

# **The Salientisation of the Cultural Integration-Demarcation Ideological Dimension for Voting in Great Britain, 2010-2019**

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## **Abstract**

This article demonstrates the growing relationship between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting behaviour in Great Britain between 2010 and 2019. Using original survey data (n = 14,923) including multiple measures of ideology, and voting data gathered at the time of each election, the article shows that voters who favour cultural demarcation are more likely to vote Conservative, whilst those who favour cultural integration are more likely to vote Labour. Further, the size of this relationship grows across the four elections, with a particular increase in its magnitude between the 2015 and 2017 general elections. This indicates the importance of the 2016 referendum on UK membership of the EU — and narratives surrounding it — in strengthening the role of ideological considerations regarding the nation, immigration, and supranational power in voting decisions. We also argue that a particularly plausible account of the observed developments centres on the idea of political elites deploying heresthetic strategies to salientise electorally favourable ideological dimensions.

**Keywords:** **ideology<sub>1</sub>, integration-demarcation, voting<sub>2</sub>, Great Britain<sub>3</sub>, Brexit<sub>4</sub>, heresthetics<sub>5</sub>.**

## **Introduction**

Using original data from two cross-sectional surveys fielded in 2017 ( $n = 3,539$ ) and 2018 (11,384), and voting data gathered at the time of each general election, this article demonstrates the growing relationship between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting behaviour in Great Britain between 2010 and 2019. The surveys gathered respondents' answers to questions covering the United Kingdom's role in the world, patriotism, diversity in their local area, immigration, and the European Union. Using confirmatory factor analysis, we find a single factor underlying respondents' views on those questions, which we label the cultural integration-demarcation dimension of ideology, in line with Kriesi et al. (2006). This dimension captures views on the extent to which national identity should be protected from the influence of globalisation and the cultural disruptions that increasing international integration entails. Such considerations have been shown to have gained in importance since the early 2000s (Kriesi et al. 2006), a point that we extend.

Investigating the relationship between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and vote choice in the 2010, 2015, 2017, and 2019 UK general elections, as well as the 2016 referendum on EU membership, we find strong and consistent correlations. In particular, those who favour cultural demarcation were significantly more likely to vote for the Conservatives, UKIP, and Leave. In contrast, those with integrationist views were more likely to vote for Labour, the Liberal Democrats, and Remain. Additionally, the data shows that the magnitude of the relationship between the integration-demarcation factor and voting behaviour increased throughout the period. This is in line with previous investigations that attest to the growing importance of cultural considerations for citizens' political choices (Surridge 2018; Cutts et al. 2020).

There is also a particular increase in the magnitude of the relationship between the 2015 and 2017 elections, indicating the importance of the Brexit referendum in salientising the cultural integration-demarcation dimension. The two response groups within the data (gathered in the run-up to the 2017

general election, and nine months later in early 2018) manifest similar ideological distributions, suggesting that the integration-demarcation ideology itself does not fluctuate with the electoral cycle. The relationships between ideology and voting are also remarkably similar across the two groups. Taken together, these finding suggest a changing *relationship between* the integration-demarcation ideological dimension and vote choice, rather than in respondents' positions on the integration-demarcation spectrum itself. These results also hold when we estimate the integration-demarcation factor without the indicators relating to the European Union.

The article makes two important contributions to the literature. First, it highlights the realignment in the British ideological landscape which has taken place over the last decade. These findings are significant because they illustrate how a macro-political event such as the 2016 Brexit referendum can act as a catalyst for wider ideological realignment. Secondly, building on these empirical findings, the article argues that the salientisation of cultural integration-demarcation ideological dimension in British politics can be seen as consequence, at least to some extent, of the actions of strategic politicians. The analysis is consistent with the view that UKIP and the Conservative Party used Brexit in a successful attempt to shift the electoral terrain towards ideological considerations that are beneficial to them.

## **Literature Review**

### Ideology

Ideology is a set of core lower order beliefs that are related to each other (Bem 1973; Jost et al. 2009; Peffley and Hurwitz 1985), difficult to change, and underpin higher order beliefs. In terms of public opinion, ideological beliefs are often conceptualised along two fundamental dimensions that cover, first, collective or individual management of economic relations and equality, and second, the desirability of structures of authority in social relations. The first dimension is commonly labelled as 'left-right,' but the beliefs that relate to it change over time and between contexts (Benoit and Laver

2006; Dalton and Anderson 2010). Indeed, the meaning of ‘left’ and ‘right’ can rotate such that they encompass more components of the second than the first ideological dimension. Such shifts in meaning relate to the salience of particular issues in political discourse, which activate or deactivate underlying ideological dispositions. The dispositions themselves, however, relate to deeper psychological traits (Jost et al. 2009) and are thus likely to persist even when not made salient by the political context.

The second dimension captures social and cultural issues, such as views on whether young people respect traditional values and whether the death penalty is ever an appropriate sentence (Evans et al. 1996). Kriesi et al. (2006) observe that the salience of issues within this dimension has been transformed since the 1970s. Whereas before, it was “dominated by issues linked to cultural liberalism, [the] integration/demarcation cleavage” has become the main structuring factor within this dimension (*ibid.*, 950). This cleavage concerns questions of national identity and the extent to which the homogeneity of this identity should be guarded against the cultural influences of globalisation. Much scholarly attention has been dedicated to analysing changes in the actual ideological composition of societies (see Higgs 2008) but there has been less work on changes in the *salience* of certain ideological dimensions for voting. This is despite the fact that the relative stickiness of ideological views suggests the importance of understanding the ways in which pre-existing and stable ideological preferences become more or less salient for political preferences.

The conceptualisation of ideology as a set of related underlying beliefs has provided a bridge between those who observe the instability of policy preferences (Converse 1964) and those who observe more stable beliefs (Feldman 1988). Drivers of ideological beliefs may be economic (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2011) or cultural (Grasso et al. 2019; Norris and Inglehart 2019), amongst a range of factors in early and formative years (Dinas 2013, 2014). Ideology also has implications for voting, including when parties move their ideological positions (Evans and Tilley 2012; Hall 1979), and parties’ signals interact with beliefs when people make political decisions (Herrmann, Tetlock and Visser 1999). This process is biased by how much attention individuals pay and the extent of their motivation to seek

information that confirms their views (Druckman 2012). As such, election campaigns are opportunities for parties to signal how they align with voters' underlying beliefs to attract votes, especially from those who have voted for them before (Gelman and King 1993). People tend to cast their votes for parties that are ideologically proximate to them on the salient issues of the electoral campaign. Indeed, voting should be closely aligned with ideology precisely because it occurs at the moment at which people are paying most attention, have most information available, and are most motivated to ensure such alignment. However, salient issues vary between elections and are often shaped by other political events and discourses.

#### Brexit, Ideology and Political Parties in the UK

Corbett (2016) has argued that the Euroscepticism underpinning the rise of Brexit has its origins in the interaction of populism and English nationalism (see also Henderson et al. 2017), fuelled by a series of flashpoints: the Maastricht Treaty in 1992; the 2004 EU expansion and associated flows of labour; and the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent austerity policies (on the latter, see also Nandy 2019). The outcome of the referendum itself, Hay (2020) argues, stems from David Cameron's flawed negotiating strategy with the EU and his party's internal war on the issue, differential turnout between demographic groups, political disaffection and socio-economic dislocation, and the failure to convince the electorate of the economic consequences of Brexit. Together, these accounts dovetail with Hobolt's (2016) identification of individual-level drivers of Brexit support including geographical identities, and policy attitudes regarding the EU. This indicates that ideological beliefs were at play in Brexit. At the same time, the identification of historical flashpoints in the UK's membership of the EU, and the Conservative Party's internecine struggles, indicate the roles that political actors played in sustaining the salience of the issue.

Indeed, a symbiotic relationship between the Conservative Party and UKIP (Bale 2018) has been observed in which the former (under the leadership of William Hague, Iain Duncan Smith, and Michael Howard) initially deployed the combination of populism and Euroscepticism that was subsequently adopted more aggressively by the latter. UKIP experimented with the mix of issues that

it emphasised to win support from Eurosceptics and then maintain itself as a viable force (Usherwood 2019). This has been reflected in changing support for the party (Clarke et al. 2016) and reflects a wider trend for right-wing populist parties to test different angles in their Eurosceptic discourses (Pirro et al. 2018). Such was the success of UKIP's populist discourse that it prompted a shift in the rhetoric of other party leaders and MPs (Bossetta 2017; Baldini et al. 2020). Thus, the actions of the Conservative Party and UKIP that sustained membership of the European Union as a political issue, and led to Brexit, had wider implications for political discourse and the salience of other issues in British politics.

## **Data and Measures**

Our data were gathered via a series of YouGov's omnibus surveys, fielded to representative samples of UK adults drawn from their online panel of respondents during two fieldwork periods. The first response group ( $n = 3,539$ ) was surveyed between the 30<sup>th</sup> of April and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2017, just over a month before the 2017 general election and in the thick of the campaign period. The second response group ( $n = 11,384$ ) was surveyed between the 6<sup>th</sup> of February and the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2018. The news in this period was marked by an earthquake in South Wales, media company mergers, retail companies going into administration, a scandal over the use of sex workers by senior figures in an international development charity, and ongoing questions over the nature of the UK's departure from the EU. The two fieldwork periods were, therefore, distinct in terms of the electoral and current affairs context. By contrast, the two response groups are similar in terms of pertinent demographic and political control variables, including age, sex, ethnicity, region of residence, gross personal income, social grade, highest education level, and party identification.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The demographic profiles of the two response groups are presented in Appendix D. Party identification is included as a control to allow us to identify the independent effect of ideological beliefs on voting. Since partisanship is likely to correlate with both ideology and vote choice, it is a potential confounder that should be included as a control.

The measures of ideology that we use were developed by David Sanders (2017) along with Thomas Scotto and Jason Reifler (2016). The question battery contains eight units covering the United Kingdom's role in the world, patriotism, diversity in one's local area, immigration, the European Union, human rights, and left-right self-placement.<sup>2</sup> Left-right self-placement is an indicator of how people perceive their own ideological position relating to both economic and social views (Dalton and Anderson 2010) and an established predictor of voting behaviour. We exclude it from our main ideological measure because it is distinct from issues of cultural liberalism, European integration, and immigration that the 'cultural integration-demarcation' dimension we focus on pertains to (Kriesi et al. 2006, 933).

Alongside answers relating to respondents' ideologies, gathered via the surveys, the data include variables covering party vote in each of the 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019 general elections, and vote in the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. Because YouGov's respondents are panellists, their reported votes were gathered near the time of each electoral event.<sup>3</sup> The size of the sample and length of the fieldwork allow us to examine the relationships between ideology and voting for the whole sample as well as for the two temporally distinct sub-samples.

## Hypotheses

The literature on ideology suggests that such beliefs are relatively stable and tend to be formulated early in life, so we should not observe large variations in the distribution of ideological beliefs over the short and medium-term. As such, we expect a similar distribution of ideological positions in both of our response groups (*Hypothesis 1*). If *Hypothesis 1* holds then variation in the relationship between ideology and voting behaviour should stem primarily from the changing political context and

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix F for question wording.

<sup>3</sup> The exception to this is respondents who join the YouGov panel after an election occurs, who are asked to recall their votes when they join or in subsequent surveys.

*salience* of ideological dimensions, rather than short-term shifts in the underlying ideologies of those in the population. Furthermore, since vote choice was recorded independently and from our survey and close to the time of each election, the relationship between ideology and voting should not vary between the response groups if *Hypothesis 1* is true, and we treat this expectation as a robustness check.

The literature on the UK's changing political landscape suggests the growing salience of cultural integration-demarcation ideological considerations. The rise of these considerations forms the background for the UK's general elections in 2010, 2015, 2017 and 2019. As such, we expect an increase in the magnitude of the relationship between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting across those four elections (*Hypothesis 2a*). Further, the 2016 Brexit referendum was a key moment in raising the electoral salience of the integration-demarcation component of the second ideological dimension. As such, we anticipate a marked increase in the magnitude of the relationship between voting behaviour and cultural integration-demarcation ideology between the 2015 and 2017 general elections (*Hypothesis 2b*).

## Empirical Analysis

### Cultural integration-demarcation and left-right ideology

Drawing on Kriesi et al. (2006) we expect a single dimension to underpin all of our ideological measures. We use confirmatory factor analysis with the robust maximum likelihood (MLR) estimator in Mplus 7.4 to identify this dimension, onto which all of the ideological measures load significantly. Rerunning the same model using the WLSMV estimator to obtain absolute fit indices also indicates that the model fits the data well (RMSEA = 0.064, CFI = 0.967, TLI = 0.962). Whilst left-right self-placement is excluded from the factor, the data shows it is moderately correlated with the 'cultural integration-demarcation' dimension ( $r = 0.476$ ). Throughout subsequent analyses, left-right self-placement is used to benchmark the explanatory power of the integration-demarcation dimension

against an established predictor of vote choice. Finding that the cultural integration-demarcation dimension is as strong a predictor of vote choice as left-right self-placement increases confidence in the substantive importance of the dimension, especially given the possibility of post-hoc amendment of left-right self-placement in light of past vote choices.

The cultural integration-demarcation factor scores are normally distributed amongst the respondents who completed the survey in 2017 and amongst those who completed it in 2018 (see Appendix H). Left-right self-placement is also approximately normally distributed in both response groups. T-tests show that the mean ideological positions of the two response groups are not significantly different (two-tailed  $p > 0.10$ ) from each other, both for the factor score and left-right self-placement. To facilitate comparison, we standardise both variables for subsequent analyses. For the factor score, higher values indicate ideological positions favouring cultural demarcation rather than integration, which we can think of as more traditionalist or conservative. For left-right self-placement, higher values indicate identification with the right.

#### Cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting, 2010-2019

To examine the relationship between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting, we run seventeen separate logit regressions. The models each use a binary indicator of voting Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democrat, or UKIP / Brexit Party as the dependent variable, and a separate model is estimated for each party at each election. The seventeenth model covers voting for Leave in the 2016 referendum on the UK's EU membership. All models use sample weights, robust standard errors, and multiple imputation with chained equations to estimate missing values for some of the demographic and political variables<sup>4</sup>. Figure 1 shows the logit regression coefficients for the relationship between cultural integration-demarcation ideology (standardised factor score) and voting, with the coefficients

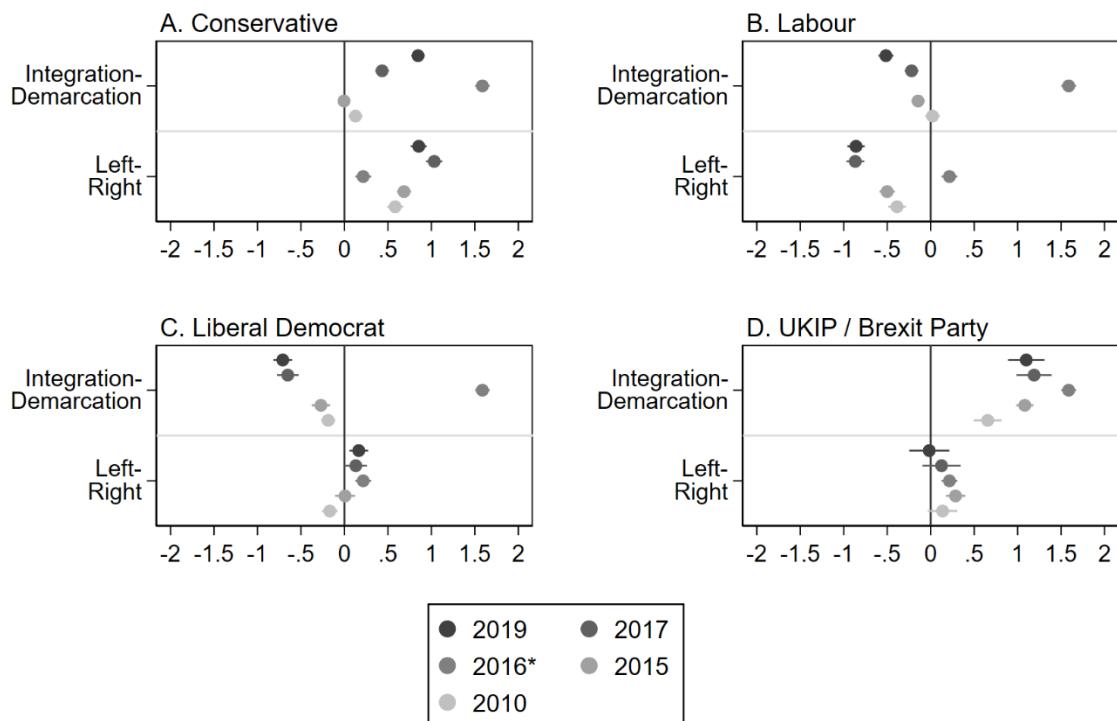
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<sup>4</sup> Despite the potential of violating the missing-at-random assumption, multiple imputation is still the least bad option, as it outperforms simple imputation strategies and does not necessitate limiting the analyses to complete cases only, both of which would likely bias the results more severely than using multiple imputation. Furthermore, the results presented below are robust to the exclusion of incomplete cases, although with some loss of significance.

for left-right self-placement (standardised) included for comparison. Each panel relates to voting for a specific party, with separate points representing the coefficients for each election (2010-2019, bottom to top), and all models include control variables.<sup>5</sup>

For reference, each panel also includes the points indicating the relationships between ideology and voting for Leave in 2016. The difference in the magnitude of the relationships between the two ideological positions and 2016 referendum vote is striking. A standard deviation move towards cultural demarcation was associated with being 4.9 times more likely to vote Leave in 2016 (coef. = 1.587, S.E. = 0.043,  $p < 0.001$ ). This is larger than the magnitude of its relationship with voting for any of the parties in any of the general elections between 2010 and 2019. It is also much larger than the relationship between left-right self-placement and 2016 referendum vote: a standard deviation move to the right was associated with being 1.2 times more likely to vote Leave (coef. = 0.216, S.E. = 0.046,  $p < 0.001$ ). This electoral event, then, is unique amongst the five that we consider in the

Figure 1. Coefficient plots for voting on integration-demarcation ideology and left-right self-placement



\* Leave vote

<sup>5</sup> Coefficients for adjusted and unadjusted models, which produce similar results, can be found in Appendix A.

importance of cultural integration-demarcation ideology for vote choice, both in itself and compared to left-right self-placement. This finding, as with all of the results, is replicated when we re-estimate the model using a cultural integration-demarcation factor that excludes the questions relating to the European Union, which are particularly pertinent to the 2016 vote.<sup>6</sup>

Turning to party voting in the four general elections, the magnitude of the relationship between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting Conservative (panel A) greatly increased between 2010 and 2019, and especially between 2015 and 2017. In 2010, a standard deviation move towards cultural demarcation was associated with being 1.1 times more likely to vote Conservative (coef. = 0.127, S.E. = 0.041,  $p < 0.01$ ). In 2019, the same change in ideology was associated with being 2.3 times more likely to do so (coef. = 0.846, S.E. = 0.039,  $p < 0.01$ ). The magnitude of the relationship between left-right self-placement and Conservative voting also increased over the period, though less dramatically. A standard deviation move to the right was associated with being 1.8 times more likely to vote Conservative in 2010 (coef. = 0.584, S.E. = 0.047,  $p < 0.01$ ), but 2.4 times in 2019 (coef. = 0.855, S.E. = 0.046,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, cultural integration-demarcation ideology began this period with a minimal relationship with voting Conservative but ended it on a par with left-right self-placement, which itself had a growing relationship with Conservative vote over the period.

The relationships between ideology and Labour voting show similar patterns to those in Conservative voting, albeit in the opposite direction and less dramatic. In 2010, a standard deviation move towards cultural demarcation was not significantly associated with voting Labour (coef. = 0.021, S.E. = 0.042,  $p > 0.1$ ), but by 2019 it was associated with being 1.7 times less likely to do so (coef. = -0.515, S.E. = 0.043,  $p < 0.01$ ). Over the same period, a standard-deviation move to the right changed from being associated with a 1.5 times lower likelihood of voting Labour in 2010 (coef. = -0.388, S.E. = 0.051,  $p < 0.01$ ) to a 2.4 times lower likelihood in 2019 (coef. = -0.859, S.E. = 0.050,  $p < 0.01$ ). Thus, left-

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<sup>6</sup> Figures showing the results of this robustness check are available in Appendix G, and the coefficient tables can be produced using the replication data and do-files available via Pure, the University of Strathclyde Research Management System. DOI: [t.b.c].

right self-placement started and ended the period with a larger relationship with Labour voting than did integration-demarcation ideology, but both relationships notably increased in magnitude. Unlike with Conservative voting, there is no particular increase in the relationship between Labour voting and integration-demarcation ideology between 2015 and 2017. However, there is an increase in the magnitude of the relationship with left-right self-placement, which is also the case for Conservative voting.

The picture for both Liberal Democrat and UKIP or Brexit Party voting is slightly different: in both cases, the magnitude of the relationship with integration-demarcation ideology increased dramatically whilst the relationship with left-right self-placement changed much less. In 2010, a standard deviation move towards cultural demarcation was associated with being 1.2 times less likely to vote Liberal Democrat (coef. = -0.186, S.E. = 0.042,  $p < 0.001$ ), whilst the figure in 2019 was 2 times less likely (coef. = -0.709, S.E. = 0.055,  $p < 0.001$ ), and there was a particular increase in the magnitude between 2015 and 2017. For UKIP and the Brexit Party, a standard-deviation move towards cultural demarcation went from being associated with a 2.6 times greater likelihood of voting UKIP in 2010 (coef. = 0.950, S.E. = 0.069,  $p < 0.001$ ) to a 3.0 times greater likelihood of voting for the Brexit Party in 2019 (coef. = 1.100, S.E. = 0.106,  $p < 0.001$ ), though the increase in the magnitude came between 2010 and 2015. The relationship with left-right self-placement did not change significantly for UKIP and Brexit Party voting. However, in 2010 a standard deviation shift to the right was associated with a 1.2 times *lesser* likelihood of voting Liberal Democrats (coef. = -0.157, S.E. = 0.033,  $p < 0.001$ ) but this had shifted to a 1.2 times *greater* likelihood in 2019 (coef. = 0.165, S.E. = 0.054,  $p < 0.001$ ).

The growing magnitude of the relationships between voting for the two largest parties in British politics and both cultural integration-demarcation and left-right self-placement supports the idea of increasing ideological polarisation between 2010 and 2019. Further, the increase in the magnitude of three of those relationships between 2015 and 2017 suggests the importance of the 2016 Brexit referendum in foregrounding cultural integration-demarcation considerations in a way that was particularly important for the Conservatives, whilst also exaggerating existing left-right divides. The

2016 referendum may also have played a role in the particular increase in the importance of integration-demarcation ideology for Liberal Democrat voting between 2015 and 2017. Further, unlike for the Conservatives and Labour, the increasing magnitude of the relationships between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting for the Liberal Democrats and UKIP or the Brexit Party was not accompanied by a similar increase in the magnitude of the relationship with left-right self-placement. This may reflect the dominant positions of the two larger parties on issues associated with the left-right dimension, whilst the greater change in the magnitude of relationships with integration-demarcation ideology indicates the capacity of all parties to attract voters using such considerations during this period. Overall, the growing magnitude of the relationships between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and party voting provides support for *Hypothesis 2a*. Additionally, the increase in the relationship's magnitude for the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats around the 2016 EU referendum provides support for *Hypothesis 2b*.

#### Response group comparisons

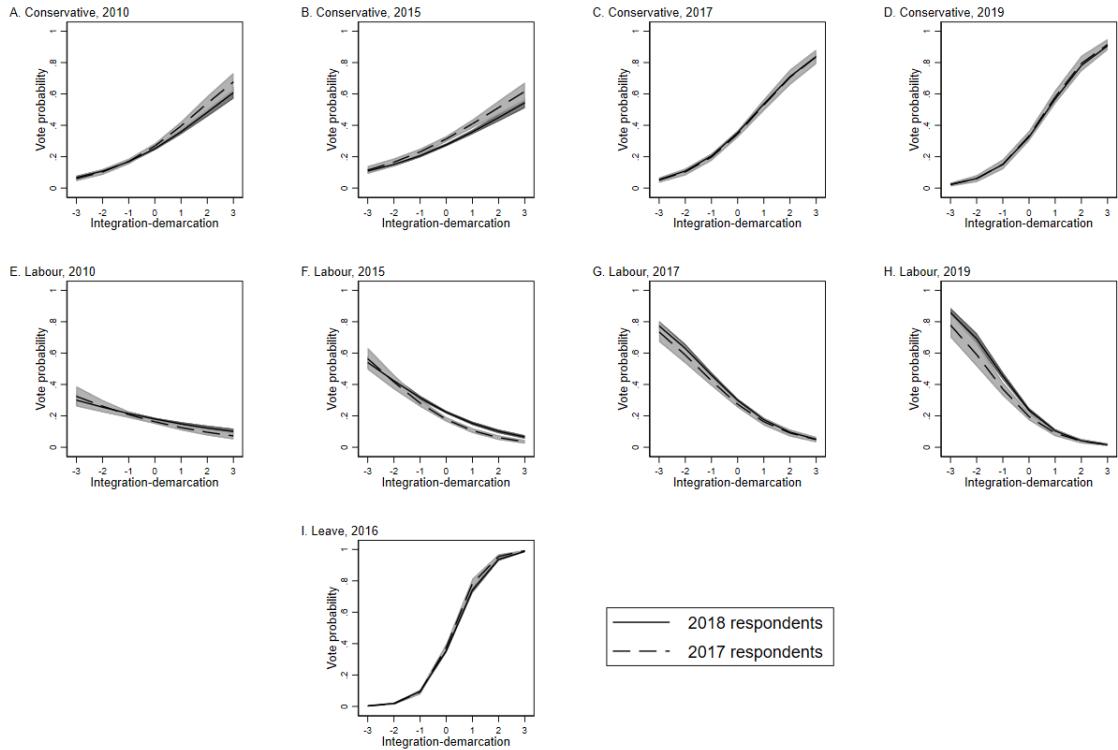
The relationship between integration-demarcation ideology and voting for the Conservatives or Labour does not differ by response group in any of the four elections or the 2016 referendum (see Figure 2).<sup>7</sup> The similarity of the distribution of cultural integration-demarcation ideology (Appendix H) in the two sub-samples suggests that ideological position is relatively static and may not vary greatly across the electoral cycle, consistent with *Hypothesis 1*. At the same time, the relationships between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting in the two sub-samples are very similar, as Figure 2 highlights. Further, as with the logit regression coefficients presented above, the margins plots for general election (and referendum) voting amongst each set of respondents display a consistently growing relationship between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting between 2010 and 2019, with a considerable steepening of the curve between the 2015 and 2017 elections, consistent with *Hypothesis 2b*. This is particularly clear for the two larger parties,

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<sup>7</sup> Coefficients for adjusted and unadjusted models using multiple imputation, by response group, can be found in Appendix B. Adjusted and unadjusted models with multiple imputation, and including an interaction between the cultural integration-demarcation factor and response group, can be found in Appendix C.

Conservative and Labour.<sup>8</sup> The shape of the relationship between integration-demarcation and voting for those two parties comes to resemble the relationship with voting Leave (or the mirror thereof, in the case of Labour) in the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. The consistency of the picture emerging from the regression coefficients (based on adjusted models) and the margins plots (based on unadjusted models) offers additional support for both hypotheses 2a and 2b.

Figure 2. Margin plots for Conservative, Labour, and Leave voting on ideology factor score and response group interaction



### Cross-pressured voters

Given the positive correlation between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and left-right self-placement, cross-pressured voters are of particular interest. These are voters who hold integration-demarcation positions that are not conventionally seen to match their ideological self-placement. Such voters fall into two groups: those who identify as left-wing but favour cultural demarcation, and those who identify as right-wing but favour cultural integration. We identify the first group, left-demarcation voters, by selecting people with a left-right self-placement below the mid-point (4) and

<sup>8</sup> Margins plots for the Liberal Democrats and UKIP or Brexit Party are available in Appendix H.

an integration-demarcation factor score that is greater than half a standard deviation above the mean. We use these cut-off points in order to identify a large enough sub-group, but even with this generous definition the number is small: only 563 respondents from our sample of 14,923 fall into the group. To ensure comparability, we also restrict our analysis to people for whom we have voting data for all four general elections and the 2016 referendum, resulting in a sub-sample of 365 respondents.

Figure 3. General election voting amongst non-cross-pressed and cross-pressed respondents

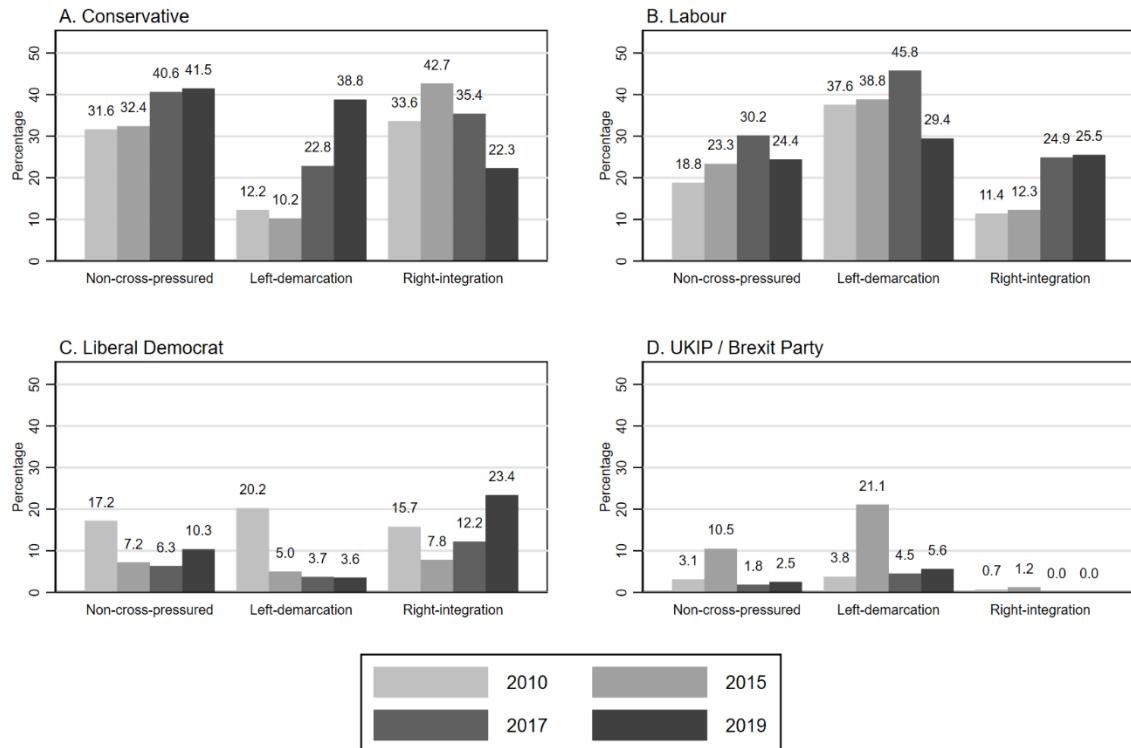


Figure 3 shows the distribution of party votes amongst left-demarcation respondents between 2010 and 2019.<sup>9</sup> Their support for the Conservatives and Labour remained static between 2010 and 2015, with the latter far ahead of the former. The vote for both parties rose sharply in 2017 before switching place in 2019. Meanwhile, the Liberal Democrats saw their support amongst left-demarcation voters collapse in 2015, and not recover thereafter, whilst UKIP only had a brief spike in support in 2015. Turning to right-integration voters, of which 501 have data for all four elections, Figure 3 shows that the Conservatives were the most popular party amongst the group between 2010 and 2017 whilst

<sup>9</sup> Coefficients from unadjusted logit regression models for voting amongst cross-pressed voters can be found in Appendix E.

Labour support doubled in the period and slightly outstripped Conservative support in 2019. Liberal Democrat support halved between 2010 and 2015 before recovering in 2017 and then doubling in 2019, whilst UKIP and the Brexit Party had vanishingly small, or non-existent, support amongst right-integration voters across the period.

Figure 3 indicates the growing importance of cultural integration-demarcation ideology in vote choice between 2010 and 2019. Voters who describe themselves as left-wing but who favour cultural demarcation shifted from Labour towards the Conservatives, particularly after 2016, and abandoned both the Liberal Democrats and UKIP. Voters who describe themselves as right-wing but who favour cultural integration flowed the other way, moving from Conservative support towards Labour and the Liberal Democrats. Amongst both sets of cross-pressured voters, there were notable changes between 2015 and 2017, the two general elections on either side of the 2016 referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. Indeed, the importance of integration-demarcation ideology is reflected in cross-pressured voters' preferences in that electoral event. Left-demarcation voters overwhelming favoured Leave in 2016 whilst right-integration voters were strongly in favour of Remain.<sup>10</sup> Both groups shifted their party preferences in subsequent general elections in a way that reflected their EU referendum voting. This indicates the importance of that electoral event in raising the electoral salience of cultural integration-demarcation ideology.

These patterns amongst both groups of cross-pressured voters attest to an even more dramatic realignment of cross-pressured voters compared to non-cross-pressured voters. Thus, whilst we have seen evidence of the growing salience of cultural integration-demarcation considerations across the electorate, it seems that it had a particular impact on those whose position on that ideological dimension does not match their self-perceived ideological identity.

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<sup>10</sup> See Figure E1 in Appendix E.

## Discussion

Our results show a clear and consistent growth in the salience of cultural integration-demarcation ideology for voting in UK general elections over the last decade. This reflects the changing faces and events of politics in the country during that period. In the 2010 general election, David Cameron attempted to remove the image of the Conservatives as the ‘nasty party’ by taking liberal positions on cultural issues such as LGBTQ rights. Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s government was still reeling from the 2008 economic crisis, and the election was dominated by issues of fiscal competence. In line with the salience of the economy and public spending, and the minimal space between the parties on cultural issues, our data show that voting for the Conservatives or Labour was not strongly related to cultural integration-demarcation. By 2015, the growing salience of such ideological considerations was apparent in UKIP gaining their largest ever vote share at a general election. However, Labour under Ed Miliband fought the election on a platform of challenging the austerity policies of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition and all three parties retained culturally liberal positions. As such, our data again show that voting for the two largest parties remained weakly related to cultural integration-demarcation in 2015.

The high levels of support for UKIP, coupled with battles within the Conservative Party, prompted David Cameron to call the 2016 referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU. Our data show that, quite unlike the 2010 and 2015 general election, the choice over whether to support Leave or Remain was much more closely related to cultural integration-demarcation than to left-right position. Voters’ experiences of casting a ballot with such issues in mind, and parties’ responses to the outcome of the referendum, made cultural integration-demarcation increasingly salient in subsequent elections. This can be seen in the 2017 general election, which was largely fought on the issue of Brexit by Theresa May’s Conservatives, if not Jeremy Corbyn’s Labour. Our data show a growing relationship between cultural integration-demarcation and Conservative vote but a largely unchanged relationship with Labour vote. At the same time, the importance of left-right position increased dramatically for both Labour and Conservatives, reflecting Jeremy Corbyn prominent left-wing economic agenda. This

appears to have solidified the relationship between being right-wing and voting Conservative, rallying some voters to reject the perceived radical positions of Labour. The 2017 election also saw a dramatic increase in the importance of cultural integration-demarcation for voting Liberal Democrat, reflecting their position as the most staunchly anti-Brexit party.

By 2019, with Boris Johnson installed as leader of the Conservative Party and deploying the slogan ‘Get Brexit Done,’ a further increase in the salience of cultural integration-demarcation put it on the same level as left-right position in its relationship with Conservative vote. The relationship between cultural demarcation and Labour vote also grew but, with Jeremy Corbyn still the leader, self-perceived left-right position continued to have a larger relationship with support for the party. The Liberal Democrats also retained their 2017 electoral strategy, emphasising their continued opposition to Brexit, and cultural integration-demarcation continued to be particularly important in support for the party. For the newly minted Brexit Party, as with UKIP in the preceding three general elections, support was also particularly influenced by cultural integration-demarcation. Along with the Conservatives, this meant that the two parties that arguably did the most to keep Brexit on the agenda, and link it to issues such as immigration, increasingly gained their support from people with pro-cultural demarcation positions.

Cross-pressured voters also shifted their support in line with events. A plurality of left-demarcation voters supported Labour from 2010 to 2017, with both Labour and Conservative support amongst the group increasing sharply in 2017. By 2019, the appeal of Boris Johnson and his cultural demarcation positions had cut through and a plurality of left-demarcation voters supported the Conservatives. At the same time, right-integration voters tended to support the Conservative Party from 2010-2017. However, they shifted from a clear plurality voting Conservative in 2015 to an even split with Labour and the Liberal Democrats in 2019. Thus, both groups of cross-pressured voters shifted from supporting parties that aligned with their self-perceived left-right positions to parties that aligned with their cultural demarcation positions.

There are multiple possible reasons for the growing salience of cultural integration-demarcation. In one view, it was driven by events such as the European migrant crisis. This prompted politicians to shift their attention towards cultural concerns related to migration, reacting to changes in public opinion. Politicians might also have been reacting to underlying and long-standing ideological concerns about cultural issues such as immigration, which were made salient by events such as the migrant crisis, rather than responding immediately to events alone. An alternative view points towards the importance of elite political agency in using populism to exploit favourable structural preconditions. Hopkins (2010) argues that the circumstances that promote demarcationist ideology emerge when communities undergo sudden demographic and socioeconomic changes while immigration is actively politicised at a national level. The importance of actors who effect this politicisation points towards the role of strategic political actors in activating ideological considerations, as suggested by William Riker's (1988) theory of heresthetic.

Riker argued that the instability of policy preferences in a multidimensional space provides an ideal opportunity for political manipulation to flourish. Astute politicians can influence outcomes by introducing or activating new ideological dimensions or considerations, which throw decision-making into flux and improve politicians' chances of victory. He dubbed such manipulations the art of 'heresthetic' to sit alongside logic, rhetoric, and grammar (*ibid.*; see also McLean 2002). The activation of the integration-demarcation ideological dimension through the Brexit campaign points towards the possibility of political actors using heresthetic to manipulate the political space to their favour.

This possible role of heresthetic in salienising cultural integration-demarcation ideology over the last decade suggests two fruitful avenues for future research. First, there is a need to expand the scope of questions relating to ideology. Future research should consider the relationship between integration-demarcation and other elements of the cultural dimension of ideology, as well as the economic dimension of ideology, and their distinct or complementary relationships with voting behaviour. Relatedly, the events around Brexit suggest the capacity of politicians to use populist rhetoric to

salienise dimensions of ideology. As such, future research should investigate the relationship between populist beliefs, centring on anti-elite ideas (Mudde 2004), their relationships with cultural and economic ideology, and their relationships with voting behaviour.

The second avenue for future research relates to the need for time-series data covering various components of ideology as well as voting behaviour. The evidence we present is consistent with the idea that the Brexit campaign activated a pre-existing ideological dimension. The similarity of ideological positions in the two response groups indicates little change over the short-to-medium term, but there could have been long-term shifts in ideological positions. It is also possible that the larger magnitude of relationship between integration-demarcation ideology and voting in 2017 and 2019 is explained partly by their proximity to our fieldwork, with respondents simply reporting ideological positions that reflect the current political climate and their recent voting behaviour.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, time-series data with a range of ideological measures is needed to fully account for changes in ideological position and its relationship with voting over the period.

## Conclusion

This article demonstrates that the distribution of cultural integration-demarcation ideology did not vary between two distinct moments the electoral cycle around the 2017 general election, and that the relationship between ideology and voting behaviour also did not vary significantly between those two response groups. Further, we find a consistent increase in the magnitude of the relationship between cultural integration-demarcation ideology and voting across the four general elections between 2010 and 2019, and a particular increase around the time of the Brexit referendum. These trends are particularly strong in relation to voting for the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats, both of

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<sup>11</sup> However, this cannot account for the larger magnitude of relationship between ideology and voting in 2019 than in 2017, given that field work took place within a ten-month period around the latter but at least twenty-one months before the former.

which took clear cut positions on the issue of Brexit. By contrast, the Labour party had a less clear-cut position, and saw a less dramatic increase in the salience of integration-demarcation ideology for its vote. Thus, the increasing magnitude of the relationship applies most clearly to parties that had a strong public position on the prevailing issue relating to that ideology, rather than to all parties equally.

There are multiple plausible explanations for the patterns that emerge from the data. The reorientation of voting towards the cultural integration-demarcation ideological dimension may be driven by politicians reacting to demand-side influences, such as changing attitudes of voters in response to events such as the European migrant crisis. However, the stability of ideological preferences hinted at in the data alongside the marked increase in the salience of the integration-demarcation dimension around the time of Brexit suggest the importance of supply-side political agency. Hence, we argue that our empirical findings are consistent with the view that political elites deployed heresthetic to salienise pre-existing ideological dimensions that they believed would be electorally favourable to them. This fits with the larger increase in the magnitude of the relationship between integration-demarcation ideology and voting for the parties that positioned themselves clearly on the issue of Brexit

The salienisation of cultural integration-demarcation for voting in Great Britain implies that politicians either need to tailor their cultural arguments to prevailing ideological distributions or find ways to salienise other facets of ideology in order to increase their chances of election. Our findings also imply the need for political scientists to account for the role of political agency in (de-)saliensing different ideological considerations among the electorate. Events and ideas beyond politicians' control shape political contexts but, concomitantly, how politicians choose to talk about those things can shape subsequent events, ideas and behaviour. Our results show that politicians in Great Britain inhabit an electoral context that became increasingly concerned with cultural integration-demarcation over the last decade. They had an important hand in shaping that context and now have a role to play in the shape it will take in future.

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## **Ethics Statement**

The survey data analysed in this article were gathered from members of YouGov's online panel of respondents, who opt-in to the panel and give consent for their anonymized data to be analysed. The data were gathered in the course of YouGov's regular political survey activities and made available to the authors for the purpose of the analysis presented in the article. As such, no prior ethics approval was required or sought for this research project.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## **Data Availability Statement**

The data generated for this study, along with the do-files allowing replication of the analyses, are available via [t.b.c].