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## The Evolution of Political Competition

The rise of new parties running on alternative election platforms, and recent unpredicted election outcomes from Brexit to Donald Trump's 2016 victory in the United States, heighten the sense that politics is changing in fundamental ways. Indeed, much of the contemporary research on citizens, elections, and parties emphasizes the dramatic changes we are now witnessing. The issues of political debate seem to be rapidly changing, and new issues arise to challenge older, familiar themes. Voters are more fluid in their political choices, rather than following habitual voting loyalties. Election outcomes also appear more volatile, and the number of competing parties is increasing.

At one level, I agree with this description, and I have contributed to research on electoral change.<sup>1</sup> Yet at the same time, there are elements of our political past (and future) that reflect continuity. Many of the issues in contemporary debates are a continuation of long-standing cleavages. The *economic cleavage* is the most notable example; the economic issues of the post-World War II era might have been resolved, but new manifestations of the same underlying values are still at hand. In addition, many of the supposedly new issues of affluent democracies reflect a broad *cultural cleavage* dealing with the tension between the progressive forces of social modernization and advocates for the status quo.

Electoral politics is always complex because of the changing context and content of each election. This applies even when we think of electoral politics as a one-dimensional Downsian competition. But it becomes more complex when we consider a multidimensional space of political competition. Voters—and parties—have to make choices on two (or more) competing political cleavages. For voters, the ideal choice is not as apparent as in a simple Left–Right one-dimensional world. For parties, the appropriate strategy to balance distinct voter bases becomes more complex. And too often, it seems, candidates and parties use the complexity of multiple cleavages to mask their real intentions from the voters. Promise A and deliver B seems more common in contemporary elections. This is one reason why spatial modeling experts say that chaos can occur when politics is structured in multidimensional terms.<sup>2</sup>

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Equally important, the underlying social bases of the economic and cultural cleavages are substantially different. The economic cleavage is largely a conflict about competing self-interests and ideologies over the role of the state versus the market in resolving these tensions. Even though electoral alignments are not fixed, I show that there has been a realignment of citizen positions on the economic cleavage. By *realignment* I mean an enduring change in the pattern of social group positions on economic issues.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the cultural cleavage has prompted a realignment of social groups' positions on these issues. Cultural cleavage positions are often tied to basic social issues and identities (as well as competing self-interests), which are more difficult to compromise and which can evoke intense feelings. The feelings aroused by debates over immigration, gender-related issues, or the European Union (EU) often have a very different tone than debates over unemployment rates or tax rates. Current political controversies can often contain a toxic mix of divergent views, and it is difficult to objectively evaluate competing claims. Some analysts argue that policy tensions have become so severe that they may produce a deconsolidation of contemporary democracies—a claim I think is overstated.

This book marshals unique empirical evidence to understand the evolution of political cleavages in the established democracies from the 1970s to the 2010s. I begin by describing the changing political demands of the citizenry as they respond to societal change and past public policies. Citizens' political opinions have changed substantially over this long time span, which places a different set of demands on the political systems. The analyses then consider how the political parties have responded to these changing demands, and how the supply side of party choices has expanded and diversified over time. The party systems of today look very different from the party systems of the 1970s in their policy and social bases, even if some of the names are the same. This study examines how the demand and supply relationship of democratic representation has adapted to these forces, and the tensions they have produced. The longitudinal analyses show where we have been, and where we are heading in the future. The cross-national comparisons show the variations in this journey. The goal is to identify how social modernization has realigned citizen demands and test whether this has realigned party politics and electoral choices for contemporary democracies.

## Social Change and Political Cleavages

Established democracies experienced unprecedented social changes from the mid-twentieth century as the forces of postwar recovery and social modernization transformed these nations and their people. Average income levels grew dramatically, the structure of the labor force changed as service

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activities and knowledge-based occupations replaced many manufacturing jobs. Technology advanced rapidly, education levels rose, the role of women in society and the economy fundamentally changed, and most recently racial and ethnic diversity increased as a byproduct of globalization.<sup>4</sup>

When we look at contemporary politics, the economic cleavage remains an important basis of political competition.<sup>5</sup> These issues include debates about the state's appropriate role in managing the economy, taxation levels, the provision of basic social welfare benefits, and problems related to income inequality. The specific issues of economic competition may vary from election to election, reflecting social and economic conditions—tax policy, social services, unemployment benefits, or other economic issues—but they are connected to an underlying economic cleavage. On the one side are the advocates of an activist state that promotes the social welfare of the citizenry, regulates the economy, and supports social equality. On the other side are those who favor a limited role for the government, a relatively unfettered market economy, and individualism. Both perspectives reflect legitimate political positions in democratic societies. Democracy provides a means of resolving such differences.

Despite the continuity of the broad economic cleavage, the nature of the cleavage changed in significant ways. For example, the changing composition of the labor force produced new class alignments.<sup>6</sup> Professionals and other members of the new middle class comprise a growing bloc of voters leaning toward conservative economic policies and liberal cultural policies. On the supply side, parties that once focused on the working class became more attuned to these new middle-class voters and their interests. A restructuring of the economy also reversed long-term trends in income growth and income inequality, producing a wider inequality gap in most affluent democracies. In many nations, labor unions shed working-class members and increasingly became advocates for public employees. Working-class interests suffered as a result of these trends.

Social modernization is associated with even more dramatic changes on the cultural cleavage. Modernity is a positive force for social change, making contemporary societies more tolerant, more socially consciously, more enlightened, more peaceful, and more democratic.<sup>7</sup> Contemporary publics are the most educated and most informed in the long history of mass democracies. And yet, these modernizing societies also experience increasing polarization on cultural issues. Americans and Europeans are more liberal on matters of gender equality, minority rights, religious norms, and LBGTQ rights than a generation or two ago, but such cultural issues seem to stimulate more political discourse and controversy.

As societies modernize economically or culturally, this may evoke reactions by those who favor the status quo or question some of the changes occurring around them. Some individuals may lose social-economic status, a feeling of

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security, or a sense of community they identify with the past.<sup>8</sup> Or phrased in different terms, they prefer a society that emphasizes community, stability, stricter moral standards, and values such as duty and patriotism.<sup>9</sup> Historically, these sentiments have often been tied to religious attachments, but this cultural backlash is broader than just religious morality. Different elements come together as a rebuke of the social changes wrought by modernization, and these views become crystallized and mobilized by the very expansion of the modernization process. If societies stopped changing, people might gradually adjust to a new normal. But social modernization is an ongoing process. So a continuing modernization process can generate counter-reactions in some parts of society. The strength of the counter-reaction can vary across cleavages depending on the resources and interests of the contending groups.

While media headlines and popular debates focus on the novel aspects of these political divisions—whether in the rise of far-right parties, an extreme political event, or the changing issue agenda—we should also recognize that many new controversies represent an ongoing experience of modernization forces struggling against the traditional status quo. New issues are new in a real sense, but they are also understandable as the newest expression of a continuing modernization cleavage.

This broad cleavage was apparent long before the current “New Right” became prominent in media coverage and academic research on electoral politics. It was apparent before the “New Left” came to prominence in the 1970s and 1980s. Writing about politics in the 1960s–1970s, for example, Seymour Martin Lipset described this as a continuing *revolt against modernity*:

Malaise with the changes which accompany modernization or development has led . . . to leftist and rightist politics. The former criticize the existing society from the vantage point of a belief in a future utopia, usually described as more egalitarian, more democratic, or more participatory on the part of the masses . . . Rightists, on the other hand, emphasize the prior existence of the good integrated society which once characterized their nation. They argue that the corruption of contemporary society is the result of an abandonment of the values and social relationships which characterized some earlier golden age.<sup>10</sup>

Lipset was following in the steps of Richard Hofstadter and others, who had previously described the periodic rise of conservative movements in the United States that opposed secularism, modernity, racial integration, and elements of an elitist political culture.<sup>11</sup>

Lipset then discussed how advanced industrial societies were undergoing profound social changes regarding the role of women, changes in religious and social morals, and increased racial/ethnic diversity as part of this modernization process—driven by the young, better educated, and more cosmopolitan sectors of society. Such social changes generated what he called *backlash politics*:

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Backlash politics may be defined as the efforts of groups who sense a diminishing of their importance, influence, and power, or who feel threatened economically or politically, to reverse or stem the direction of change through political means. Since their political concern has been activated by decline, by repeated defeats and failures, backlash politics is often extreme in its tactics and policies and have frequently incorporated theories of ongoing conspiracies by alien forces to undermine national traditions and strength.<sup>12</sup>

Lipset's choice of terms might be overstated or pejorative. Perhaps a more neutral term is that faced by rapidly changing social conditions; some people may experience *future shock* or *culture shock* and want the world to change more slowly, or not at all.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, those who favor the direction of social change often want the tempo to be even faster. Most of us, I believe, grumble at some changes, applaud others, and are unaware of yet other changes.

Lipset wrote about these political tensions in the 1960s–1970s, yet his views could be talking points for a television interview about the cultural conflicts in contemporary societies, and the movements that stimulate the French National Front, UKIP in Great Britain, or the Tea Party/Trump movement in the United States. Instead, Lipset cited Poujadists in France, George Wallace in the United States, and Christian parties in Scandinavia as examples of the backlash movements of the 1970s. This historical aspect of these tensions is often lacking from current electoral research. In short, the *liberal culturalists* and *conservative culturalists* are not really so new in many features, and I use these terms through this book instead of the more common “New Left” and “New Right.”<sup>14</sup>

The cultural cleavage became an important new political force in the 1970s. Citizen values and political interests were changing as social conditions changed, new social actors were forming, and the influence of these changes would increase in the following decades. Ronald Inglehart's research on post-material value change highlights this development.<sup>15</sup> Postmaterial values are concentrated among the young, more educated and more affluent sectors of Western society. These values emphasize individual freedom, tolerance of diversity, social and gender equality, and concern about the quality of life. Thus, empirical evidence documents a distinct liberal shift in attitudes toward many cultural issues across the affluent democracies.<sup>16</sup>

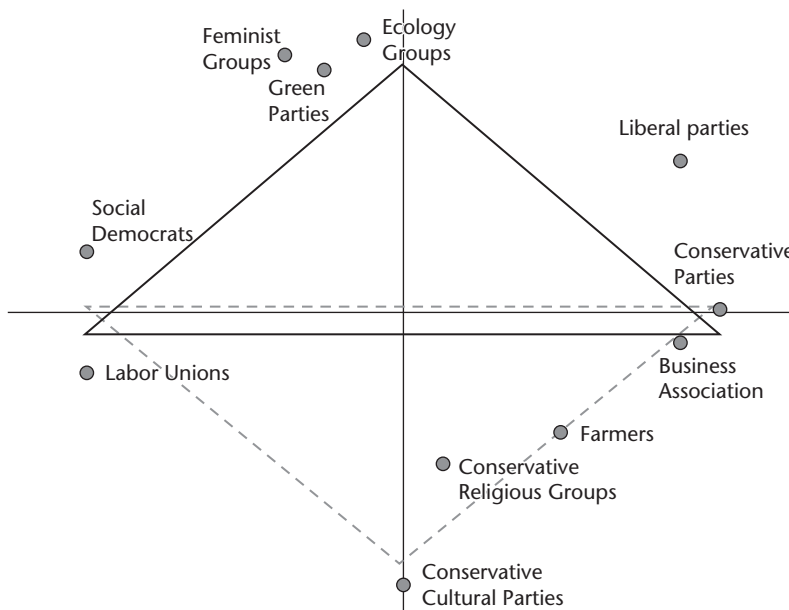
Environmental groups and other New Social Movements (NSMs) of the period, such as the women's movement, human rights groups, social justice groups, and the peace movement, had a growing impact on public discourse and public policy.<sup>17</sup> These networks encouraged the formation of Green parties that advocated an alternative political agenda reaching beyond just environmental issues. The German Greens, for example, initially campaigned under the banner of green politics, but they also emphasized gender equality, social equality, and peace as core values.

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As these new liberal groups became active in affluent democracies, this produced a backlash or culture shock reaction.<sup>18</sup> Culturally conservative social groups challenged parts of this new political framework. For example, religious interests countered the liberal culturalist advocacy on issues related to women and family, and later opposed gay rights proposals and multiculturalism. Thomas Frank's popular book on political change similarly described a conservative backlash to liberal trends among American Midwesterners.<sup>19</sup> The counter-mobilization of a conservative culturalist perspective helped to crystallize a cultural cleavage.

New far-right parties in Europe further shaped this cultural cleavage by linking together diverse issues and articulating an alternative worldview.<sup>20</sup> Simon Bornschier describes the French National Front as the model case for this new pattern of political competition.<sup>21</sup> The party was an early critic of liberal cultural changes, as well as advocating extreme nationalist and xenophobic policies. Similarly, the Progress parties in Denmark and Norway in the 1980s took conservative positions on the new post-industrial issues as well as the struggles of the working class.<sup>22</sup> Slowly evolving over several decades, a conservative culturalist position rose in opposition to the liberal culturalist agenda.

Figure 1.1 presents a stylized image of this contemporary political space using social and political groups as examples.<sup>23</sup> The horizontal dimension



**Figure 1.1.** A Stylized Representation of the Political Space

*Source:* The author.

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represents the traditional economic cleavage. On the Left are labor unions and other political actors that represent progressive economic programs that benefit working-class interests and others in need of state support. On the right are business associations, corporations, and other economically conservative economic interests. As Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan argued a half-century ago, this cleavage emerged from the industrial revolution, and still influences contemporary politics.<sup>24</sup>

The vertical dimension depicts the cultural cleavage. At the liberal cultural pole are NSMs (ecology groups, the women's movement, human rights groups, etcetera). They are the active advocates for progressive change on cultural issues. These groups are joined by Green parties in many nations—although Green parties vary significantly in their ideology—along with progressive or Left-libertarian parties.<sup>25</sup> Conservative cultural positions are advocated by religious groups, agrarian interests, far-right parties, and others who hold conservative views.

This is a stylized view of the economic and cultural cleavage. It is worthwhile to point out that this chart largely replicates Ronald Inglehart's description of emerging political cleavages in the mid-1970s. His analysis of cleavage structures in eight Western democracies led him to conclude:

The two dimensions seem to reflect: (1) the traditional Left-Right socio-economic cleavage, with an infrastructure based on the polarization between labor and management (with religious cleavages also assimilated into this dimension, in some countries), and (2) an establishment-antiestablishment (or New Politics) dimension, based on one's reaction to groups [New Social Movements] that have become politically prominent much more recently than organized labor—and that, we suspect today are more active carriers of support for social change.<sup>26</sup>

In short, a significant cultural cleavage formed long before the 2008 recession, before the EU Maastricht Treaty, and before the recent immigration waves into Western Europe in this millennium. Then, globalization, deindustrialization, and European integration further altered social conditions in Europe, North America, and Pacific Rim democracies. These social changes amplified political divisions among these publics.

Moreover, some of the political actors that once might have addressed these issues, such as social democratic parties, seemed to accept a neo-liberal economic model and cater to their new middle-class voters.<sup>27</sup> In the United States, for example, presidents Clinton and Obama were strong advocates for expanding international trade—even when opposed by their own party in Congress. Similarly, public concerns about the expansion of the EU and its economic and cultural consequences were voiced by the public but often ignored by the established political elites.<sup>28</sup> A rich longitudinal study by Geoffrey Evans and James Tilley show the Labour Party's movement away from its liberal

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economic orientation and toward liberal culturalism—distancing the party from its traditional working-class base.<sup>29</sup> The growth of far-right parties occurred at least in part because of their advocacy of cultural positions that the established parties avoided. And in advancing this alternative perspective, these parties further crystallized the cultural cleavage.

The triangles in Figure 1.1 symbolize the evolution of academic research. In the 1980s, scholarship focused on the emergence of New Social Movements and Green parties. Researchers examined the upper triangular relationship between traditional Left parties, traditional Right parties, and the New Left.<sup>30</sup> Since the mid-1990s, attention has shifted to the lower triangular relationship between traditional Left parties, traditional Right parties, and the conservative culturalists.<sup>31</sup> The liberal culturalists and conservative culturalists are opposing ends of a political cleavage and should be examined as such rather than examined at only one pole or the other. By viewing this as a cleavage dimension similar to the economic cleavage with polar opposites, we can better represent and understand contemporary political alignments.

Several empirical studies have examined the emerging cultural cleavage and its relationship to the traditional social democratic/conservative economic cleavage. For example, Inglehart described a two-dimensional cleavage structure in the mid-1970s, along with parallel analyses of West Germany and Japan.<sup>32</sup> Even earlier, Warren Miller and Teresa Levitin wrote about the development of a New Politics cleavage in the United States.<sup>33</sup> Paul Goren has tracked the evolution of the economic and cultural issue cleavages in the United States since the 1980s, and their impact on party choice.<sup>34</sup>

Recent party expert surveys of party issue positions identified two broad political cleavages.<sup>35</sup> One is the traditional economic cleavage and the other is a new GAL/TAN dimension that is very similar to my description of the cultural cleavage. The GAL represents Green, alternative and libertarian values; the TAN represents traditional, nationalist, and authoritarian orientations.<sup>36</sup>

The richest longitudinal evidence comes from a series of studies by Hanspeter Kriesi and his colleagues.<sup>37</sup> This research group focused on globalization's impact in producing the economic and cultural insecurities that coalesced in a conservative counterview. They assembled longitudinal data on citizen issue positions from national election studies in six countries to identify the economic and cultural cleavages, and follow their development.<sup>38</sup> They also coded party campaign statements to follow the changes in party positions over time. However, most of their empirical base is limited to six nations, and the relevant questions in most election studies are relatively few (often a half-dozen items for a two-dimensional analysis) and vary across nations and time. I build upon their important research program in this book.



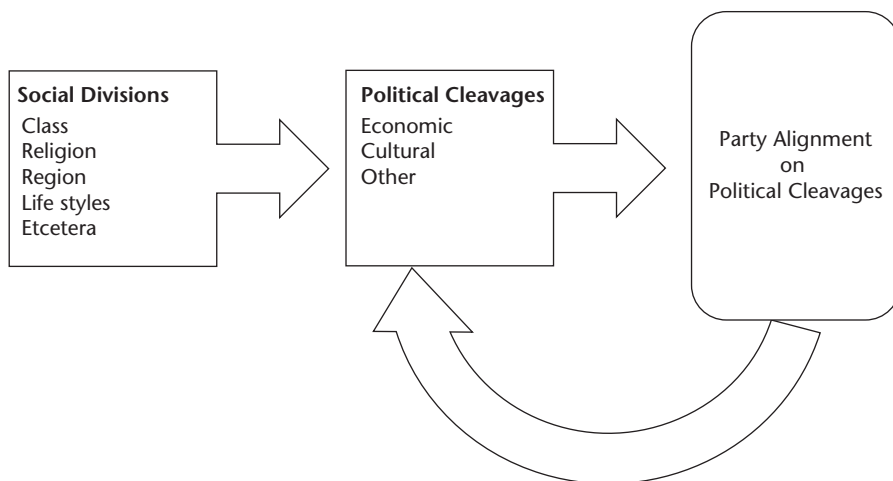
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### A Template for Research

This book's basic analytic framework is summarized in Figure 1.2. Social structure and living conditions shape political interests as Lipset and Rokkan first formalized. Specific issue interests can coalesce to form a broad political cleavage. Typically, these interests are articulated and mobilized by social groups. The natural example is social class differences leading to an economic cleavage on the role of the state in the economy and the provision of social security to those in need.

At the next stage, partisan alliances form to represent the underlying political cleavages. The content of party coalitions can vary depending on the strategies that elites pursue. Research often makes a direct link between social characteristics and voting choice, without factoring in the way that groups form party alliances as a key determinant of choice. A person's vote for a party may depend on the available party choices, rather than fully representing the voter's political preferences.

The diversity of group-partisan alliances was central to Lipset and Rokkan's description of the formation of party systems across Western Europe. For instance, in the early twentieth century, rural interests aligned with the Radical Left in some nations, and the Right in other nations. The same pattern can apply to the cultural cleavage. For example, the religious composition of a nation can affect how churches respond to gender and gay rights issues. The strategic choice of how labor unions respond to the environmental movement can also shape alliance patterns on the Left.



**Figure 1.2.** Social Interests to Political Cleavages to Party Alignments

*Source:* The author.

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Once these partisan patterns are set, party alignments can then affect citizens' cleavage positions in a partial feedback link. For instance, as parties began to articulate an alternative New Left or Green political agenda, this helped crystallize the cleavage positions of their supporters, identifying which issues went together in which ways. As Social Democratic parties shifted their economic positions, this provided a cue to party supporters to follow them (or seek another party). The same process came into play in recent decades as far-right parties integrated different issue positions to articulate a culturally conservative position. Parties, or other political actors, can give a coherent identity to the policy positions of their supporters.

In short, political cleavages provide a semi-rigid structure for political competition, not a fixed and stationary framework. Political parties have some flexibility in how they position themselves in the cleavage structure, and the choices they offer to voters. We see this flexibility being exercised by parties today, such as Corbyn's newest New Labour Party, Marcon's *En Marche* in France, Trump's transformation of the Republican Party, and the Five Star Movement in Italy.

In some ways, current patterns of political competition represent a new cycle in a continuing process of social modernization in Western democracies—modernization reshapes political demands and party strategies, often with new issue content or new social bases.

## Citizens and Political Cleavages

A common research framework in studying electoral politics distinguishes between political supply and demand. In this case, the demand is defined as the policy preferences of the public—what they expect from democracy and elected governments. The supply element is the set of choices that political parties offer for expressing policy preferences. I draw upon this general logic in the chapters that follow.

The empirical analyses begin with a description of *citizen-defined perceptions of the political space*. I use citizens' positions on current political issues to construct a dimensional model of political competition. In this case, the two major dimensions are the economic cleavage and the cultural cleavage.

A prior question, however, concerns the source of these political cleavages and the issue opinions that comprise them. The landmark work by Lipset and Rokkan maintained that the structure of society and the social conditions of individual citizens create the interests that determine political cleavages.<sup>39</sup> Democratic politics is a means to resolve competing social interests, and Lipset and Rokkan tracked these interests back to the social structure. For instance, the shared interests of the working class arose because of their common work

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experience and their competition with the interests of the middle class and bourgeoisie. Farmers' interests could be at odds with the interests of urban dwellers. Such group-based interests can provide a framework for political competition, reinforced by interests groups that represent social sectors, such as labor unions, farmer associations, business groups, religious denominations, and others.<sup>40</sup>

However, my use of the term "cleavage" is different from Lipset and Rokkan and some other cleavage scholars. I use the term to identify a set of values or worldview that is expressed in a set of political issues. Contemporary cleavages can develop with less formalized intermediary groups, such as environmental interests or norm-based interests. In fact, I have long argued that political cleavages are increasingly based on common political values rather than formal group alignments, because group alignments have become more fluid and less institutionalized in contemporary society.<sup>41</sup> From this perspective, political competition is based on groups of individuals pursuing their objective self-interest, and resolving this competition through the democratic process.

A more complex basis of political differences derives from conflict over values and norms rather than specific self-interests. Describing the emergence of the cultural cleavage in late 1970s Europe, Ronald Inglehart wrote: "when postmaterialist issues (such as environmentalism, the women's movement, unilateral disarmament, opposition to nuclear power become central, they may stimulate a materialist reaction in which much of the working class sides with the Right to reaffirm the traditional materialist emphasis on economic growth, military security, and domestic law and order."<sup>42</sup> To an extent, these issues involve the self-interest of women who want greater opportunities and rights, minorities who feel discrimination, or other interests. But citizen positions on such issues may also reflect feelings of ethnocentrism, norms about social relations, religious values, and authoritarian/permissive norms. These sentiments reflect the values of individuals and their own identities, which can exist separately from self-interest.

The economic and cultural cleavages thus both reflect a mix of objective self-interests and subjective value judgments. Separating these two aspects is difficult, but it is generally the case that the economic cleavage focuses more on the objective elements, and the cultural cleavage on the value elements. I expect these patterns to shape the correlates of citizen cleavage positions and their importance to the individual and to their electoral choices.

### Political Cleavages and Party Alignments

Political parties are the supply side of the cleavage model that links citizens to public policy. While the public is only periodically involved in politics and

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has less information about public policy, elites typically structure the choices available to voters at election time and represent citizen preferences within the policy process.

Just as for the public, I examine *elite-defined perceptions of the political space* over time. Political elites are more informed about society because of their positions and activities. One might expect them to share the same basic images of political competition as the average person, perhaps in finer detail. And yet, elites are also separated from the average person by being “elite.” They might read reports on the social conditions of workers in the *Ruhrgebiet*, but this is different from living those experiences. They might see the statistics on the struggles of immigrants, but this is different than living in the immigrant banlieues around Paris. Indeed, in their own social conditions elites are very different from the average citizen. They may understand the struggles to send children to an elite university but not the difficulty faced by working-class families to ensure their child attends any college. In general, members of national parliaments are better educated, more affluent, older, and will often have professional occupations before entering politics.<sup>43</sup> Elite surveys show that, on the whole, their personal opinions often lean toward the Left, post-material values, and views supportive of modernization.<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, high-level party elites could see different cleavage structures than the citizenry. In addition, elites can either lead or lag public opinion in their perceptions of how the structure of political cleavages is changing. Only by comparing both groups over time can one begin to assess the similarities and differences between citizens’ political concerns and those of elites.

Studying party elites is also important because elite discourse can influence mass attitudes since elites provide cues that some citizens follow in forming their own opinions. For example, Edward Carmines and James Stimson demonstrated that changing party positions on racial issues led many Americans to shift their party attachments to conform to the new alignment.<sup>45</sup> Various experiments demonstrate that cuing people with the issue position of the parties produces a shift in responses by partisans on both the Left and the Right.<sup>46</sup> Hypothetically, if prime minister X advocates expanding free trade, and the person likes prime minister X, then they have a positive predisposition to that policy. The greater people’s trust in the information source, the greater is the potential persuasive effect.

What sometimes goes unsaid in studies of far-right parties is the question of how other parties have acted.<sup>47</sup> For example, why did the established leftist parties not respond more forcefully and effectively to the economic and social needs of the “losers” of globalization or the increase in income inequality? Representing these individuals could (should) have been a traditional Leftist program, consistent with the historical base of social democratic parties. Labour’s Third Way in Britain, the German SPD’s *Neue Mitte*, the Left’s

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cohabitation in France, and Bill Clinton's triangulation strategy shifted these parties to the center on economic issues and closer to the growing number of middle-class voters. Similarly, the electoral potential of far-right parties is linked to the strategic choice of other established parties on the Right. The basic lesson is that by focusing on one party and its supporters, such as Greens or far-right parties, one can overlook the true nature of democratic elections as a choice between all of the available options.

Thus, studying party elites provides a comprehensive picture of the parties' positions in the political space. Parties can choose a mix of issues that create different identities, even among parties of the same ideological family. A specific example is the emergence of environmental issues in the 1980s. In some nations (such as Germany), the Social Democratic Party was initially unresponsive to the policy demands of environmental activists—in part because of their commitment to blue-collar labor unions. This pattern encouraged the formation of new Green parties in many instances. In the Netherlands, however, the Labour Party (PvdA) was more responsive to these new interests and attempted to integrate them into the party's constituency. This weakened efforts to establish an independent Green Party from a diverse coalition of minor parties. Since 1989 this small Green Party has won seats but has never risen to the prominence or governing role that the German Greens have wielded.

A more complex example is the List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in the Netherlands. The party was founded by a charismatic young, gay, liberal professional. The party merged two seemingly contradictory issues as its core. LPF was highly critical of the increased number of Muslims emigrating to the Netherlands. But this was because Fortuyn saw that increased immigration was threatening liberal cultural values, such as accepting gay rights and promoting women's rights.<sup>48</sup> In other words, the LPF staked out two positions at opposite ends of the cultural cleavage. Cultural clashes can produce different ways of thinking.

In short, the significance of an issue and its cleavage alignment can vary over time rather than being constant. The strategic decisions of the parties on what themes and positions to advocate—presumably based on a mix of national interests and party interest—change over time. Political parties face decisions on how to respond to new issues such as gender equality, immigration, climate change, and the other economic and cultural issues. Parties in different nations have chosen different responses depending on their own views, the actions of other parties, and the specific national conditions. Cross-national comparisons provide a means to examine these choices and their consequences of the supply of partisan choices.

A final topic is the agreement between voter demands and party supply on the political cleavages. Has this congruence changed significantly over the past several decades as the processes of social and political change have

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accumulated? This is a challenging question, and ideal research resources to definitively address this question do not exist. Nevertheless, we can make important progress by focusing the available evidence on how political competition is changing in affluent democracies.

## Data Sources

*Back to the Future* is a popular U.S. film in which the characters move back and forth in time using a DeLorean time machine invented in 1985.<sup>49</sup> The central figure first traveled back to 1955 and met his parents as high school students of his own age. Then he traveled to the future of 2015, which is now our past. Coincidentally, almost all the major characters were the same people at different stages in their lives. In a sense, this is the method of this book, applied to politics.

The theoretical interest in such time travel drove my search for appropriate empirical evidence. I wanted to describe the evolution of political cleavages and their impact on established party systems over the past several decades. Together they shared the modernization changes beginning after World War II. This includes the established democracies of Western Europe, as well as the affluent non-European democracies. Thus, this project requires broad cross-national evidence to compare how cleavages evolved over time—but lacking a time machine.

The research decision to focus on affluent democracies also reflects our theoretical query. Affluent democracies generally experienced the same modernization process that reshaped political cleavages. They share relatively similar socioeconomic conditions, levels of education, and other key social traits. The effects of modernization are less evident outside affluent democracies. The post-communist EU member states in Central/Eastern Europe are still forming, and our theoretical interests are not salient to new democracies in the developing world.

Empirical evidence is quite limited, however. Some scholars have examined national election studies over time.<sup>50</sup> This is a valuable resource, yet the available evidence is limited in several ways. Other studies focus on cross-sectional analyses of recent surveys, such as the European Social Survey.<sup>51</sup> There are obvious limitations to studying a dynamic theoretical model with cross-sectional surveys.

I started in the present and then looked for empirical evidence covering a set of affluent democracies at least 30 years in the past. The European Election Studies (EES) furnish the empirical base for most of this study.<sup>52</sup> Many researchers treat European Parliament (EP) elections as second-order events, where the political stakes are lower and parties highlight EU issues. I see

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another value for these surveys. The EES simultaneously survey all the member states of the EU during the election season, when citizen opinions are activated by the political discussions of the election. In terms of voting choice, I do not focus on the EP election but on *voting in the last national elections* that is a separate question in these surveys. The EES also ask a common battery of issue questions, and about other political attitudes in each survey. This contrasts with national election studies occurring in different years when economic or political conditions may vary widely, and ask different questions in each nation.

The real value of the EES lies in two other areas. First, the EES series include three general population surveys that can track the evolution of political cleavages from the late 1970s to 2014. Table 1.1 lists the nations and the sample sizes for each national survey. The 1979 study interviewed citizens in the original nine EU member states. The next appropriate surveys were in 2009 and 2014.<sup>53</sup> These studies included all the members of the enlarged EU at these time points, although I examine only the fifteen established Western democracies. The specific political questions asked in each EES differ, but there is sufficient content to address our research needs.

The ability to track patterns from 1979 to 2009 is our *Back to the Future* experience of moving across three decades in time. How have patterns of political competition been changed by the social and political experiences over this period?

The five years between the 2009 and 2014 surveys are significant because the 2008 recession, and the subsequent financial difficulties and political

**Table 1.1.** The European Election Studies

Nation	1979		1994	2009		2014
	Public	Elite	Elite	Public	Elite	Public
Austria	–	–	–	1000	52	1114
Belgium	982	40	117	1002	75	1084
Denmark	1073	41	105	1000	31	1085
Finland	–	–	–	1000	55	1096
France	1010	128	104	1000	125	1074
Germany	1003	150	393	1004	160	1648
Greece	–	–	–	1000	33	1085
Ireland	997	26	12	1001	8	1081
Italy	1178	158	135	1000	73	1091
Luxembourg	300	12	33	1001	20	538
Netherlands	1023	47	125	1005	78	1101
Portugal	–	–	24	1000	17	1033
Spain	–	–	74	1000	68	1106
Sweden	–	–	514	1002	183	1144
United Kingdom	1318	140	134	1000	258	1421
Total	8884	742	1770	1515	1236	16,701

Note: Table entries are unweighted N in each sample.

Source: 1979, 1994, 2009, and 2014 European Election Studies.

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conflict within the EU may have polarized political differences.<sup>54</sup> Compared to 2009, income levels dropped, unemployment rose, credit markets tightened, income inequality increased, and the additional pressures of cumulative immigration accentuated political differences. The Eurozone area experienced an 18-month recession beginning in the fourth quarter of 2011 and ending in the first quarter of 2014. Many analysts attribute the rising support for extreme parties on the Right and Left, and Brexit, to these forces. Thus, the 2014 EES can describe the patterns resulting from Europe's financial crisis.

Second, the 1979, 1994, and 2009 EES interviewed Candidates for the European Parliament (CEP) with questions that parallel the general public surveys.<sup>55</sup> I use the CEPs' issue opinions to measure party positions on the economic and cultural cleavages. Table 1.1 presents the sizes of the elite samples. The 1994 CEP survey lacked a comparable public opinion survey.<sup>56</sup> The data are especially valuable because elites were asked about the same issues as the general public, which allows for a comparison of voter and party elite positions.

To complement the European analyses, I examine the patterns of political change in the United States. The American National Election Studies began asking a series of policy questions in 1972 that partially represent both cleavages; additional issue questions in each election define cleavage positions for the public. Beyond the trend data, there is an in-depth analysis of party support in the 2016 election. The results demonstrate the commonality of cleavage politics across affluent democracies.

## Plan of the Book

This study tracks the evolution of political cleavages at the mass and elite levels from the 1970s. Any such mass-elite comparison raises the question of whether to begin with the citizenry or with the elites. The supply–demand framework I have adopted leads to analyses that begin by describing the citizenry in the EU, and how their views have changed over time. This is followed by parallel analyses of party elites. These two research streams then come together to study voting choice and political representation.

Chapter 2 begins these analyses by describing how public opinion on specific issues reflect deeper economic and cultural cleavages, and the evolution of those cleavage from 1979 to 2014. The EES show that a persisting economic cleavage is now joined by a cultural cleavage that has crystallized over time.

Chapter 3 examines how the social characteristics of Europeans influence their positions on the economic and cultural cleavages. In the 1970s, the traditional working-class/middle-class polarization on the economic cleavage was apparent, but these differences have narrowed over time. Social groups



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have realigned on the cultural cleavage. Higher status occupations and the more educated adopted distinctly liberal positions on the cultural cleavage, with the religious, manual workers, and farmers adopting more conservative positions. In addition, political support suggests how governments have responded to changing citizen demands. For Europe as a whole in the 2009 and 2014 surveys, economic conservatives and cultural liberals are more satisfied with government. Probably not coincidentally, these are positions held by upper social status occupations and the highly educated.

Chapter 4 extends the research to describe the composition of political cleavages for each of the nine early EU member states, and the evolution of these cleavages since 1979. The analyses provide a firmer foundation for understanding the cleavage structure in contemporary Europe, and how the social composition of a nation may affect the definition and distribution of cleavage positions.

Chapter 5 identifies the cleavage dimensions for party elites based on CEP surveys. A two-dimensional cleavage structure is visible in 1979, and becomes more clearly crystallized in the 1994 and 2009 surveys. The chapter then examines the distribution of these orientations across European elites and how political realignment among elite social groups has followed the pattern of citizen realignment.

Chapter 6 uses the CEPs' cleavage positions to place political parties in the two-dimensional political space. The evidence shows the persistence of the economic cleavage over time, with modest political adjustments by Leftist and Rightist parties. Party choices have changed more along the cultural cleavage, from the introduction of liberal cultural parties in the 1970s–1980s to the more recent emergence of cultural conservative parties. The supply of party choices available to voters has consequently broadened over time.

Chapter 7 connects the cleavage positions of European citizens to the supply of party choices available from the political parties. The analyses demonstrate the growing importance of the cultural cleavage for party choice, such that it eclipsed the impact of the economic cleavage in most nations in the 2009 survey.

Chapter 8 describes the degree to which parties agree with their supporters in collective and individual terms. The chapter first asks whether voters as a collective find a party that represents their positions well, or if they are satisfied with a party that only partially reflects their views. There is a very close fit between blocs of voters and their chosen parties in this two-dimensional space, but also significant variation. Then the chapter examines the agreement at the individual level—between each voter and their chosen party. While there is strong voter-party congruence at the macro level, this relationship weakens at the micro level.

To broaden the scope of the evidence, Chapter 9 tracks the evolution of political cleavages and party choices for the American electorate.<sup>57</sup> Just as for

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European systems, an economic and cultural dimension frames the party space, although interacting with the United States' racial and ethnic divisions. The cultural dimension emerged earlier in the United States owing to social groups mobilizing against the Vietnam War, and for racial justice, environmental reform, and gender equality. Evidence from the American National Election studies tracks the evolution of these two cleavage dimensions and their impact on presidential candidate choice up to the 2016 presidential election.

Finally, Chapter 10 discusses the realignment of these party systems and the implications for affluent democracies. Cleavages that have persisted for decades, and even strengthened in their political effects, are likely to persist for the foreseeable future. What does this imply for the nature of party competition, democratic discourse, and party systems?

## The Past and Future

Nearly fifty years ago, Alvin Toffler wrote the bestseller, *Future Shock*.<sup>58</sup> The futurologist wrote about the rapid pace of social change and what the future would hold. It is thought provoking to reread the predictions of medical miracles, the information revolution, economic transformations, and other technological changes he expected in the near future—and to compare those predictions to the reality today. He was probably right more often than he was wrong.

However, his core argument is not about technological change per se, but about how these dramatic and growing societal changes are affecting people. On the one hand, “the super-industrial revolution can erase hunger, disease, ignorance and brutality...it will radiate new opportunities for personal growth, adventure and delight. It will be vividly colorful and amazingly open to individuality.”<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, “Having to live at an accelerating pace...when faced by unfamiliar, strange or unprecedented situations is distinctly another [situation]. By unleashing the forces of novelty, we slam men up against the non-routine, the unpredicted. And, by so doing, we escalate the problems of adaptation to a new and dangerous level. For transience and novelty are an explosive mix.”<sup>60</sup>

Toffler noted that some people thrive on these new conditions, and want the future to accelerate and go further. Their personality and social conditions lead in this direction, and they probably benefit from these social trends. Think of the nouveaux riches of Silicon Valley or the elite businesses in London's Canary Wharf. Change and disruption are their mantras.<sup>61</sup> Other people are repelled by these changes and want to halt or reverse the pace of change; they look back to the past as a more idyllic time. Toffler also noted that technological change has unequal effects on the population “For

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coalminers in Appalachia or textile workers in the French provinces, however, this [social change] proves to be excruciatingly painful.”<sup>62</sup>

Toffler was writing about Western societies in the 1960s and the dramatic social changes of the day. Now, some people look back to this period as “the good old days” before the even more dramatic social changes we are now experiencing with the rights revolutions, globalization, and even more rapid technological change. If Toffler’s predictions about flying cars and body-less brains were ahead of reality, his predictions of the cultural clash in contemporary democracies seem prescient.

This book shows that one manifestation of future shock is the growing salience of the cultural cleavage among citizens and elites, and increased social polarization on this cleavage. One sees this in election campaigns, political discourse, and at its worst in social media. Too often the cleavage is presented in very stark terms, with pejoratives used to describe people who do not agree with the speaker or the writer of a post on social media. I consciously downplay such rhetoric in this study, not because I am ambivalent about these changes but because research should separate normative preferences from empirical evidence. Moreover, democracy exists to resolve conflicting issue preferences and not to demonize people with whom you disagree.

My goal is simple: to empirically study the realignment of cleavage structures and partisan alignments in contemporary politics so we can better understand where we have been, and the choices available for the future. But getting there is a challenging task.

## Notes

1. See, for example, Russell Dalton, Scott Flanagan, and Paul Beck, eds. *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; Russell Dalton and Martin Wattenberg, *Parties without Partisans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990; Russell Dalton, *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Established Democracies*, 7th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2018.
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3. Angus Campbell, A classification of the presidential elections. In Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes, eds., *Elections and the Political Order*. New York: Wiley, 1966; Dalton, Flanagan, and Beck, *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, ch. 1.
4. Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990; Hanspeter Kriesi et al., *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
5. Oddbjørn Knutsen, *Social Structure, Value Orientations and Party Choice in Western Europe*. London: Palgrave, 2017.

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6. Ronald Inglehart, The changing structure of political cleavages in Western society. In Russell Dalton, Scott Flanagan, and Paul Beck, eds., *Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; Herbert Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; Geoffrey Evans and James Tilley, *The New Politics of Class; The Political Exclusion of the British Working Class*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
7. Christian Welzel, *Freedom Rising: Human Empowerment and the Quest for Emancipation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013; Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*. New York: Viking, 2017; Ronald Inglehart, *How People's Motivations Are Changing and How This Is Changing the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
8. Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Pantheon, 2012; Amitai Etzioni, We must not be enemies. *The American Scholar*, 2017 (<https://theamericanscholar.org/we-must-not-be-enemies>). A broader literature argues that there is a personality basis to these orientations, linked to traits such as tolerance of uncertainty, openness to new experiences, and feelings of fear and insecurity. John Jost, Jack Glazer, Arie Kruglanski, and Frank Sulloway, Political conservatism as motivated social cognition, *Psychological Bulletin* (2003) 129: 383–93; Dylan Lane and Danielle Sulikowski, Bleeding-heart conservatives and hard-headed liberals: The dual processes of moral judgements, *Personality and Individual Differences* (2017) 115: 30–4; Christopher Johnston, Howard Lavine, and Christopher Federico, *Open versus Closed: Personality, Identity, and the Politics of Redistribution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017.
9. This contrast in citizenship norms is described in: Russell Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, 2nd ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2015; Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
10. Seymour Martin Lipset, The revolt against modernity. In Per Torsvik, ed., *Mobilization, Center-Periphery Structures and Nation-Building*. Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1981, p. 255.
11. Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*. New York: Vintage, 1955.
12. Lipset, The revolt against modernity, p. 256.
13. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*. New York: Random House, 1970.
14. “New” no longer seems to apply for movements and political parties that have existed for several decades. Thus, I chose a terminology focusing on the basis of this cleavage.
15. Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977; Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990; Inglehart, *How People's Motivations are Changing And How this is Changing the World*; Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
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17. Hanspeter Kriesi, Ruud Koopmans, Jan Duyvendak, and Marco Giugni, *New Social Movements in Western Europe*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1985; Russell Dalton and Manfred Kuechler, eds., *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.
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  19. Thomas Frank, *What's the Matter with Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004.
  20. Herbert Kitschelt with Anthony McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe. A Comparative Analysis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995; Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003; Tim Bale, Cinderella and her ugly sisters: The mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems, *West European Politics* (2003) 26: 67–90.
  21. Simon Bornschier, France: The model case of party system transformation. In Hanspeter Kriesi et al., *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
  22. Jorgen Goul Anderson and Tor Bjorklund, Structural changes and new cleavages: The Progress parties in Denmark and Norway, *Acta Sociologica* (1990) 33: 195–217.
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  24. Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments. In Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds. *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-national Perspectives*. New York: Free Press, 1967.
  25. Examples of liberal culturalist parties at the time are: D'66 in the Netherlands, Socialist People's Party in Denmark, and the Left Alliance in Finland. Ferdinand Müller-Rommel, *New Politics in Western Europe: The Rise and Success of Green Parties and Alternative Lists*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989.
  26. Inglehart, The changing structure of political cleavages in Western society, p. 60.
  27. Kitschelt, *The Transformation of European Social Democracy*.
  28. Referendums to endorse the expansion of the EU went down to defeat in Denmark (1992), France (2005), Ireland (2001), the Netherlands (2005), and Norway (1994). The Danes and Swedes both voted to opt out of the common Euro currency. Polls suggested that if Germans had been allowed to vote on accepting the Euro, they would have said “*Nein, Danke*”—but the established parties offered no choice. Most established parties, national governments, and EU elites pressed forward with the European project, even with these contrary signs from the public.
  29. Evans and Tilley, *The New Politics of Class*.
  30. Herbert Kitschelt, Left-Libertarian parties: Explaining innovation in competitive party systems. *World Politics* (1988) 40: 194–234; Müller-Rommel, *New Politics in Western Europe*; Herbert Kitschelt and Staf Helleman, *Beyond the European*

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  37. Kriesi et al., *West European Politics in the Age of Globalization*; Bornschieer, *Cleavage Politics and the Populist Right. The New Cultural Conflict in Western Europe*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010; Hanspeter Kriesi et al., *Political Conflict in Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Swen Hutter, Edgar Grande, and Hanspeter Kriesi, *Politicising Europe: Integration and Mass Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
  38. This project has expanded to the full EU membership to study the effects of the Great Recession and the subsequent financial crises in the European Union. See <https://www.eui.eu/Projects/POLCON/Documents/POLCONdescriptionwebsite.pdf>
  39. Lipset and Rokkan, Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments.
  40. For a discussion of the traditional interpretation of social cleavages see Lipset and Rokkan, Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments; Stefano Bartolini and Peter Mair, *Identity, Competition and Electoral Availability: The Stabilization of European Electorates 1885–1985*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 212–20; Kevin Deegan-Krause, New dimensions of political cleavage. In Russell Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Political Behavior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011; The Structure of Political Competition in Western European Politics (special issue), *West European Politics* (2010) 33.

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41. Dalton, *Citizen Politics*; also see Goren, On Voter Competence; Knutsen, *Social Structure, Value Orientations and Party Choice in Western Europe*.
42. Inglehart, The changing structure of political cleavages in Western society, p. 28; also Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism: Economic have-nots and cultural backlash. HKS Working Paper 16-026, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University (<https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/workingpapers/Index.aspx>).
43. Heinrich Best and Maurizio Cotta, eds. *Parliamentary Representatives in Europe 1848–2000 Legislative Recruitment and Careers in Eleven European Countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. On Britain see Evans and Tilley, *The New Politics of Class*, ch. 6.
44. Inglehart, The changing structure of political cleavages in Western society; Jacques Thomassen and Hermann Schmitt, Policy representation, *European Journal of Political Research* (1997) 32: 165–84; Russell Dalton, Political parties and political representation: Party supporters and party elites in nine nations, *Comparative Political Studies* (1985) 18: 267–99.
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51. Knutsen, *Social Structure, Value Orientations and Party Choice in Western Europe*; Silja Häusermann and Hanspeter Kriesi, What do voters want? Dimensions and configurations in individual-level preferences and party choice. In Pablo Beramendi, Silja Häusermann, Herbert Kitschelt, and Hanspeter Kriesi, eds., *The Politics of Advanced Capitalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015; Herbert Kitschelt, Social class and the radical right: Conceptualizing political preference formation and partisan choice. In Jens Rydgren, ed., *Class Politics and the Radical Right*. New York: Routledge, 2013; Inglehart and Norris, Trump, Brexit, and the rise of populism.
52. Further information on the European Election Studies and access to the survey data is available through the project website: <http://europeanelectionstudies.net/>. I am grateful for the many principal investigators for collecting these surveys and sharing with the international research community.

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55. Additional elite samples were included in the 1989 EES, but the questionnaire did not include a range of non-EU political issues.
56. Lieven de Winter et al., *European Candidates Study 1994*. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA3077.
57. Also see Goren, On Voter Competence.
58. Toffler, *Future Shock*.
59. Toffler, *Future Shock*, p. 187.
60. Toffler, *Future Shock*, p. 187.
61. Greg Ferenstein, *The Age of Optimists* (<https://medium.com/the-ferenstein-wire/silicon-valley-s-political-endgame-summarized-1f395785f3c1>); David Broockman, Greg F. Ferenstein, and Neil Malhotra The political behavior of wealthy Americans: Evidence from technology entrepreneurs. Stanford Business School Working Paper No. 3581, 2017. <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/faculty-research/working-papers/political-behavior-wealthy-americans-evidence-technology>.
62. Toffler, *Future Shock*, p. 87.