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Many Ways to be Right: Cross-pressured Voters in Western Europe

Noam Gidron*

March 2020

Abstract

Mainstream parties in Western Europe are increasingly struggling to hold together their base of support. As a lens for exploring this changing electoral landscape, I focus on the growing share of the electorate that is cross-pressured between conservative and progressive attitudes on economic and cultural issues. I argue that a stable asymmetry characterizes Western European mass attitudes: while support for the left is common among voters with progressive attitudes on both issues, it is enough to be conservative on one issue to turn right. Analyzing survey data collected from 1990 to 2017, I show that cross-pressures are resolved in favor of the right and examine the trade-offs this poses to center-right parties. My findings contribute to debates on electoral dealignment and realignment and shed light on the electoral choices of the center-right.

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Western European mainstream parties are increasingly struggling to appeal broadly and hold together their base of support (Bale and Krouwel, 2013; Hobolt and Tilley, 2016; Pardos-Prado, 2015; Somer-Topcu, 2015). In the French elections of 2017, traditional mainstream parties all but collapsed. In the German elections of 2017, both the center-left and center-right achieved their worst results in decades. Similar developments have taken place across Western Europe, from Sweden in the North to Italy in the South.

Two theoretical approaches address these developments. Dealignment theory posits that voters, unburdened by stable commitments, defected from mainstream parties and are floating freely in the electoral space (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). In contrast, the globalization-driven realignment argument proposes that the electorate has reorganized into two blocs: globalization losers and globalization winners (Kriesi et al., 2008). Both arguments advance our understanding of electoral politics but are not without limitations. The former paints an overly disorganized image of the electorate, with no clear predictions for voting patterns. And in the face of increased electoral fragmentation, the latter paints an overly organized image of the electorate, with voters too neatly sorted into two main blocs.

As an alternative lens for considering the remaking of West European electoral politics, I focus on cross-pressured voters: those who hold conservative and progressive attitudes on different issues. A substantive share of the electorate is cross-pressured: it is either *welfare chauvinist*, combining cultural conservatism with progressive economic views, or *market cosmopolitan*, bundling economic conservatism with progressive cultural values (Federico, Fisher and Deason, 2017; Kitschelt, 2004; Kurella and Rosset, 2017; Hillen and Steiner, 2019; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Malka, Lelkes and Soto, 2019; Surridge, 2018; van der Brug and van Spanje, 2009). In line with dealignment theory, this focus on cross-pressures acknowledges that voters are spread across the ideological space—yet without assuming they no longer hold stable electoral preferences. And like the realignment theory, it takes seriously the role of identity-related concerns—yet without assuming they divide the electorate into two blocs.

Analyzing survey data collected over 25 years, I show that West European politics is characterized by an asymmetry: *while support for the left is common among voters with progressive attitudes on all issues, it is enough to be conservative on one issue to turn right.* This is because cross-pressured voters tend to attribute greater importance to those issues on which they hold conservative attitudes (Shayo, 2009) and therefore turn right. There are thus many ways to be right, as the right attracts not only voters with consistent conservative attitudes but also welfare chauvinists and market cosmopolitans.

This asymmetry in public opinion, in turn, carries implications for the challenges and opportunities of center-right parties. On the one hand, center-right parties are better positioned than the center-left to attract cross-pressured voters, since these voters already self-identify with the right. Yet on the other hand, center-right parties compete over cross-pressured voters with other parties on the right and may find themselves increasingly torn between welfare chauvinists and market cosmopolitans, since movement toward one group of cross-pressured voters may alienate the other.

Uncovering the asymmetric structure of mass attitudes across the left-right divide entails the exploration of two issues in the electoral politics literature. The first issue relates to the development of European party systems. A prominent argument posits that the inability of the right to speak in a single voice has been a source of weakness (Castles, 1978). Yet in a multidimensional electoral space with many cross-pressured voters, the ability of the right to speak in multiple voices is a source of strength, which expands the right's base of support.

The second issue has to do with the rise of the radical right. One influential account traces support for the radical right to defection of welfare chauvinist, working class voters from the center-left (Fraser, 2017; Streeck, 2017). Yet as demonstrated below, welfare chauvinists tend to identify with the right also where and when a radical right party is not available. While center-right parties traditionally absorbed the support of many welfare chauvinists (Beer, 1965; Lipset, 1959), these voters are now increasingly represented by the radical

right. Seen from this perspective, the rise of radical right parties may portend not so much a mass defection of welfare chauvinists from the center-left but rather the disintegration of the center-right (Bale, 2018; Evans and Mellon, 2015; Gidron and Ziblatt, 2019).

Theoretical expectations

Extant research provides conflicting predictions regarding cross-pressured voters: some expect them to prioritize economic attitudes, others hypothesize they prioritize cultural values, and others predict they adopt a centrist position.¹ These perspectives all share the same starting point: since the left is associated with progressive positions and the right with conservative ones, cross-pressured voters have to decide which attitudes to prioritize in choosing between left and right (Lefkofridi, Wagner and Willmann, 2014; Thomassen, 2012).

Some expect voters to prioritize their economic preferences. Historically, economic issues have played a crucial role in European politics (Cusack, Iversen and Rehm, 2006). Research in American politics shows that voters prioritize attitudes on economic issues even following the ‘Culture Wars’ of the 1980s, which increased the salience of cultural issues (Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder, 2006; Bartels, 2006; McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, 2006).

Others suggest that voters prioritize cultural issues, since it is harder to compromise on cultural identities than on taxes and welfare (Goren and Chapp, 2017; Tavits, 2007). There is evidence that poor religious voters follow their (conservative) cultural views rather than their (progressive) economic attitudes (De La O and Rodden, 2008). Research that argued for this cultural bias mostly focused on welfare chauvinists (Lefkofridi, Wagner and Willmann, 2014). Yet it follows from this perspective that just as welfare chauvinists (culturally conservative) turn right, market cosmopolitans (culturally progressive) should turn left.

Alternatively, cross-pressured voters may average out their conservative and progressive attitudes and adopt a centrist position: Treier and Hillygus (2009, 696) note that Americans

¹Note that by cross-pressures, I refer to the combination of conservative and progressive attitudes on different issues rather than cross-cutting social networks (Mutz, 2002).

“with divergent economic and social preferences are more likely to call themselves moderate than to use a liberal or conservative label.” From this perspective, a centrist ideological position often reflects a ‘meeting place’ for voters who are cross-pressured between conservative and progressive attitudes (Cochrance, 2015, 138)

An alternative: Right-wing asymmetric advantage—with a caveat

In understanding the political behavior of cross-pressured voters, the core question then is: to which dimension do these voters attach more salience when choosing which party to vote for? As Lefkofridi, Wagner and Willmann (2014) explain, if cross-pressured voters attach more salience to economic issues they would support a party that closely represents their economic views, and if they attach more salience to cultural issues they will support a party that represents their cultural values. Yet it is likely the case that different cross-pressured voters systematically attach more salience to some issues and not others—in which case, we can generate predictions about the electoral behavior of cross-pressured voters.

There are theoretical reasons to expect that welfare chauvinists will attach greater salience to the cultural dimension, while market cosmopolitans will see economic issues as more salient to their vote. Especially relevant is the model developed by Shayo (2009), according to which the salience voters attach to different dimensions is endogenous to their socio-demographic characteristics. Within this model, voters identify with either their economic identity or with their cultural identity; greater identification with one identity translates into lower identification with the other identity (Han, 2016). Since being poor confers low status, less well-off voters identify with their cultural identity; and since being rich confers high status, more well-off voters are likely to prioritize their economic identities.

While Shayo (2009) focuses on explaining support for redistribution, his model is highly relevant for explaining electoral behavior and vote choice. In terms of their demographics, welfare chauvinists tend to be less well-off while market cosmopolitans are more well-off (Baldassarri and Goldberg, 2014). Bringing these demographics together with Shayo’s model,

it follows that less well-off, welfare chauvinist voters are likely to attach greater salience to the cultural dimension, on which they are conservative, and turn right—while well-off market cosmopolitan voters are likely to put more weight on their economic preferences, on which they are conservative, and also turn right. Thus, while previous work expects cross-pressured voters to follow the issue most salient to them, we can expect salience to vary systematically across cross-pressured voters in a way that would nudge them to the right.

One caveat is in order: in multiparty systems, center-right parties—namely Christian democrats and conservatives—may not be the main beneficiaries of this right-wing advantage among cross-pressured voters. Center-right parties nowadays often combine moderate conservative positions on both economic and cultural issues (Gidron and Ziblatt, 2019). As Pardos-Prado (2015) demonstrated, center-right parties indeed benefit when these ideological dimensions are strongly bundled—while it is other parties on the right that reap the benefits of disalignment between dimensions of electoral competition. This reflects a broader finding in the electoral politics literature, according to which mainstream parties struggle when dimensions of electoral competition are misaligned (de Vries and Hobolt, 2012).

Theoretical expectations and their observable implications

The literature generates conflicting expectations: (1) Some expect voters to prioritize economic preferences; (2) Others predict voters follow their cultural preferences; (3) Yet others expect cross-pressured voters to be centrists. Alternatively, I hypothesize that (4a) cross-pressured voters prefer the right over the left, since both welfare chauvinists and market cosmopolitans are likely to see as more salient to their vote those issues on which they are conservative; and (4b) compared to other parties right of the center, center-right parties are likely to be less appealing to cross-pressured voters.

Figure 1 presents the observable implications of the theoretical arguments discussed above. The y-axis denotes the probability of identifying with the right. The x-axis ranges across the different combinations of economic and cultural attitudes: from welfare chauvin-

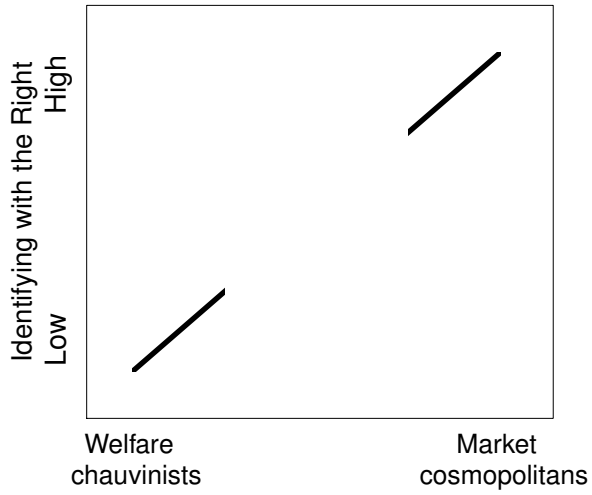
ism to market cosmopolitanism, with bundled attitudes (either progressive or conservative) in the middle. Later on, I will construct an empirical variable that similarly ranges from welfare chauvinism to market cosmopolitanism. Note that the theoretical argument generates predictions for the two extreme sides of this scale (unbundled attitudes) but not to the middle of the scale (bundled attitudes).

If cross-pressured voters follow their economic preferences, those who are economically conservative and culturally progressive will identify with the right, while those who are economically progressive and culturally conservative will identify with the left (subfigure a). If voters follow their cultural values, those who are economically conservative and culturally progressive will identify with the left, while those who are economically progressive and culturally conservative will identify with the right (subfigure b). If cross-pressures generate ambivalence, cross-pressured voters will adopt a centrist position (subfigure c). Yet if cross-pressures are resolved in favor of the right, both welfare chauvinists and market cosmopolitans will turn right (subfigure d).

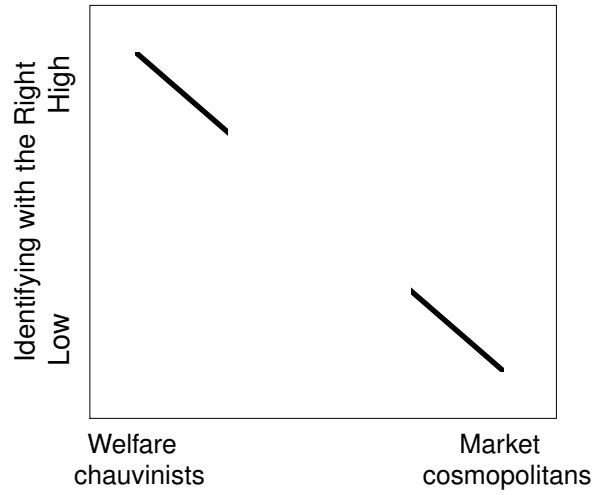
Data and measurement

In order to test these predictions regarding the political behavior of cross-pressured voters, I analyze data from the European Value Survey [EVS] collected in Western Europe in 1990-1993 [1990] and 2017 (EVS, 2015, 2019). The following ten countries were included in both waves: Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Great Britain. The EVS is suited for this analysis since the same questions on economic and cultural issues were asked over a time period of more than 25 years.

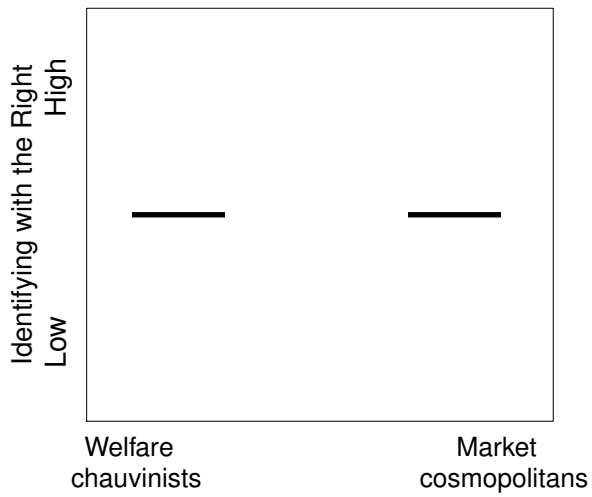
The dependent variable is a 10-point scale of left-right self-identification (later on, I turn to analyses in which the dependent variable is vote choice). The majority of the public in Western Europe can locate itself on the left-right scale (Best and McDonald, 2010). Notwithstanding arguments about its decline in post-industrial democracies (Hellwig, 2008),



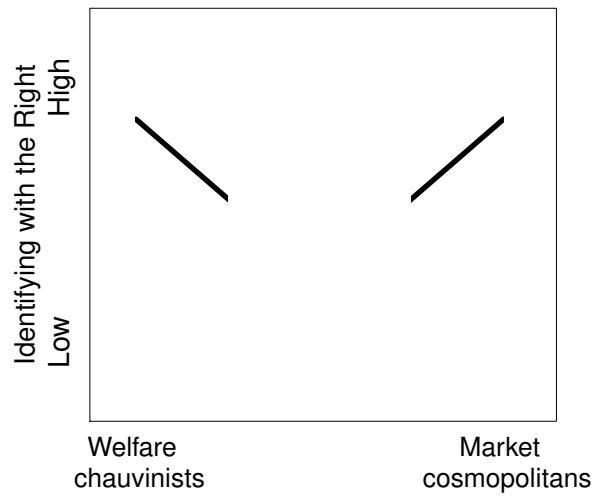
(a) Economic bias



(b) Cultural bias



(c) Ambivalence



(d) Right-wing asymmetry

Figure 1: Contrasting observable implications

left-right identification remains a very strong predictor of vote choice: that is, citizens who identify with the right (left) tend to vote for right (left) parties (Dalton, 2010).

The key independent variable is a measure of cross-pressures on the economic and cultural dimensions. I construct standardized scales for attitudes on economic and cultural issues for survey respondents in both the 1990 and 2017 samples; higher values on both scales stand for more conservative attitudes. A factor analysis of 10 questions reveals that attitudes in 1990 and 2017 were constructed along two dimensions: one economic, which pertains to state intervention in the economy, and one cultural, which deals with gender norms and attitudes toward foreigners (see Table 1 in the Supplementary Information memo for the factor scores, Eigenvalues, and questions wording). A composite index of attitudes decreases measurement error compared to relying on single questions (Ansolabehere, Rodden and Snyder, 2008).²

I use the factor scores to construct two measures of cross-pressures. First, I follow Hillen and Steiner (2019) and classify respondents into four quadrants based on their relative positions within their countries. Welfare chauvinists are those whose economic views are below the 40th percentile (that is, more progressive economic attitudes) and their cultural views are above the 60th percentile (that is, more conservative cultural attitudes), while market cosmopolitans are those whose economic views are above the 60th percentile and their cultural views are below the 40th percentile. Consistent conservatives are those whose economic and cultural attitudes are above the 60th percentile in their country, while consistent progressives are those whose economic and cultural attitudes are below the 40th percentile. This classification excludes respondents whose attitudes are around the median and therefore produces a conservative estimate of the share of cross-pressured voters.

²To validate these scales, I regress them on a host of individual-level demographic variables and the results are presented in Table 2 in the Supplementary Information memo. In line with previous research (Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015), respondents with higher income and men hold more conservative economic attitudes, while union members are more economically progressive. Members in religious organizations and men are more culturally conservative, while those with higher education are more culturally progressive. The Standardized Cronach's alpha for the economic and cultural factors are 0.6 and 0.54 in 1990, 0.57 and 0.58 in 2017. Observations with missing data are excluded.

Classifying respondents into the categories of welfare chauvinists and market cosmopolitans provides a useful measure for the share of cross-pressured voters. Yet it requires setting arbitrary cut-off points for these categories.³ In addition, this measure does not say much about the intensity of cross-pressures at the individual level. To address these issues, I construct a continuous measure of cross-pressures. Following Baldassarri and Goldberg (2014), I take the difference between economic and cultural attitudes; I refer to this measure as ΔEC . Since the two attitudinal scales are standardized and range from progressive to conservative attitudes, values around zero on ΔEC reflect strong attitude bundling, with similar preferences (progressive or conservative) on both dimensions. Welfare chauvinists have negative values on the ΔEC scale while market cosmopolitans have positive values. This ΔEC ranges from welfare chauvinism to market cosmopolitanism, similar to the x-axis in Figure 1.

Identifying cross-pressured voters

Mass attitudes in Western Europe had unbundled between 1990 and 2017: the correlation between economic and cultural attitudes had dropped from 0.35 in 1990 to 0.12 in 2017. This finding is in line with previous work that documented decreasing correlations between economic and cultural attitudes in Europe (Bartels, 2013; Kriesi et al., 2008).

The share of both market cosmopolitans and welfare chauvinists has increased between 1990 and 2017, as shown in Table 1. The share of market cosmopolitans increased from 8% to 14%, while the share of welfare chauvinists increased from 9% to about 15%. The share of cross-pressured respondents in 2017 is very similar to the numbers reported by Hillen and Steiner (2019), which rely on different survey data.

Cross-pressures are linked with distinct demographics: welfare chauvinists have lower

³For instance, Hillen and Steiner (2019) use the cut-off points of the 40th and 60th percentiles. Lefkofridi, Wagner and Willmann (2014) create cut-off points of 2.5 and 3.5 on the 1 to 5 economic scale and cut-off points of 3 and 3.5 on the 1 to 5 economic scale. Kurella and Rosset (2017) classify cross-pressures based on respondents' "relative placement on each dimension as compared to the mean voter on that dimension." It is not surprising that these different cut-off points produce somewhat different estimations for the prevalence of cross-pressures in the electorate.

Table 1: Share of cross-pressured voters

	Consistent progressives	Consistent conservatives	Market cosmopolitans	Welfare chauvinists
1990	24%	24%	8%	9%
2017	18%	18%	14%	15%

education and lower income while market cosmopolitans are characterized by higher education and higher income, as shown in Table 3 in the Supplementary Information memo. This is consistent with evidence that income and education push voters in opposite directions: higher income predicts conservative economic views, while higher education predicts progressive cultural attitudes (Häusermann and Kriesi, 2015; Kitschelt and Rehm, 2014).

According to the theoretical expectations, cross-pressured voters should differ in the issues they care more about: welfare chauvinists were expected to attach greater importance to their cultural identity, while market cosmopolitans were expected to prioritize their economic identity. To test this prediction, I analyze a survey question from the EVS 2017 that asked respondents how important work and religion are in their lives. As shown in Table 4 in the Supplementary Information memo, market cosmopolitans perceive work as significantly more important and religion as significantly less important compared to other respondents. In contrast, welfare chauvinists indicate that religion is significantly more important compared to other respondents. This is in line with the expectation that different groups of cross-pressured voters differ in the salience they attach to economic and cultural issues.

To summarize, attitudes on economic and cultural issues are unbundling and the share of cross-pressured voters has been on the rise. Cross-pressures are linked with specific demographics and social identities: market cosmopolitans have higher income and higher education, and are more attached to their economic identity, while welfare chauvinists have lower income and lower education, and they attach greater importance to cultural issues. I now turn to examine the electoral implications of these differences across cross-pressured voters.

Cross-pressures and left-right orientations

To test the predictions regarding cross-pressured voters' left-right orientations, I first regress left-right self-identification on the four attitudinal categories presented above: consistent progressive (which serve as the reference category), consistent conservative, market cosmopolitans, and welfare chauvinists. All models include country fixed effects and survey weights. Standard errors are clustered by countries. In models 1-4, the dependent variable is a continuous measure of left-right identification. These models may capture movements within the left and right blocs rather than across them. To address this concern, models 5-8 use linear probability models with a binary dependent variable for identification with right, cutting the left-right self-identification scale in the middle.⁴

Compared to respondents with consistent progressive attitudes, voters with consistent conservative attitudes are about 30% more likely to identify with the right in both 1990 and 2017, once we account for individual-level covariates (models 6 and 8). Market cosmopolitans are about 27% more likely to identify with the right compared to consistent progressives. Welfare chauvinists were 15% more likely to identify with the right compared to consistent progressives in 1990, and 19% more likely to identify with the right in 2017. Notwithstanding differences between 1990 and 2017, the similarities over this time period stand out: cross-pressures on the economic and cultural dimensions tend to resolve in favor of the right.

To further test the relationship between cross-pressures and left-right identification, I turn to the continuous measure of cross-pressures. As explained above, the ΔEC ranges from welfare chauvinism (negative values) to market cosmopolitanism (positive values), with values around 0 representing strongly bundled attitudes. I regress left-right self-identification on ΔEC and the results of these OLS regressions are presented in Table 3. All models include country fixed effects and survey weights. Standard errors are clustered by countries.

⁴Note that comparable data on education were not available for the 1990 sample.

Table 2: Cross-pressures and left-right self-identification (quadrants)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	<i>Left=1, Right=10</i>				<i>Left=0, Right=1</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	(1990)	(1990)	(2017)	(2017)	(1990)	(1990)	(2017)	(2017)
Reference category: consistent progressives								
Consistent conservatives	1.828*** (0.106)	1.662*** (0.117)	2.059*** (0.191)	1.794*** (0.226)	0.350*** (0.023)	0.306*** (0.021)	0.367*** (0.035)	0.305*** (0.042)
Market cosmopolitans	1.397*** (0.129)	1.339*** (0.135)	1.585*** (0.204)	1.544*** (0.207)	0.285*** (0.037)	0.268*** (0.034)	0.287*** (0.042)	0.273*** (0.045)
Welfare chauvinists	0.935*** (0.115)	0.926*** (0.123)	1.284*** (0.074)	1.149*** (0.109)	0.170*** (0.027)	0.150*** (0.029)	0.223*** (0.017)	0.192*** (0.020)
Gender (1=female)		0.025 (0.057)		-0.216*** (0.072)		-0.022 (0.013)		-0.060*** (0.016)
Age		0.008** (0.003)		0.005 (0.005)		0.002*** (0.001)		0.002 (0.001)
Income reference category: low								
Income: medium		0.151** (0.070)		0.107* (0.063)		0.018 (0.017)		0.031** (0.013)
Income: high		0.323*** (0.082)		0.424*** (0.093)		0.061*** (0.022)		0.114*** (0.018)
Higher education (=1)				-0.226*** (0.026)				-0.008 (0.010)
Member in religious organization (=1)		0.330*** (0.116)		0.398*** (0.114)		0.095*** (0.027)		0.077*** (0.021)
Union member (=1)		-0.513*** (0.080)		-0.435*** (0.113)		-0.110*** (0.018)		-0.083*** (0.023)
Constant	4.658*** (0.042)	4.201*** (0.160)	3.920*** (0.100)	3.844*** (0.194)	0.281*** (0.008)	0.215*** (0.032)	0.160*** (0.018)	0.108*** (0.041)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	6,825	5,631	8,064	6,033	6,825	5,631	8,064	6,033
R ²	0.191	0.216	0.151	0.180	0.125	0.144	0.115	0.141

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Regression analyses with country fixed-effects and survey weights, standard errors clustered by country. Data source: European Values Survey, 1990 and 2017.

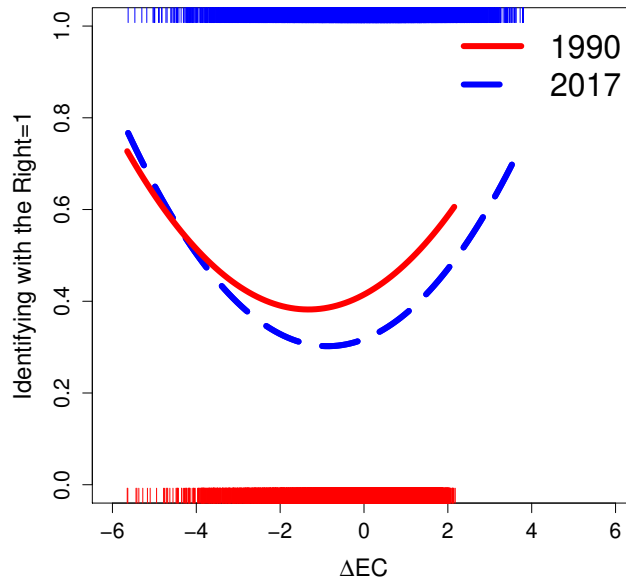


Figure 2: Predicted probabilities of identifying with the right, 1990 and 2017. Predicted values based on models 6 (1990) and 8 (2017) in Table 3.

The squared ΔEC term is positive in all models, suggesting that support for the right is higher among respondents who hold a combination of conservative and progressive attitudes on economic and cultural issues. Figure 2 presents the predicted probabilities of identifying with the right while moving along the ΔEC scale, holding other variables constant in both 1990 and 2017, based on models 6 and 8 in Table 3 respectively.⁵ The rug at the bottom of the figure presents the distribution of respondents on the ΔEC scale in 1990, and the rug at the top of the figure represents the distribution of respondents on the ΔEC scale in 2017. These results show that the right attracted cross-pressured voters in 1990 and more so in 2017, in line with the expectation that welfare chauvinists care more about cultural issues and turn right—while market cosmopolitans prioritize economic issues and also turn right.

⁵Figure 2 presents the predicted values for male with medium income, 42 years old, not a member of religious organizations or union, and without a higher education degree. The country variable is fixed on Great Britain, where left-right average is close to the sample left-right average in both 1990 and 2017.

Table 3: Cross-pressures and left-right self-identification

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>							
	<i>Left=1, Right=10</i>				<i>Left=0, Right=1</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	(1990)	(1990)	(2017)	(2017)	(1990)	(1990)	(2017)	(2017)
ΔEC	0.317*** (0.088)	0.290*** (0.086)	0.150*** (0.051)	0.201*** (0.053)	0.058*** (0.021)	0.049** (0.020)	0.029** (0.011)	0.035*** (0.012)
ΔEC^2	0.133*** (0.027)	0.110*** (0.023)	0.098*** (0.020)	0.102*** (0.018)	0.024*** (0.006)	0.018*** (0.006)	0.020*** (0.004)	0.021*** (0.004)
Gender (1=female)		-0.125* (0.072)		-0.339*** (0.072)		-0.052*** (0.018)		-0.089*** (0.016)
Age		0.016*** (0.003)		0.009** (0.004)		0.003*** (0.0005)		0.002** (0.001)
Income reference category: low								
Income: medium		0.150** (0.067)		0.158*** (0.046)		0.021 (0.015)		0.030*** (0.007)
Income: High		0.359*** (0.080)		0.376*** (0.087)		0.074*** (0.018)		0.101*** (0.013)
Higher education (=1)				-0.428*** (0.055)				-0.041*** (0.014)
Member in religious organization (=1)		0.498*** (0.096)		0.442*** (0.135)		0.130*** (0.021)		0.083*** (0.025)
Union member (=1)		-0.581*** (0.059)		-0.453*** (0.110)		-0.121*** (0.016)		-0.079*** (0.022)
Constant	5.308*** (0.060)	4.523*** (0.165)	4.919*** (0.033)	4.577*** (0.199)	0.399*** (0.014)	0.262*** (0.032)	0.338*** (0.007)	0.243*** (0.046)
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Observations	10,519	8,690	12,621	9,504	10,519	8,690	12,621	9,504
R ²	0.064	0.110	0.037	0.084	0.038	0.073	0.041	0.079

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Note: Regression analyses with country fixed-effects and survey weights, standard errors clustered by country. Data source: European Values Survey, 1990 and 2017.

Cross-pressures and voting

The analyses above supported the expectation that different combinations of conservative and progressive attitudes are resolved in favor of the right. But which parties benefit the most from this right-wing advantage among cross-pressured voters? Previous work suggest that mainstream parties, including center-right parties, struggle when dimensions of electoral competition are misaligned (de Vries and Hobolt, 2012; Pardos-Prado, 2015).

In order to explore this question, I analyze data from the 2017 European Value Survey and create binary variables of voting for four major European party families right of the center: Christian democrats, conservatives, liberals and the radical right.⁶ To examine the relationship between between vote choice and cross-pressures, I use the same measures developed above to identify respondents who are welfare chauvinists and market cosmopolitans, next to those who are consistent progressives and consistent conservatives. I regress vote choice separately on each of these four attitudinal categories and include the same individual-level controls reported above in each regression model. The coefficients for the four attitudinal categories are reported in Figure 3 as follows: WC stands for Welfare Chauvinists, MC stands for Market Cosmopolitans, CP stands for Consistent Progressives and CC stands for Consistent Conservatives. The gray bars represent the 95% confidence intervals. The full regression models are reported in the Supplementary Information memo. In each regression, I subset the data for countries in which the relevant parties are found. Standard errors are clustered by country.

A division of labor emerges on the right, as different parties appeal to voters with different combinations of attitudes. Christian Democrats (subfigure a) enjoy an advantage among consistent conservatives: compared to the rest of the sample and controlling for individual-level covariates, consistent conservatives are about 8% more likely to support christian democratic

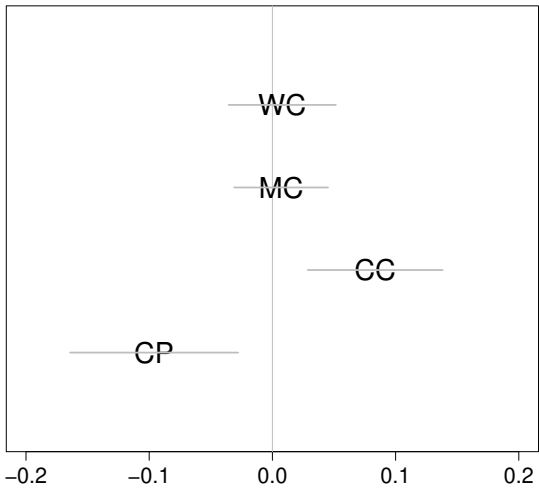
⁶These variables equal 1 if respondent voted for this party family and 0 if voted for any other party. Party family classifications are based on the Comparative Manifesto Project and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey.

parties. However, Christian democrats do not strongly appeal to cross-pressured voters—in contrast to other parties on the right. Conservative parties (subfigure b) enjoy a high level of support from both consistent conservatives and market cosmopolitans. Radical right parties (subfigure c) attract both consistent conservatives and welfare chauvinists, in line with research on the growing support for the radical right among working class voters (Rydgren, 2012; Oesch and Rennwald, 2018). Liberal parties (subfigure d) are supported by market cosmopolitans (Giger and Nelson, 2011).

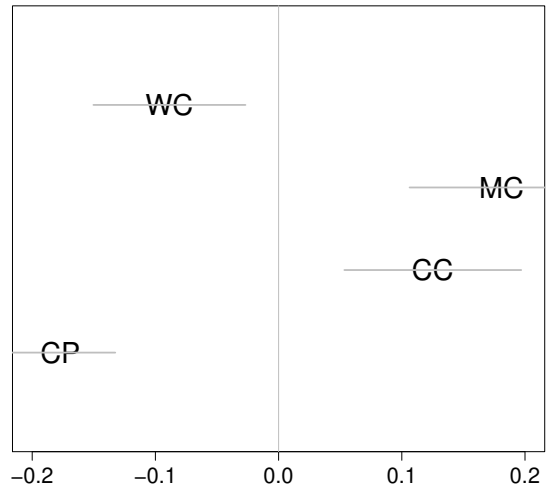
These individual-level findings complement the country-level results in Pardos-Prado (2015), who documents a positive relationship between support for the radical-right and lower correlations across partisan positions on economic and cultural issues.⁷ That being said, these results also suggest that conservative parties may be better positioned to deal with the challenge of attitudinal cross-pressures compared to Christian democrats, at least in terms of attracting market cosmopolitans.

No such division of labor emerges among parties left of the center: parties on the left compete over the same pool of consistently progressive voters while parties on the right divide between them the rest of the electorate, including different types of cross-pressured voters. The results for left-wing parties are presented in the Supplementary Information memo. When controlling for individual-level covariates, only consistent progressive attitudes predict voting for social democratic, green and radical left parties. There is not one party on the left that has an advantage among cross-pressured voters, either welfare chauvinists or market cosmopolitans.

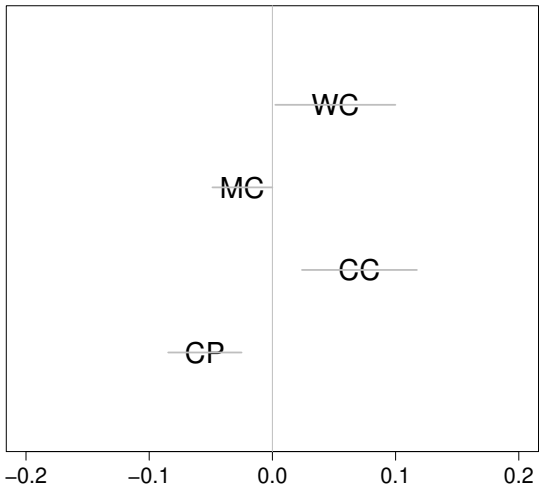
⁷These results are also in line with research by Webb and Bale (2014), according to which members of the British Conservative Party who are cross-pressured between centrist economic attitudes and conservative cultural values were the most likely to defect to the radical right UKIP. My analyses suggest that these findings likely extend beyond the UK and are not limited to party members.



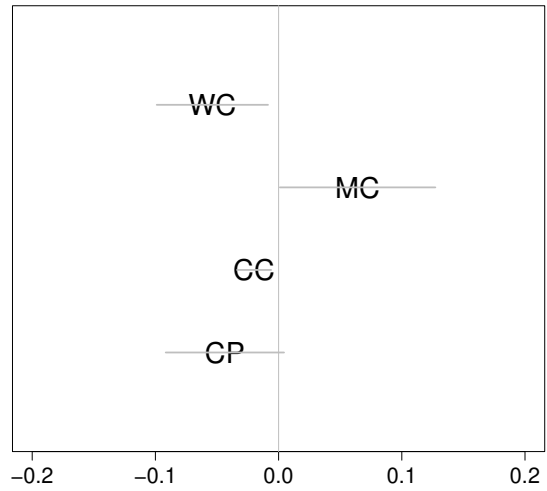
(a) Christian Democrats



(b) Conservatives



(c) Radical right



(d) Liberals

Figure 3: Cross-pressures and parties on the right. Based on estimations in Tables 5-8 in the online Supplementary Information memo. WC: Welfare Chauvinists. MC: market Cosmopolitans. CC: Consistent conservatives. CP: Consistent progressives.

Robustness checks

The previous analyses showed that cross-pressures are resolved in favor of the right. It may be that cross-pressured voters, and specifically welfare chauvinists, identify with the right only because some radical right parties recently adopted more centrist and blurred positions on economic issues next to their very conservative cultural stands (Harteveld, 2016; Schumacher and van Kersbergen, 2014). In this case, welfare chauvinists would identify with the right *only* in party systems with radical right parties. In contrast, I expect that cross-pressures are resolved in favor of the right across different electoral contexts, including those without a radical right party. Indeed, there is evidence that cross-pressured voters turn right in the United States, with its strict two-party system (Baldassarri and Goldberg, 2014).

To examine this point, I run similar analyses to those in Table 3 after subsetting the data to two countries with the most different electoral environments in Western Europe: The UK and the Netherlands. The UK comes closest to a two-party system in Western Europe; in both 1990 and 2017, the right was represented in parliament by the Conservative Party (although by 2017, the radical right did become a major electoral player). The Netherlands is a case of extreme proportionality, with several parties on the right.

If cross-pressured voters support the right in both countries and in both 1990 and 2017, then the asymmetric right-wing advantage is likely generalizable across different party system configurations. This is indeed the case: as shown in Table 12 in the Supplementary Information memo, combinations of conservative and progressive attitudes were likely to be resolved in favor of the right in these two very different electoral environments. Especially relevant, that was the case in the United Kingdom in 1990, with no credible radical right parties. This should come as no surprise: the Conservatives' reliance on a segment of the working class, or the 'Tory working man,' was key to their electoral strategy already since the early 20th century (Beer, 1965).

I report additional robustness checks in the Supplementary Information memo. Some readers may be concerned that the results are driven by differences in political interest across respondents. Table 13 in the Supplementary Information memo shows that cross-pressures are resolved in favor of the right also after controlling for political interest. Another concern is that the results are driven by extreme cases of both higher and lower scores on the ΔEC scale. To address this issue, I constructed a truncated ΔEC scale for both 1990 and 2017, excluding 5% of the observations at the extreme sides of the scale. The results of these analyses are again substantively similar, as shown in Table 14 in the Supplementary Information memo. Lastly, it may be that many respondents place themselves at the middle of the left-right scale because they lack knowledge of the left-right scale. To address this concern, I run the analyses reported above after excluding respondents who located themselves exactly at the center of the left-right self-identification scale. The results are reported in Table 15 in the Supplementary Information memo and they are substantively similar.

Discussion and conclusions

This manuscript demonstrated that there are many ways to be right: the right—more so than the left—attracts voters with diverse worldviews. Scholars have already shown that “the issue basis of left/right identification is fundamentally dynamic in nature” (de Vries, Hakhverdian and Lancee, 2013, 236): it changes over time as it absorbs new issues. The evidence above shows that the attitudinal basis of left/right identification is also fundamentally asymmetric in nature: while support for the left is common among voters with bundled progressive attitudes, it is enough to be conservative on one issue to turn right. This is in line with the expectation that different groups of voters prioritize different issue dimensions—which are also the issues on which they tend to be conservative (Shayo, 2009).

The consistency of the right-wing advantage among cross-pressured voters over 25 years suggests that it is a stable feature of West European politics. That being said, the degree

to which cross-pressured voters lean rightward likely varies across contexts. For instance, as shown above, welfare chauvinists have tended to turn right in both 1990 and 2017—yet this right-wing advantaged increased over time. The advantage of the right among cross-pressured voters may become more pronounced in certain political contexts than others (Stenner, 2005). For instance, the degree of social prestige conferred on low-skilled occupations has likely decreased over time in ways that may make some welfare chauvinists even more reliant on their national and religious identities as a source of social standing, further pushing them to the right (Gidron and Hall, 2017, 2019). There is likely also a role for elite-level changes in political discourse: the greater salience of cultural issues across Western party system may also shape the degree to which some cross-pressured voters prioritize cultural over economic issues. These issues await further research.

My analyses are not without limitations. Like other studies of cross-national over-time variations in mass attitudes (Malka, Lelkes and Soto, 2019), the evidence is correlational. In addition, I lack direct evidence for the underlying mechanism that I theorize nudges both welfare chauvinists and market cosmopolitans to the right. This limitation is shared with previous studies that focused on the political behavior of cross-pressured voters (Federico, Fisher and Deason, 2017; Shayo, 2009). While this issue could be potentially addressed with an experimental design, the thrust of this manuscript was to focus on long-term patterns in public opinion, an issue that could mostly be studied through survey data.

While existing research focuses on the center-left, the analyses above shed light on the challenges and opportunities of center-right parties. The increased dimensionality of the ideological space is a double-edged sword for the center-right (van Kersbergen and Krouwel, 2008). An electorate with many cross-pressured voters benefits the right-wing bloc—in contrast to the view that the right’s diversity is a source of weakness (Borg and Castles, 1981). Furthermore, center-right parties are better positioned to adapt to an ideological landscape of cross-pressures compared to center-left parties considering the right-wing identification of

cross-pressured voters. Yet within the right bloc, Christian democratic parties, which served as a major pillar of west European postwar party systems (Kalyvas and van Kersbergen, 2010), do not appeal to cross-pressured voters. The full implications for the center-right may thus turn on the viability of parliamentary coalitions between the center-right and other parties on the right in general and the radical right in particular (Bale, 2003).

How are center-right parties likely to respond to their electoral struggles? As the share of consistently conservative voters shrinks and satisfying both the welfare chauvinists and market cosmopolitans simultaneously becomes harder (Odmalm and Bale, 2016), center-right parties may have to choose which cross-pressured voters they prioritize. Center-right parties may find themselves increasingly oscillating between welfare chauvinists and market cosmopolitans, or simply collapsing as these two groups of cross-pressured voters opt for other parties on the right. This, in turn, calls for further attention to patterns of electoral competition across different parties on the right.

Lastly, it is worth reflecting on points of tension and overlap between these findings and research in American politics. Scholars of American politics emphasize the degree to which the American right is ideologically more homogeneous than the left (Grossmann and Hopkins, 2016; Lelkes and Sniderman, 2016). This may seem inconsistent with the evidence above for the ideological heterogeneity of the right in Western Europe yet there is no necessary contradiction here. This is because research in American politics stresses the degree to which right-wing Americans identify as conservative (which may serve as both ideological but also social identities) while my focus has been on the diversity of belief systems within the right.

In fact, there are apparently many ways to be right also in the US: previous research shows that cross-pressures are indeed more common on the American right than the left (Ellis and Stimson, 2012). Explanations for this finding often point at unique features of American politics, such as Fox News or the role of religion in American society (Claassen, Tucker and Smith, 2015). Yet since the asymmetric right-wing advantage among cross-pressured voters

is also evident in Western Europe, explanations that are unique to the American context are at best insufficient. Greater engagement between scholars of American and comparative politics is needed to fully understand the political behavior of cross-pressured voters.

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