

Extreme Right Constituencies in Romania and France:
A Two-Dimensional Policy Mapping

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I use survey data to map the constituencies of two extreme right-wing parties, the French National Front and Greater Romania Party, in a two-dimensional policy space. The results indicate that in both countries, there is an “Old Politics” cleavage of economic conflicts separating the left and right constituencies, and a “New Politics” cleavage which separates the authoritarian and xenophobic voters of the extreme right from all other constituencies

In December 2000, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the leader of the extreme right-wing Greater Romania Party, came in second position in the first round of Romania's presidential election. One year and a half later, in April 2002, we saw a similar event in France: Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of another extreme right-wing party, the National Front, was the runner-up in the first round of France's presidential election. Witnessing the emergence of these extreme right-wing parties in the two countries, on the one hand, and considering how different Romania and France are in terms of economic and social development, as well as their historical experiences and types of political regime for the most part of the second half of the twentieth century, on the other hand, raises an important question. Is the rise of extreme rightist parties in the two countries connected in some way, or are these in fact two separate regional trends, with distinct causes and their simultaneous occurrence is simply coincidental?

I argue that this is not a mere coincidence. Notwithstanding all the substantial differences between the two cases, we can trace similar processes of economic change, which have had analogous social consequences, and these consequences are further reflected in similarities at the attitudinal level of core partisan constituencies. Finally, these similarities in the distribution of attitudes have political consequences, mirrored in comparable patterns of party competition. To demonstrate this, I analyze survey data, identifying the micro-level link (changes in the attitudes of individuals) between structural changes (the transition from an advanced industrial economy to a post-industrial economy in France, and the transition from a socialist economy to a post-

socialist economy in Romania) and structural outcomes – namely, the rise in support for extreme right-wing parties, and its consequences for electoral competition.

The focus of this paper is on the constituents of the two parties, the Greater Romania Party and the French National Front. I argue that in both countries, in addition to the economic cleavage that separates the mainstream left from the mainstream right, there is a second, political cleavage, which separates the extreme right from all other parties. Ideologically, this cleavage separates a pro-democratic, cosmopolitan (or at least neutral) majority, from a more authoritarian and xenophobic minority. In terms of its social make-up, the extreme right constituency is also distinctive, with an overrepresentation of blue-collar males with little education. With respect to their positioning on the first dimension, extreme right voters are not very extreme – they endorse centrist economic policies.

The accurate mapping of the policy positions endorsed by the constituents of the two parties is important in several ways. First, it has a theoretical relevance: this mapping is anything but uncontroversial, and therefore this paper makes a contribution to the debate about the ideological location of extreme right-wing voters. Moreover, while the literature on the extreme right, including its constituents, is very prolific, it has seldom looked at these voters cross-regionally. Second, the mapping of extreme right-wing voters has implications for our understanding of party competition in the two polities. Last, but not least, such results have policy relevance: while the extreme right-wing voters must, by definition, be located in an extremist position on the second, political dimension (otherwise they should not be called extreme), their location on the

first, economic dimension is an empirical question and must be explored as such. By knowing this location, party elites can adjust their tactics and strategies accordingly.

Do extreme right-wing voters endorse laissez-faire capitalism?

Downs' 1957 book "An Economic Theory of Democracy" is the first clear example of an analysis of political competition using a one-dimensional framework. Downs assumed that a one-dimensional model is a reasonably accurate description of political competition, and therefore we can "reduce all political questions to their bearing upon one crucial issue: how much government intervention in the economy should there be?" (1957, p. 116). When we apply this model, all voters and candidates (or parties) can be assigned a position along the left-right continuum, and each voter will choose the candidate that is closest to his/her ideal point.

One problem with Downs' one-dimensional model is that it offers no clear prediction about the extreme rightists' position on economic issues. Leftists, centrists, and moderate rightists are labeled as such based primarily, if not exclusively, on the economic policies they endorse. But we use primarily political criteria such as authoritarianism, hostility to democracy, and xenophobia, to label voters or parties as "extreme right." Downs himself acknowledged this problem when he wrote that the "parties designated as right wing extremists in the real world are for fascist control of the economy rather than free markets" (Downs, 1957, p. 116; see also Figure 1 below).

For practical purposes, the accurate mapping of the extreme right (and the related question of whether one dimension is enough for this purpose) was less of a problem in the 1950s, when Downs was writing his book. At that time such parties

appeared to be all but extinct and had little impact, electoral or otherwise. Nonetheless, this issue became more relevant in recent years, when we saw a resurgence of the "extreme right" across Europe.

In his book *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, Kitschelt (1995) argues that, in addition to the "old politics" of primarily economic conflicts, advanced industrial democracies are now characterized by "new politics" cultural conflicts (Kitschelt, 1995; see also Inglehart, 1997; Dalton, 2006). Nonetheless, political competition is still essentially one-dimensional: instead of the old left-right dimension, the new axis of conflict has become left-libertarian versus right-authoritarian. In recent years, the moderate left and the moderate right have converged toward the center, therefore creating a niche for the extreme right (or radical right, in Kitschelt's terminology). To be successful, the extreme/radical right must combine authoritarianism with an endorsement of free market capitalism.

Figure 1

Kitschelt describes the French National Front as coming "close to an ideal-typical realization of [...] the 'New Radical Right' or new right-wing authoritarianism" (1995, p. 91). According to Kitschelt, the National Front and its electorate is not only more authoritarian than the moderate right; it is also more pro-capitalist.

However, other scholars argue that the National Front endorses centrist economic policies. Although the National Front started as a staunch supporter of the free market, it gradually abandoned this position as its electorate became increasingly working-class in composition (Roy, 1998; Ivaldi, 1999). Survey data from the 1988

presidential election indicates that Le Pen’s electorate was already “much less economically liberal¹ than voters for Jacques Chirac and even Raymond Barre” (Grunberg and Schweisguth, 1993, p. 49). For the purpose of this paper, focused on the mapping of extreme right-wing constituencies, I will ignore the question whether the National Front’s move toward supporting centrist economic positions (Cole, 2005) was supply-driven (a strategic move for gaining blue-collar votes), or demand-driven (a response to the increase in working class support). Either way, the consequence is that both the demographic profile of National Front constituents and the economic policies endorsed by the party increasingly resemble those of the “old left.”

The end result of these developments is that the French political space is no longer one-dimensional. Instead, it has become two-dimensional. On the economic dimension, “the extreme right electorate [is] not to the right but to the left of the moderate right on a left-right continuum [...] Attachment to economic liberalism is certainly not one of the main reasons for voting for the extreme right” (Grunberg and Schweisguth, 2003a, pp. 332-36). Thus, the specificity of the French extreme right comes exclusively from its position on the second dimension (Grunberg and Schweisguth, 1997; Mayer, 2002; Ivarsflaten, 2003). This second dimension, “having to do with attachment to or hostility toward universalist values, [is] primarily what very strongly distinguishes the extreme right from both the moderate right and left” (Grunberg and Schweisguth, 2003a, p. 334).

¹ That is, “liberal” in the classical, or European, meaning of the concept – the endorsement of individual freedom in both the social and the economic realms.

Scholars who analyzed the support for economic and political reforms among Romanians have revealed two distinct dimensions. Using factor analysis of data from a 1993 nationwide survey, Firebaugh and Sandu (1998) have identified a market-related dimension (high loadings for questions about privatization, a market economy, and the issue of foreign investments) and a liberal democracy dimension (high loadings for questions about the role of elections, multi-party competition, and the independence of the judiciary). A more recent study, which focused specifically on the relationship between authoritarian attitudes and party preference among Romanian voters, confirmed the fact that the attitudes of Romanians are better described by a two-dimensional framework (Krauss, 2002). Moreover, the author found that authoritarian attitudes were unrelated to support for the left, negatively related with support for the right, and positively related with support for the Greater Romania Party.

These results suggest that the mapping of Romania's core constituencies in a two-dimensional space is similar to that of France's constituencies. As it was the case in France, we see the leftist and rightist constituencies divided primarily by their position on economic issues. On this dimension, the extreme right constituency (the voters of Greater Romania) is located in an intermediate position. It is on the vertical dimension that the Greater Romania Party and its constituents appear clearly distinctive from all other parties and constituencies. Like their French counterparts, these voters are more authoritarian, more xenophobic, and have less sympathetic views about democracy and Europe compared to either the left or the right constituencies.

Mapping the voters of the National Front and the Greater Romania Party

The works discussed so far provide useful information about the voters of the French National Front or those of the Greater Romania Party. I go a step further and offer a framework that enables us to make not only intra-country comparisons, but inter-country comparisons as well. I map the left, right and extreme right constituencies in a two-dimensional policy space in each of the two countries, and this enables us to see where the extreme right voters fall on these dimensions. Moreover, by using a similar framework for both cases, I can compare the policy positions of the voters of the French National Front and those of the voters of Greater Romania Party.

This inter-country comparison shows that the two extreme right-wing constituencies have a similar sociological and ideological profile. These voters are indeed extremists on political issues (the second dimension); nonetheless, on economic issues they are rather centrist (in France) or even leftist (in the case of Romania).

Economics, politics, and the voters of the National Front

By late 1980s, the National Front was already an important force in French politics. Survey data from the 1988 presidential election² provides an opportunity to compare the policy positions of Le Pen's voters with those of the voters of the most important candidates on the left (the incumbent president François Mitterrand), and those of the right (the incumbent prime minister Jacques Chirac and the centrist Raymond Barre).

To position each constituency along the first, economic dimension, I used the answer to

² Pierce, Roy. 1988. *French Presidential Election Survey, 1988* [Computer file]. ICPSR version. Ann Arbor, MI: Roy Pierce, University of Michigan [producer], 1995. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1996.

a question about the respondent’s opinion about what the state’s role in the economy ought to be (Figure 2):

Figure 2

Each respondent chose a number from one to seven, one representing maximal state intervention and seven representing minimal state intervention (I rescaled the results on a zero-six scale). Not surprisingly, the voters of the socialist president François Mitterrand showed the highest level of support for state intervention, and the voters of the then-incumbent conservative prime minister Jacques Chirac were the least supportive. The constituency of the centrist candidate Raymond Barre fell somewhere in-between the other two constituencies, though still to the right of the national (sample) mean (labeled “France”). The one result that does appear surprising, at least in the light of the claims about the unequivocal endorsement of free market capitalism by the extreme right, is the position of National Front voters. What we see in Figure 2 is that by 1988, this electorate was indeed already less economically liberal than the voters of the mainstream right (Chirac’s voters, possibly even Barre’s voters), as Grunberg and Schweisguth claim (1993, p. 49).

In addition to placing themselves on this economic policy scale, respondents were asked to position each presidential candidate on the same scale. On this dimension, respondents placed Le Pen in a very rightist position, close to Chirac (see Figure 2). I see two possible explanations for this incongruence between the position of Le Pen’s constituency and the perceived position of their candidate. The first possibility, the one that I call the “objective” scenario, is that each time when there is

an important shift in the social and/or ideological base of support for a party, the party in question needs time to adjust its position in order to match it with the position of its constituents. In this scenario, we have a National Front electorate which, in the late 1980s, becomes increasingly working-class and more leftist economically. Although Le Pen and the National Front followed suit, this movement was not yet discernible in 1988.

The second possibility, the "subjective" scenario, is when respondents assume, maybe even unconsciously, that a party or candidate which is extremely right-wing politically must be extremely right-wing economically as well. Which of the two explanations is the real account is a relevant question, but I will not seek to answer it here. I would only point out the fact that, if we look at economic policies, the National Front's constituents did not appear to have a very different position from that of centrist voters. For the National Front, a party that has never been in the government, and thus never had an opportunity to implement any economic policies, the mapping of its voters on this dimension is probably more reliable than the mapping of the party itself (or the mapping of its leader).

The general point of Figure 2 is that, as early as 1988, a one-dimensional mapping of the French electorate was unsatisfactory. We continue to see leftists and rightists divided primarily by economic conflicts, as they were during the entire history of the Fifth Republic. On this dimension, extreme right constituents are located to the left of rightist voters, and they are indistinguishable from center-right voters. It is on the second, political dimension that the National Front voters are clearly

distinguishable from all the rest, including moderate right voters. The mapping of leftists, rightists and extreme rightists in Figure 2 is closer to Downs' 1957 mapping of left, right and extreme right than it is to Kitschelt's 1995 mapping of those constituencies. Survey data from France's most recent elections (2002) shows the persistence of the electoral alignments identified in 1988:

Figure 3

Figure 3 presents the results of a factor analysis³ of survey questions about the respondents' positions on various economic and non-economic issues. As it was the case in 1988, we see economic conflicts separating leftist constituencies from rightist constituencies. The respondents' views on profit and privatization, and about how much leeway employers should have in hiring and firing employees, have high loadings on the first dimension and low loadings on the second dimension. The same thing can be said about the mean scores for most constituencies, with the notable exceptions of the extreme rightists and the Greens. These two constituencies score high on the second dimension, where we have high loadings for questions about ethnic minorities, the restoration of the death penalty, the working of democracy in France, or the respondent's opinion about the EU. The empirical results in Figure 3 look remarkably similar to Inglehart's (1997, p. 249) theoretical model of electoral competition in France, with a class-based, "Old Politics" left-right dimension separating Communists and Socialists on the left from liberals (UDF) and

³ CEVIPOF/CIDSP/CECOP. 2002. *Panel electoral français 2002* [Computer file]. Paris: CEVIPOF.

conservatives (RPR) on the right, and a “New Politics” dimension separating the Greens from the National Front.

Economics, politics, and the voters of Greater Romania Party

Drawing on data from a relatively recent Romanian survey (May 2002), I employ rotated factor analysis to map the positions of Romania’s main constituencies in a two-dimensional policy space.⁴ Figure 4 shows the standings of leftists (the voters of the Social Democratic Party), rightists (the voters of the Liberal Party and the voters of the Democratic Party), and extreme rightists (the voters of Greater Romania).

Figure 4

Similar to France, we see Romania’s politics being shaped by two dimensions – an economic dimension and a political dimension. The questions about economic policies and the questions relating to traditionalism-versus-modernity conflicts (respondent’s views on homosexuality, the role of women in society, and the importance of religion) have high loadings on the first dimension. This first dimension is the one that separates leftists from rightists, indicating that these two groups are divided primarily by “Old Politics” conflicts. Unlike their French counterparts, the extreme right voters in Romania are closer to leftists rather than rightists on this dimension.

⁴ This is the most recent survey for which the data is publicly available and there is a sufficient number of questions about economic and political questions to allow a meaningful analysis which results in a two-dimensional mapping of constituencies (the dataset and the questionnaire are available from the Romanian branch of the Soros Foundation for an Open Society, at www.sfos.ro).

This is not surprising; across Eastern Europe, the type of prior Communist regime is a good predictor of whether the dominant party on the left is cosmopolitan and reformist or nationalist and “conservative” (that is, opposed to reform). In post-Communist countries such as Hungary or Poland, which started reforming their economic or political system prior to the fall of Communism, the left is typically dominated by cosmopolitan parties. In Romania, a country with no experience of reforms prior to 1989 and a hardline, nationalist prior regime, the post-Communist left is more nationalistic and traditionalist than the moderate right.

Most importantly, the similarities between France and Romania extend to the relative policy positioning of their extreme right constituencies. In Romania, as we can see in Figure 4, questions about various political issues, such as the respondent’s views on Communism, on the direction of the country, on whether democracy is the best regime, and whether the respondent thinks that democracy works well in Romania, have low loadings on the first dimension and high loadings on the second dimension. On this second factor, the constituents of Greater Romania have a high mean score; the mean scores of leftists and rightists on this second factor are rather modest. Overall, we can conclude that, as it was the case in France, there is an “Old Politics” dimension separating leftists from rightists, and a “New Politics” dimension which separates the left and the right constituencies from the extreme right constituency.

Discussion

In this paper I focused on the constituents of two extreme right-wing parties: a Western European party, the French National Front, and an Eastern European party, Greater

Romania. I used survey data to map the voters of each party in two-dimensional policy spaces, and compared their positions on economic and political problems with those of the moderate left and the moderate right constituents. This mapping has revealed important similarities between the relative positions of the left, the right and the extreme right constituencies in the two countries. It has also shown that the voters of the two parties are extremists politically but moderates economically.

These findings are significant in several ways. To begin with, they make a contribution to the debate about the policy positions of the extreme right. Consequently, they have policy relevance. To take the voters of the National Front, for example, if the difference between this constituency and the rest of the voters, including rightists, is not just a matter of degree, as Kitschelt (1995) describes it, but a matter of fundamentals⁵, as Grunberg and Schweisguth (2003b) claim, then moderate politicians are well advised not to seek gaining these voters via short-term, tactical moves (such as radical, pro-capitalist rhetoric). In fact, the results in this paper position the extreme right-wing voters in a moderate economic position, and therefore such moves only risk furthering the alienation of these voters. Instead, it appears that the key to undercutting the support for the extreme right is strategic, rather than tactical – finding economic and social policies to solve the structural problems that are the root cause of this support.

⁵ A further piece of evidence that this is the case is the fact that the vast majority of French voters would never consider voting for the National Front. Even among rightist voters, this number is as high as 83 percent (Grunberg and Schweisguth, 2003b, p. 360). For rightist voters, the extreme right is not an acceptable substitute.

Finally, these results are relevant for how we describe and understand political competition in the two polities. They indicate that the second, political cleavage is a matter of fundamentals, rather than a matter of degree. Therefore, if the success of the two extreme rightist leaders in the first rounds of the 2000 Romanian and the 2002 French presidential election, respectively, has shown their potential strength, the results of the subsequent runoffs have shown their limits – in both cases, they had little success in enlarging their base of support between the first round and the runoff.⁶ By positioning themselves in an extreme position on the second dimension, these parties have ensured a relatively stable base of electoral support from a disaffected and radical minority. At the same time, such a position makes it difficult for these parties to enlarge their base of support outside this minority.

⁶ Appendix A shows how the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' formed a cross-class coalition to defeat the extreme right candidate in Romania's 2000 presidential runoff.

Figure 1. Mapping the Economic and Political Positions of the Left, the Right and the Extreme Right in Downs (1957) and Kitschelt (1995)

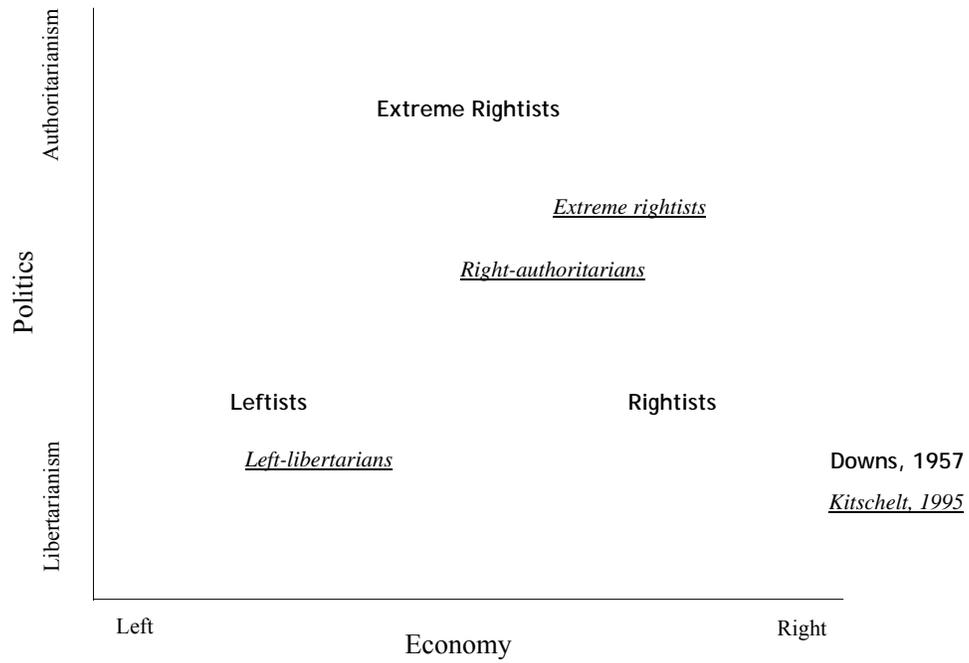


Figure 2. Mapping of Constituents and Perceived Candidate Positions in France:
(1988 presidential election)

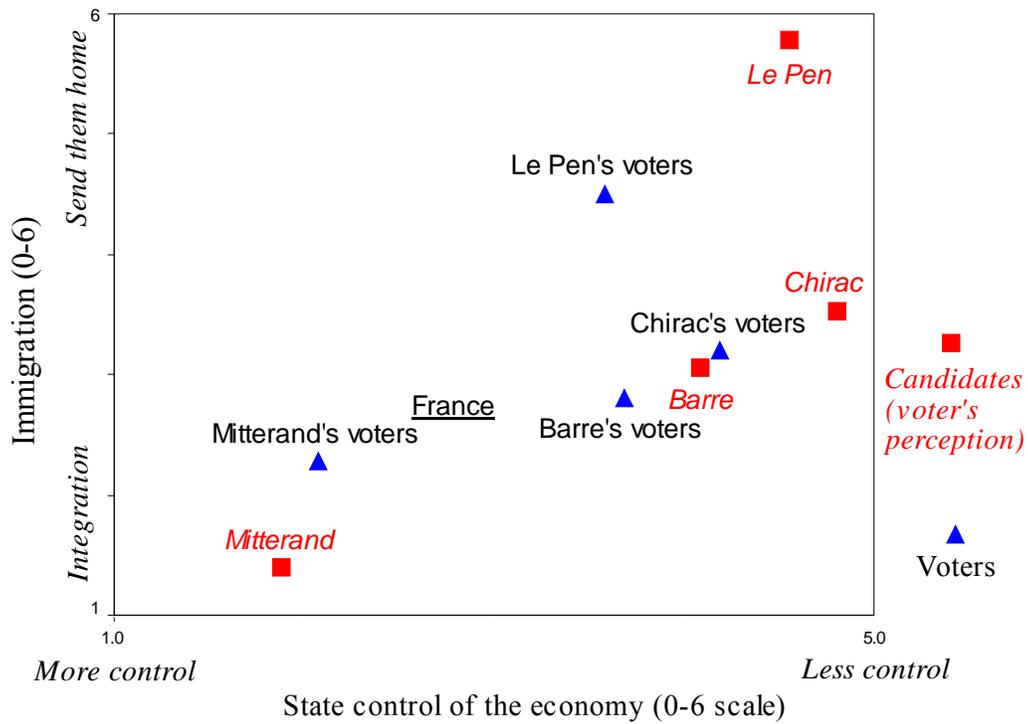
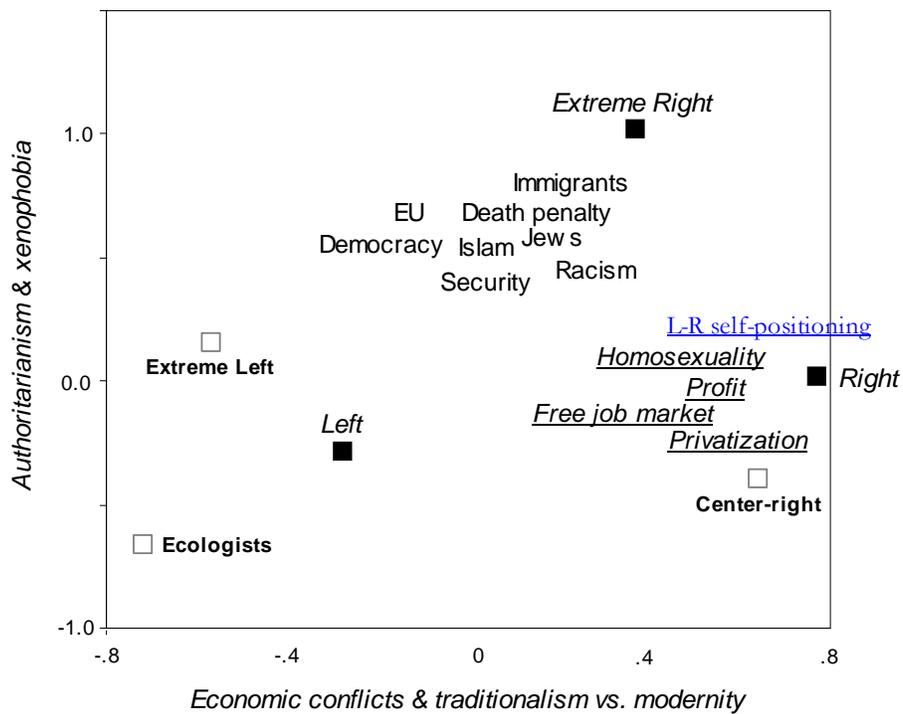
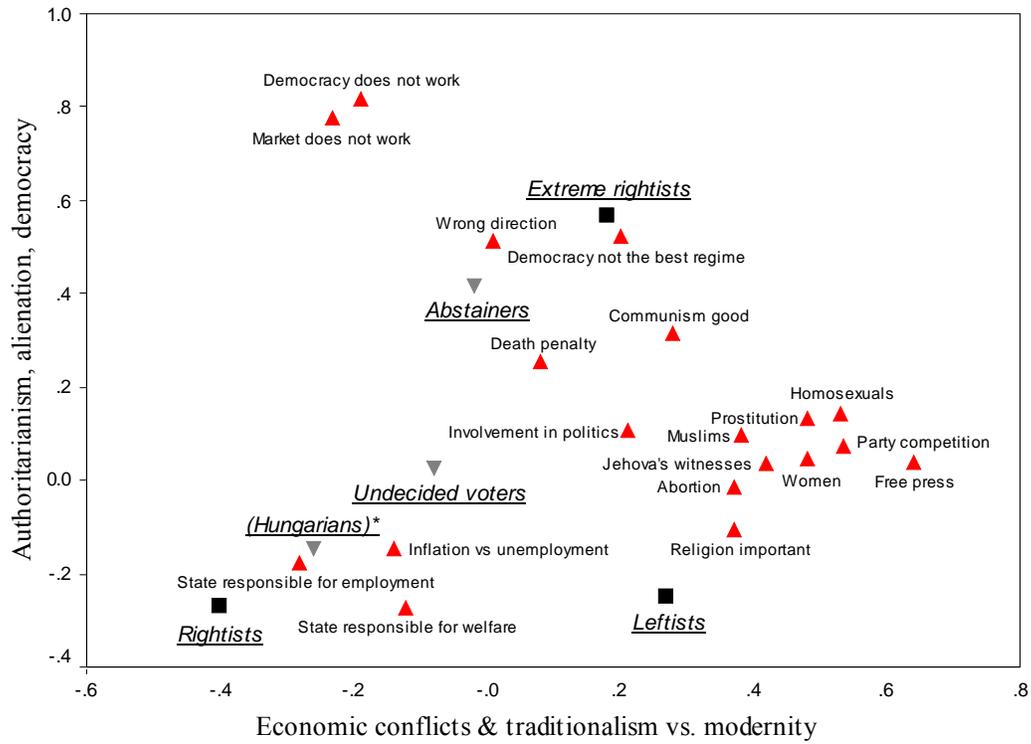


Figure 3. Two-Dimensional Map of Issues and Constituencies in French Politics
Principal components factor analysis of survey data (2002)



- “Ecologists:” Noël Mamère’s voters
- “Extreme left:” Arlette Laguiller’s voters
- “Left:” Lionel Jospin’s voters
- “Extreme Right:” Jean-Marie Le Pen’s voters
- “Center-right:” Alain Madelin’s voters
- “Right:” Jacques Chirac’s voters

Figure 4. A Two-Dimensional Map of Issues and Constituencies in Romanian Politics (2002 survey data)



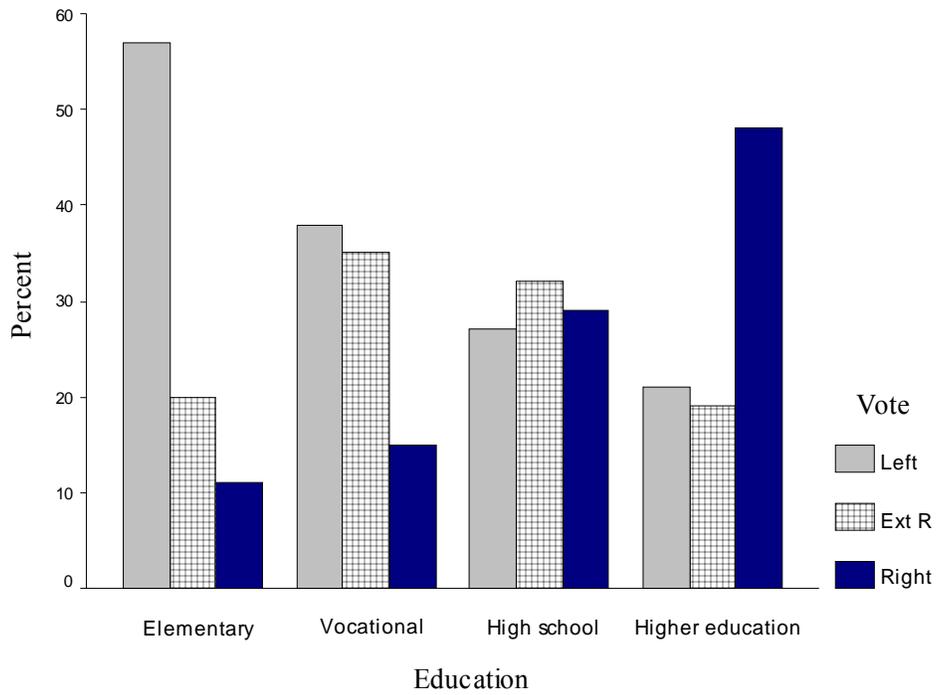
Principal components factor analysis of 2002 survey data; varimax rotated solution, two factors extracted

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Appendix A

Education and Vote, First Round of the 2000 Romanian Presidential Election



Education and Vote, Second Round of the 2000 Romanian Presidential Election

