Understanding Ideological Change in Britain
Corbyn, BREXIT, and the BES Expert Surveys

by

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This paper presents results from the BES Expert Surveys. So far, the survey has been run three times between 2014 and 2017 as a complement to the main BES surveys. It asks experts in British electoral politics – i.e. EPOP members – to rate each of seven major British political parties on various policy and attitudinal scales. The paper has two primary empirical components. Firstly, it analyses the extent to which experts have perceived shifts in party positioning during a tumultuous period in British electoral politics and at which point these shifts may have occurred. In doing so, it concentrates on four major ideological dimensions – overall left-right, economic left-right, libertarian-authoritarian, and communitarian-cosmopolitan. Secondly, it analyses the underlying structure "beneath the surface" of party position taking and identifies how these dimensions are related to one another, and how these relations may have changed in time. The paper aims to make a contribution by documenting party policy shifts and by identifying the underlying ideological structure and its change over time.

1. Introduction: The drama of British electoral politics 2014-17

The past 3 years will surely be remembered as a particularly turbulent period in British politics. [1] Beginning in 2014, the Scottish independence referendum resulted in a narrow defeat for the "Yes" campaign led by the Scottish National Party. However, while the SNP narrowly failed in achieving its ultimate goal of an independent Scotland, the referendum process produced a substantial realignment in the Scottish electorate (Fieldhouse and Prosser 2016). The impact was felt when large numbers of former Labour voters switched to the SNP; a party with a similar policy profile but a very different agenda with regard to the now most crucial dimension of Scottish independence (Mitchell 2015). This shift, first realised at the occasion of the referendum vote, perpetuated itself in the subsequent general elections of 2015 and 2017 leading to an almost complete annihilation of Scottish Labour and a significant UK-wide impact on party competition through the complexities of electoral geography (Fieldhouse and Prosser 2016, Johnston, Pattie and Manley 2017).

The general election of the following year in 2015 saw the minor coalition partner, the Liberal Democrats, punished at the ballot box by many of its former supporters for the effects of entering into a coalition with the Conservatives – a choice that was contrary to the preferences of many who had previously voted for the party (Cutts and Russell 2015). Labour also underperformed most expectations at the 2015 election, in part as a result of the Scottish realignment discussed above, as the Conservatives won a slim (and largely unexpected) parliamentary majority (Bale and Webb 2015). As a result of that electoral defeat, the Labour Party leader Ed Miliband resigned. His successor was decided by a vote of Labour members which was unexpectedly won by Jeremy Corbyn, a veteran MP from the left of the party with labour union and peace movement affinities (Dorey and Denham 2016). On the conservative side, the victorious incumbent Prime Minister David Cameron felt obliged to stick to his pre-electoral pledge to call a referendum on the EU membership. His intention was to win a "remain" majority in order to negotiate more favourable terms of membership for the UK thereafter (Lynch 2015).

The referendum was held in June 2016 and resulted in a narrow win for the "leave" campaign. This was credited in part to significant support for the "leave" campaign from key figures in Cameron's government such as former London mayor Boris Johnson (Goodwin and Heath 2016). Cameron resigned as a result of this defeat and was succeeded by Theresa May, the former home secretary. May has interpreted the referendum result as a mandate to take a hard line in "Brexit" negotiations – with a rigorous course for the country to cut links with the European Union (Barrett 2016). May assumed office in June 2016 based on a majority of 330 conservative MPs who came into office after the 2015 election. In April 2017, she called early elections for June in order to secure a comfortable majority in parliament for her Brexit negotiations with Brussels. This move was less than successful – the Conservative Party lost 12 seats and its governing majority. Despite the party increasing its share of the vote by 5.5% it could only secure a working majority through a parliamentary support agreement with Northern Ireland's DUP. The Labour Party's 2017 election result, gaining 30 seats (and increasing its vote share by 9.5%), confounded the expectations of many who argued that the party's move to the left would result in electoral losses (Bale 2016). Meanwhile UKIP's electoral support largely collapsed and the Liberal Democrats failed to achieve any significant recovery on their 2015 result producing a somewhat unexpected turn back towards two-party electoral politics.

In light of these varied developments the paper aims to address two basic research questions. Firstly: Was there a change in the ideological positioning of UK political parties during this turbulent period? Secondly: Did the underlying structure of ideological dimensions change as a result of such positional moves on the side of the parties? To explore these questions we will utilise data from three waves of the BES Expert Surveys which were run between 2014 and 2017. Our analysis uses Structural

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Equation Modelling to explore the relationship between four major ideological dimensions in UK party competition which were all salient during the period described above; overall left-right position, economic left-right, libertarian-authoritarian, and communitarian – cosmopolitan. The primary substantive findings from the analysis highlight the decreasing left-right polarisation of UK party competition and show a general 'cosmopolitan' shift among all the non-right-wing parties after the EU referendum. Our findings also point to changes in the relationship between the underlying ideological dimensions in UK party competition which may relate to longer term trends in the course of which the impact of economic components is declining while the impact of cultural components is increasing.

2. Structuring the space of party competition and voting behaviour

There is some scholarly disagreement about how the dimensional space of party competition should be conceived. Starting from the seminal account of Anthony Downs in 1957, the classic approach has been to consider party competition in uni-dimensional terms. According to Downs, party competition unfolds on the left-right dimension: parties place themselves where they can gain the most support, and each individual voter will then choose the party that is closest to his/her own position on the left-right dimension. This basic theorem is known as the smallest-distance approach to party competition and voting behaviour. This version of the story is supported by the understanding that the left-right schema is an "imperialistic political code" (Fuchs and Klingemann 1990) which adapts to emerging socio-political conflicts by absorbing, slowly but efficiently, political parties' positions on these conflicts in its meaning content. This is consistent with the insightful analysis of Downs who assumes: "…that each party takes stands on many issues, and that each stand can be assigned a position on our left-right scale. Then the party's net position on this scale is a weighted average of the positions of all the particular policies it upholds." (Downs 1957: 132) As a result of this, the underlying meaning of the left-right schema is changing over time (as socio-political conflicts are evolving) and differs somewhat between countries (as national conflict structures differ to some degree).

There are of course alternative views of the structure of party competition and voting behaviour. Most of them assume a two-dimensional ideological or policy space. We briefly refer to two of the more prominent among them. One juxtaposes an economic left-right dimension with a libertarian-authoritarian dimension, usually assuming that the two are independent from one another (i.e. orthogonal). A well-known exposition of this view for the British context is from Evans et al. (1996); a more recent comparative analysis is from van der Brug et al. (2013). There are variants of that view, currently perhaps the best known is the opposition between the economic left-right dimension and a GAL-TAN dimension (the acronym standing for green-alternative- libertarian vs. traditional-authoritarian-nationalist). Again, these two dimensions are understood to be independent from one another and to structure together the political space. The GAL-TAN dimension is typically measured by indicators derived from the Chapel Hill expert surveys on party positions. It has first been proposed by Hooghe et al. (2002); a more recent piece summarising the empirical evidence and comparing it with other data is from Bakker et al. (2015).

Another alternative to the uni-dimensional view juxtaposes the traditional left-right dimension with a European integration dimension which ranges from pro-independence (euro-sceptic) to pro-integration (euro-positive) positions. A first prominent expose of this was offered by Hix and Lord (1997) who observed that euro-sceptic parties tend to place themselves at one of the poles of the left-right dimension while euro-positive parties are usually found in the centre of it. This "horseshoe" pattern of party positions and voter orientations in the political space has been a recurring finding of scholarly work. It has been refined recently by van Elsas et al. (2016) who reaffirm the general pattern but show that the origins of Euro-scepticism among citizens on the far left and the far right are fundamentally different.

Kriesi et al. (2006, 2008) add a social-structural interpretation to this conflict dimension over European integration and relate it to factors such as globalisation and the increasing exposure to economic risk in the global economy, and cosmopolitanism including attitudes to foreigners and immigration. They call this new structural division the integration-demarcation cleavage. For the British context, Evans already in 1999 proposes a similar structure when he observes that "Europe" – that is: conflicts over EU membership and policies – might be developing into a new electoral cleavage. More recent work by Wheatley (2015, 2016) seems to support and even accentuate that view. Based on English VAA data, he identifies a communitarian-cosmopolitan ideological dimension as the first and most important structure underlying the policy preferences of citizens. Various EU related issues are central here, but attitudes towards foreigners and immigration are important additions. The second dimension that Wheatley identifies is marked by economic left-right issues. A third and weaker dimension which he ignores in the following consists of libertarian-authoritarian issues. Our paper will contribute to this literature by using the BES expert surveys in order to explore the changing relationships between the key ideological dimensions discussed here, in response to recent major electoral events.

3. Strategy of Analysis and Expectations

We have seen that past research in the field concentrates on the identification of ideological dimensions. These dimensions are the global left-right dimension, an economic left-right dimension, a libertarian-authoritarian dimension (with its GAL-TAN variant), and a communitarian-cosmopolitan dimension (which has – in Europe – the conflict about European integration as its core). Pairs of these dimensions are typically understood to structure, collectively and independently, the policy space of single countries or in a European comparative perspective – if the focus is not on of one them alone as in the case of the global left-right dimension as devised by Downs (1957) and specified empirically in later work (see e.g. Benoit and Laver, 2006; Schmitt and van der Eijk, 2009; van der Eijk and Schmitt, 2010).

In the following we will build on these important insights of earlier research but proceed in a somewhat different direction. It is our aim in the current paper to model the interrelationship of the four dimensions of policy oppositions and ideological conflict that were identified by earlier scholarship and identify the evolution of these interrelationships over one of the most turbulent phases of European post-war electoral history: Electoral politics in the United Kingdom during the period between 2014 and 2017. Our basic structural equation model is specified in Figure 1 below. We simply assume that political parties' positions on the overall left-right dimension is co-determined by their economic left-right position and their libertarian- authoritarian position (e.g. Inglehart 1984; Mair 2007; with reference to German party competition also Schmitt 1987[2]). We also assume that political parties' position on the communitarian-cosmopolitan dimension is chiefly determined by their libertarian- authoritarian position (as implied by Hooghe et al. 2002). Given the vast amount of comparative empirical evidence on the independence of the left-right and the integration dimension (see Hix et al. 2006 for many), we do not specify a path between communitarian-cosmopolitan positions and overall left-right positions (although this is also suggested by Hooghe et al. 2002 and later by Kriesi et al. 2006). We appreciate that other relationships may emerge from our data analysis, but drawing from the literature we settled on the following basic model assumptions: economic left-right together with libertarian-authoritarian values determine overall left-right positions, and libertarian-authoritarian values determine, to some degree, communitarian-cosmopolitan orientations.

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[2] Schmitt argues there that the common "centrist" placement of the German liberal party – the FDP – on the left-right dimension can only be understood as some sort of average of two "extremist" positions – the one on the economic left-right scale near the right pole and the other on the libertarian-authoritarian scale near the libertarian pole.

Figure 1

**A basic model
of political parties' positions on
four inter-related ideological dimensions**

economic
left-right
position

→

overall
left-right
position

libertarian -
authoritarian
position

→

communitarian-
cosmopolitan
position
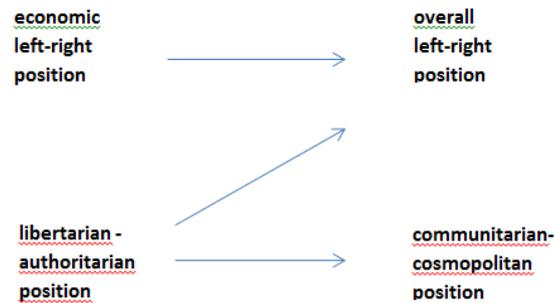
We will then try to identify the evolution of the interrelationship of these policy and ideological dimensions over time. Based on the findings that the Brexit vote in June 2016 highlighted, and potentially contributed to, a deep and lasting divide of British society between the well and not so well educated, between old and young generations, and between urban and rural residents (Goodwin and Heath 2016], we expect that the classical economic class divide that has been so consequential for British politics has lost some of its importance and structuring power. On the other hand, we expect that libertarian-authoritarian views have become more powerful predictors in particular with regard to communitarian-cosmopolitan positions.

4. Data and Methods

4.1. Data

Our database is the series of three BES expert surveys conducted in the spring of 2014, 2015, and 2017. The primary purpose of these surveys was to provide "objective" information on the positions of political on issue and policy questions that were also asked, in identical form, in the mass surveys of the British election Studies 2015 and 2017. Data are available from the BES website.[3] (http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-objects/expert-survey-data/). For each survey our universe was the membership of EPOP (the acronym stands for **e**lections, **p**ublic **o**pinion, and **p**arties), a UK-based professional organisation specialising in the analysis of electoral politics broadly defined. Its members are typically academics, more than four in five of those answering our surveys hold a PhD in one of the social sciences. With the political support of the EPOP leadership and the technical support of the School of Social Sciences of the University of Manchester, these expert surveys were conducted online. All EPOP members that were included in the mailing list at the time were invited to participate in the survey by filling in our questionnaire. Precise response rates are hard to determine as the membership of EPOP at the time of each survey is hard to establish. It is estimated at around 30% for the first two surveys, and half of that for the third. Some details of the data collection are reported in Table 1; further details can be found in the relevant survey codebooks on the BES website.

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[3] http://www.britishelectionstudy.com/data-objects/expert-survey-data/.

Table 1

Some details on the BES expert surveys 2014-2017

	2014	2015	2017
first Q received	17.4.	23.4.	16.5.
last Q received	9.5.	4.5.	30.5.
# respondents	93	95	41
% of which holding a PhD[a]	na[b]	86	85

a=PhD in Political Science or related discipline; b=not ascertained.

We believe that these numbers compare well to similar expert surveys in the field. First, we want to stress that close to 100 valid responses in our first two surveys[4] is a solid base of information. Benoit and Laver for their 47 nation survey report an average number of 32 respondents per country (c.f. Benoit and Laver 2006, Table A1). However, we also need to acknowledge that our third survey of 2017 came out with "only" 41 respondents which is less than half of the previous size – but still somewhat ahead of the average of 32 respondents in the Benoit/Laver survey.[5] We are confident therefore that even this somewhat lower number of respondents to our third survey provides a sufficiently solid base of expert information on parties' positions on the relevant policy dimensions in that year.

The actual expert survey questions which we analyse in the present paper are only four: the global left-right dimension[6], the libertarian-authoritarian dimension[7], the communitarian-cosmopolitan dimension[8], and the economic left-right dimension[9].

4.2. Methods

We made two key decision in order to best identify the structure of party competition in the British party system at three different points in time. The first concerns the structure of the expert survey

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[4] for many of our questions as not all respondents answered all the questions put. Answering these questions obviously becomes more difficult for the smaller parties and here in particular those who restrict their activities to one of the devolved regions (like the SNP in Scotland and the Playd Cymru in Wales).

[5] We can think of three possible reasons for this decline in responses. One is a certain fatigue on the side of the EPOP experts to answer our questions – some might not have appreciated our reasoning behind these repeated surveys. A second is the closeness of this survey to the 2017 election (which was held on Thursday, June 8 and thus just one week away from the last response we recorded) – people specialising in electoral politics might have been busy with other things at that time. A third possible reason we can think of is more technical – due to the introduction of more restrictive data protection protocols we were unable to get direct access to the EPOP mailing list in 2017 as we had in the previous waves. This meant that our request e-mail went out from a generic mailing list as opposed to being tailored by us for the purpose. Another effect of this was the fact that we were unable to send targeted follow-up e-mails.

[6] The expert survey question is: "Please place Labour on a scale where 0 is left and 10 is right. Select at least 1 and no more than 1 [box]." Eleven boxes were provided which run from 0 to 10, plus a box each for no position and don't know. This question was repeated for the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, etc.

[7] The expert survey question is: "Please place Labour on a scale where 0 is Libertarian and 10 is Authoritarian. Select at least 1 and no more than 1 [box]." Eleven boxes were provided which run from 0 to 10, plus a box each for no position and don't know. This question was repeated for the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, etc.

[8] The expert survey question is: "Please place Labour on a scale where 0 means 'European integration has already gone too far' and 10 means 'European integration should be pushed further.' Select at least 1 and no more than 1 [box]." Eleven boxes were provided which run from 0 to 10, plus a box each for no position and don't know. This question was repeated for the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, etc.

[9] The expert survey question is: "Please place Labour on a scale where 0 means 'Government should try to make people's income more equal' and 10 means 'Government should be less concerned about equal incomes.' Select at least 1 and no more than 1 [box]." Eleven boxes were provided which run from 0 to 10, plus a box each for no position and don't know. This question was repeated for the Conservatives, the Liberal Democrats, etc.

data that we analysed, and the second the statistical model that we applied in the subsequent analysis.

With regard to the first decision, we choose to construct a stacked data matrix in order to analyse the position of all (relevant) parties of the party system rather than that of only one party – say Labour. Proceeding this way, we were able to determine the covariation of *generic* party positions on the global left-right dimension, the economic left-right dimension, the libertarian-authoritarian dimension and the communitarian-cosmopolitan dimension. We have tried to visualise this procedure in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Visualisation of the structure of a stacked data matrix

(hypothetical data for left-right placements of three parties by 90 respondents)

Vars. Cases	LR party1	LR party2	LR party3	LR party
1	7	3	2	7
2	8	4	1	8
3	7	4	1	7
.	.	.	.	.
88	6	3	2	6
89	7	2	2	7
90	5	4	1	5
1	7	3	2	3
2	8	4	1	4
3	7	4	1	4
.	.	.	.	.
88	6	3	2	3
89	7	2	2	2
90	5	4	1	4
1	7	3	2	2
2	8	4	1	1
3	7	4	1	1
.	.	.	.	.
88	6	3	2	2
89	7	2	2	2
90	5	4	1	1

The analysis of such stacked data matrices has some tradition in the study of electoral politics, in particular with regard to multivariate analyses of party preference or party choice as a dependent variable (see e.g. van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; van der Eijk et al. 2006; van der Brug et al. 2007; Schmitt 2001, 2005, 2013; Schmitt and Scheuer, 2012; Önudóttir et al. 2017). The unit of analysis in our study, then, is not the individual respondent but his or her party placements on the four dimensions whose covariation we intend to analyse. Proceeding this way we multiply our number of cases by the number of parties the position of which is evaluated.[10] This number for the BES expert surveys two and three is seven as we ask our respondents to place seven parties – Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, UKIP, Greens, SNP and Play Cymru – on the scales provided. It is six in the first survey as we did not yet include the Greens in our list of parties at that time.[11]

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[10] A welcome side effect here is that a party which is not or cannot be placed by a respondent on one of our four dimensions does not contribute to the overall analysis of co-variance.

[11] The fact that we are analysing six party stacks for the first survey and seven for the two following ones does not affect our findings though. We find roughly the same if we exclude the Greens from all three analyses of stacked data.

In regard to the second decision related to which analytical approach to take we use a structural equation modelling approach. We analyse observed variables only. The software we use is EQS (see Bentler 2006). All analyses that are reported in the following were successfully replicated with Mplus (see Muthen and Muthen 2010).

5. Findings

5.1. What happened on the surface: stability and change in political parties' positioning

We start our data analysis by an inspection of party-specific distributions of our variables of interest. Means and standard deviations are reported for each party for each of our three surveys in Table A1 in an appendix to this paper. What we see here is the following:

- **Conservatives:** This large government party is the right-wing, communitarian (Euro-sceptic) and increasingly authoritarian central political force in the country. Our expert surveys do not find much change with regard to these positions – except perhaps that the party moves somewhat more to the authoritarian pole between the 2015 and the 2017 survey.

- **Labour:** In 2017, the Labour Party is amore distinct left of centre alternative to the Conservatives than it was previously. Labour went to the left after the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the new party leader in September 2015, both in terms of the economic meaning of that dimension and also, if less pronounced, with regard to libertarian-authoritarian component of it. It also turned modestly but continuously more cosmopolitan (i.e. EU positive) during the period which we cover.

- **Liberal Democrats:** The LibDems are centrist with regard to the overall left-right and the economic left-right dimensions (although the expert judgements are rather dispersed with regard to the latter); and they are clearly on the libertarian and the cosmopolitan side. In marked contrast to the Conservatives, the positions of the Liberal Democrats changed considerably between our three surveys. They became more left-wing overall, but most significantly more libertarian and cosmopolitan (EU positive) after their electoral defeat in 2015 and the subsequent dissolution of the government coalition with the Conservatives.

- **UKIP**: The United Kingdom Independence Party is consistently positioned at the most extreme end of the communitarian scale. It is also on the far right end of the other respective dimensions, although somewhat less so with regard to the economic left-right scale. Overall, there is clear stability in the positioning of **UKIP**, with probably one element of change: this party in the eyes of our experts became continuously more authoritarian between 2014 and 2017.

- **The Greens:** This party is far left both in an overall sense as well as in economic terms, and it is as libertarian and cosmopolitan as the LibDems are. We did not include the Greens in the 2014 survey, so we can only comment on developments between 2015 and 2017. Over that period, the Greens became even more cosmopolitan (EU positive), probably as a result of the Brexit verdict from June 2016. They also turned more libertarian during that time.

- **SNP:** The Scottish National Party, the governing party in Scotland, is perceived as a moderately left party both with regard to the global left-right scale and in terms of economic left-right placements. It is moderately libertarian and cosmopolitan (i.e. EU-positive). These are rather stable features: the only change between 2014 and 2017 that we observe in our data is a continuous shift towards more cosmopolitan orientations after – and probably as a result of – the (in their eyes: failed) referendum on Scottish independence of September 2014.

- **Plaid Cymru:** Plaid Cymru shares much of the SNP characteristics, except perhaps that the move towards a more cosmopolitan position is somewhat later – after and probably as a result of the Brexit decision from June 2016.

Overall, we see here in 2017 the contours of a rather polarised party system – not much remained it seems from the earlier left-right convergence of the two main parties during the New Labour period (Green 2007, Green and Hobolt 2008, Evans and Tilley 2013) after Corbyn assumed the Labour leadership in 2016. In addition, we see that all parties which opposed (in the case of Labour one must say: more or less unanimously) a Brexit decision – i.e. all except the Conservatives and UKIP – have turned more cosmopolitan when the referendum result turned out to be a verdict for leaving the European Union.

5.2. What happened beneath the surface: stability and change in the covariance of ideological dimensions

As interesting as these descriptive results are, they may simply be a result of more fundamental shifts occurring beneath the surface. In order to identify the inter-relationship of these ideological dimensions, we move on to the analysis of the covariance structure of them and how this structure evolves over time. A first task here is to fit the parsimonious model that could be deduced from the theoretical reasoning and empirical findings of previous scholarship to the expert survey data which we collected in the spring of 2014, 2015 and 2017. Based on least squares regression analyses and multiple Lagrange multiplier and Wald tests, we find that indeed all four dimensions are related to one another.[12] However, the strength of the respective effects (resp. co-variation) differs tremendously.
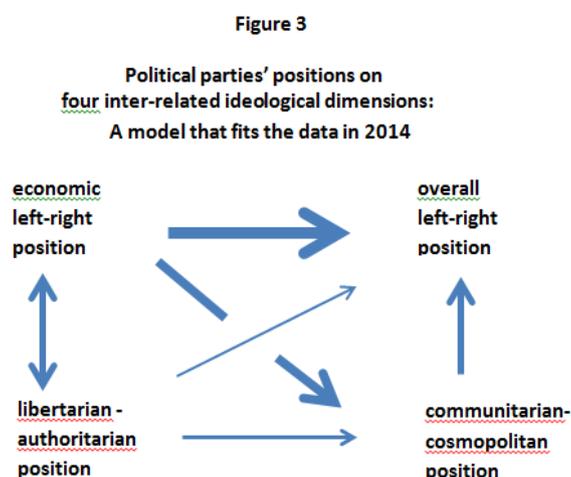
Before we address these differences in effect sizes, we need to indicate which effects we were led to specify in addition to the three initially foreseen (i.e. economic left-right on global left-right, and libertarian-authoritarian on both global left-right and communitarian-cosmopolitan). The first additional co-variation that we found is between the economic left-right dimension and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension. Here we could not think of a directed effect and decided to model this as a correlation. The second significant additional co-variation we found is between economic left-right and the communitarian-cosmopolitan dimension. The theoretical reasoning in support of this finding is that the losers of globalisation (whose natural interest is in re-distribution of wealth in society by the nation state which however is gradually losing its respective functionality due to globalisation) are those who oppose cosmopolitan views like support for European integration. This was first forcefully formulated by Kriesi et al. (2006; see also Hooghe and Marks 2009; Kriesi et al. 2012; Hutter et al. 2016). Following them we decided that this effect should emerge in economic left-right positions and go to communitarian-cosmopolitan positions. We note in passing that this view contradicts two decades of previous scholarship – referred to earlier – which was finding again and again that the two dimensions are independent from one another. A final path that was identified by our test statistics runs between communitarian-cosmopolitan and global left-

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[12] The value of Bentler's and Bonnett's normed fit index is 1 for all the models that we report in the following.

right positions. How the causal flow of this should be modelled depends of course on the research question which is pursued. However, given the overarching role of the global left-right dimension in the organisation of policy and ideological orientations, we directed this effect from communitarian-cosmopolitan to global left-right positions.

Figure 3 gives a rough visual impression of the relationship of our four constructs in 2014, at the beginning of our series of three expert surveys: the more solid the arrows are, the more important are the effects which they represent (see Table 2 for exact effect sizes). What we see is the over-whelming importance of the economic left-right dimension in the determination of overall left-right positions and also what communitarian-cosmopolitan positions mean (communitarians tend to be against redistribution). By contrast, the direct effect of libertarian-authoritarian positions on both global left-right and communitarian-cosmopolitan positions is only limited. Communitarian-cosmopolitan positions contribute to global left-right positions (communitarian party placements tend to be right-wing party placements – this matches a pan-European trend, see Schmitt 2017). Last but not least, economic left-right and libertarian-authoritarian positions are solidly correlated.

Figure 3

**Political parties' positions on
four inter-related ideological dimensions:
A model that fits the data in 2014**

We have run identical structural equation models for each expert survey, so that we can directly compare effect sizes and thereby identify changes in the meaning components of our two dependent constructs. The most important changes that we observe are a certain devaluation of the impor-tance of the economic left-right dimension for global left-right position taking. And what economic left-right placements lose in importance is gained by the libertarian-authoritarian dimension. These linear trends in effect sizes over time show themselves most clearly in the total effects panel of Table 2. Even more impressive than this are the changes which we observe in the determination of communitarian-cosmopolitan positions. The effect of economic left-right party placements on communitarian-cosmopolitan positions almost completely disappears over the course of our three surveys while the impact of libertarian-authoritarian positions increases to an impressive size (from -.228 in 2014 to -.645 in 2017; see Table 2).

The direct effect of communitarian-cosmopolitan positions on party placements on the global left-right dimension is somewhat more erratic; it reaches a climax in 2015 (some time ahead of the Westminster election of that year) in order to shrink to shear irrelevance in 2017 (less than a year after the Brexit referendum).

In order to make sense of the causes and consequences of these 'underground' developments we start out tentative interpretation by observing that Corbyn and Brexit – perhaps Brexit more than

Corbyn – have transformed the salience of issues and divisions in British politics quite profoundly in this period. Our results seem to indicate that political competition in Britain is no longer as dominated by the economy and classic questions of class conflict as it was. Cultural matters that belong to the libertarian-authoritarian category of issues have clearly gained in importance. It is in that regard that we plan to substantiate the content (and its evolution) of the libertarian-authoritarian dimension in a follow up analysis.

Table 2

**Changing Roots of Global Left-Right and
Communitarian-Cosmopolitan Positions**

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DECOMPOSITION OF EFFECTS WITH STANDARDIZED VALUES: PARAMETER TOTAL EFFECTS

Global Left-Right positions dependent

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2014      GLR = -.274*CC  + .144*LA  + .746*ELR  +  .540 E-GLR  -  .207 E-CC
2015      GLR = -.415*CC  + .211*LA  + .686*ELR  +  .508 E-GLR  -  .322 E-CC
2017      GLR = -.172*CC  + .384*LA  + .611*ELR  +  .443 E-GLR  -  .118 E-CC
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Communitarian-Cosmopolitan positions dependent

```
2014      CC = -.228*LA  - .528*ELR  + .756 E-CC
2015      CC = -.302*LA  - .438*ELR  + .777 E-CC
2017      CC = -.645*LA  - .130*ELR  + .686 E-CC
```

STANDARDIZED SOLUTION: PARAMETER DIRECT EFFECTS

Global Left-Right positions dependent

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2014      GLR = -.274*CC  +.082*LA  +.601*ELR  +.540 E            R2=       .708
2015      GLR = -.415*CC  +.086*LA  +.504*ELR  +.508 E            R2=       .742
2017      GLR = -.172*CC  +.273*LA  +.589*ELR  +.443 E            R2=       .804
```

Communitarian-Cosmopolitan positions dependent

```
2014      CC = -.228*LA  - .528*ELR  + .756 E                    R2=       .429
2015      CC = -.302*LA  - .438*ELR  + .777 E                    R2=       .397
2017      CC = -.645*LA  - .130*ELR  + .686 E                    R2=       .530
```

COVARIANCES

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2014      LA*ELR                                                           .407.
2015      LA*ELR                                                           .429
2017      LA*ELR                                                           .573
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Legend: GLR=Global Left-Right; CC=Communitarian-Cosmopolitan; LA=Libertarian-Authoritarian;
ELR=Economic Left-Right: E-=Error.

6. Summary **and Perspectives**

British electoral politics experienced significant events and, in part, dramatic shocks over the past few years. The most significant among them are probably the election of Jeremy Corbyn as the new Labour leader in September 2015 and the outcome of the Brexit referendum in June 2016 as a result of which Britain will leave the EU. This constitutes the background against which we pursued two very basic research questions. First, did these developments lead to a readjustment of ideological

positions of political parties? And secondly, did the meaning components of ideological dimensions change as a result of such positional moves?

After reviewing previous scholarship, both British and comparative, related to the spatial structure of party competition, we moved on to map the policy and ideological changes of British parties over the course of the past few years as they were seen by those EPOP experts who answered the BES expert surveys. We realise that part of our descriptive results are trivial – everybody knows that Labour moved to the left after September 2015 when Jeremy Corbyn was elected and therefore the British party system today is much more polarised than it was in the era of New Labour. However, other aspects of political parties' policy adjustments are less widely known. We found, for instance, that the Liberals moved towards the left, the libertarian and the cosmopolitan poles after their electoral defeat in 2015 and the termination of their government coalition with the Conservatives. More generally, all political parties except UKIP and the Conservatives moved in the cosmopolitan direction most likely in response to the Brexit vote in 2016.

The core of our analysis, however, was aimed at examining developments "below the surface" of observable shifts in party positions. Here we were interested in possible changes in the meaning the components – or roots – of the overall left-right and communitarian-cosmopolitan dimensions of ideology. What we found is that the far reaching impact of economic left-right orientations on these ideological constructs has been shrinking somewhat – more for the communitarian-cosmopolitan dimension than for global left-right – and that the contribution of libertarian-authoritarian positions is significantly increasing – more so for communitarian-cosmopolitan than for global left-right positions. This might signify that the predominant role of the class cleavage in British politics is slowly eroding and being gradually replaced by another structural cleavage in British society which divides the young, urban and well-educated from the old, rural and more poorly educated segments of society.[13]

We need to be careful here in order to not over-interpret the insights we gained from three expert surveys which were conducted in a period of not more than three years. But then, as we have hinted at earlier, these were rather turbulent three years in which a number of dramatic events might have accelerated trends that were slowly evolving in British politics already for a long time. Future research will need to pay close attention to the further development of ideological changes that we have identified in the current paper.

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[13] This must not mean the end of class politics in Britain of course. It might rather reflect a development in **which the class cleavage is evolving to incorporate these newly accentuated and salient structural divisions** rather than being replaced by them.

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Appendix

Table A1

Party positions as perceived by EPOP experts: 2014 – 2017
(figures are means and standard deviations)

Overall left-right scale: 11 point from 0 (left) – to 10 (right); libertarian-authoritarian scale: 11 point from 0 (libertarian) – to 10 (authoritarian); communitarian-cosmopolitan scale: 11 point from 0 (EU integration gone too far) – to 10 (should be pushed further (10) ; economic left-right scale: 11 point from 0 (gov't should do more to redistribute wealth) – to 10 (~less).

Conservatives		2014	2015	2017
Overall	mean	7.4	7.4	7.5
left-right	sd	0.9	0.8	0.8
Libertarian/		6.4	6.3	7.5
authoritarian		1.7	1.8	1.1
Communitarian-		2.3	2.5	2.4
cosmopolitan		1.5	1.2	1.6
Economic		7.8	7.5	8.0
left-right		1.6	1.6	1.4
Labour				
Overall		4.1	3.9	2.4
left-right		0.9	0.9	0.9
Libertarian/		5.0	5.0	4.4
authoritarian		1.7	1.6	1.4
Communitarian-		5.2	5.4	5.6
cosmopolitan		1.1	1.1	1.5
Economic		4.1	3.9	2.7
left-right		1.2	1.4	1.7
Liberal-Democrats				
Overall		5.5	5.2	4.6
left-right		1.1	1.0	1.2
Libertarian/		3.7	3.6	2.8
authoritarian		1.8	1.4	1.1
Communitarian-		6.7	6.9	8.4
cosmopolitan		1.5	1.4	1.6
Economic		5.5	5.2	5.0
left-right		1.7	1.5	1.8

UKIP

Overall left-right	8.8 0.7	8.7 0.9	8.8 1.3
Libertarian/ authoritarian	6.9 2.6	7.4 2.3	8.7 1.3
Communitarian-cosmopolitan	0.7 2.3	0.3 1.1	0.4 1.7
Economic left-right	7.9 2.0	7.5 1.9	7.5 2.2

Greens

Overall left-right	na	1.9 0.9	1.9 1.0
Libertarian/ authoritarian	na	3.5 2.5	2.5 1.9
Communitarian-cosmopolitan	na	6.3 1.7	7.6 1.0
Economic left-right	na	2.4 2.1	2.2 1.7

SNP

Overall left-right	3.5 1.5	3.0 1.1	4.0 1.1
Libertarian/ authoritarian	4.9 1.8	4.9 1.8	4.7 1.5
Communitarian-cosmopolitan	6.2 1.5	6.6 1.4	7.7 2.0
Economic left-right	3.5 1.5	3.5 1.7	4.2 1.5

Plaid Cymru

Overall left-right	3.3 1.2	2.8 0.9	3.6 1.4
Libertarian/ authoritarian	4.4 1.6	4.4 1.7	4.5 1.2
Communitarian-cosmopolitan	6.3 1.2	6.2 1.6	7.1 1.9
Economic left-right	3.5 1.4	3.3 1.7	3.8 1.4

Legend: mean = arithmetic mean; sd = standard deviation; na = not ascertained.