The Importance of Left-Right Orientations in the New Democracies

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1. Draft

Having meaningful choices is an essential attribute of a functioning democratic system (Dahl 1971). It is generally assumed that party leaders and candidates can transmit useful information on policy programs by structuring their ideas along a limited number of dimensions (Downs 1957). Even more, it has been asserted, then empirically tested, that most party policy positions can be synthesized by a unique dimension, reducing in this way the information costs at a minimum (e.g. Robertson 1976, Budge et al 2001). The left-right dimension has been found to be the most common one across consolidated democracies. In the short term, parties try to give saliency and provide specific solutions to diverse policy issues in ways that are expected to increase their support. But, in the long term, parties tend to stay on stable positions relatively to each other and not 'leapfrogging (Colomer and Escatel 2005). Empirical studies have shown that most citizens living in democratic societies are able to place themselves, locate political parties on the left-right dimension, and vote accordingly (ex. Sum and Badescu 2005). In addition, studies based on representative surveys, on expert judgments (Laver and Hunt 1992, Huber and Inglehart 1995), and content analysis of party manifestos (Budge and Klingemann 2001, Laver, Benoit and Garry 2003), found a generally high level of consistency in using left-right dimension, by both political actors and citizens. Thus, one's ideological orientation plays a key role in explaining the process through which citizens evaluate, and choose, among competing candidates and parties. The left-right scale provides the most prevalent symbolic foundation of ideological space. The meaning of "left" and "right" varies cross-nationally, but generally these terms carry specific ideological connotations related to social class and resource distribution. As a schema, the left-right continuum serves as a simple and efficient mechanism of political space through which citizens and political parties communicate (Knight 1985; Fuchs and Klingemann 1990; Hinich and Munger 1994).

This paper aims to explore the processes through which left-right schema is adopted as a tool of political communication through structuring party preferences. It focuses on the cases of several former communist countries in Eastern Europe, whose public has had a shorter period of democratic experience and less exposure to ideological information structured by "left/right" concepts, than public of older democracies. We already know that a difference between the two categories of countries existed during the mid '90s. The proportions of people who use left-right schema, of those who use it in consistent ways, as well as of those employing left-right dimension for structuring preference among political actors, were found to be lower in the Eastern Europe, when using Module 1 (1996-2001) of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems data (Sum and Badescu 2005). Adding to analysis the new Module 2 (2001-2005) of the CSES data, will provide us a unique opportunity to evaluate what has been the temporal dynamic of these differences. Our use of both transversal and longitudinal comparisons among countries will allow us to identify what are the factors that facilitate or, on the contrary, slow down the adoption of the left-right schema as a generally used mechanism through which citizens and political actors communicate. We will focus on four ex-communist countries that were included in both modules, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania, with a special emphasize on Romania, due to richer data available in its case.

Using data from the CSES, we first explore the use of the left-right orientations cross-nationally and, where available, at two moments of time. First, we evaluate the propensity for

individuals to place themselves and the main parties on a left-right scale as individual recognition of political space. We then assess the extent to which left-right assessments are consistent among citizens of the same polity. Finally, we evaluate the relationships between one's ideological distance to a party and preference toward that party. These three categories of left-right orientations will be assessed in relationship with both individual and macro level factors.

2. Main hypotheses

The research design in this study allows us to assess if differences between East European countries and older democracies has changed over time, and, in case of variation, what are some of the factors associated with change. The four ex-communist countries that are in both modules of CSES provide a far from a representative sample of the 28 East European countries. Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland has been considered throughout the post-communist period as its best performers (Slovenia is the only member of this category not included in this study) in terms of democratic and economic reforms. At the same time, Romania has been generally considered as part of a middle category, more similar to Bulgaria[1], in a worse situation than the Baltic states, but better than other former Soviet Republics. Therefore, data that we have available provide more information about the leaders of transitions and less about its laggards.

It would seem natural that, at least in the case of the three former communist countries which are generally considered as having consolidated democracies, differences present within the Module 1 data, when compared to older democracies, will be much lower or nonexistent. Although to a lesser extent, Romania has made significant democratic progress between 1996 (Module 1) and 2004 (Module 2), and similar, although possibly slower evolution should be expected. Widespread adoption by citizens of the left-right dimension could be the result of the fact that both public and political elites are gradually becoming aware that this simplified representation provides an efficient tool of communication, or perhaps that lines of political communication are becoming more relevant. An additional reason to expect increasing use and consistency of the left-right discourse involves the influence of the European Union. All countries in our study have been for several years in a process of integration in the EU. The Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are already part of the EU, whereas Romania could become an official member in 2007 or 2008. This accession process has required intense dialogue between political parties in all applicant countries and parties from EU countries. By this, the process has provided a strong incentive to the political actors in the East to adopt the language and concepts used by their counterparts in the West, including the left-right representations. Finally, one additional factor could be exposure of the citizens to a social and political environment in which left-right terms are used, by means of labor migration. In several East European countries, the proportion of citizens who were temporary labor migrants in the past fifteen years is more than 10% of the adult population. Such countries include Romania, Moldova, and Albania. That labor migrants may be significantly exposed to left-right representations is suggested by several studies conducted in the recipient countries. For instance, Cornel Ban found that in marked contrast with the mainstream Romanian print

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[1] In addition to having close values for various indices for quality of democracy, they are the only two countries in the region with a W shape of economic growth after the fall of communism--having two periods of decline and not one as the other EE countries.

media, in which labor conflicts and issues of resource redistribution are typically approached with purported anti-ideological neutrality, the editorialists of a Romanian newspaper published in Italy, *Gazeta*, are sympathetic to high redistribution, high labor protection standards and strong unionism (Ban 2005).

However, there are several factors that could possible have a negative influence on adoption of left-right conventions and information at the aggregate level. First, the political, economic and social difficulties associated with transition should not be underestimated in East European countries. The proportion of people living under the poverty line, and of those unemployed or fearing unemployment, have increased significantly in each of the former communist countries. At the same time, and perhaps as a result of the hardships of transition, many people have become disillusioned about the democratic game and have lost interest in democracy generally. Decreasing voter turnout in this region seems to suggest this. For these people, many may have given up understanding and staying current with political parties positions by using the simplified representation provided by the left-right schema. There is another related factor that could possibly slow or reverse adoption of the left-right schema. For many in the post-communist world, expectations were unrealistically high as their countries began the democratic transition, and it has been difficult to lower their demands. Thus, in East and Central Europe the general rule has been that parties in power loose elections, even when their accomplishments seem, to anybody else than their national public, remarkable.

A third factor, impacting especially South-Eastern Europe countries like Romania and Bulgaria, concerns the fact that reforms in these countries depend for their success on a stable policy consensus even as these reforms transform and polarize society (Krastev 2002). The stability of governmental policies is ensured largely by international community pressure, which is aimed at arresting the extraction project of the elites (Zielonka ...). Since these elites have learned to cite such external pressures as excuses for their own refusal to take responsibility for the welfare of ordinary citizens, external conditionalities worsen relations between politicians and the public. In Ivan Krastev words, "Governments get elected by making love to the electorate, but they are married to the international donors." (Krastev 2002: 51). As a consequence, it is more difficult to held politicians accountable, and political learning is less effective. Both results can possibly slow or even reverse the adoption of the left-right representations.

Finally, democratic transition and weak civil society are a mix that may decrease the intensity and precision of political communication between elites and public. Most of the former communist countries have had a slower than expected development of civic groups, despite of the sometimes very significant external support (Howard 2004). Not only that proportion of public involved in associations tends to be much lower than in the older democracies, but the effects of these groups are limited. One result is that most of the former communist countries suffer from a deficit of vibrant and persistent debates on a large array of issues of public interest. Policies are adopted in the East after little deliberation, a fact that decreases people's incentive to get informed on them, and, in turn, reduces their need to use the left-right conceptual schema. In particular, there is one topic that has significant potential to aggravate the problem of public-elite communication in a society with weak public spheres: perceptions of corruption. In addition to political instability, the perceptions of widely spread corruption in a society, and especially of political corruption, has the effect of clouding the public's

understanding of what it would take to tackle other national priorities such as a country's bankrupt educational system, malfunctioning hospitals, or stagnating economy (Naim 2005).
As a result, public's obsession with one dominant topic, which cannot be simplified more, or approximate in terms of left and right, could be another factor that discourages public and politicians to structure their communication by using left-right dimension.

To summarize, party institutionalization, EU integration and labor migration are factors expected to increase left-right use, whereas difficulties of transition, political elites using external pressure as excuses to take responsibilities, and high perceptions of corruptions could have the effect of reducing use of the left-right schema. It is clear that having only four cases as part of the group of ex-communist countries impose serious limits on testing causal mechanisms that include all of these factors. However, by using cross-national data available and additional data for the Romanian case, we hope to significantly reduce the range of possible explanations.

3. Left-right orientations in a cross-national perspective
To what extent is the left-right scale relevant to people cross-nationally? In addressing this question, we distinguish between ideological sophistication and ideological identification (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990, 205; Knight 1985, 828). Ideological sophistication suggests that citizens hold shared meanings around the abstract left-right schema. Ideological identification means that individuals share the left-right scale as a common understanding of political space without necessarily shared meanings.
When considering ideological sophistication, common understandings of the left-right scale refer to questions of ownership of the means of production, levels of equality in resource distribution, and mechanisms for social protection especially in the realm of individual rights (Klingemann 1979; Fuchs and Klingemann 1990; Bobbio 1995).
Thus, the meanings of "left" and "right" may vary widely among individuals within a society. Moreover, an individual's understanding of what issues the left-right scale represents is not fixed. The left-right scale can accommodate new issues as they become relevant for an individual, or society as a whole. For example, Knutsen (1995) demonstrates how individuals in Western European countries have cobbled post-material, quality of life values onto the left-right scale. As a result, the general meaning as an abstraction of political space and representation of political conflict can change overtime.
The left-right scale, however, is not exclusively an ideological blueprint of political attitudes. Conceptualizing the left-right scale in terms of ideological identification reduces the need for a shared understanding of the meanings of "left" and "right." Rather, ideological identification simply asks to what extent people understand (and use) the left-right scale when considering the political landscape. Do individuals understand their own political orientation in terms of the distances between themselves and competing parties along a single dimension that moves from left to right? Ideological identification still must hold meaning for individuals, but it eliminates the need for these understandings to be held with widely shared connotations. In this way, the left-right scale denotes as a common reference of political space, and through it, we are able to evaluate cross-national variance in voter choice along a spatial dimension.
Using the left-right scale as a form of ideological identification allows for a comparative analysis of the linkage that citizens perceive between their own orientations and those of their representatives. Understood as an abstraction of political space, the left-right schema serves

to link individual ideological orientations to their perceptions of political party orientations. Relying on the left-right schema does not imply that other political dimensions do not exist, or are not important. Voters likely perceive other dimensions of political space (Kitschelt 1992; Middendorp 1992, 257). It does imply that individuals use this simplification as a convenient delineation of political space that maps their preferences. Moreover, we expect that parties would attempt to utilize the left-right schema to advertise themselves to the electorate, and in the process complete the two-way citizen-party linkage that is necessary in a representative democracy (Downs 1957; Kitschelt et al. 1995; Klingemann 1995; Kitschelt et al. 1999).

Table 1 demonstrates the minimum standard for ideological identification. It reflects the proportion of respondents who placed themselves on the left-right scale when asked, the proportions of respondents who placed the three main parties in their society[2] on the left-right scale, and the proportions of respondents who placed themselves and each of the three main parties[3]. These five measures are applied as part of the Module 1 (1996-2001) and then, as part of the Module 2 (2001-2005).

Table 1. The proportion of respondents who placed themselves on the left-right scale, the proportions of respondents who placed the three main parties on the left-right scale, and the proportion of respondents who placed themselves and each of the three main parties, for Module 1 (16 countries) and for Module 2 of CSES (17 countries).

	Module 2					Module 1				
	Self	A	B	C	All	Self	A	B	C	All
Romania	66	66	64	64	54	63	61	63	58	51
Czech Republic	92	93	92	93	87	97	98	96	97	93
Hungary	91	89	89	87	85	78	77	75	75	70
Poland	77	87	72	72	59	90	83	85	78	74
Switzerland	95	90	90	89	87	92	85	85	82	78
Germany	94	95	94	94	91	92	91	91	88	85
Israel	95	97	97	91	88	87	92	92	79	73
Mexico	72	75	75	71	66	73	77	76	74	66
Norway	95	93	94	93	93	98	96	95	96	94
New Zeeland	76	74	71	63	58	80	78	78	72	67
Portugal	85	89	90	88	89	85	89	90	88	82
Sweden	96	94	93	91	90	84	83	83	84	81
Taiwan	48	46	47	43	42	48	42	40	37	35
Bulgaria	91	91	92	99	88					
Belarus						41	42	26	-	18
Lithuania						67			74	61
Slovenia						67	57	58	55	49
Ukraine						61	72	65	60	47
Russia						66	38	33	34	27
France	97	91	93	96	87					
Ireland	78	76	74	72	66					

[2] in terms of electoral outcome in the last general elections.
[3] All data are from the CSES data set (http://www.cses.org)

Data in Table 1 show that there is a significant difference between former communist countries and established democracies in terms of how often are the left-right used. The average proportion of those who used these terms to characterize themselves and for each of the three main parties during the first module was 73% in the old democracies and 52% in the Eastern Europe. In the second module, with much fewer countries from the Eastern Europe, difference is between 78% and 71%--but it is lower than in the Module 1 only because of the selection of countries. In addition, data show that there is important variation among countries in each of these two categories. Taiwan is the most different among the Western countries (the general use is 35% in Taiwan, compared to the mean of 78%, when Taiwan is excluded). Among the East European countries, Czech Republic has very high values, followed by Hungary and Poland. The lowest are in Belarus (18%, with only two parties asked) and Russia (27%).

When the two moments of time are compared, there is a slight increase of the level of ideological identification among the Western countries, from Module 1 to Module 2: from 73% to 78% (for 9 countries); increase took place in 6, tie in two and decrease in one (New Zeeland). There is no clear difference among the four East European countries (72% in Module 1, 73% in Module 2): increase took place in Hungary and Romania, decrease in Poland and Czech Republic.

Table 2 shows values of three indicators measuring consistency of the left-right use. The first one (I1) illustrates the proportion of respondents who indicate the "conventional"[4] order among the three main parties in his country on a left-right scale. The second and third measures indicate the proportion of people who express stronger preference for a party that is closer on the left-right scale than for a party that is farther--second measure (I2) is based on comparing the first two parties, whereas third measure (I3) is based on comparing the first and the third party.

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[4] "right" means that respondent gave similar order with one indicated by experts.

Table 2. The values of I1, I2, I3, indicators that measure consistency of the left-right use, for Module 1 (16 countries) and for Module 2 of CSES (17 countries).

	Module 2			Module 1		
	I1	I2	I3	I1	I2	I3
Romania	39	29	28	34	35	24
Czech Republic	78	61	61	92	69	70
Hungary	45	67	20	60	50	50
Poland	49	36	27	63	54	42
Switzerland	66	55	48	55	51	44
Germany	73	61	61	72	52	52
Israel	72	66	50	71	60	51
Mexico	26	31	27	30	34	36
Norway	76	57	60	77	62	62
New Zeeland	44	42	32	57	55	49
Portugal	40	49	31	41	51	33
Sweden	81	70	61	67	61	49
Taiwan	20	19	21	14	15	14
Belarus				33	8	
Bulgaria	66	48	56			
Slovenia				32	25	26
Ukraine				40	40	20
Russia				28	20	17
France	48	58	52			
Ireland	22	22	35			

The three measures of consistency in Table 2 show similar tendencies with those of left-right use across countries. In the first module, there is a difference between post-communist and other countries with regard of proportion of those who place correctly the three most important parties on a left-right dimension: the average is 54% in the nine Western countries (59% if Taiwan, which has again a much lower value, is excluded,), compared to 48% in the eight former communist countries. In the second module, there is no clear difference between the two categories of countries, but this seems to be entirely the result of having in the ex-communist categories fewer countries among those with relatively low values in this group.
A comparison between Module 1 and Module 2 finds very small increase among the nine Western countries that were in both modules, from 54 to 55 (increase in three, tie in four, decrease in two), and decrease among the four East European countries, from 62 to 53 (increase in one, decrease in three).

With regard of the ideologically based party preference, I2 and I3 values indicate that there is an important difference between West and East. In Module 1, the average proportion of people who express stronger preference for a party that is closer to their own position on the left-right scale than for a party that is farther, is 46% among the Western countries (50% without Taiwan), compared to 34% in the East. In Module 2, the average is 47% in the West and 43% in the East. When only countries that are in both Module 1 and Module 2 are considered, there is no difference in time among the nine West European countries (increase

in 5, tie in 1, decrease in 3), and there is a decrease among the East European ones (decrease in 3, tie/small decrease in one).

Taken together, comparisons between the two categories of countries, and at two different moment of time, indicates that the process of adopting left-right schema by the public of the new East European democracies has been more problematic than one could have expected. Data show no tendency of convergence between East and West in using and consistency of use of the left-right concepts. On the contrary, whereas in the West reliance on the left-right one dimensional representation of the political parties has known a slight increase, in the East proportion of people able to place in order main parties on a left-right scale, as well as proportion of people showing consistency between ideological distance and party preference, has decreased.

What are the possible explanations for the general finding that representations of political space in the former communist countries are slow to adopt, and, in some cases, even reduce the use of the seemingly efficient left-right schema?
In order to explore possible explanations, we will focus on Romanian case, for which more data is available, and then, will discuss which of the factors found to influence left-right orientations in its case, can be found in other ex-communist countries as well.
Romanian data estimate change of left-right orientations over two electoral cycles. In 1996, the extent and degree of consistency in using left-right concepts were among the lowest among the CSES countries, with values close to the one of Lithuania, Slovenia, Ukraine, and higher than the ones of Taiwan, Russia and Belarus. Since then, several factors that are expected to increase use of the left-right schema have been present in Romanian case:
1. Stability regarding main political parties. There have not been any new significant parties, none to enter into parliament, therefore public's knowledge about existing political actors was expected to increase over time.
2. The main political parties have become institutionalized, meaning that they have assumed a clear ideological profile which resonates in the minds of the electorate beyond personalities (Mainwarring 1995). In particular, the process of joining EU has provided more opportunities to the Romanian parties to discuss their affiliation to ideological families and international organizations. In addition, each time when new political parties were set up, they tried to communicate to the public there specific positions by using left-right language. For instance, the Union of the Right Forces presented itself as the first Romanian party truly to the right.
3. Romania is an important "donor" of labor migration in Spain and Italy, countries in which Romanian migrants had the opportunity to get exposed to the debates structured by the left-right dichotomy of the local political context.
4. One of the main categories of suspects for the limited relevance of the left-right thinking of Romanians in 1996 concerns the communist legacy and the first years of transitions. Thus, after 1990, "left" have been associated with "communism" and, for this reason, parties were reluctant to assume the "left" or even "center-left" labels. Instead of the left-right polar terms, public and parties referred to the "neo/former-communist" versus "reformers". However, it has been expected that after the 2000 elections, when the main political party that defined itself as anti-communist failed to enter to parliament, the left-right dichotomy could finally replace the communist-reformist one.

Since our data show only marginal increase in the left-right use over the eight years period, we have to look for mechanisms that could have compensated for the effects of the previous four categories of factors. The main suspect for having only a slow adoption of the left-right schema regards the perceptions of widely spread and enduring corruption (Table 3.) This is because these perceptions could have distracted public's attention from other issues, and discouraged both public and politicians in structuring communication by using left-right dimension.

Table 3. The proportion of people declaring that corruption is the most important problem their country has faced for the last four years, the most important problem and the proportion of those choose that problem, across 15 countries (CSES, Module 2).

	Corruption	Most important problem	
Romania	38	Corruption	38
Hungary	3	Unemployment	12
Poland	2	Unemployment	59
Bulgaria	12	Unemployment	40
Switzerland	-	Immigration	20
Germany	1	Unemployment	72
Israel	1	Security	45
Mexico	5	Unemployment	18
Norway	-	Health	22
New Zeeland	0	Health	25
Portugal	3	Health	22
Sweden	-	Unemployment	27
Taiwan	0	Economy	59
France	-	Insecurity	25
Ireland	2	Health	19

4. Left-right orientations in Romania
Data on Romania allow us to explore more relationships between explanatory variables and left-orientations than the CSES cross-national data. First of all, we are able to evaluate the effect of elections, by comparing measures of ideological identification from a survey collected shortly before the 2004 general elections with similar measures collected shortly after. The approximately one month period between the two surveys captures the time with a very high intensity of political communication between citizens and parties, hence it would not be a surprise if left-right schema usage increased.
Data in Table 3 show little effect on several measures--such as self identification, and some of the comparisons between parties on a left-right scale--, and no effect or even a negative one on others. In conclusion, our data does not support the idea that electoral campaign has an important effect on ideological identification, at least on the short term.

Table 4. Measures of ideological identification, in 1996 after the elections, in 2004 before the elections and in 2004 after the elections.

	1996	2004 before elections	2004 after elections
Self-placement	63%	59%	66%
PSD	63%	70%	66%
PNL	60%	65%	64%
PD	58%	66%	64%
PSD<PNL	41	41	46
PSD<PD	36	37	46
PD<PNL	30	26	16
PSD<PNL,PD	31	34	44
PSD<PD<PNL	19	10	8
Correlation between ideological distance and preference:			
PSD	-.33	-.40	-.30
PNL	-.29	-.18	-.32
PD	-.12	-.20	-.31

Is salience of one issue, or of few major issues that cannot be associated to the left-right schema a possible reason for this lack of change over time? The 2000 and especially 2004 general elections were dominated by discussions concerning corruption, and European integration--none of them generating much debate since the vast majority of public agreed the fighting corruption and EU integration[5] are top priorities.

Data in Table 5 compare people who declare that corruption is the most important problem that Romania has faced for the last four years with those who indicated a different problem, with regard of ideological identification and ideological sophistication.

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[5] Romania has constantly had highest proportions of people supporting EU integration, among all candidate countries.

Table 5. Measures of ideological identification (left-right use, I1, I2, I3) and ideological sophistication (beta (welfare) and beta (Tax)), across people who consider corruption as the main problem Romania has faced for the last four years and people who consider other problem as important.

	Corruption-most important	Other problem-most important
Left-right use (self+3 main parties)	60%	55%
I1	58%	34%
I2	36%	25%
I3	36%	22%
Standardized coeff. in a regression model of Left-Right self placement[*]		
Welfare	.01	.03
Tax	.26**	.06
Adjusted R^2	0.1	0.0
N	163	241

Note: The other independent variables, not shown here, are level of education, age, sex and level of political information, measured by an aggregate index of four political knowledge dichotomous variables.

The results indicate that people who see corruption as the most important problem that has faced Romania for the last four years are slightly more likely to use left-right schema to describe their own positions and that of the main parties, and to show a significantly higher level of consistency, by providing correct left-right order of parties and preferring parties with closer ideological distance to their own, then people who indicate a different problem than corruption. In addition, for people in the first category there is a significant relationship (beta=.26, p=.001) between their view of income tax schema and position on the left-right dimension--those who favor a flat tax system over a progressive one are leaning more to the right--, whereas for those in the second category, there is no such relationship.

A very similar relationship can be found between ideological identification and ideological sophistication on the one side, and travel abroad, on the other side. People who traveled abroad are more likely to use left-right schema to describe their own positions and that of the main parties (60% compared to 51%) and to show a significantly higher level of consistency, by providing correct left-right order of parties and preferring parties with closer ideological distance to their own, then people who indicate a different problem than corruption. In addition, for people who traveled abroad there is a significant relationship (beta=.23, p=.001) between their view of income tax schema and position on the left-right dimension--those who favor a flat tax system over a progressive one are leaning more to the right--, whereas for those did not travel, there is no such relationship.

Table 6. Measures of ideological identification (left-right use, I1, I2, I3) and ideological sophistication (beta (welfare) and beta (Tax)), across people who traveled abroad and those who did not.

	Traveled abroad	Did not travel abroad
Left-right use (self+3 main parties)	60%	51%
I1	64%	41%
I2	37%	28%
I3	36%	27%
Standardized coeff. in a regression model of Left-Right self placement[*]		
Welfare	.10	-.07
Tax	.23**	.07
Adjusted R^2	0.1	0.0
N	155	472

Note: The other independent variables, not shown here, are level of education, age, sex and level of political information.

What about the relationship between age and left-right orientations? Is it a difference between young adults, especially those who voted first only after 1996, and those who have benefited from longer experience about Romanian politics? Such a difference could signal a change in the kind of discourse political actors have during the more recent electoral campaigns and between them, possibly an increase of using left-right terminology.
The answer is no. The only significant difference in terms of left-right orientations is between people older than 60 and all others, with the former using more often but with less consistency the left-right concepts.

Travel abroad and, surprisingly, perceptions of corruption, are likely to determine a slight increase of the reliance on the left-right representations. More significant is the positive effect of the two factors on levels of consistency in use of the left-right concepts.
Why perceptions of corruptions and travel in a foreign country[6], which in most cases, is not tourism but work abroad[7], have similar effects with regards of left-right orientations? It is worth noticing that there is tremendous variation in what kind of experiences people who work abroad encounter. The vast majority of people traveled abroad during the last five years, and especially after the visa ban for Romanian was lifted by most West European nations. Also, the context of their travel was very diverse, at one extreme people who crossed several borders illegally (e.g. Popa 2004), at the other people with legal working contracts and visa; at the middle, probably most frequent case, people with tourist visa who travel for work.
Our result suggests that even if most Romanians who worked abroad had only brief or superficial contact with political context in the countries of destination, it was significant enough to increase their ideological placement and sophistication.

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[6] Our data show that in more than 90% of the cases, the country is a West European one.
[7] As suggested by sex, age, type of locality of respondent and, especially, country where he/she traveled.

It is less clear why perceptions of corruption as the most important issue are positively associated to ideological orientations, even when effect of other factors is controlled for. One possible explanation is that the DA center-right opposition coalition was successful in challenging the center-left Social Democratic Party for being too lenient in dealing with corruption, and, in the same time, contending that center-right economic policies are more efficient in this respect. In the same time, other issues, including ones that may seem easier to frame by using left/right terms, received less attention during campaign and people who consider them as important were not provided with ideological clues. If this is the case, then perceptions that the new center-right government is successful in dealing with corruption could help strengthening ideological orientations. Perceptions that this government fails will likely weaken even more use of the left-right dimension.

5. Discussions

We explored in this paper the processes through which left-right schema is adopted as a tool of political communication in the former communist countries. We aimed to assess if difference between these countries and older democracies in terms ideological orientation has changed, and to identify some of the factors that explain individual and country level variation. Since our focus has been to explain change over time, in most cases a four year period, we considered only variables that possibly had variation during that time, and ignored the ones with no or minor variation--such as attributes of electoral systems and income inequality[8]. The small number of East European countries for which data are available for two moments of time, only four, has limited the strength of some of our inferences. However, by analyzing the two modules of the CSES data and additional variables for the Romanian case, it is clear that the process of adopting left-right schema by the public is not necessarily a stable and cumulative one. In addition, data show no tendency of convergence between East and West in terms of ideological identification. On the contrary, whereas in the West reliance on the left-right one dimensional representation of the political parties has known a slight increase, in the East proportion of people able to place in order main parties on a left-right scale, as well as proportion of people showing consistency between ideological distance and party preference, has decreased. This general tendency of decrease among the East European countries makes more likely that at least one of the following factors have significant effect:
- disillusion about democratic game, because of too high expectations, increased inequality and social exclusion, resulting in apathy, disinterest in political messages, in particular in understanding and using left-right schema. There is a strong correlation in each of the countries under study between voting (as reported by respondent) and ideological identification. In the same time, between Module 1 and 2, turnout has decreased in the Czech Republic and Romania, was stabile but very low in Poland, and increased only in Hungary[9].
- worsening relations between politicians and the public as a result of elites citing external pressures as excuses for their own refusal to take responsibility for the welfare of ordinary citizens.
Analysis of Romanian data gave us information about two other factors that could possibly apply to other ex-communist countries that are not part of the leading group: perceptions of corruption and labor migration. We found, contrary to our initial expectations, that people who consider corruption as the main problem facing the country have higher levels of

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[8] which we discussed elsewhere (Sum, Badescu 2005).
[9] turnout data can be found at http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm

ideological identification and ideological sophistications than the others. Also, we found that labor migration tends to have a positive effect on both use and consistency regarding left-right concepts. In addition, other factors with likely positive effects on ideological orientations have been present in Romania: stability regarding main political parties, their gains in institutionalization, EU integration resulting in political learning, in particular increase of ideological sophistication of the elites. Given all of these, the fact that change in ideological identification and sophistication over an eight years period was only minimal suggests that the combined effect of the negative factors has been significant.

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