The Extreme Right Vote in Western Europe 1980-2002. Individual and Contextual Factors

Kai Arzheimer

31.10.2006
Overview

Theory
- The Research Question
- Theoretical approaches
- Mode of explanation
- Hypotheses

Design, Model, Data

Empirical findings
- The overall relevance of contextual factors
- Individual Characteristics
- Contextual factors

Summary and conclusion

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The Extreme Right Vote in Western Europe 80-02
What makes the Extreme Right vote ‘interesting’?

- After decades of stagnation (Scandinavia), enormous rise since ca. 1980
- From mid-/late 80s on, indirect and later direct impact on policies and elite rhetorics/positions
- Questions of legitimacy/democratic stability
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- From mid-/late 80s on, indirect and later direct impact on policies and elite rhetorics/positions
- Questions of legitimacy/democratic stability
- Success of (Extreme) Right parties unexpected/unusual for many WE societies
  - Support for Extreme Right highly variable over time and space
  - Like the emergence of the Greens a sign of change
What is the research question?

1. Why do people vote for the Extreme Right?
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2. *Why is the Extreme Right vote so variable*
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2. Why is the Extreme Right vote so variable
   2.1 Why is support for the Extreme Right so unstable over time?
   2.2 Why is the Extreme Right so weak in many West European countries but successful in others?
Why would anyone vote for the Extreme Right?

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  - Identification with the Extreme Right/no attachments to other parties
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- Specialised theories of political (right wing) extremism
- Should be linked to general model (background)
Which specialised explanations can be linked to the general model?

1. Personality factors/value orientations
2. Social (dis-)integration
3. Group conflicts
   3.1 Realistic Group Conflict
   3.2 Status politics/symbolic racism
   3.3 Social Identity
   3.4 Scapegoating
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4. *(Opportunity structures and other context factors)*
Who ‘should’ vote for the Extreme Right?

- First three groups of theories very ambitious
- But (comparative) data usually restricted to socio-demographics + very few attitudes
- Causal paths usually not separable, Extreme Right vote over-determined:
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- (Nearly) all theories point to core of Extreme Right support:
  - (Non-traditional) male workers + petty bourgeoisie
  - Competition/vulnerability, values, lack of social ties etc.
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- But . . .
What is the problem here?

- Differences in groups sizes cannot explain...
  1. (Persistent) differences *between* countries (e.g. Germany vs. Austria)
  2. Massive fluctuation *within* countries
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- Which external (i.e. political) factors determine the level of mobilisation?
The research question, reframed

Which external factors can explain the variation (over time and space) in support for the Extreme Right, provided that individual characteristics of the voters are held constant?
Which causal order is assumed?

1. Contextual (political, social and economical) variables

Theories/hypothesis about macro factors
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- Path model would be nice, but all variables (if present) put into one straightforward regression model
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  - Key variables: perceptions, but normally no data
  - Exception: truly global (pure) system level variables like electoral laws
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Diagram:

1. Contextual variable 1
2. Individual voting decision
3. Contextual variable 2
4. Individual attitudes

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![Diagram showing the relationship between contextual variables and individual voting decision and attitudes](image)
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3. (Of course, both can happen at the same time)
Which contexts matter?

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  - Families/friends
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- Analyse people, nested in survey waves, nested in political systems
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- **Other potentially important factors not included** (media agenda, elite behaviour (but: CMP))
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5. Unemployment benefits reduce support for the Extreme Right ⇔ Kitschelt’s original idea of the NRR
Which countries/time-frame?

- EU-15 + Norway (votes for the usual suspects pooled)
- 1980-2002
- Data availability
Which parties?

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  - Not fully accepted by elites within their respective system (Bale: ‘Cinderella’s ugly sisters’)
  - Somewhat ambiguous stance toward liberal democracy, but not necessarily extremist in a narrow sense
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- Agreement on
  - Which parties should be considered borderline cases (AN)
  - Have joined the group subsequently (Scandinavian Parties, NL)
Who are the usual suspects (Eurobarometer) ?

- Austria: Freedom Party (FPÖ)
- Belgium: Front National, Vlaams Blok/Belang
- Denmark: Freedom Party, Danish People’s Party
- Finland: Rural Party, True Fins,
- France: National Front
- Germany: German People’s Union (DVU), Republikaner, National Democrats (NPD)
- Greece: EPEN, National Front, Political Spring
- Italy: National Alliance (AN), Northern League (LN)
- Luxembourg: National Movement (NB)
Who are the usual suspects (Eurobarometer) ? II

- Netherlands: Centre Parties, Lijst Pim Fortuyn/Leefbaar Nederland
- Norway: Freedom Party
- Portugal: ‘Christian Democrats’ (PDC)
- Spain: Various splinter parties (Falange)
- Sweden: New Democracy
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- Contextual data from various sources (Comparative Manifesto, OECD, UNHCR, etc.)
- 15 countries (East Germany and West Germany treated as separate)/336 contexts/roughly 330,000 individual cases
- Unique coverage; including early years of success and weak parties
What does the design look like?

- Individual trend-data (intention to vote for the Extreme Right 0 vs. 1)
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  - Plus individual characteristics
  - Pooled over time/countries
  - Matched with appropriate contextual data
- Multi-Level logistic analysis
- Three levels: country, wave, respondent
What does the structure of the data look like?

country (3)

wave (2)

respondent (1)
What does the actual model look like?

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  ▶ Features of the individual voters
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    ▶ Unmeasured: individual level variance (actually fixed: Logit)
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  - Features of the individual voters
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  - Features of the respective context
    - Measured: macro variables
    - Unmeasured: context level variance
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How important is the (national) context?

- Standard procedure: Estimate empty (intercept only) model, assess Variance Partition Coefficient (VPC)
Empty model (variance components)

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\[ \text{logit}(\pi_{ij}) = \beta_0 + u_{0j} \]

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\[ (u_{0j}) \sim N(0, \Omega_u) : \Omega_u = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_{u0}^2 \end{pmatrix} \]
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  - Methods tend to disagree for all smaller parties
  - Context is more important for all smaller parties
  - Context slightly more important for the Extreme Right than for green or liberal parties
What features of the context are important?

- Third level (countries) represented by a series of dummies
Overall constant is replaced...

\[ y_{ij} \sim \text{Binomial}(1, \pi_{ij}) \]
\[ \logit(\pi_{ij}) = \beta_0 + u_{0j} \]

with

\[ (u_{0j}) \sim N(0, \Omega_u) : \Omega_u = (\sigma^2_{u0}) \]
... by 15 country-specific constants (country effects)

\[ y_{ij} \sim \text{Binomial}(1, \pi_{ij}) \]
\[ \logit(\pi_{ij}) = \beta_1 A_{Tj} + \beta_2 B_{Ej} + \cdots + \beta_{15} S_{Ej} + u_{0j} \]

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- Third level (countries) represented by a series of dummies
- Once *time-invariant* country effects are introduced, contextual variance reduced by more than two thirds
- Assumption of homogeneous, normally distributed noise on context level becomes much more plausible
Residuals: Empty model

The overall relevance of contextual factors
Individual Characteristics
Contextual factors
Residuals: Country effects

The overall relevance of contextual factors
Individual Characteristics
Contextual factors
Residuals (country effects): Outlier

The Extreme Right Vote in Western Europe 80-02

Kai Arzheimer
What features of the context are important?

- Third level (countries) represented by a series of dummies
- Once *time-invariant* country effects are introduced, contextual variance reduced by more than two thirds
- Assumption of homogeneous, normally distributed noise on context level becomes much more plausible
- Little evidence of serial correlation within countries (would be difficult to detect anyway) or throughout whole sample
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- Assumption of homogeneous, normally distributed noise on context level becomes much more plausible
- Little evidence of serial correlation within countries (would be difficult to detect anyway) or throughout whole sample
- Further reduction of contextual variance by including individual and contextual variables?
Which individual characteristics are important?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>18-29 years</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>30-45 years</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>65++ years</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Ed: middle/high</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Ed: university</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Petty bourgeoisie</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Worker</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Pensioner</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>(SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.507</td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td>0.296</td>
<td>(0.031)</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>(0.030)</td>
<td>−0.052</td>
<td>(0.041)</td>
<td>0.102</td>
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\( \sigma^2_{u0} \)  

\[ \begin{align*} 
\sigma^2_{u0} & = 0.521 \pm 0.047 \\
N(1) & = 253,630 \\
N(2) & = 336 
\end{align*} \]
Which individual characteristics are important?

- Gender (almost twice as much support amongst men)
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- Age (more support amongst young voters)
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- Education (virtual no support amongst university-trained voters)
- Class ((increasingly) more support amongst workers)
- Social ties:
  - Strong negative effect of union membership
  - Weaker effects of church attendance, household size, living with partner
  - PID: problematic
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- Political disaffection (performance of own political system)
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- Euroscepticism
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- Value orientations (virtual no support amongst postmaterialists)
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▶ Political disaffection (performance of own political system)
▶ Euroscepticism
▶ Value orientations (virtual no support amongst postmaterialists)
▶ Ideology (very strong effect of self left-right placement)
Which individual characteristics are important?

- Political disaffection (performance of own political system)
- Euroscepticism
- Value orientations (virtual no support amongst postmaterialists)
- Ideology (very strong effect of self left-right placement)
- Yet largely stable effects for socio-demographic variables – probably due to ethnocentric attitudes (cross sectional data)
Which contextual characteristics are important?

- Model assumes that group differences are constant (in term of logits) over contexts
- Political relevance of individual features depends on base level
- Which in turn depends on
Which contextual characteristics are important?

- Model assumes that group differences are constant (in term of logits) over contexts
- Political relevance of individual features depends on base level
- Which in turn depends on
  - Country effects
  - Random influences on the context level
  - Measured features of the contexts
Contextual variables: Scales

- Proportionality: Gallagher-Index
- Decentralisation: Lijphart-Index
- Unemployment: OECD ‘Standardised Unemployment Rates’ (SUR), centred
- Asylum seekers: OECD/UNHCR figures, new applications per 1,000 inhabitants, centred
- Unemployment benefits: OECD Gross Unemployment Benefit Replacement Rates (GRR), centred
Contextual variables: Scales II

- Positions of established parties/elites
- Zaller 92: Elites may keep issues off the agenda, strongest effects if they are united
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- Positions of established parties/elites
- Zaller 92: Elites may keep issues off the agenda, strongest effects if they are united
  - Based on subset of CMP categories (internationalism (+/-), national lifestyle (+/-), multiculturalism (+/-), law and order)
Contextual variables: Scales II

- Positions of established parties/elites
- Zaller 92: Elites may keep issues off the agenda, strongest effects if they are united
  - Based on subset of CMP categories
  - Most extreme position of established parties (‘red line’, linear interpolation over time)
  - (Distance between too major parties)
  - Salience of the Extreme Right’s issues (previous election, ignoring direction)
  - Variance of party positions
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- (Cabinet composition)
Proportionality (Gallagher-Index)

▶ PR – security valve, incentive, or largely irrelevant?
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\[ Gh = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (V_i - S_i)^2}{2}} \]
Proportionality (Gallagher-Index)

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\[ Gh = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (V_i - S_i)^2}{2}} \]

- (Dis-)Proportionality has a weak but borderline-significant \textit{positive} impact on Extreme Right support
- Due to French cases?
- Positive effect gets \textit{stronger} once French cases excluded
- No substantial effect in more complex models
Unemployment and Immigration

- Presumably strong positive effect for both unemployment and immigration
- Presumably large positive interaction
Unemployment and Immigration

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- Presumably large positive interaction
- Expected difference (in logits) between low immigration and high immigration contexts large (about three times larger than difference between men and women)
- Roughly the same for unemployment
Unemployment and Immigration

- But: Substantial *negative* interaction between unemployment and immigration
Unemployment and Immigration

- But: Substantial *negative* interaction between unemployment and immigration
- Extreme Right less successful if both immigration and unemployment are high?
The impact of four contextual factors/one interaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>(0.029)</th>
<th>0.486</th>
<th>(0.025)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dis-Proportionality</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decentralisation</td>
<td>0.230</td>
<td>(0.166)</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td>(0.169)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum seekers</td>
<td>0.324</td>
<td>(0.054)</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>(0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asylum seekers × Unemployment</td>
<td>−0.038</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>−0.041</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>−3.415</td>
<td>(0.813)</td>
<td>−3.255</td>
<td>(0.832)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>σ²_u0</td>
<td>0.395</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>0.410</td>
<td>(0.045)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N(1) 176 679 271 303
N(2) 276 276
Effect of unemployment, conditional on asylum seekers

![Graph showing the effect of unemployment on asylum seekers](image-url)
Effect of asylum seekers, conditional on unemployment
What is the political relevance of this?

- Calculate the impact of unemployment, asylum and interaction over the empirical range of both variables
- Calculate expected probability of ER vote while holding combined effect of other variables constant
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- Calculate expected probability of ER vote while holding combined effect of other variables constant
- Done for more complex model
Structure of Party Competition

- Established Right (or Left): Paving the Extreme Right’s way or stealing their issues?
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  - Effect of variance never significant, variance and salience correlate at 0.64
  - ‘Toughness’ has no effect
  - Salience has a huge impact (0.7; 24.2) $\times$ 0.13
  - Effect of asylum seekers somewhat reduced
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  - Salience has a huge impact (0.7; 24.2) × 0.13
  - Effect of asylum seekers somewhat reduced
- Modest negative effect if established right is not in government
What about unemployment benefits?

- Positive main effect
What about unemployment benefits?

- Positive main effect
- Negative interactions with asylum seekers and unemployment
What about unemployment benefits?

- Positive main effect
- Negative interactions with asylum seekers and unemployment
- Again: What is the political relevance of this?
What about unemployment benefits?

▶ Positive main effect
▶ Negative interactions with asylum seekers and unemployment
▶ Again: What is the political relevance of this?
  ▶ Link between support for the ER and ethnic competition in the labour market *if welfare state protection is minimal* (squares nicely with Betz/Swank)
  ▶ In many situations, no relevant effect of unemployment, but usually some effect of asylum seekers
  ▶ Model implies *negative* effect of unemployment if benefits are very generous and level of immigration is extremely high – artifact or welfare chauvinism of those who still have something to lose?
Interaction between unemployment, asylum seekers, and unemployment benefits

A base logit (constant + all other effects) of $-4$ is assumed.
Are individual level effects constant over contexts?

- Impact of some variables might vary over contexts (Euroscepticism, ideology, gender . . . )
Are individual level effects constant over contexts?

- Impact of some variables might vary over contexts (Euroscepticism, ideology, gender . . .)
- Add random effects
Are individual level effects constant over contexts?

- Impact of some variables might vary over contexts (Euroscepticism, ideology, gender . . . )
- Add random effects
- Some variation for being unemployed and Euroscepticism, but effects of ideology and gender quite stable (gender effect $0.548 \pm 0.283$ in more than 2/3 of all contexts)
Are there substantial cross-level interactions?

- Mostly harmless
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- E.g. no interaction between ideology and ‘toughness’ of established parties
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- Effect of individual unemployment somewhat stronger if unemployment level low
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- Mostly harmless
- E.g. no interaction between ideology and ‘toughness’ of established parties
- Effect of individual unemployment somewhat stronger if unemployment level low
- But effect for global unemployment the same in both groups
Cross-level interaction between global and individual unemployment

Effect: unemployed

unemployment (centred)
What is gained by studying country-level variables?

- Macro effects often in line with expectations...
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- Macro effects often in line with expectations ... 
- ... or at least plausible
What is gained by studying country-level variables?

- Macro effects often in line with expectations . . .
- . . . or at least plausible
- But persistent country effects do not disappear!
Country effects only vs. complex model

Kai Arzheimer
The Extreme Right Vote in Western Europe 80-02
Summary

1. Extreme right has clear social profile
2. Salience of issues in elite statements matter
3. Unemployment and Immigration increase support for the Extreme Right
4. But not if unemployment benefits are generous
Where do we go from here?
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1. Reconsider common wisdom (‘First past the post curbs the Extreme Right’)
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   ▶ Media content
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Where do we go from here?

1. Reconsider common wisdom (‘First past the post curbs the Extreme Right’)
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   - (Comparable) information on party organisation, leadership, funding etc.
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3. If national context is important, but not that important
   explore
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   ▶ Other, smaller contexts: Municipalities, neighbourhoods, families, friendship-networks
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4. Further research needed!
AS YOU CAN CLEARLY SEE IN SLIDE 397...

GAAAAAH!

"POWERPOINT POISONING."
Residuals: Trend
Support for the Extreme Right 1980-2003

80-85

86-91

92-97

98-03