Political Ideology and Affective Ambivalence

Abstract

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The question whether individuals with opposite political views differ in their feeling and thinking not only when it comes to political issues but also in general and outside the political arena has intrigued scholars for decades and continues to be debated. With respect to feelings, the debate has concerned issues such as security needs and sensitivity to threats, the relative importance of different moral intuitions, or disgust sensitivity. With respect to thinking, the debate has concerned issues such as epistemic needs and tolerance of ambiguity, thinking style, or intelligence. Recently, bringing together both domains of mental life, scholars have raised the question whether individual differences in political views are associated with differences in the tendency to hold ambivalent attitudes. Interestingly, theoretical predictions as well as empirical findings of research on this question have been inconsistent. […] In the following, we describe the theoretical rationales behind both predictions and introduce a third perspective. In the empirical part, we test the different predictions that follow from the three perspectives using data of the German Longitudinal Election Study (GLES) collected during the 2017 and 2013 Federal Election Campaigns in Germany.