large proportion of the meaning of left and right, albeit that this development is – in line with Inglehart's argument – limited to the economically more prosperous societies in Europe. Especially in Western European countries such as Switzerland, the Netherlands, or Germany, but also in Norway and Denmark, we can observe a substantial impact made on the left-right dimension by issues such as homosexual rights, immigration, and obedience in the school system.

Interestingly, this linkage is not just a consequence of enhanced prosperity and security in post-war Europe, it is also mediated by the political system that is in place. Therefore, we find in a number of post-communist countries an inverse relationship between libertarian-authoritarian values and left-right self-placement. This constitutes a replication of the party system-related findings by Marks et al. (2006) at the individual level, albeit that the relationship is limited to a few – mostly non-Catholic – countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Russia, and Slovakia).

One of the most noteworthy outcomes of this study is the diversity in the meaning of left and right that is observed across Europe. We find countries with an almost purely socio-economic (Sweden), and such with a predominantly religious account (Poland) of the left-right dimension. Also, there are societies where the libertarian-authoritarian dimension constitutes a major proportion of the meaning of left and right, mostly in addition to a strong socio-economic dimension (Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark, United Kingdom). In some countries, a three-dimensional account most aptly describes the value orientations associated with left and right (France, Finland). Finally, there are a few countries lacking a strong socio-economic dimension while displaying a strong relationship between left-right and libertarian-authoritarian value orientations (Spain, Slovenia).

What are the implications of these findings for the communication and orientation function of the left-right dimension as described by Fuchs and Klingemann (1990) or Arian and Shamir (1983)? Most notably, the left-right dimension appears to make sense primarily in the specific national contexts that individuals find themselves in. Cross-national comparison is clearly hampered by the great variation in value orientations that are associated with the left-right dimension. While party and party system characteristics are more easily compared across national borders by means of the left-right dimension (Inglehart and Huber 1995; Benoit and Laver 2006), there are many caveats as to the cross-national use of left-right as an ideological dimension at the individual level. At best, such a function can be ascribed to the terms left and right within a limited geographical context, most likely Northern and Western Europe, where there are sufficient commonalities in the understanding of the value component of the left-right dimension. It should, however, not be assumed that individuals placing

themselves similarly along the left-right continuum share too many ideological views when comparing Denmark with Russia, France with Cyprus, or Israel with Sweden. Especially Eastern Europe displays not only a pattern of value orientations that differs largely from that in Western and Northern Europe, also there is considerable heterogeneity within the societies of the former communist bloc.

Therefore, the application of spatial models of electoral competition to these countries, with left-right self-placement as an important (or even the only) determinant of vote choice (Downs 1957), seems problematic. While it cannot be fully assessed on the basis of the present analysis to what extent individuals in the countries of post-communist Europe are ideological in the sense of holding consistent or interrelated value orientations (Gerring 1997; Sartori 1969), it can nevertheless be argued that, even if ideology can be found amongst the Eastern European electorates, it has not (yet) been absorbed by the left-right terminology to an extent comparable to that in Northern and Western Europe. This is especially true for the socio-economic and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension.

The divide between the long-lived and well-established democracies and the recently democratized states of Southern and Eastern Europe can be regarded as the main finding of this thesis. Further research may pay particular attention to a more profound analysis of the left-right dimension and its usefulness for the societies of Southern and Eastern Europe, in order to examine the potential of the terms left and right to function as an overarching ideological heuristic across Europe.

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8. APPENDIX

8.1. Abstract (English)

The present study examines the meaning of the left-right dimension across 21 European countries at the individual level. The terms left and right entered the vocabulary of the political arena in the aftermath of the French Revolution, where “right” used to denote the followers of the nobility, the clergy, and the defenders of the *ancien régime*, and “left” characterized the revolutionary bourgeoisie.

Ever since, major lines of social conflict in European societies have been absorbed by the political dichotomy. Through the course of the nation-building era, the religious-secular cleavage became salient, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the socio-economic class cleavage strongly shaped the political landscape across Europe, and in the second half of the twentieth century, value change fostered the emergence of a libertarian-authoritarian cleavage. The left-right terminology has been used with respect to all three of these lines of conflict, denoting either social groups, political parties, or value orientations which are of interest for the purpose of this study.

Accordingly, I present a three-dimensional mode of operationalizing the value component of the left-right dimension. Data from the European Social Survey (Round 4) are employed to examine the extent to which religious, socio-economic, and libertarian-authoritarian value orientations explain left-right self-placement by individuals across countries. The outcomes obtained from these analyses are then used to discover commonalities and differences between the 21 countries in the data set.

The results show that (1) respondents in the Western and Northern parts of Europe link their individual value orientations to the left-right terminology in a much more meaningful way than citizens in Southern and Eastern Europe, especially in post-communist societies; (2) the religious dimension of left-right is remarkably more salient in the mixed belief or predominantly Catholic societies of Europe; (3) the socio-economic dimension continues to explain the largest share of variance of respondents’ left-right self-placement; (4) the libertarian-authoritarian dimension is the more salient the more economically developed a society.

8.2. Abstract (German)

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die Bedeutung der Links-Rechts-Dimension im Vergleich von 21 europäischen Ländern. Die Begriffe links und rechts wurden im nachrevolutionären Frankreich erstmals politisch gebraucht. "Rechts" bezeichnete die Anhänger des Adels, des Klerus und die Verteidiger des *ancien régime*, demgegenüber meinte "links" die Vertreter des revolutionären Bürgertums.

Seit damals wurden große gesellschaftliche Konfliktlinien mit der Links-Rechts-Dichotomie in Verbindung gebracht: Zur Zeit der Nationalstaatenbildung war vor allem die *Cleavage* zwischen religiösen und säkularen Interessen dominant; in der Folge der Industriellen Revolution trat der sozio-ökonomische Klassenkonflikt an die oberste Stelle der politischen Agenda; und im späten 20. Jahrhundert bekamen nicht-materielle Konfliktlinien im Spannungsfeld zwischen libertären und autoritären Werthaltungen besondere Bedeutung. Mit allen drei *Cleavages* wurde das Links-Rechts-Schema in Verbindung gebracht, sei es im Bezug auf soziale Gruppen, politische Parteien oder ideologische Orientierungen, die hier von zentralem Interesse sind.

Dementsprechend erfolgt eine dreidimensionale Operationalisierung der Wertorientierungskomponente des Links-Rechts-Schemas. Anhand von Daten aus dem European Social Survey (Vierte Runde) wird ländervergleichend untersucht, in welchem Ausmaß religiöse, sozio-ökonomische und libertär-autoritäre Werthaltungen individuelle Selbsteinstufung auf der Links-Rechts-Skala erklären. Die Ergebnisse dieser Analysen werden anschließend verwendet, um Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen Ländern und Ländergruppen in Europa zu identifizieren.

Es zeigt sich, dass (1) Befragte in West- und Nordeuropa ihre Werteinstellungen sinnvoller mit der Links-Rechts-Dimension in Verbindung bringen als Personen in süd- und osteuropäischen Ländern, speziell im postkommunistischen Raum; (2) die religiöse Dimension der Links-Rechts-Dichotomie in katholischen oder katholisch-protestantischen Gesellschaften weitaus präsenter ist als anderswo; (3) die sozio-ökonomische Dimension den größten Anteil an erklärter Varianz beisteuert; (4) die libertär-autoritäre Dimension umso stärker ausgeprägt ist, je höher die wirtschaftliche Entwicklung eines Landes ist.

8.3. Curriculum Vitae

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Education

1988 to 1992	Primary school in Langenlois (Lower Austria)
1992 to 2000	Secondary school in Krems (Lower Austria)
2000 to 2006	Composition studies at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna; Graduation with distinction
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Spring 2007	ERASMUS-semester at Umeå University (Sweden)

Job Experience

September 2008 to September 2009	Freelancer at SORA (Institute for Social Research and Analysis)
November 2008	Contributor to the Forum of Young Scientists at the 4 th Austrian Development Conference, Innsbruck
since April 2009	Student assistant at the Department of Sociology, University of Vienna
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November 2009	Contributor to the conference <i>Independent Local Lists and Local Parties – Challengers From Bottom-up?</i> at Halle University, Germany. Together with Martin Ejnar Hansen.