

Dr. Lea Kaftan

leakaftan.eu

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Academic positions

09/23-today	GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences Postdoctoral/senior researcher, Department: Survey Data Curation (Prof. Alexia Katsanidou)
10/21-08/23	Chair for International Political Studies, Witten/Herdecke University Postdoctoral researcher, DANGER project (Prof. Nils-Christian Bormann, PhD)
10/18-09/21	Cologne Center for Comparative Politics, University of Cologne Doctoral Researcher, Rebels in Representative Democracy (Prof. Sven-Oliver Proksch, PhD)
10/13-12/18	Cologne Center for Comparative Politics, University of Cologne Student assistant, Decentralization and Electoral Geographies (Prof. Dr. André Kaiser)
03/16-12/16	Chair for Comparative Politics, University of Duisburg-Essen Student assistant (Prof. Dr. Susanne Pickel)
04/15-07/15	Manifesto Project, Berlin Social Science Center Student assistant (Dr. Andrea Volkens)

Education

10/17-03/22	University of Cologne , Dr. rer. pol. • Dissertation: “Who cares about democracy? And why? European Citizens’ and Parties’ Attitudes towards Liberal Democracy”
01/17-06/17	Science Po, Strasbourg , Erasmus exchange semester
10/15-09/17	University of Duisburg-Essen , Master of Arts: Theory and Comparative Studies of Political Systems in Transition
06/12-03/13	Universidad National de La Plata, Argentina , Semester abroad
04/11-05/15	University of Cologne , Bachelor of Science: Social Sciences

Peer reviewed publications

- Kaftan, Lea.** forthcoming. "How Authoritarianism, Populism, and Radicalism Shape Citizens' Support for Liberal Democracy in Western Europe". *Political Studies*.
- Duell, Dominik, **Lea Kaftan**, Sven-Oliver Proksch, Jonathan Slapin, and Christopher Wratil. 2026. "Voices of the Party Base. How Supporters Want Established Parties to Respond to New Parties" *European Journal of Political Research*, online first.
- Kaftan, Lea**, and Nils-Christian Bormann. 2025. "Polarization, fragmentation, and democratic deconsolidation in interwar Europe". *Democratization*, online first.
- Kaftan, Lea**, Bruno Della Sala, Olga Jerjomina, Stefan Stojkovic, Edoardo Viganò, and Nils-Christian Bormann. 2025. "Introducing the Archive of Interwar Europe Election Data & Assemblies (AIEEDA)". *scientific data* 12(630): 1–12.
- Röth, Leonce, Daniel Saldivia Gonzatti, **Lea Kaftan**, and André Kaiser. 2025. "Studying multi-level systems with cross-level data". *British Journal of Political Science*, online first.
- Kaftan, Lea**, and Theresa Gessler. 2025. "The Democracy I Like. Perceptions of Democracy and Opposition to Democratic Backsliding". *Government & Opposition*, 60(2): 358–381.
- Gessler, Theresa, and **Lea Kaftan**. 2025. "Communicating democratic subversions to citizens". *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 35(1), 89–101.
- Bormann, Nils-Christian, and **Lea Kaftan**. 2024. "Introducing the Democratic Electoral Systems data, 1919–1925. [version 2; peer review: 2 approved, 1 approved with reservations]". *Open Research Europe*.
- Duell, Dominik, **Lea Kaftan**, Sven-Oliver Proksch, Jonathan Slapin, and Christopher Wratil. 2024. "The rhyme and reason of rebel support: exploring European voters' attitudes toward dissident MPs." *Political Science Research and Methods*, 12(2), 301–317.
- Kaftan, Lea**. 2024. "Party Competition over Democracy". *Politics and Governance*. 12, 1–17.
- Kaftan, Lea**. 2024. "Lip Service to Liberal Democracy in Western Europe?". *European Political Science Review*, 16(4), 521–538.
- Duell, Dominik, **Lea Kaftan**, Sven-Oliver Proksch, Jonathan Slapin, and Christopher Wratil. 2023. "Communicating the Rift: Voter Perceptions of Intra-Party Dissent in Parliaments". *Journal of Politics*, 85(1), 76–91.
- Mohamad-Klotzbach, Christoph, Susanne Pickel, Lucas Adler, **Lea Kaftan**, and Lisa Vogt. 2017. "Schwerpunkte der Vergleichenden Politikwissenschaft in Deutschland (2007–2017)". *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, 11(4), 557–574.
- Volkens, Andrea, Cristina Ares, Radostina Bratanova, and **Lea Kaftan**. 2015. "Scope, Range, and Extent of Manifesto Project Data Usage: A New Research Tool for Manifesto Project Database's Users". *Revista de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociológicas*, 14(2), 217–232.

Other publications

- Kaftan, Lea. 2025. "Lauth, Hans-Joachim und Simon Bein. 2025. Vergleichende Demokratieforschung". *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, online first.
- Röth, Leonce, **Lea Kaftan**, and Daniel Saldivia Gonzatti. 2024. "Optimized Dictionaries: A Semi-Automated Workflow of Concept Identification in Text-Data". *Social Science Open Access Repository*, <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-91666-3>.
- Volkens, Andrea, Cristina Ares, Radostina Bratanova, and **Lea Kaftan**. 2015. *Scope, Range, and Extent of Manifesto Project Data Usage: A Survey of Publications in Eight High-Impact Journals. Handbook for Data Users and Coders*. Version I. Berlin: WZB Berlin Social Science Center.

Invited talks

- Kaftan, Lea. 2025. "Beyond Left and Right. How Populism and Authoritarianism Shape Voter Behaviour in Europe." Kolloquium der Abteilung Politische Theorie und Empirische Demokratieforschung, Universität Stuttgart, Stuttgart, 2025-01-27.
- Kaftan, Lea. 2024. "Demokratie von Köln bis Europa: Welche Rolle spielen Bürgerinnen und Bürger in der Demokratie? Wie können wir heute beeinflussen, was morgen politisch entschieden wird?" Wissenschaft in Kölner Häusern, AntoniterQuartier, Köln, 2024-10-01.
- Kaftan, Lea. 2024. "EU-Integration zwischen Werte und Kriterien: Über Motivation, Willen und Chancen der (potentiellen) Beitrittskandidaten." Unser Europa der Zukunft, Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit, 2024-01-14.
- Basu, Chitralekha, Jens Wäckerle, and Lea Kaftan. 2023. "How Voters Prioritize Identities for Descriptive Representation: A Pre-Analysis Plan." Research Colloquium, Cologne Center for Comparative Politics, University of Cologne, Köln, 2023-10-24.
- Kaftan, Lea. 2023. "Party Competition over Democracy. Democracy as Electoral Issue in Germany." Comparative Politics & Political Economy Research Workshop, Universität Konstanz, Konstanz, 2023-11-20.

Third-party funding

01/25-12/26, granted in 2024	HarDIS , Open Science Clusters' Action for Research & Society (OSCARS), 250,000€ PI, project application together with Paul Bederke, Sebastian Ziaja, and Alexia Katsanidou
01/25-12/27, granted in 2024	Men4Dem , HORIZON-CL2-2024-DEMOCRACY-01-05: Gender-roles in extremist movements and their impact on democracy, 523.437€ at GESIS Project application together with Alexia Katsanidou (GESIS) and co-applicants at other institutes

07/23–12/23	INTERSECT , Selten Seeding Grants, ECONTRIBUTE Cluster of Excellence at the University of Bonn and Cologne, 2,500€ Project application together with Chitralekha Basu and Jens Wäckerle
02/21–09/21, 02/20–09/20	Hack Your Future , Financial fund for the implementation of the statutory equality mandate of the University of Cologne, 15,062€ Project applications together with Franziska Deeg, Franziska Pradel, Ayjeren R., and Ingo Rohlfing
not granted (2024)	Engage the Citizen – an app-based, long-term field experiment to improve citizen engagement for academia and policy makers (EngageApp) , VolkswagenStiftung Cooperation Project: “Transformational Knowledge on Democracies under Change – Interdisciplinary Perspectives”, 1.300.000€ Project application together with Mareike Wieland, Sebastian Ziaja, and the Initiative Offene Gesellschaft.
not granted (2023)	Kuratorium, Witten/Herdecke University , Nationalism in parliamentary speeches in interwar Germany, 10.000€ Project application together with Nils-Christian Bormann
not granted (2022)	Violent Protesters, Violent States. How People Perceive the Legitimacy of Protests and Protest Repression , C-SEB Junior Start-up Grant, 3,950€ Project application together with Lennart Schürmann

Scholarships and prizes

09/2025	Honourable Mention for the article “Lip Service to Liberal Democracy in Western Europe?” by the ECPR’s 2025 EPSR Early Careers Prize
10/17–09/18	Cologne Graduate School: PhD Scholarship , University of Cologne
10/16–09/17	Scholarship: UDE-Stipendium The University of Duisburg-Essen-Stipendium is funded by the Federal Government (Deutschlandstipendium) and provides support for top-performing students.

Teaching

WS 25/26	Democratic Theory and Practice , Master level lecture, University of Cologne
04/25	Introduction to Computational Text Analysis with R , GESIS – Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences, online.
03/24	

SS 23	Applied Survey Research for Political Scientists , Master level seminar, University of Cologne
SS 22	Public Opinion on Democracy and Advanced Survey Methodology , Master level seminar, University of Cologne
08/20, 08/21	Hack your Future , University of Cologne, one week R coding course for pupils https://www.hyf-koeln.org/
WS 18/19	The Political System of Germany , Bachelor level seminar, University of Cologne

Services do the discipline

Reviewer	British Journal of Political Science (2024, 2025), Comparative Political Studies (2024), Electoral Studies (2024, 2025), European Journal of Political Research (2024, 2025), European Political Science Review (2023), Interdisciplinary Political Studies (2025), International Political Science Review (2025), Journal of Common Market Studies (2021), Journal of Politics (2023, 2025), Legislative Studies Quarterly (2023, 2022), PLOS ONE (2022), Political Behavior (2025), Political Science Research and Methods (2024), Political Science Quarterly (2022), Politics and Governance (2025), Public Opinion Quarterly (2023, 2022), SN Social Sciences (2025), Social Sciences (2025), SOCIUM-SFB Working Paper Series (2024), The International Journal of Press/Politics (2025), West European Politics (2025), Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft (2024)
Committee work	AI@GESIS working group member (2024–2025), Appointment committee for a junior professorship in Political Science (UWH, 2022), Election Committee member (in 2022 at UWH, in 2021 at UzK), Representative of the PhD Students (UzK, WS 17/18)

Membership

2022–today	Speaker of the AK Demokratieforschung (since Sep 2024) and member of the German Political Science Association (DVPW)
2021–today	Chair (in winter term 24/25) and active member of the self-organized Women and Non-Binary Researchers' Working Group at the University of Cologne and GESIS
2023, 2024	Chair (in summer term 2023) and active member of the Working Group for Peace and Conflict Research

Volunteer work

2015–today	Budo Arts Movements e.V., Deputy chairwoman (since 2018) & instructor
11/2023	Short-Term Observer in the OSCE Election Observation Mission to Moldova
2022	Training as an election observer for the Center for International Peace Operations (Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze)
01/12–11/14	Kölner Studierendenzeitung, Chief editor, finances, journalism, ...