

Insurgent extremity: A new lens for analysing insurgent ideologies

Meri Dankenbring*

October 2, 2025

Abstract

There is a widespread interest in the role of insurgent ideologies in civil war. However, the concept has been understood in a variety of ways, which are at odds with how ideology is conceptualised in political theory and election research. This results in fragmented theorising and a lack of systematic empirical insights. I argue that we should conceptualise ideology in a theoretically sound, and empirically measurable manner to enable quantitative research. Using a definition of ideology common in political science, I argue that we should reclaim the term extremism to theorise effects of insurgent ideologies. I conceptualise *ideological extremity* as an insurgent group's ideological distance to an average ideology. Instead of relying on ideology-specific arguments, this novel concept enables theorising and empirically studying the effect of extreme, compared to moderate ideologies in a generalisable way, allowing insights that are transferable to future ideologies. The concept maps onto a measurement model, enabling me to estimate insurgent's ideological extremity based on their manifestos.

1 Introduction

Insurgent ideology defines group goals and tactics (Midlarsky, 2011; Basedau et al., 2022), organisational structure (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood, 2014), the combatants' belief systems and evaluation of politics (Fine and Sandstrom, 1993). It therefore is a constant presence, both during active fighting and at the negotiating table. Accordingly, ideologies have been found to affect all stages of civil war (see Figure 1).

That being said, efforts to study the phenomenon often either remain theoretical or focus on specific ideologies and are generalisable only to a limited degree. This is in part due to the difficulty of quantitatively studying the phenomenon, and in part to the fuzziness of the concept. We lack a theoretically derived understanding of insurgent ideology, enabling substantive empirical insights into its role in civil war. To fill this gap, I theorise insurgent ideology and stipulate that we should reclaim the concept of extremism (Jackson, 2019) and theorise *ideological extremity* as the distance of an ideology to an average ideology. I argue that highly extreme ideologies can have similar consequences, irrespective of whether they are, e.g., strongly nationalist or socialist, as

*Postdoctoral Researcher, Institute of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany. Dankenbring[at]soz.uni-frankfurt.de.

the effects stem from formulating far-reaching demands. I introduce a new measure of insurgent extremity which does the concept of ideology justice by being a ubiquitous presence underlying large variation, therefore holding strong potential as an explanatory factor.

Thus, moving away from studying specific ideologies, I suggest a new perspective on insurgent ideology, which allows for quantitative analysis. In doing so, I enable research that strives to brush out some patterns that unify insurgents with very explicit political goals.

2 Ideology between theory and empirics

In political science, the concept of ideology is defined as a ubiquitous part of society.

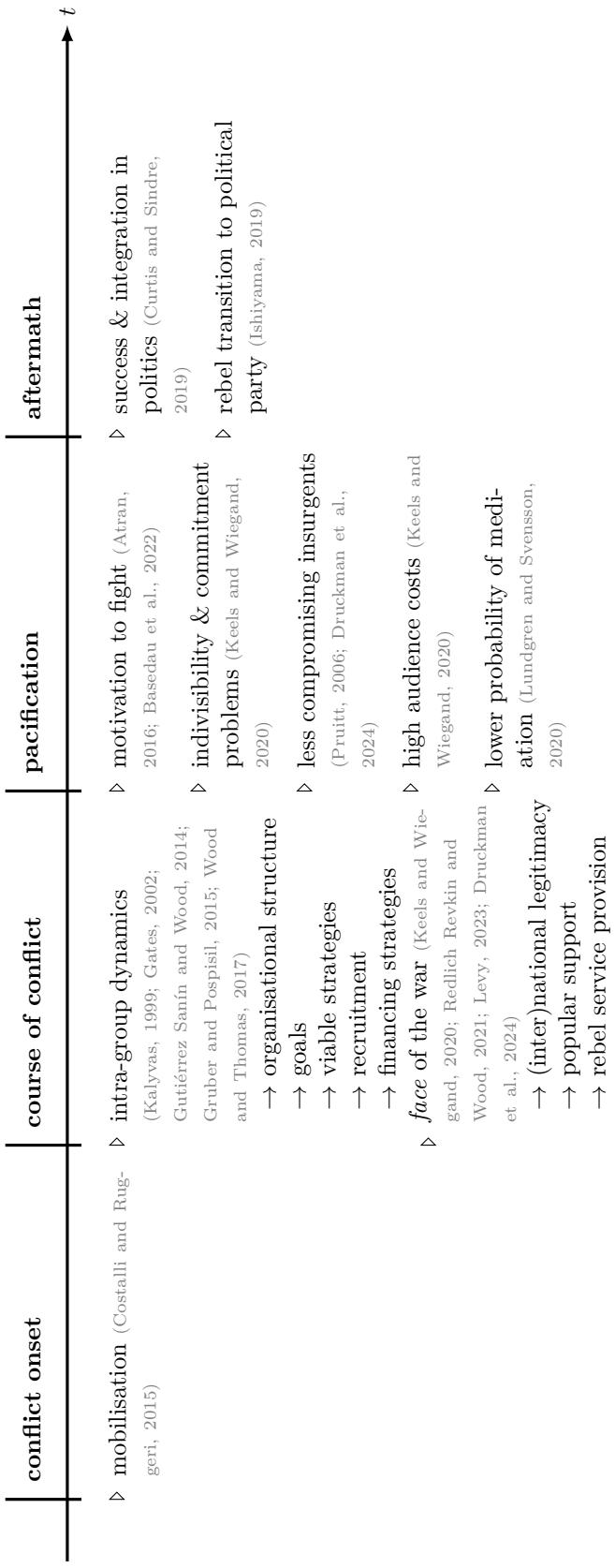
“Ideologies [are] those systems of political thinking, loose or rigid, deliberate or unintended, through which individuals and groups construct an understanding of the political world they, or those who preoccupy their thoughts, inhabit, and then act on that understanding.” (Freeden, 1996, p.3)

Ideologies are a lens through which one sees the (political) world, which is not necessarily closely bound to reality (Freeden, 1996), and which colours evaluations and behaviour (Fine and Sandstrom, 1993).

Peace research, however, often offers a much more fragmented perspective of ideology (cf. Leader Maynard, 2022). This results in a conceptual gap between the way ideology is commonly theorised and how it is theorised and operationalised in conflict research. Building on existing work, I argue that it is both desirable and possible to find ways to incorporate ideology in a theoretically founded way in empirical conflict research.

While scholars are increasingly interested in the effects of ideologies in civil war (see Figure 1), they handle the difficulties of the concept in different ways. Some look at specific ideologies and how they shape insurgent movements, such as Marxism-Leninism (Thaler, 2012; Luna and Van Der Haar, 2019), Islamism or religious ideologies more generally (Redlich Revkin and Wood, 2021; Nilsson and Svensson, 2021; Satana et al., 2013; Lundgren and Svensson, 2020; Walter, 2017), or secessionism (Sindre, 2018). Others compare types of ideologies, hypothesising differences between them (Sarwari, 2021; Basedau et al., 2022). While these studies circumvent the definitional problems by choosing a very specific focus, they lack in generalisability to other ideologies. Additionally, I argue that many of the particularities attributed to one specific ideology (e.g. Jihadism) could be theorised more broadly to extreme ideologies. The latter approach would allow for conclusions to be transferred to new forms of extremism.

Figure 1: Effect of ideology on different stages of civil war.



In studies which theoretically anchor the concept (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood, 2014; Keels and Wiegand, 2020; Basedau et al., 2022), ideology is usually assumed to shape behaviour only to the “degree that individuals are *motivated by strong convictions*” (Leader Maynard, 2022, p.28, emphasis in original). Ideology is even regarded as optional: groups with rational motives, such as benefit maximisation or *real* deprivation are compared to groups with ideologically driven *perceived* grievances (Basedau et al., 2022). Similarly, Atran (2021) compares devoted to rational actors, implying that believers in sacred values make irrational choices. However, such distinctions are based on a narrow conception of rationality (Toft, 2006). I argue that we should do the fact justice that every person has a belief system that colours their (political) reasoning (Taber and Lodge, 2006). In particular, because insurgent groups per definition “engage[...] in political violence” (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood, 2014, p.214), and hence have political motives. We should theorise insurgent ideology as a ubiquitous presence, as “distinctive political world views” (Leader Maynard, 2022, p.32), varying both in ideological colour, and in the depth of the organisation’s demands.

Quantitative studies conceptualising ideology in this sense, conforming with psychological and election research, tend to be inhibited by a lack of comprehensive data on insurgent ideology and instead rely on rough indicators or limited time-frames for their analyses (Gutiérrez Sanín and Wood, 2014; Keels and Wiegand, 2020). As a result, we lack empirical insights in the consequences of insurgent ideologies in civil war.

Overall, conflict research is behind the broader discipline of social sciences in the way it theorises ideologies. It lacks a common understanding of what ideology is and how we can generalise and measure it to a point enabling its use in quantitative research. I attempt to fill this gap by providing a theoretically founded, measurable concept—ideological extremity—which allows for cross-case comparability. On the one hand, this means abstracting from the concrete ideology, be it Marxism, democratisation, or the implementation of the sharia, and therefore a loss of informational depth. On the other hand, it allows for generalised theorising, as diverging ideologies may have similar consequences. For example, the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka had very different goals—an Islamic emirate v an independent Tamil state—and yet faced similar problems during negotiations (Maley and Shuja Jamal, 2022; Terpstra and Frerks, 2018), due to their ideological extremity. I argue that by comparing groups with high ideological extremity to moderate groups, we remain open to changes in the ideological landscape and are able to translate our findings to future ideologies.

3 Defining extremity

The term extremism is often used in a subjective way and to the normative end of condemning a political view (Jackson, 2019). Additionally, the terms extremism, fanaticism, fundamentalism, radicalisation and even terrorism are often used interchangeably, although they are different phenomena (cf. Hardin, 2002; Ferrero, 2002; Walter, 2017). In an “attempt to reclaim the term [political extremism] as an analytical concept”, Jackson (2019, p.245) argues that extremism should be understood as “purposeful disruptive political behavior that aims to replace or fundamentally alter the dominant political system” (*ibid.*). However, this definition is not helpful if we analyse rebel organisations, as most of them fight a government with the aim of changing the current political

system. Nevertheless, most of us would agree that not all rebel organisations follow extremist ideologies. Midlarsky (2011) adds that for extremist political programs “individual liberties are to be curtailed in the name of collective goals, including the mass murder of those who would actually or potentially disagree with that program” (Midlarsky, 2011, p.7). However, using civilian killings to identify extremity on a large-n level is difficult, as mass murder is not merely a question of numbers, but distinguished from high collateral damage by intent and quality (Midlarsky, 2011). Moreover, I would argue that extremity can also occur without mass murder, and that we should conceptually separate ideological extremity from violence. Firstly, because extreme ideologies can also result in restraint towards civilians (Thaler, 2012). And secondly, because mass murder requires a substantive level of power, which is not achieved by all extremist insurgents.

Instead, I propose using a pragmatist approach: Extremism is an essentially relative phenomenon (cf. Jaschke, 2020), i.e. relative to the opinion of the majority population (Hardin, 2002). In his definition, Hardin uses “normal” politics as a point of reference as to what the majority feels represented by to some degree. However, this is based on the median-voter theorem, making this approach viable only in democracies.

To circumvent this problem, Walter (2017) defines extremism in civil war “in relation to the majority opinion of the affected population on a key ideological dimension” (16). To underline that her subset of cases, i.e. Salafi Jihadist organisations, do not represent a majority view, she states that Muslim countries around the world predominantly reject such an interpretation of the Quran and Hadith. By standards of common sense, this statement can be regarded as valid. Nevertheless, such a common-knowledge-based categorisation of rebel organisations into extremist and non-extremist is prone to misjudgements.

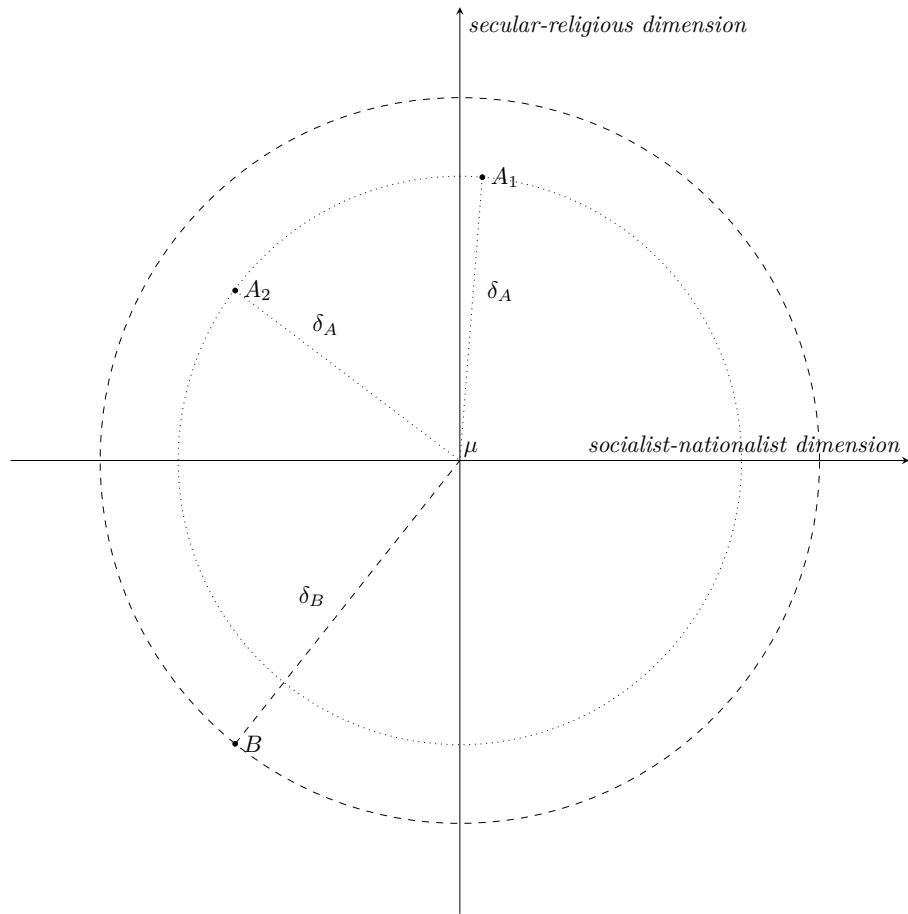
If we therefore want to adopt a pragmatist understanding of extremity, i.e. saying extremism is relative to public opinion—and thus basically what the society in question calls extremism (or understands the term extremism to mean (Wittgenstein, 1971, 2006))—we run into two major problems when trying to measure and analyse it: Firstly, how can we measure public opinion in autocracies, and how do we measure rebel ideologies relative to it? Secondly, does that make ideologies extremist in some countries that are not so in others? To name a simple example: Are democratic values and human rights extremist in Saudi Arabia? And if so, what does that mean for our cross-country analysis?

As a path around these issues, I define an extremist group as an ideological outlier compared to other insurgent groups’ ideologies. While this does not measure extremity as the distance of the group’s ideology from its constituent society, it nevertheless maps onto a pragmatist understanding. Here, extremity is conceptualised as the relationship of one ideology relative to other ideologies found in insurgent organisations. Even amongst insurgents—who, as established above, all fight against a government with violent means—we should be able to observe many different ideologies, ranging from leftist over democratic, to separatist, and religious. As a result, I am able to establish where the organisations range from mainstream ideology to ideological outliers. I therefore do not talk about *extremism* as a binary concept, but about *extremity* as the position of an organisation on an ideological scale. Insurgents with a low ideological extremity range close to a *mean* ideology, while insurgents with a high extremity are situated further out on the scale.

So to measure extremity, we need to estimate insurgents’ ideology. To translate the definition

of ideology (see above) into a measure of insurgent ideologies in civil war, it is reasonable to draw on existing measurements in other contexts. Ideologies are frequently studied in the backdrop of Western European party politics, e.g. using party programs (Bornschier, 2010b). Ideology is understood as a political belief system that covers the central convictions of individuals (Converse, 1964). In electoral research, simplifying survey respondents' political views by scaling them on the left-right spectrum has become standard procedure (Scherer and Stövsand, 2019). However, driven by right-wing parties, an additional cultural cleavage has increasingly established itself (Western European) politics since the 1990s: traditional values v individual autonomy (Bornschier, 2010a), also referred to as GAL-TAN (green, alternative, libertarian v traditional, authoritarian, and nationalist) (cf. Bayerlein, 2021).

Figure 2: Extremity in terms of the two measured dimensions



Tokdemir et al. (2021) transfer the idea of measuring ideology on two cleavages to conflict research. To that end, they study insurgent groups' manifestos and code which ideology they propagate¹. However, the GAL-TAN dimension was theorised and developed based on Western

¹The coding procedure for the ideological data is described in detail in Section 1 in the Online Appendix

European societies and their political discourse and does, therefore, not sufficiently map onto the ideologies present in insurgent organisations in civil wars across the globe. Instead, Tokdemir et al. (2021) opt to measure a left-right dimension (which I term socialist-nationalist) and a secular-religious dimension using Bayesian Multidimensional Item Response Theory (IRT).

I argue that this measurement already inherently includes the concept extremity: Scoring organisations on a socialist-nationalist and secular-religious scale is a relative endeavour. We are interested in positioning organisations relative to each other and the mean. Picturing a coordinate system where the mean is zero (e.g. see Figure 2), we immediately have a rough understanding of a group's goals when looking at its relative position to zero. This can be in a socialist or nationalist, but equally in a secular or religious direction. We draw information from the scales by checking *how far out* organisations are. As elaborated, I call this *extremity*. The MIRT model thus measures insurgent extremity on a socialist-nationalist and secular-religious dimension. When sn_i is the score of organisation i on the socialist-nationalist dimension, and sr_i its score on the secular-religious dimension, with sn_μ and sr_μ being the sample means of the two dimensions, I define i 's extremity as:

$$\delta_i := \delta(sn_i, sr_i) = \sqrt{(sn_i - sn_\mu)^2 + (sr_i - sr_\mu)^2}$$

By normalising the mean of both dimensions to zero, we have $sn_\mu = 0$ and $sr_\mu = 0$. This means we can simplify the distance to

$$\delta_i = \sqrt{sn_i^2 + sr_i^2} \tag{1}$$

By using this function, I use the distance to zero of the estimated ideology of organisation i in terms of both dimensions (secular-religious and left-right) as a measure of its extremity. The larger the distance of organisation i 's score from zero, the higher i 's extremity. This corresponds to the way the latent traits are estimated, where zero (closely) corresponds to the mean, i.e. middle-ground ideology in the sample. In practice, this implies that both groups A_1 and A_2 in Figure 2 have the same extremity score—here depicted as the distance δ_A —although their ideologies on the 2D graph are rather different. The same would be true about any additional group A_3 situated on the circle with radius δ_A . The theoretical organisation B is further out, with a distance from the mean ideology δ_B .

4 Measuring insurgent ideology and extremity

To measure insurgent ideology—the basis of the extremity measure—I estimate two ideological dimensions, socialist-nationalist and secular-religious. I do so building on Tokdemir et al.'s (2021) data and code it for 6 additional years, between 2015 and 2021, using dyadic UCDP data (Harbom et al., 2008; Davies et al., 2022) to identify organisations active in civil wars. The estimation is calculated on 499 insurgent manifestos.

The position of each manifesto on the socialist-nationalist and secular-religious dimension is measured using a latent variable model; a Bayesian Multidimensional Item Response Theory (MIRT) model. Item response theory (IRT) is a method from educational sciences to measure students' abilities (Lord, 1953), such as doing math. The underlying logic is fairly simple: easy

questions should be answered correctly by many students, and difficult ones only by a few. Thus, the frequency of correct answers indicates how *difficult* an item (here, a math problem) is. However, some questions may hold less information on the student's math ability than others: Questions that students with high and low math abilities get wrong with a similar probability. Such items fare worse in distinguishing levels of the underlying math ability and, therefore, have a low *discrimination* parameter. Thus, making the assumption that the underlying math ability explains which questions were answered correctly and which were not, the frequency and covariance patterns can be used to measure the children's ability to do math.

How this method can be used to measure ideology becomes clearer when taking a closer look at the coding procedure of the ideology data. We read insurgent groups' manifestos and ascertained whether they included mention of specific ideology items as defined by Tokdemir et al. (2021). Among these items are *revolutionary democracy*, *communism*, and *Marxism*. Using them, we can translate the logic from the math test: A democratic organisation's manifesto may include mention of ousting the current power and replacing it with a different, democratically organised group. A Marxist organisation would additionally mention communism and Marxism. This would result in a pattern similar to the math test: Moderate goals (e.g. *social democracy*) are more frequently observed than far-reaching ones (e.g. *socialism*). Applying this logic, the items are used to estimate where the organisation can be located on a scale ranging from socialist to nationalist, and from secular to religious (Tokdemir et al., 2021).

Next to variation in frequency, some views often co-occur, while others are rarely observed together. For example, when an organisation is Marxist, it is usually coded leftist, communist and Marxist. Being leftist does not necessarily imply being socialist, and socialist views do not necessarily mean the organisation is Marxist. Thus, with every additional item, the organisation takes a 'step to the left', i.e. becomes more radically leftist. At the same time, Marxism is rarely observed with nationalism or demands of sharia law. Hence, it is possible to extract the different dimensions of ideology and every organisation's score on them. While Marxism is very strictly bound to being leftist, there are some more broadly used items. For example, *revolutionary democracy*, is coded one for the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)—next to *maoism*—but also for organisations such as Hamas. As a result, this item may hold less informative value for the socialist-nationalist scale, and/or be less strictly bound to being leftist. Hence, both the discrimination and difficulty parameters for *revolutionary democracy* are somewhat lower than for *Marxism* (see Figure 2 in the Online Appendix).

$$P(Y_{ij} = 1 | \theta_{1j}, \theta_{2j}) = \frac{\exp(a_{1i}\theta_{1j} + a_{2i}\theta_{2j} + b_i)}{1 + \exp(a_{1i}\theta_{1j} + a_{2i}\theta_{2j} + b_i)} \quad (2)$$

I use a Bayesian compensatory multidimensional two-parameter logistic model with two latent dimensions; secular-religious and socialist-nationalist (see Equation 2). Compensatory means that the latent traits interact: a high score in one latent dimension can offset a low score in another dimension (Bolt and Lall, 2003). I build the model based on Tokdemir et al. (2021) and their replication material, drawing on the MIRT specification proposed by Bolt and Lall (2003). The priors of the two thetas follow a multinomial normal distribution of mean zero and a covariance matrix equal to the identity matrix. The discrimination and difficulty parameters have normal

priors with a variance of 1^2 . For the discrimination parameters, the means' priors change (by 1) in the direction I expect the item to inform the latent trait (cf. Bolt and Lall, 2003). This means the priors ensure the latent traits are ordered correctly. Due to the model's design, the estimated latent traits are roughly standard normally distributed, where zero corresponds to a middle ground ideology. The standard tests all suggest convergence (see Section 3.2 in the Online Appendix).

Using these estimates of the two ideological dimensions, I calculate insurgents' ideological extremity using the theoretically derived function (see Equation 1). Due to the nature of the model, groups are estimated as increasingly extreme with increasingly far-reaching demands. When simply calling for democratic self-determination (e.g. SLM/A), groups would be scored as middle-ground. When demanding extensive reforms of state institutions, economy and political system (e.g. FARC), groups are scored higher on the extremity scale.

5 Describing the measure

Figure 3 depicts the measurement of insurgent extremity. It shows that the score ranges from a little under 0.25 up to roughly 2. When looking at the global picture of the estimated extremity, the scale orders organisations rather straightforwardly. At its lower end, there are insurgents fighting against (perceived) dictators and for democracy. Below 1, there are groups fighting against repression, for self-determination, and (in some cases) secession. Above a distance of 1, groups become increasingly determined in very particular goals, including Marxism, communism, and profoundly religious visions³.

So when considering the ideology as measured in the two latent dimensions and when translating the estimates to the extremity scale, most organisations are scored reasonably in terms of what one would expect given general knowledge about their ideology. Nevertheless, the measurement does include some noise and uncertainty, as the number of items coded by (Tokdemir et al., 2021) is limited, especially on the secular-religious scale. And, of course, official insurgent programs can be noticeably at odds with their practices and in-official ideology.

²I started with very weakly informative priors, with a variance of 4. However, this resulted in an even longer run-time, as the autocorrelation in the chains was high. Hence, having the envisioned effective sample size at the end would have necessitated sampling with many iterations combined with a large thinning interval from the posterior. To speed convergence, I therefore restricted the variance to 1.

³At this point I feel it is imperative to stress that in no way do I suggest that ideologies scored above one are more similar to one another than they are to ideologies scored below 1, or lower. Or indeed, that they are all normatively equally problematic. The point of this scale is not to make any arguments similar to the horseshoe theory.

Figure 3: Plot of insurgents' manifestos' extremity, as measured using the scoring on the secular-religious, and socialist-nationalist dimensions.
Highlights well-known organisations.

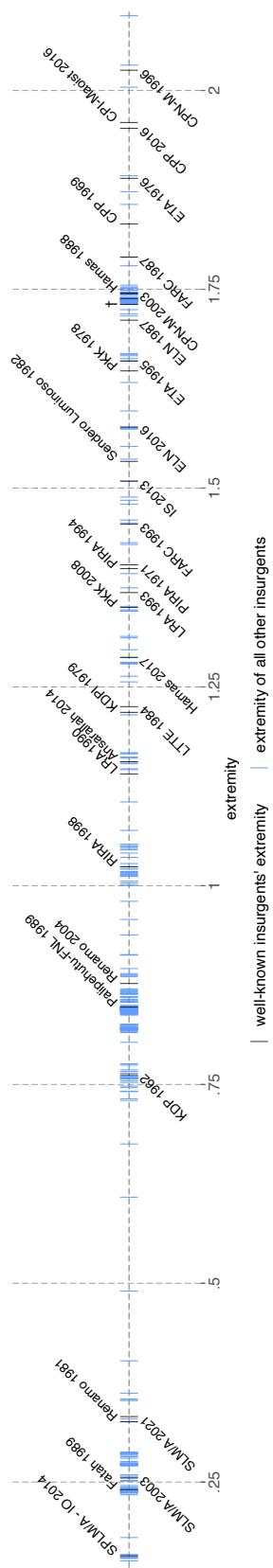
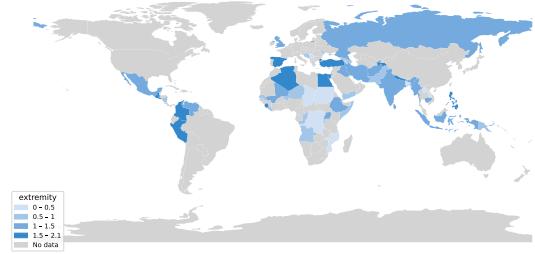
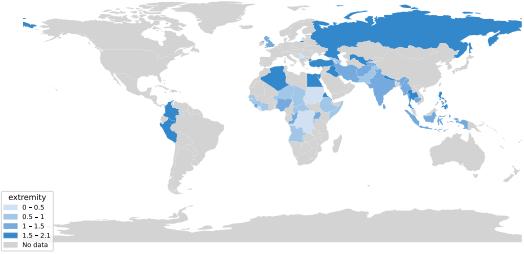


Figure 4: Map of the average extremity of all organisations active, by country.

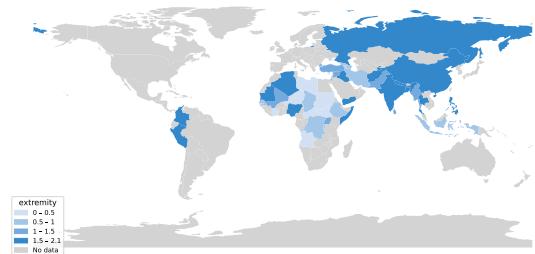
(a) 1989 to 1996



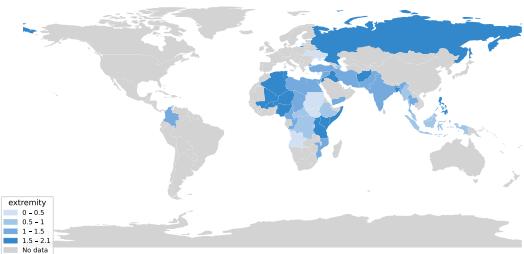
(b) 1997 to 2004



(c) 2005 to 2012



(d) 2013 to 2021



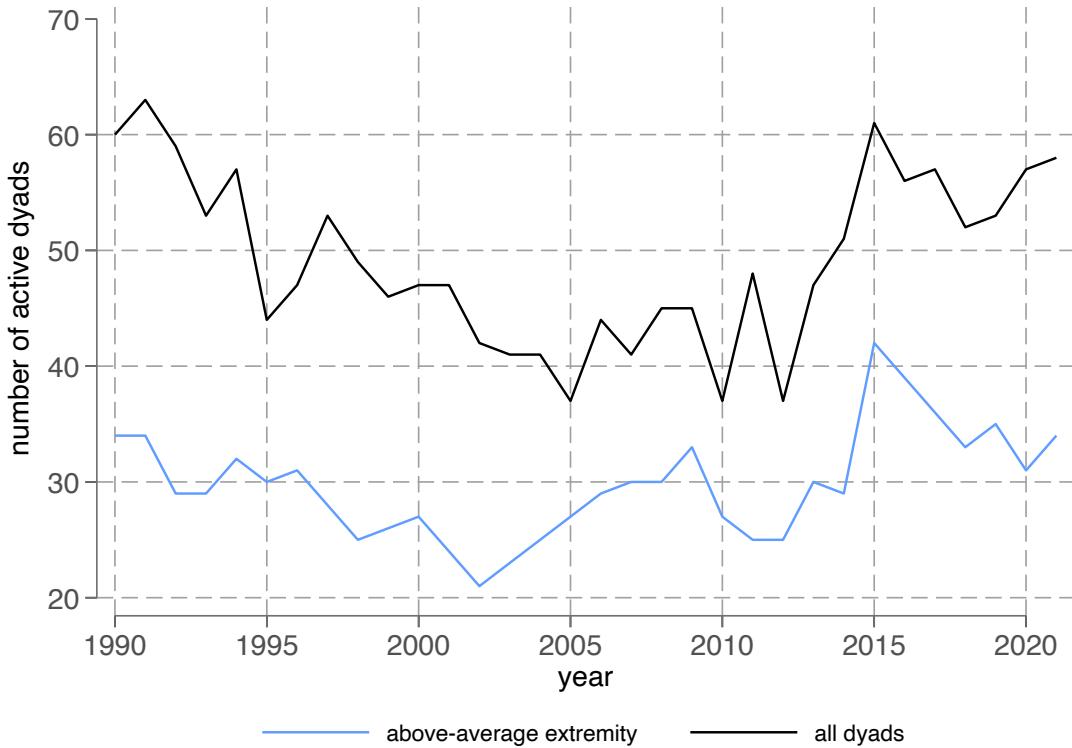
Aggregating the measure at the country-level using UCDP GED data (Sundberg and Melander, 2013; Davies et al., 2024), we observe fluctuations over time and space. Figure 4 depicts the average extremity of all active organisations in the respective country. Next to visualising changes in the countries with ongoing civil wars, the figure shows how the average extremity of active organisations develops geographically and in frequency. For example, it shows how organisations with high ideological extremity have spread in West Africa in the past twenty years.

Figure 5 shows that the frequency of extremity also underlies changes at the dyad-level. While the number of dyads with insurgents with an above-average extremity, i.e. $\text{extremity} > 1$, was fairly stable between 1990 and 1996, it decreases until the beginning of the noughties. Except for a brief dip in the 2010s, it continuously increased from the early 2000s until 2015. Since then, numbers are falling again. This only partly overlaps with the global development of active dyads. The share of organisations with an above-average extremity is particularly high in between 2006 and 2009, and 2012 and 2019.

The new concept of extremity enables the analysis of extreme groups, and their comparison to moderate groups. While ideologies with high extremity can be absolutely contrary to one another in terms of belief systems, such as Islamism and Marxism, they can nevertheless lead to similar problems, e.g. during efforts of pacification. For example, during the Cold War, socialists were framed as the arch-enemy, whereas nowadays, socialist movements have become less common, and the Global North is more worried about groups such as Boko Haram or the IS. Depending on

the decade, organisations belonging to either category have been deemed more illegitimate than other groups, e.g. affecting prospects of mediation (Lundgren and Svensson, 2020). The measured concept allows quantitatively studying such effects of extremity.

Figure 5: Development of the frequency of above-average extremity over time.



6 Measurement validation

6.1 Content validation

Content (Adcock and Collier, 2001) validity assesses whether the measurement is adequate in generating data consistent with the concept it is supposed to measure (Fariss and Lo, 2020, p.673). Here, high content validity is ensured by the theoretical deduction of the concept and its measurement. The definition of extremity translates into the measurement of the two latent traits and the final extremity score in a theoretically derived manner.

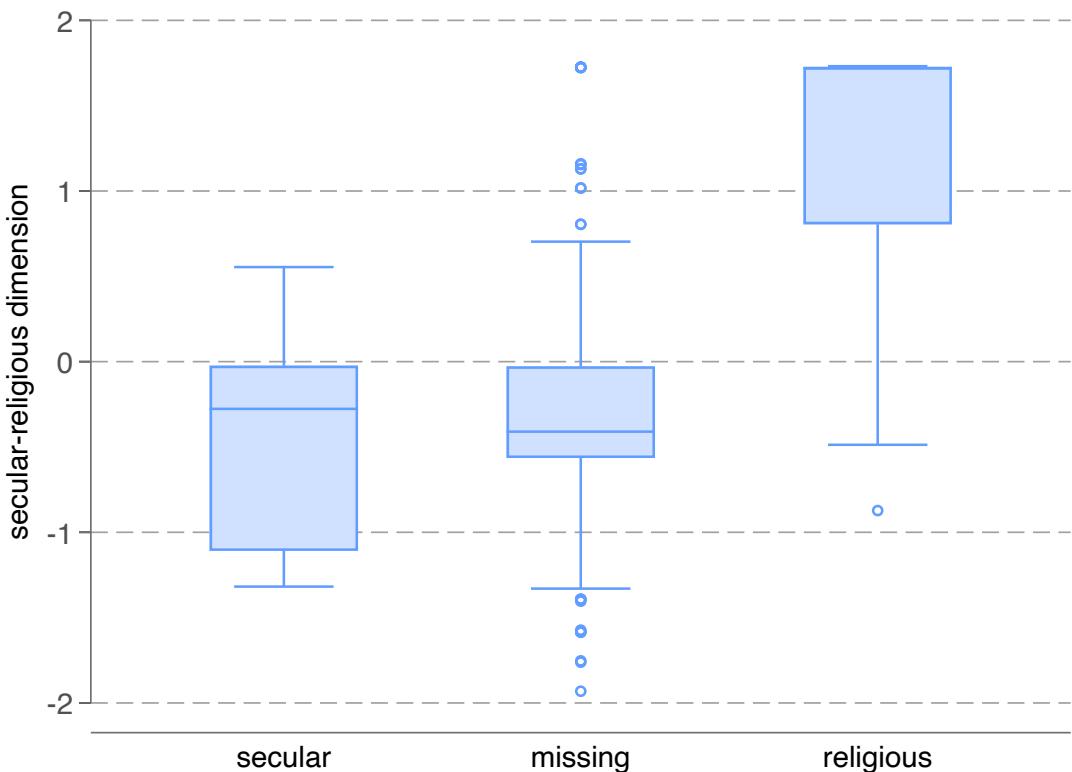
Additionally, there is a clear link between the measured latent scales and their informing components, the ideology items coded: the Item Characteristic Planes (see Figures 3 and 4 in the Online Appendix). The only assumption is the functional form and the adequacy of the given items for measurement. To establish the appropriateness of the items used, I compare them to a similar data source; the UCDP conflict issues dataset (CID) (Brosch   and Sundberg, 2023). It

includes very similar items to capture insurgent ideology (see Figures 7 and 8). This suggests that the items used in my measurement model are adequate in that they portray what are commonly understood as different realisations of insurgent ideologies.

6.2 Convergent/discriminant validation

Convergent validation is the comparison of one's measurement with previous efforts to measure the concept, or a theoretically similar one: If they are conceptually related, there should also be an empirical association (Fariss and Lo, 2020; Adcock and Collier, 2001). Similarly, the association of the measurement should be weaker for more distantly related conceptualisations (discriminant validation) (Adcock and Collier, 2001).

Figure 6: Box plot of secular-religious dimension over aggregated claim type coded by RELAC, distinguishing secular claims, religious claims, and missings, i.e. no secular or religious claims coded in RELAC.



To observe whether or not the measured secular-religious dimension sufficiently maps onto previous measures of the concept, I use the Religion and Armed Conflict (RELAC) data (Svensson and Nilsson, 2018). The data codes whether insurgents make religious or secular claims or fail to specify either (i.e. missing). The measured secular-religious dimension should thus map onto these categories. Figure 6 depicts a box plot of the measured scale for each category of the RELAC

data. Comparing the distribution of the estimates in the religious with the secular category, a clear distinction is visible. This means the categorical attribution of religiosity maps onto the measured secular-religious dimension quite well. The organisations coded missing in the RELAC data have a large variance in the measurement model. This shows that the measurement conforms with a previous data source while adding nuance to it.

Figure 7: Box plot of socialist-nationalist dimension (until 2017) over ideology items coded in the conflict issues dataset (Brosch   and Sundberg, 2023)

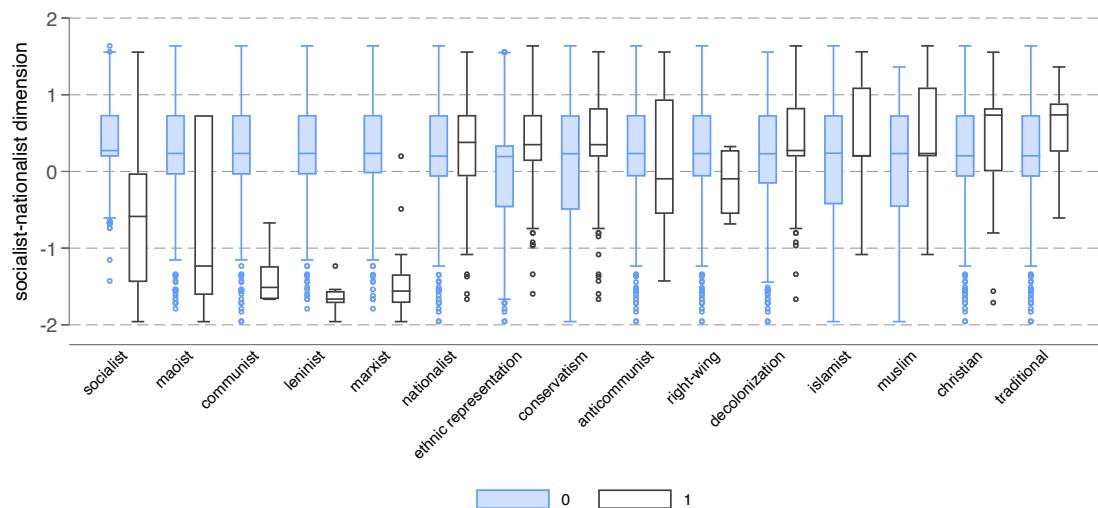
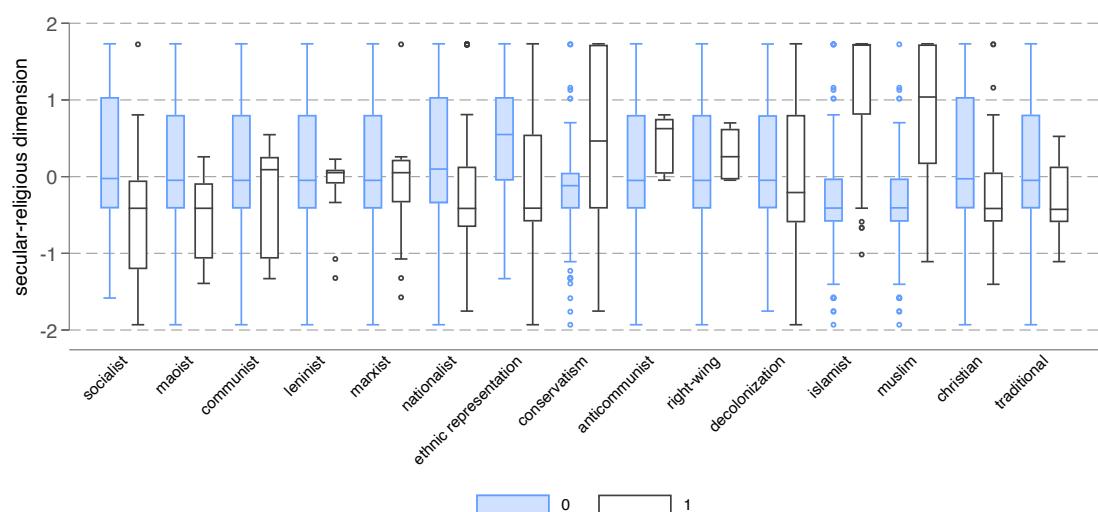


Figure 8: Box plot of secular-religious dimension (until 2017) over ideology items coded in the conflict issues dataset (Brosch   and Sundberg, 2023)



I additionally use UCDP CID (Brosch   and Sundberg, 2023) for convergent validation. The RELAC data, ending in 2015, covers 323 distinct insurgent ideologies. With 342 measured ideologies the overlap with the CID is a little larger, as it ends in 2017. Figures 7 and 8 show box plots of both dimensions for each ideology item coded in CID with sufficient observations. The items are sorted by over-arching ideology. We would expect a negative correlation between the socialist-nationalist dimension and the left-leaning items in Figure 7, a positive correlation with conservative and nationalist items, and lastly, less correlation for religious items. In Figure 8, depicting the secular-religious dimension, we would expect the strongest correlation with the religious items on the right-hand side of the graph. There should be a negative correlation for the left-leaning items, as these often entail being secular. When considering Figures 7 and 8, we observe that in most cases, the measured latent scales correlate in the expected way with the issues coded in the conflict issues data. This is a strong sign of convergent validity.

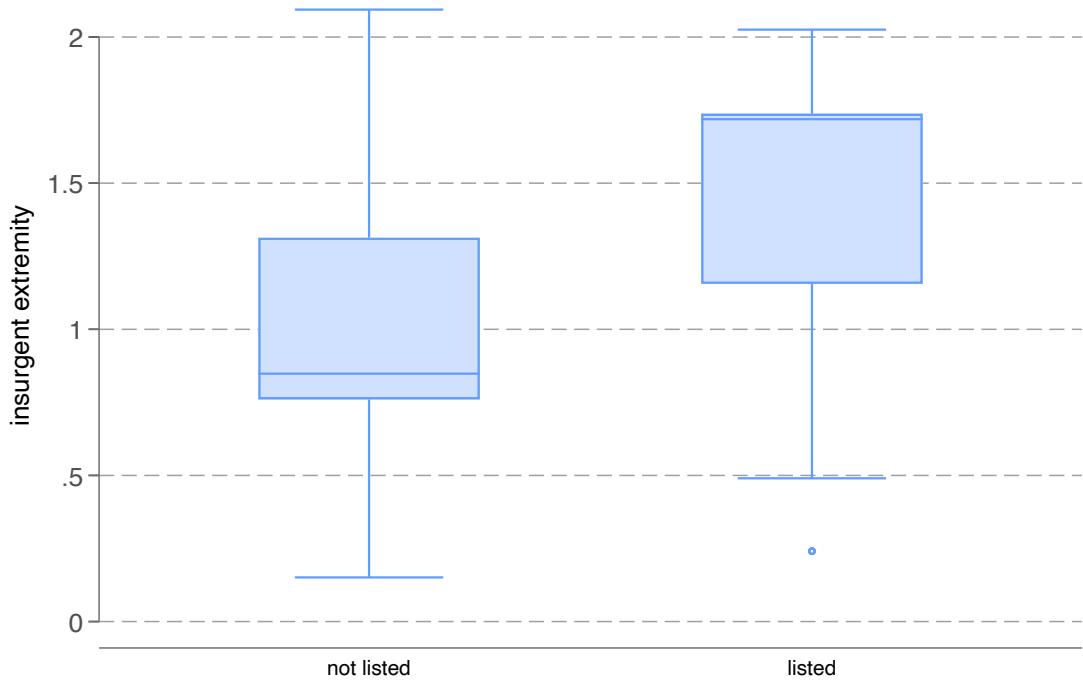
As extremity is a new concept, there exists a lack of data for further convergent validation. Considering the extensive convergent validation done on its two component measures and the fact that the estimation was theoretically derived, we can nevertheless conclude a high level of validity.

6.3 Construct validation

Construct validation uses existing knowledge on the construct in question and its causal relationship to another, different construct to test whether it replicates the expected relationship (Adcock and Collier, 2001; Fariss and Lo, 2020). This can e.g. be done by testing whether the measure fares well at predicting an outcome it ought to predict based on existing research (Fariss and Lo, 2020).

A phenomenon that extremity should be able to predict is proscription (Jarvis and Legrand, 2018). Proscribing, or blacklisting, illegalises organisations and individuals who are perceived as terrorists. However, organisations are also listed for holding ideologies that are deemed problematic by the listing government or international organisation (Jarvis and Legrand, 2018). The extremity measure should therefore correlate with observed proscription. In line with this, Figure 9 shows a clear association between insurgent manifest extremity and group proscription (Lundgren et al., 2024). This lends strong support to the validity of my construct.

Figure 9: Box plot of measured insurgent extremity over group listing as coded in the Proscription of Armed Actors Dataset (Lundgren et al., 2024)



7 Conclusion

Previous research on insurgent ideology lacks an understanding and measurement of ideology that conforms with definitions common in political science. Filling this gap, I build on such a definition and introduce the novel concept of insurgent ideological extremity. I argue that thinking of extremity as far-reaching demands allows new insights in the effects of ideologies in civil war, while resulting in a generalisability resilient to changes in ideological landscape. I measure extremity using data on insurgent manifestos, thus enabling its inclusion in quantitative analyses.

8 References

- Adcock, R. and D. Collier (2001). Measurement validity: A shared standard for qualitative and quantitative research. *American Political Science Review* 95(3), 529–546.
- Akkaya, A. H. (2020). The PKK’s ideological odyssey. *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 22(6), 730–745.
- Atran, S. (2016). The devoted actor: Unconditional commitment and intractable conflict across cultures. *Current Anthropology* 57(S13), 192–203.

- Atran, S. (2021). Psychology of transnational terrorism and extreme political conflict. *Annual Review of Psychology* 72, 471–501.
- Basedau, M., M. Deitch, and A. Zellman (2022). Rebels with a cause: Does ideology make armed conflicts longer and bloodier? *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 66(10), 1826–1853.
- Bayerlein, M. (2021). Chasing the other “populist zeitgeist”? mainstream parties and the rise of right-wing populism. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 62(3), 411–433.
- Bolt, D. M. and V. F. Lall (2003). Estimation of compensatory and noncompensatory multidimensional item response models using markov chain monte carlo. *Applied Psychological Measurement* 27(6), 395–414.
- Bornschier, S. (2010a). *Cleavage Politics and the Populist Right: The New Cultural Conflict in Western Europe*. Temple University Press.
- Bornschier, S. (2010b). The new cultural divide and the two-dimensional political space in western europe. *West European Politics* 33(3), 419–444.
- Brosché, J. and R. Sundberg (2023). What they are fighting for - introducing the ucdp conflict issues dataset. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 0(0), 1–30.
- Carayol, R. (2016). Burundi – Melchiade Biremba: «on ne peut pas défendre la démocratie avec des belles paroles», 23 february 2016. *Jeune Afrique*. <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/304829/politique/burundi-melchiade-biremba-on-ne-defendre-democratie-belles-paroles/> (accessed 16.07.2024).
- Communist Party of the Philippines (2016). Constitution and program. <https://web.archive.org/web/20220808002816/https://cpp.ph/2018/06/30/cpp-constitution-and-program/>, last visited 01.07.2024.
- Converse, P. E. (1964). The nature of belief systems in mass publics. In D. E. Apter (Ed.), *Ideology and Discontent*. New York: The Free Press.
- Costalli, S. and A. Ruggeri (2015). Indignation, ideologies, and armed mobilization: Civil war in italy, 1943-45. *International Security* 40(2), 119–157.
- Curtis, D. E. and G. M. Sindre (2019). Transforming state visions: Ideology and ideas in armed groups turned political parties - introduction to special issue. *Government and Opposition* 54(3), 387–414.
- Davies, S., G. Engström, T. Pettersson, and M. Öberg (2024). Organized violence 1989-2023, and the prevalence of organized crime groups. *Journal of Peace Research* 61(4), 673–693.
- Davies, S., T. Pettersson, and M. Öberg (2022). Organized violence 1989-2021 and drone warfare. *Journal of Peace Research* 59(4), 593–610.
- Druckman, D., S. Vuković, and N. Verbeek (2024). Rebel group legitimacy, ideology and durable peace. *International Journal of Conflict Management* 35(1), 215–241.

- Fariss, C. J. and J. Lo (2020). Innovations in concepts and measurement for the study of peace and conflict. *Journal of Peace Research* 57(6), 669–678.
- Ferrero, M. (2002). The political life cycle of extremist organizations. In A. Breton, G. Galeotti, P. Salmon, and R. Wintrobe (Eds.), *Political Extremism and Rationality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fine, G. A. and K. Sandstrom (1993). Ideology in action: A pragmatic approach to a contested concept. *Sociological Theory* 11(1), 21–38.
- Flint, J. and A. De Waal (2008). *Darfur: A New History of a Long War*. London: Zed Books.
- Freeden, M. (1996). *Ideologies and Political Theory : A Conceptual Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gates, S. (2002). Recruitment and allegiance: The microfoundations of rebellion. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 46(1), 111–130.
- Gelman, A. and D. B. Rubin (1992). Inference from iterative simulation using multiple sequences. *Statistical Science* 7(4), 457–472.
- Gruber, B. and J. Pospisil (2015). ‘Ser Eleno’: Insurgent identity formation in the ELN. *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 26(2), 226–247.
- Gutiérrez Sanín, F. and E. J. Wood (2014). Ideology in civil war: Instrumental adoption and beyond. *Journal of Peace Research* 51(2), 213–226.
- Hamas (2017). A document of general principles and policies. <https://web.archive.org/web/20230821170444/https://hamas.ps/en/post/678/A-Document-of-General-Principles-and-Policies>, last visited 16.07.2024.
- Harbom, L., E. Melander, and P. Wallensteen (2008). Dyadic dimensions of armed conflict, 1946–2007. *Journal of Peace Research* 45(5), 697–710.
- Hardin, R. (2002). The crippled epistemology of extremism. In A. Breton, G. Galeotti, P. Salmon, and R. Wintrobe (Eds.), *Political Extremism and Rationality*, pp. 3–22. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- IRIN (2016). Briefing – who’s who in Burundi’s armed opposition, 7 june 2016. *UNHCR: ref-world*. <https://webarchive.archive.unhcr.org/20230519120741/https://www.refworld.org/docid/5757bbe44.html> (accessed 16.07.2024).
- Ishiyama, J. (2019). Identity change and rebel party political success. *Government and Opposition* 54(3), 454–484.
- Jackson, S. (2019). Non-normative political extremism: Reclaiming a concept’s analytical utility. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 31(2), 244–259.

- Jarvis, L. and T. Legrand (2018). The proscription or listing of terrorist organisations: Understanding, assessment and international comparisons. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 30(2), 199–215.
- Jaschke, H.-G. (2020). *Politischer Extremismus: Eine Einführung*. Elemente der Politik. Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Kalyvas, S. N. (1999). Wanton and senseless? the logic of massacres in algeria. *Rationality and Society* 11(3), 243–285.
- Keels, E. and K. Wiegand (2020). Mutually assured distrust: Ideology and commitment problems in civil wars. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 64(10), 2022–2048.
- Leader Maynard, J. (2022). *Ideology and Mass Killing: The Radicalized Security Politics of Genocides and Deadly Atrocities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Levy, G. (2023). Violence against civilians and public support for the state: The moderating role of governance and ideology. *Journal of Peace Research* 0(0), 1–16.
- Lord, F. M. (1953). An application of confidence intervals and of maximum likelihood to the estimation of an examinee's ability. *Psychometrika* 18(1), 57–76.
- Luna, K. and G. Van Der Haar (2019). Living maoist gender ideology: experiences of women ex-combatants in nepal. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 21(3), 434–453.
- Lundgren, M., E. Janson, and M. Lundqvist (2024). Introducing the proscription of armed actors dataset. *Journal of Peace Research early access*, 1–11.
- Lundgren, M. and I. Svensson (2020). The surprising decline of international mediation in armed conflicts. *Research and Politics* 7(2), 1–7.
- Maley, W. and A. Shuja Jamal (2022). Diplomacy of disaster: The Afghanistan ‘peace process’ and the Taliban occupation of Kabul. *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 17(1), 32–63.
- Matsuura, K. (2022). *Bayesian Statistical Modeling with Stan, R, and Python*. Springer, Singapore.
- Midlarsky, M. I. (2011). *Origins of Political Extremism: Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nilsson, D. and I. Svensson (2021). The intractability of islamist insurgencies: Islamist rebels and the recurrence of civil war. *International Studies Quarterly* 65(3), 620–632.
- Öcalan, A. (2008). *War and Peace in Kurdistan: Perspectives for a solution of the Kurdish question*. Cologne: International Initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Ocalan – Peace in Kurdistan”.
- Öcalan, A. (2011). *Democratic Confederalism*. Cologne: International Initiative “Freedom for Abdullah Ocalan – Peace in Kurdistan”.
- Pruitt, D. G. (2006). Negotiation with terrorists. *International Negotiation* 11(2), 371–394.

- Redlich Revkin, M. and E. J. Wood (2021). The islamic state's pattern of sexual violence: Ideology and institutions, policies and practices. *Journal of Global Security Studies* 6(2), 1–20.
- Sarwari, M. (2021). Impact of rebel group ideology on wartime sexual violence. *Journal of Global Security Studies* 6(2), 1–23.
- Satana, N. S., M. Inman, and J. K. Birnir (2013). Religion, government coalitions, and terrorism. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 25(1), 29–52.
- Scherer, P. and L.-C. Stövsand (2019). Ideologie. In H. Rattinger, S. Roßteutscher, R. Schmitt-Beck, and B. Weßels (Eds.), *Zwischen Polarisierung und Beharrung: Die Bundestagswahl 2017*. Nomos.
- Sindre, G. M. (2018). From secessionism to regionalism: Intra-organizational change and ideological moderation within armed secessionist movements. *Political Geography* 64, 23–32.
- Sundberg, R. and E. Melander (2013). Introducing the ucdp georeferenced event dataset. *Journal of Peace Research* 50(4), 523–532.
- Svensson, I. and D. Nilsson (2018). Disputes over the divine: Introducing the religion and armed conflict (relac) data, 1975 to 2015. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 62(5), 1127–1148.
- Taber, C. S. and M. Lodge (2006). Motivated skepticism in the evaluation of political beliefs. *American Journal of Political Science* 50(3), 755–769.
- Terpstra, N. and G. Frerks (2018). Governance practices and symbolism: De facto sovereignty and public authority in ‘Tigerland’. *Modern Asian Studies* 52(3), 1001–1042.
- Thaler, K. (2012). Ideology and violence in civil wars: Theory and evidence from mozambique and angola. *Civil Wars* 14(4), 546–567.
- Toft, M. D. (2006). Issue indivisibility and time horizons as rationalist explanations for war. *Security Studies* 15(1), 34–69.
- Tokdemir, E., E. Sedashov, S. H. Ogutcu-Fu, C. E. Moreno Leon, J. Berkowitz, and S. Akcinaroglu (2021). Rebel rivalry and the strategic nature of rebel group ideology and demands. *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65(4), 729–758.
- Vehtari, A., A. Gelman, D. Simpson, B. Carpenter, and P.-C. Bürkner (2019). Rank-normalization, folding and localization: An improved \hat{R} for assessing convergence of MCMC. *Bayesian Analysis*.
- Walter, B. F. (2017). The extremist’s advantage in civil wars. *International Security* 42(2), 7–39.
- Wittgenstein, L. (1971). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus = Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Wittgenstein, L. (2006). *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp.
- Wood, R. M. and J. L. Thomas (2017). Women on the frontline: Rebel group ideology and women’s participation in violent rebellion. *Journal of Peace Research* 54(1), 31–46.

9 Online Appendix

9.1 Coding ideology data

I intended to use the measurement model published by Tokdemir et al. (2021). However, their data only extends up to 2015. I decided to extend the ideology data for six additional years, to increase the sample and enable the inclusion of recent cases. I started by merging the ideology data (Tokdemir et al., 2021) with dyadic UCDP armed conflict data (Harbom et al., 2008; Davies et al., 2022) and exported all organisations with no ideology coding at all, plus all organisation-conflict-years after 2015 up to and including 2021, to a new excel sheet, which was then used for coding. We coded the organisations based on the codebook (see Table 1) and instructions used in the coding of the Tokdemir et al. (2021) data kindly provided by Evgeny Sedashov. Based on their instructions, I wrote guidelines to make our coding easily replicable, including technical details for the Research Assistants helping with the coding (see Section 9.1.1). Using these, we coded the organisations' manifestos as follows.

In a first step, we ensured the organisation was relevant by looking at the UCDP actor, or dyad page. By a rule of thumb, we skipped the organisation if there were significantly fewer than 100 deaths overall. I decided on this arbitrary threshold because it is challenging to find any sources, primary or secondary, on small organisations' ideologies. This has to do with the limited media attention these organisations get, but also with their small size and, hence, usually informal structure that does not rely on broadcasting their goals to a large audience.

Having established the organisation's relevance, we used DuckDuckGo - or equivalent search engines which uphold privacy to avoid bias and due to Google's algorithm - to find original organisation manifestos or Facebook pages. If no type of primary source was available, we resorted to scientific papers or books. If this did not yield results, we consulted LexisNexis for news reports. In difficult cases, we additionally consulted the UCDP actor descriptions (ucdp.uu.se). We always coded the manifestos for the year in which they were published and only coded further years if subsequent manifestos with diverging claims were published. Similarly, we coded the ideology described by the scientific source for the year the book or article mentioned and used the year of the news articles. To avoid missings, we strode to find manifestos in the year of first appearance in active conflict or earlier.

When we found a source, we coded the ideology using the 19 categories previously described by Tokdemir et al. (2021): nationalism, ethno nationalism, regional nationalism, communism, socialism, left-leaning, anti-communism, Marxism, Maoism, Cuban communism, other communism, religious, secular, sharia, shia extremism, Christian extremism, religious other, revolutionary democracy, social democracy. Just as Tokdemir et al. (2021) detail in their coding instructions, this usually is quite easy, as organisations are very clear on their goals in their manifestos (or Facebook pages). We did not require the exact terminology to be used in the sources as the categories. In the following, I will illuminate this process using three examples.

Table 1: Codebook as included in the Online Appendix of Tokdemir et al. (2021), footnotes in the original. Does not include changes I made, such as re-coding the left-leaning item (see Section 9.1).

Variable	Coding Procedures
Nationalism	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions autonomy of any kind among group's main priorities, excluding autonomy based on ethnicity or the region of group's residence. Otherwise coded as 0.
Ethnonationalism	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions ethnicity-based autonomy of any kind among group's main priorities. Otherwise coded as 0.
Regional Nationalism	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions region-based autonomy of any kind among group's main priorities. Otherwise coded as 0.
Communism	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions transformation into communist regime among group's main priorities. Otherwise coded as 0.
Socialism	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions transformation into socialist regime among group's main priorities. Otherwise coded as 0.
Left-leaning	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source is centered around generic leftist goals, but DOES NOT include goals of transformation into communist/socialist regime. Otherwise coded as 0.
Anti-communism	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions fight against communism/socialism among group's main goals. Otherwise coded as 0.
Marxism, Maoism, Cuban Communism, Other Communism ¹	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions specific form of communism as primary ideological orientation of the group. Otherwise coded as 0.
Religious	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions religion-related goals among group's main priorities. Otherwise coded as 0.
Secular	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions the goal of secularization among group's main priorities. Otherwise coded as 0.
Sharia, Shia extremism, Christian extremism, Religious other ²	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions specific form of religion-related demands as primary ideological orientation of the group. Otherwise coded as 0.
Revolutionary Democracy	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions goals of reallocation of power from one group to another. Otherwise coded as 0. Typically this category goes hand-in-hand with communism/socialism.
Social Democracy	Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions social democratic priorities of the group. Otherwise coded as 0. Category frequently goes hand-in-hand with communism/socialism.

One example of an organisation that was very easy to code is the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). In the Excel sheet used for coding, it first appears in 2016. By searching for the organisation name, year and the keyword manifesto, I immediately found their home page—which has been since modified, but the version I accessed in 2022 can still be found on the Internet Archive ⁴. On the home page, they published a PDF titled “Constitution and Program - Communist Party of the Philippines 2016”. Handily, it is available both in English and Filipino. The first two sentences of the Preamble are

“The universal theory of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism is the guide to action of the Communist Party of the Philippines. It is the supreme task of the Party to apply this theory on the concrete conditions of the Philippines and to integrate it with the concrete practice of the Philippine revolution.” (Communist Party of the Philippines, 2016)

These already make some facets of the ideology rather obvious. Two of the categories coded by Tokdemir et al. (2021) are *marxism* and *maoism*; Leninism does not exist as a separate category. Based on the sentence cited above, both Marxism and Maoism are coded 1. The manifest goes on to explain

“The Party carries out the people’s democratic revolution as the current stage of the Philippine revolution in preparation for the subsequent stage of socialist revolution as the first stage towards fulfillment of attaining its ultimate goal of communism.” (Communist Party of the Philippines, 2016)

In terms of the coding, this covers the items *communism* and *revolutionary democracy*. This leaves the question of how the organisation positions itself towards religion. Two mentions can be found in the section “Program for a People’s Democratic Revolution”:

“In the cultural field, the Party must promote among the people a national, scientific and mass system of culture and education, and combat all counterrevolutionary trends of thought through campaigns of education and information and with due respect to freedom of thought and belief.”

and

¹While all these ideological forms are typically understood as communist ideologies by definition, we followed more textual approach: group was coded as Communist AND Marxist only if manifesto/secondary source includes mentions of both generic Communism AND Marxism. If generic Communism was not mentioned, group was coded as Marxist only. In other words, being coded as the communist group of a specific type (e.g., Marxist or Maoist) was neither necessary nor sufficient condition for being coded as generically Communist group (category Communism). The rationale behind such an approach is our coding goals: we wanted to capture variation within communist groups, and differentiating between groups who are generically communist and groups that rely on specific type of communism was a vital part of a path towards achieving these goals.

²Here, procedure was similar to communism coding: we coded groups as Religious and, say, Sharia only if the group of interest posits both generic goals related to Islamic religion and Sharia-related demands as well. If all demands related to Islam come in the form of Sharia-related demands, then group is coded as Sharia but not generically Religious. It should be noted, however, that such occasions are quite rare, and in the vast majority of the cases group coded as Sharia was also coded as Religious.

⁴See <https://web.archive.org/web/20220807161108/https://cpp.ph/category/cpp-constitution-program/>

“5. Respect the freedom of thought and belief, use patient persuasion in gathering support for the people’s democratic revolution and promote the united front of proletarian revolutionaries and progressive liberals in the intellectual field.” (Communist Party of the Philippines, 2016)

For the coding, this means that contrary to classical Marxist ideology, the CPP does not expressly call for secularisation and the abandonment of all religions. Instead, it includes a paragraph expressly including freedom of belief. This may be due to Catholicism’s considerable influence on Philippine society. This leads us to code the organisation neither as *secular* nor *religious*, as it does not expressly strive to change the status of religion in either direction.

As a second example to highlight the procedure, I will describe the coding of Hamas. At this point, it is important to note that our coding was conducted before the terrorist attack on 8 October 2023 and refers to Hamas’ rhetoric previous to this event. Older manifestos were coded by Tokdemir et al. (2021) for the years 1988, 2005 and 2006. In each of these codings, Hamas’ ideology was coded as a mixture of *ethnonationalism*, *religious*, and *sharia*. However, we found a manifesto from May 2017, which includes some new, different rhetoric. It was published on Hamas’ website, which is no longer accessible, but you can again find archived versions of it online⁵. Due to the formulation

“The Palestinians are the Arabs who lived in Palestine until 1947, irrespective of whether they were expelled from it, or stayed in it; and every person that was born to an Arab Palestinian father after that date, whether inside or outside Palestine, is a Palestinian.” (Hamas, 2017)

combined with passages such as

“Palestine symbolizes the resistance that shall continue until liberation is accomplished, until the return is fulfilled and until a fully sovereign state is established with Jerusalem as its capital.” (ibid.)

we coded the organisation as ethnonationalist. We also code *religious* and *sharia* one, just as Tokdemir et al. (2021) did for earlier years. We make this decision based on formulations such as

“1. The Islamic Resistance Movement “Hamas” is a Palestinian Islamic national liberation and resistance movement. Its goal is to liberate Palestine and confront the Zionist project. Its frame of reference is Islam, which determines its principles, objectives and means.” (Hamas, 2017)

and

“The right of the Palestinian refugees and the displaced to return to their homes from which they were banished or were banned from returning to – whether in the lands occupied in 1948 or in 1967 (that is the whole of Palestine), is a natural right, both individual and collective. This right is confirmed by all divine laws as well as by the basic principles of human rights and international law.” (ibid.)

⁵See <https://web.archive.org/web/20230821170444/https://hamas.ps/en/post/678/A-Document-of-General-Principles-and-Policies> (last accessed 16.07.2024)

While the deeply religious conviction is obvious across the document, the reference to “divine law” led us to code the item *sharia* one. However, different from the earlier codings by Tokdemir et al. (2021), Hamas also includes several mentions of democracy in their program:

“27. A real state of Palestine is a state that has been liberated. There is no alternative to a fully sovereign Palestinian State on the entire national Palestinian soil, with Jerusalem as its capital. [...] 30. Hamas stresses the necessity of building Palestinian national institutions on sound democratic principles, foremost among them are free and fair elections.” (ibid.)

Hence, at least in rhetoric, they call for a democratic state, which is supposed to include Israel’s landmass. As this translates into the intention of abolishing Israel in every respect and building a Palestinian state in its place, we coded *revolutionarydemocracy* one. According to the coding manual provided by Tokdemir et al. (2021) in their online appendix, this item is “[c]oded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions goals of reallocation of power from one group to another. Otherwise coded as 0. Typically this category goes hand-in-hand with communism/socialism.” (Tokdemir et al., 2021, p.2 of the online appendix) In this case, the reallocation of power is of ethnic nature, not class. However, the idea of establishing a new democracy with a different constituency holds.

This example highlights that we strive to code the primary sources as they are written, not the groups’ current or past behaviour, and what we believe their “real” ideology to be. The usage of the term real in this context already highlights why Tokdemir et al. (2021) rely on the group’s self-attribution and why I also consider this to be the best strategy. For a more detailed discussion of the advantages of a measurement model, see Section ?? above.

Most cases in which we could not find primary sources were smaller groups whose clashes with the government had resulted in less than 1000 deaths overall, according to the UCDP. An example of such an organisation is RED-Tabara. Their fight against the government crossed the 25 battle-related deaths threshold in 2014 and fell below this threshold in 2016, only crossing it again in 2019. To code RED-Tabara’s ideology, we relied on an interview with their “chef d’état-major” (chief of staff) Melchiade Biremba in Jeune Afrique, published in 2016 (Carayol, 2016). We additionally cross-referenced it with the information in an entry on UNHCR’s refworld (IRIN, 2016), which describes the opposition in Burundi. As these are the earliest sources describing the group’s ideology that we could find, the first manifesto entry is in 2016. In the interview, Biremba makes the following statements:

“First of all, we need to remember that the motives that led us to take up arms are the same as those that led Nkurunziza himself to join the rebellion in 1994: The absence of democracy and justice, no rule of law... [...] Freedom of expression has become an empty word. [...] Our goal is to oust Nkurunziza and his clique. After his departure, we will put in place a transitional government that will reorganise the country, particularly the defence and security forces, that will disarm the Imbonerakure militia and organise credible, free, transparent and democratic elections.” (Carayol, 2016, translation by the author)

These led us to code *social democracy* one, in accordance with the description in the coding manual: “Coded as 1 if manifesto/secondary source mentions social democratic priorities of the group.” (Tokdemir et al., 2021, p.2 of the online appendix). In comparison, *revolutionary democracy* applies to groups whose manifestos include “goals of reallocation of power from one group to another”(ibid., also see Table 1 in Section 9.1.1). As the proclaimed group goal is democratisation in general, not specifically referring to a social group that should gain power (e.g. workers), the appropriate coding is social democracy.

For some organisations, even reading news reports resulted in no clear picture of their ideology. An example of this is the group FACT, which was briefly active in Chad in 2021. On their website, UCDP reports over 400 deaths due to “major clashes” and that “[d]uring the fighting, then-President Idriss Deby was fatally wounded”⁶ However, we could find no primary or secondary sources on the group’s ideology. As a result, the brief conflict is not covered by the data.

Proceeding in this manner, we coded 136 manifestos or secondary sources for 126 different insurgent organisations. In 25 cases, the secondary sources suggested that the organisation had no discernible ideology. In these cases, we coded all items as zero. Some of these are leader-centric groups, e.g. led by former statesmen who were ousted. Others are (decentralised) self-defence forces, such as the anti-Balaka. Merging these with the observations coded by Tokdemir et al. (2021) and dyadic UCDP data (Harbom et al., 2008; Davies et al., 2022), we arrive at 711 manifestos.

The measurement heavily relies on the assumption that extreme views are less frequent than moderate ones, and that there exist simple items that are present both in moderate and more extreme ideologies. I therefore make a small change to the final manifesto data. I re-coded the item ‘left-leaning’ 1 when any of the strongly leftist items (such as socialism, communism, or Marxism) were 1. I additionally code the item ‘group-based’, which is 1, when any of the nationalist items are 1. This makes sure that the items’ difficulty is mirrored in their frequency and co-variation pattern.

9.1.1 Coding instructions

Coding manual ideology data—technical details

1. Check for every organisation how important it is → search ucdp.uu.se. When the organisation was very small and had a minor role in conflict, skip it.
2. Do not use Google but DuckDuckGo or a similar search engine with high privacy standards. Otherwise you will get different results to the same search and your search will become less replicable.
3. Using the university’s VPN may be helpful (e.g. to access Nexis Uni)—see <https://www.rz.uni-frankfurt.de/45200557/Kurzanleitung> for an introduction
4. If you cannot find a manifesto (or facebook page used by the insurgents for communication with the public), first check via the university library or Web of Science (<https://access.clarivate.com/login?app=wos&alternative=true&shibShireURL=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.webofknowledge.com>).

⁶See <https://ucdp.uu.se/statebased/16743>, last visited 16 July 2024.

com%2F%3Fauth%3DShibboleth&shibReturnURL=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.webofknowledge.com%2F&roaming=true) for academic books and articles on the organisation.

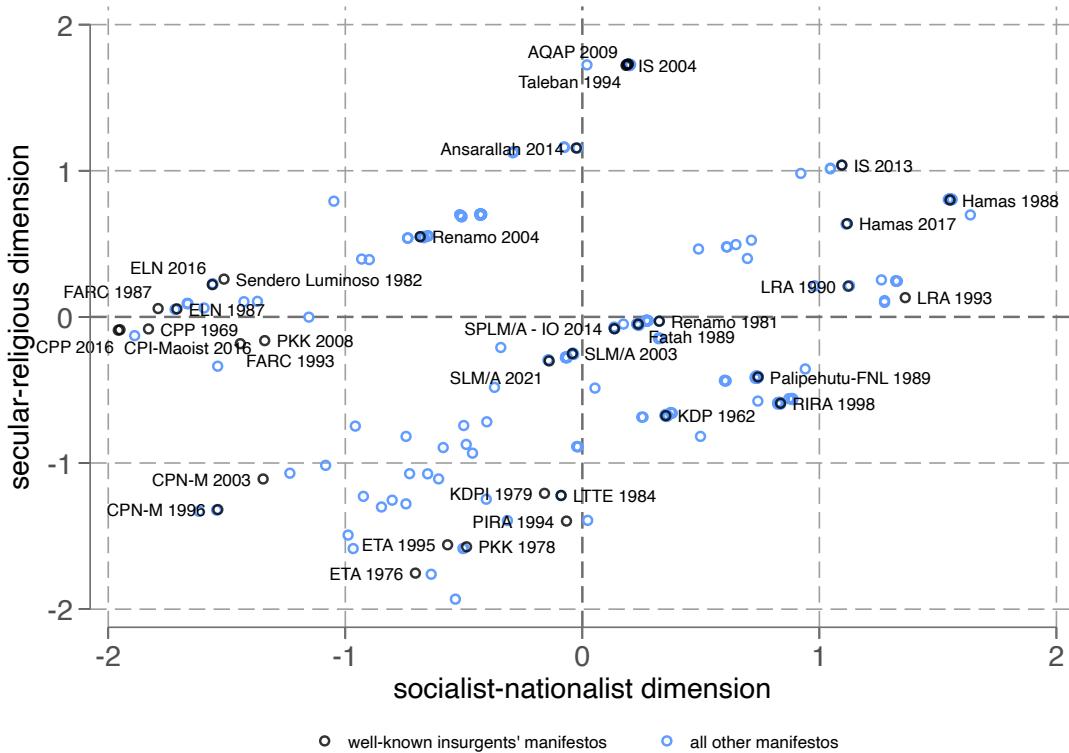
5. Then use Nexis Uni.
 - This is a portal on which news from around the globe are collected
 - Informations on access to it can be found here: https://dbis.ur.de/detail.php?bib_id=ubfm&colors=&ocolors=&lett=f&tid=0&titel_id=1670
6. If one of you understands the language of the manifesto and the other does not, forward the source to him/her.
7. If none of you speak the language in question, use DeepL. If the language is not available (e.g. the case for arabic), try it with Google translate.
8. Once you found a manifesto or secondary source, use the codebook published in the online appendix of Tokdemir et al. (2021) for coding.
9. Save the website (or cite the book) that you use as source in the Excel sheet used for coding.

9.2 Ideology measure

To better understand what is being measured and how the two scores map onto the ideology of organisations, Figure 10 shows all manifestos' scores on both dimensions while marking some prominent insurgent organisations. Some measurement errors notwithstanding, when looking at the scatter plot in Figure 10, the model captures most organisations' ideologies and their changes over time rather well.

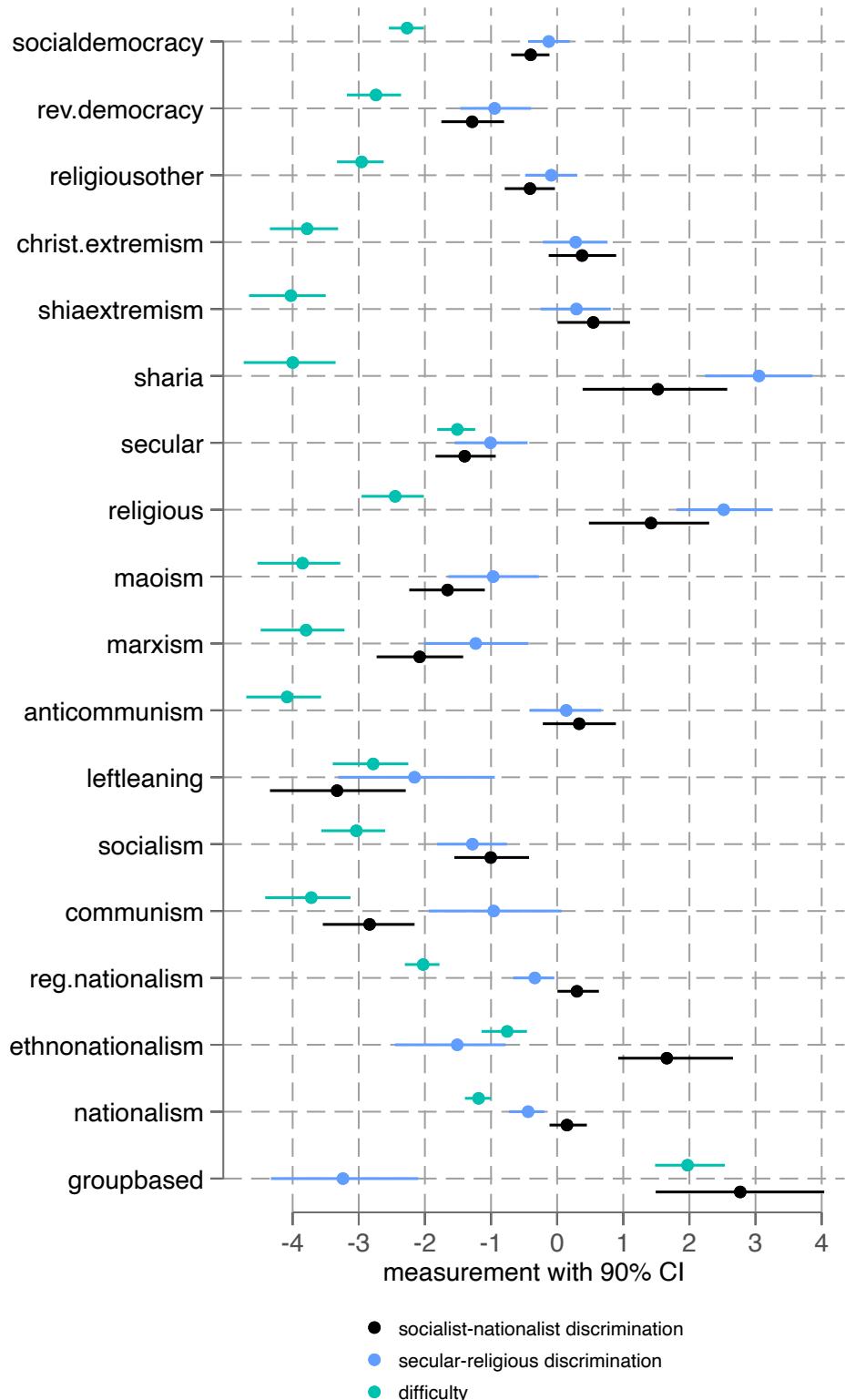
For example, the PKK re-invented itself in the 2000s (Akkaya, 2020). It had started out as a socialist “national liberation movement”, striving to establish a Kurdish nation-state. “National liberation theory [...] [uses Marx’] analysis of imperialism and colonialism”, which Lenin and Stalin built on in their works on self-determination (Akkaya, 2020, p.4 f.). Beginning in the 1980s and continuing after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the PKK started discussing a new understanding of socialism (*ibid.*, p.8 f.), criticising ‘real-socialism’ as practised in the Soviet Union. This development continued in the 1990s, as the PKK started growing in new fields, including propagating its ideas over media on large scales, emerging grassroots organisations in different places, and the women’s movement. It finally adapted its still very guerilla-focused ideology in the 2000s, after the arrest of Öcalan (*ibid.*, p.10). Proclaiming that nation-state and capitalism are interwoven, Öcalan proposed a radical democracy that functions without a state. Instead, it is built on the self-government of an ecological, socialist and feminist society (Öcalan, 2008, 2011). As a result, the PKK moves further out on the socialist-nationalist scale in 2008, as it officially drops its *ethno-nationalist* goals.

Figure 10: Scatterplot of insurgent organisations' manifestos, as scored on the secular-religious, and socialist-nationalist dimension by the MIRT model. Highlights and marks some more well-known organisations for added information.



9.3 Measurement

Figure 11: Measurement insecurity plot of the discrimination and difficulty coefficients estimated in the MIRT model, showing the point estimate and 95% credible intervals.



9.3.1 Further validation

As an additional step to validate the ideology estimates as measured by the MIRT model, consider Figures 12 and 13. They display the item characteristic surfaces (ICSs) of all items included in the model. That means they show the probability that the respective item is part of the group's goals, dependent on both latent dimensions, and are therefore helpful to check whether the items inform the scales in the intuitive direction.

For example, a group-based ideology (see Figure 12a) increases in probability with both the socialist-nationalist, and decreases with the secular-religious dimension. It is most probable (nearly 100%) when an insurgent is at least mostly secular, and ranges high on the nationalism end of the scale. Intuitively, it makes a lot of sense that when an insurgent organisation is strongly nationalist, the probability of having a group-based ideology is high.

The probability of having a left-leaning ideology decreases with both dimensions (see 12, f). While organisations scored on the lower end of the scale have a left-leaning ideology with nearly 100% probability (for a secular-religious rating of 0 or below), organisations on the upper end have a probability close to zero of being left-leaning. The probability of being left-leaning when the organisation is scored as very secular is also nearly 100% (when rated 0 or below on the socialist-nationalist scale), and sinks to 60% and below for very religious insurgents, depending on their socialist-nationalist rating.

Although these two items are special cases as they are bucket-items for sub-groups of items and therefore per definition 1 for the maximum/minimum of the socialist-nationalism scale (see Section 9.1 above), they illustrate how the model works in practical terms.

Unsurprisingly, groups with a high score on the socialism-nationalism scale are more likely to have a nationalist ideology. However, this effect is most pronounced for insurgents who also score low on the secular-religious scale. This may seem surprising at first. However, nationalism is most commonly present in secessionist movements. Prominently, the SPLM/A - IO combined their calls for a South Sudanese state with demands to establish democratic leadership. Similarly, diverse Kurdish liberation movements combine their strive for a nation-state with secular ideologies. During my coding of insurgents' ideologies (extending Tokdemir et al. (2021) data), I also found that some insurgents state they fight for democracy, and the 'liberation' of the nation from 'dictatorship'. I found a few Congolese groups who stress that their fight is for the entire 'oppressed' nation, across ethnicities. One example for this is the *Coalition Nationale du Peuple pour la Souveraineté du Congo*⁷, who fight for a democratic constitution for the "peuple Congolais" (Congolese people) and against Kabila. The *Collectif de Mouvements pour le Changement (CMC) en sigle*⁸ has similar goals. However, the call for a multi-ethnic democracy is also present in the SPLM/A [cite splma conference!]. The *Sudan Liberation Movement/Army* (SLM/A) combined demands for decentralisation (i.e. regional nationalism) with secularism and claims to represent all people marginalised by the government (Flint and De Waal, 2008, p.91). In this way, nationalism is a good illustrative example of how the data informs the model, and thus the ICPs mirror the cases found in the dataset.

When comparing the ICPs, one notices that not only do the planes vary in steepness, but

⁷For their facebook presence, see CNPS Congo

⁸For their facebook presence, see CMC

also in the maximal expected probability. While some—such as group-based and left-leaning; here by construction—are very probable at some end of the scales, others are very unlikely, such as Christian and Shia extremism, or anti-communism. This is due to the distribution of items in the sample, and shows that some ideologies are very rarely observed in insurgent organisations.

Overall, when looking at the expected probability of each item conditional on an organisation's level on both dimensions, the MIRT model seems to do quite a good job. The items we would qualify as nationalist positively inform the socialist-nationalist scale, the items we would term socialist, negatively inform it. Similarly, the secular-religious dimension is negatively informed by secularity, and ideologies usually entailing secular views, such as socialism, Marxism or communism, but also nationalism.

Figure 12: Item characteristic surfaces of all measurement items: Probability that the respective item is part of the group's goals, dependent on both latent dimensions. (Part 1)

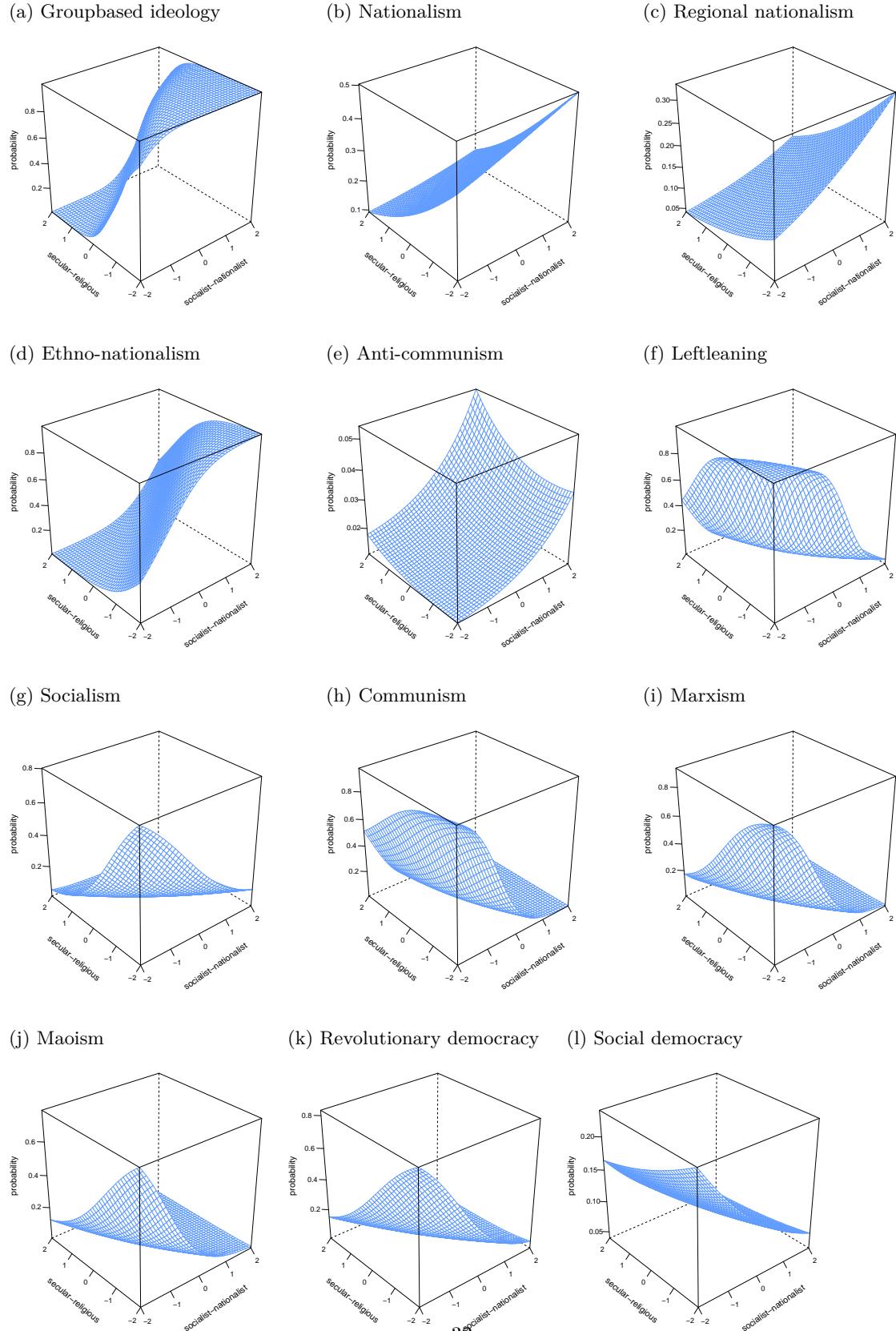
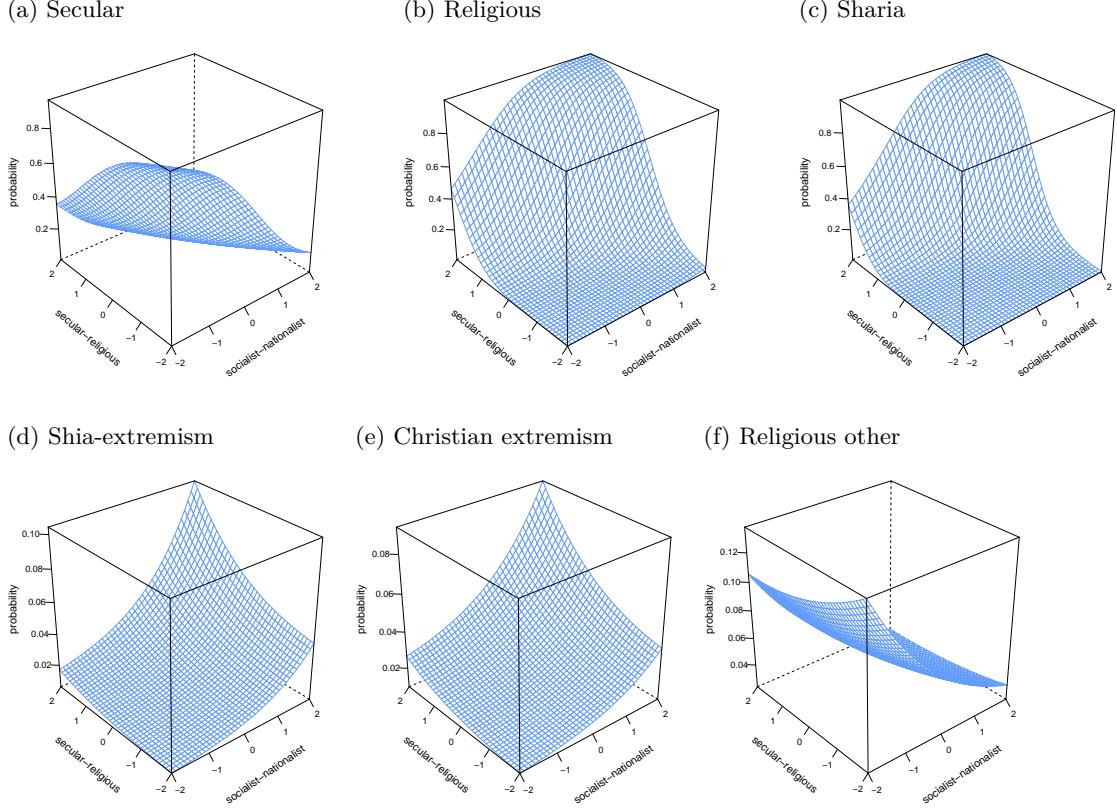


Figure 13: Item characteristic surfaces of all measurement items: Probability that the respective item is part of the group's goals, dependent on both latent dimensions. (Part 2)

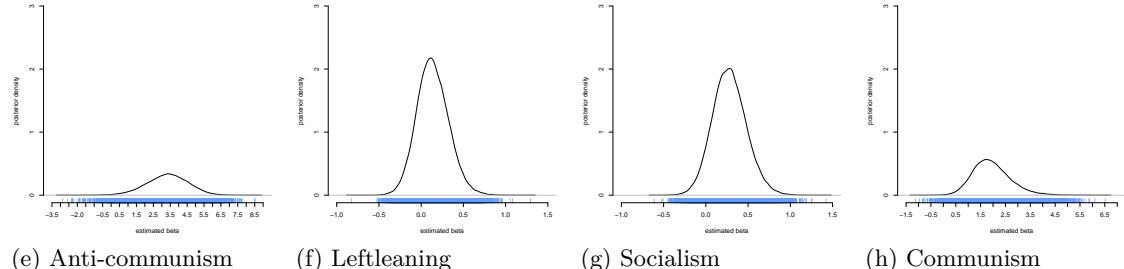


9.3.2 Convergence

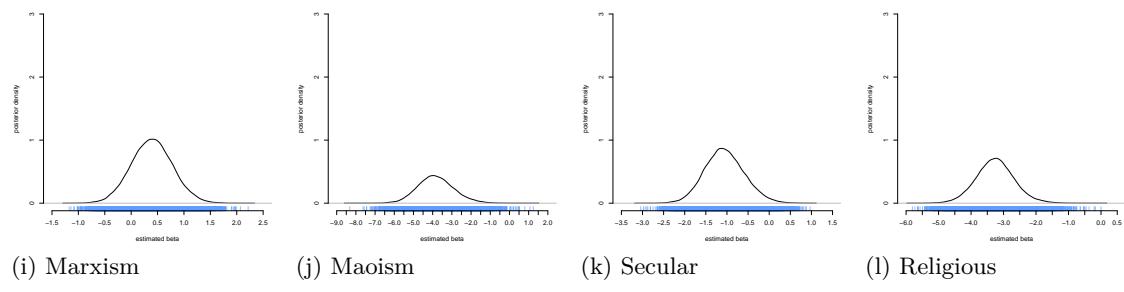
Having run the Bayesian IRT model, I used some standard methods to test convergence. In a first step, I looked at the R-hat (1 for all betas estimated) (Gelman and Rubin, 1992; Vehtari et al., 2019), and Gelman statistics (convergence of individual parameters: 1.002; multivariate proportion scale reduction factor: 1.03). Both of these support convergence. Additionally, Figures 14, 15, and 16 show that all the posterior distributions of the estimated beta coefficients are unimodal, i.e. there is no *label switching* (Matsuura, 2022). Figures 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22 show that for some of the items the five chains show some autocorrelation in the early lags. Nevertheless, it decreases with the iterations and is at a low level, which is a sign of convergence. The fact that the chains need quite a few lags for the autocorrelation to decrease to acceptable levels is frequent in complex models and was accounted for by using a very large burn-in period and a high number of iterations with a large thinning interval.

Figure 14: Posterior density plots for the estimated discrimination parameters of the socialist-nationalist dimension.

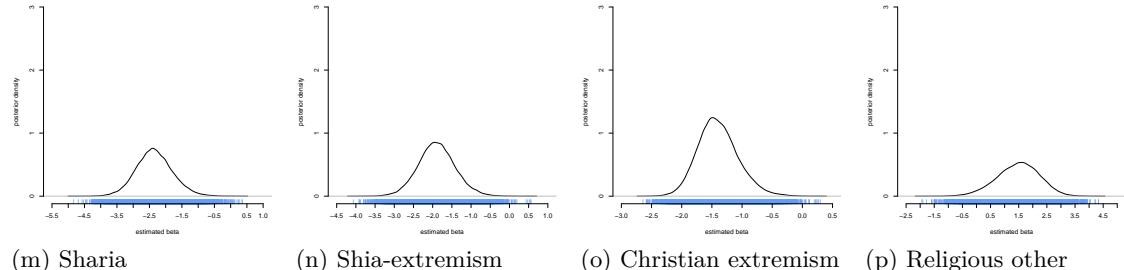
(a) Groupbased ideology (b) Nationalism (c) Regional nationalism (d) Ethno-nationalism



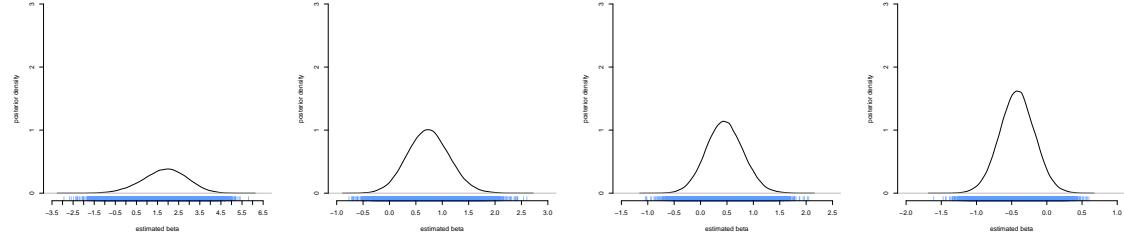
(e) Anti-communism (f) Leftleaning (g) Socialism (h) Communism



(i) Marxism (j) Maoism (k) Secular (l) Religious



(m) Sharia (n) Shia-extremism (o) Christian extremism (p) Religious other



(q) Revolutionary democracy

(r) Social democracy

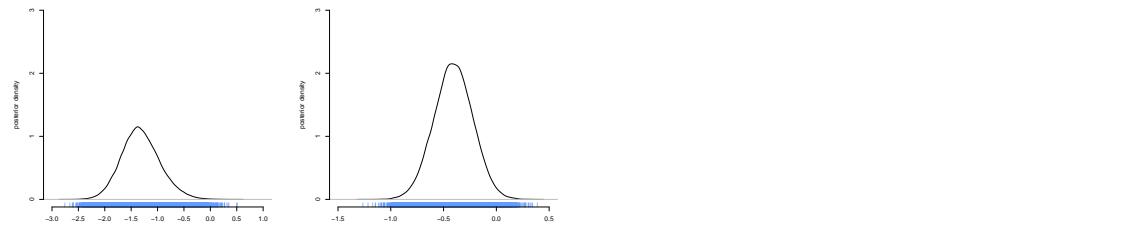
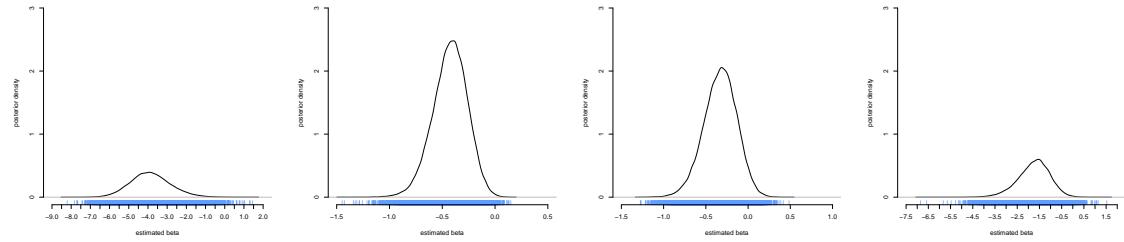
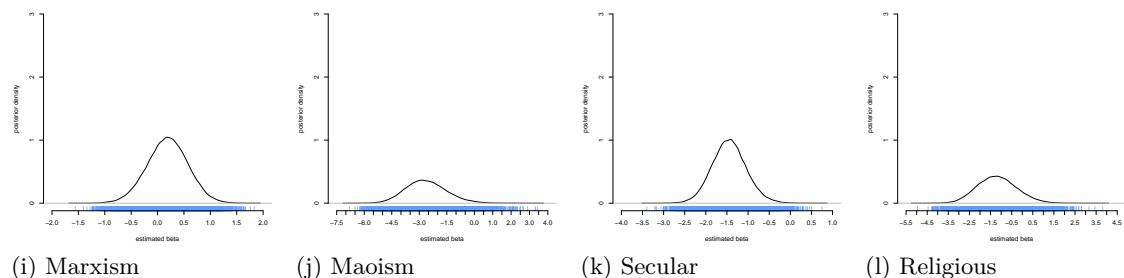


Figure 15: Posterior density plots for the estimated discrimination parameters of the secular-religious dimension.

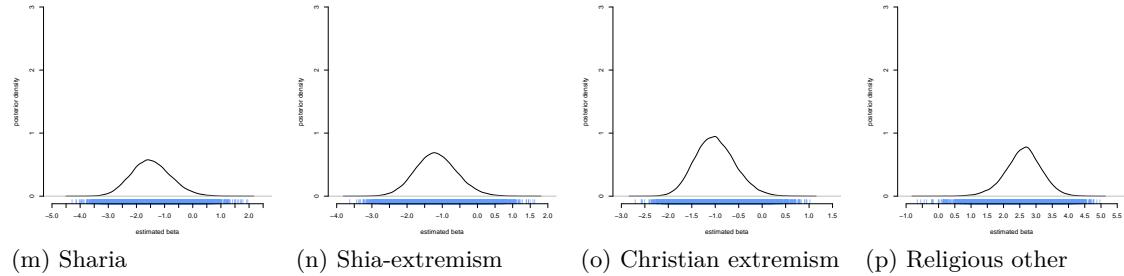
(a) Groupbased ideology (b) Nationalism (c) Regional nationalism (d) Ethno-nationalism



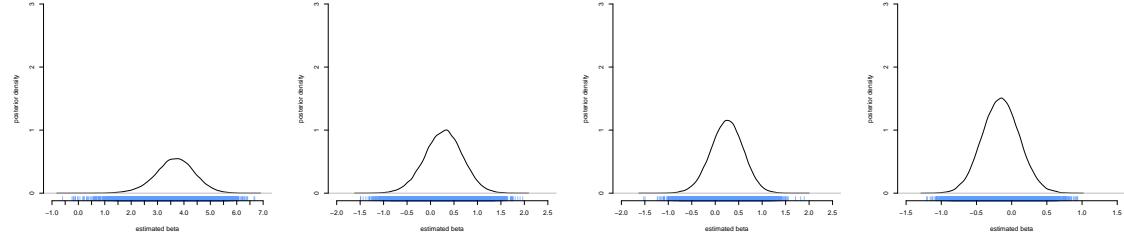
(e) Anti-communism (f) Leftleaning (g) Socialism (h) Communism



(i) Marxism (j) Maoism (k) Secular (l) Religious



(m) Sharia (n) Shia-extremism (o) Christian extremism (p) Religious other



(q) Revolutionary democracy (r) Social democracy

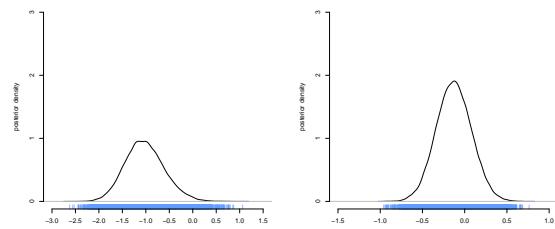


Figure 16: Posterior density plots for the estimated difficulty parameters.

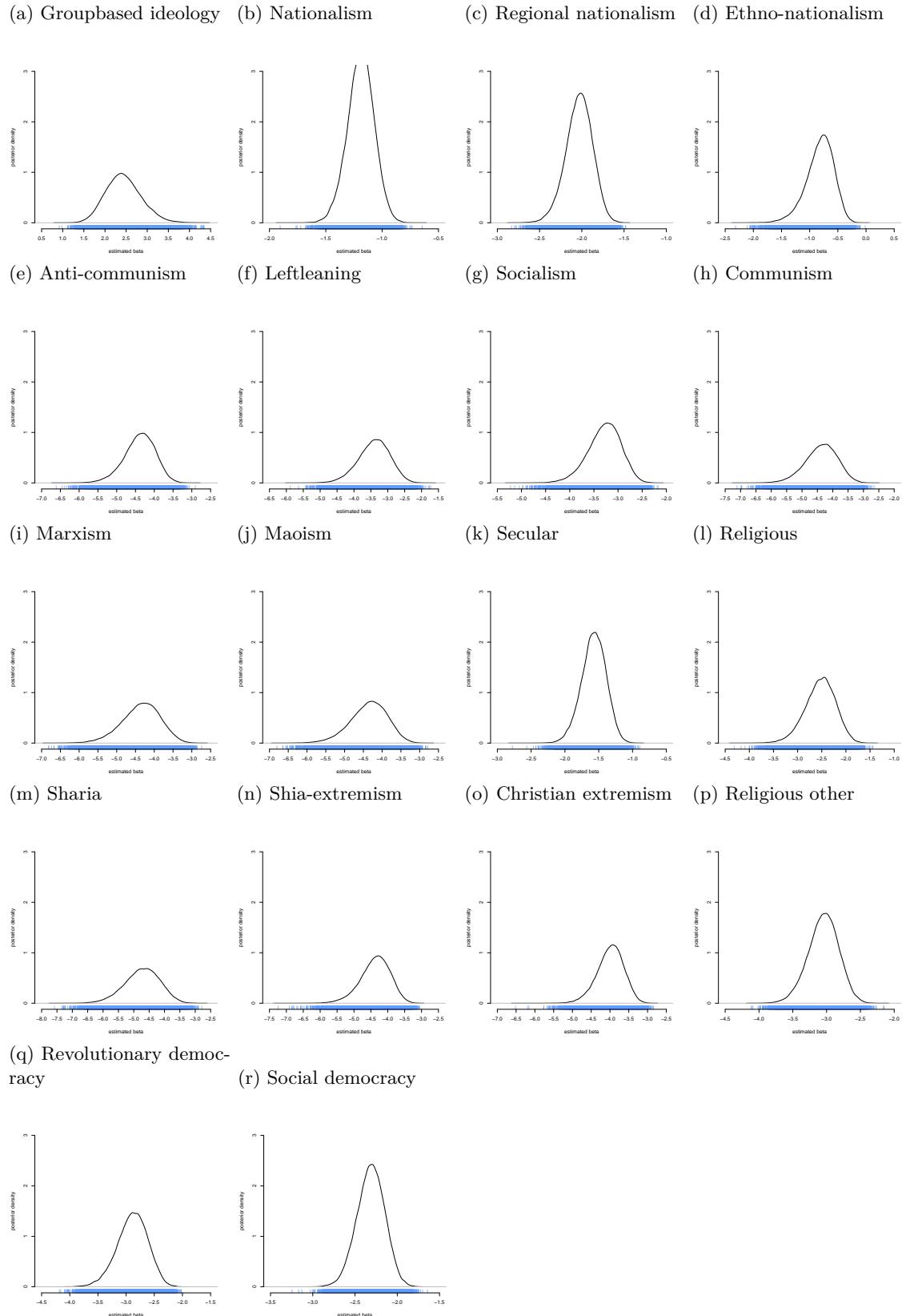


Figure 17: Autocorrelation plots for the discrimination parameter measured for the socialist-nationalist dimension. The five colours identify the five chains. (Part 1)

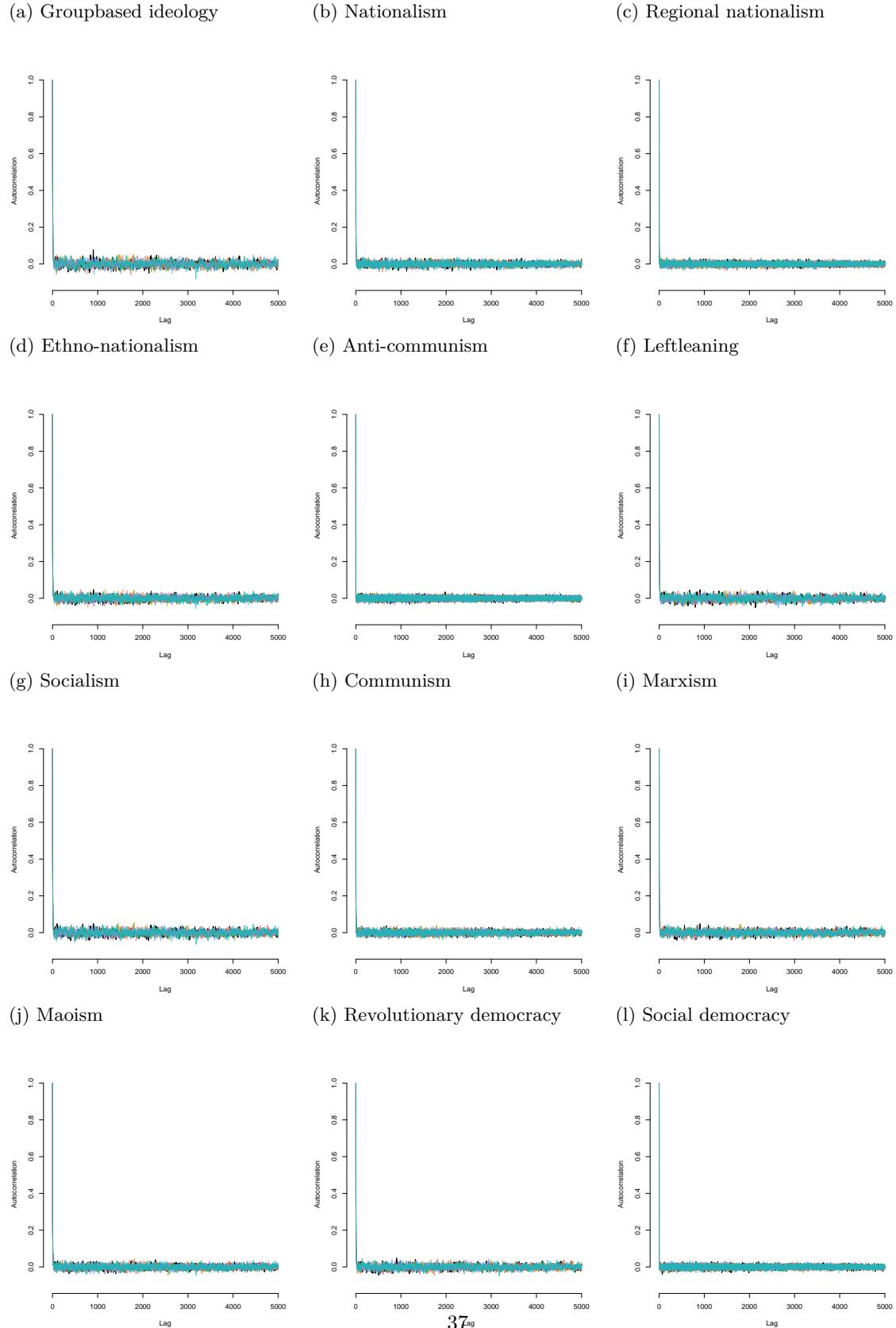


Figure 18: Autocorrelation plots for the discrimination parameter measured for the socialist-nationalist dimension. The five colours identify the five chains. (Part 2)

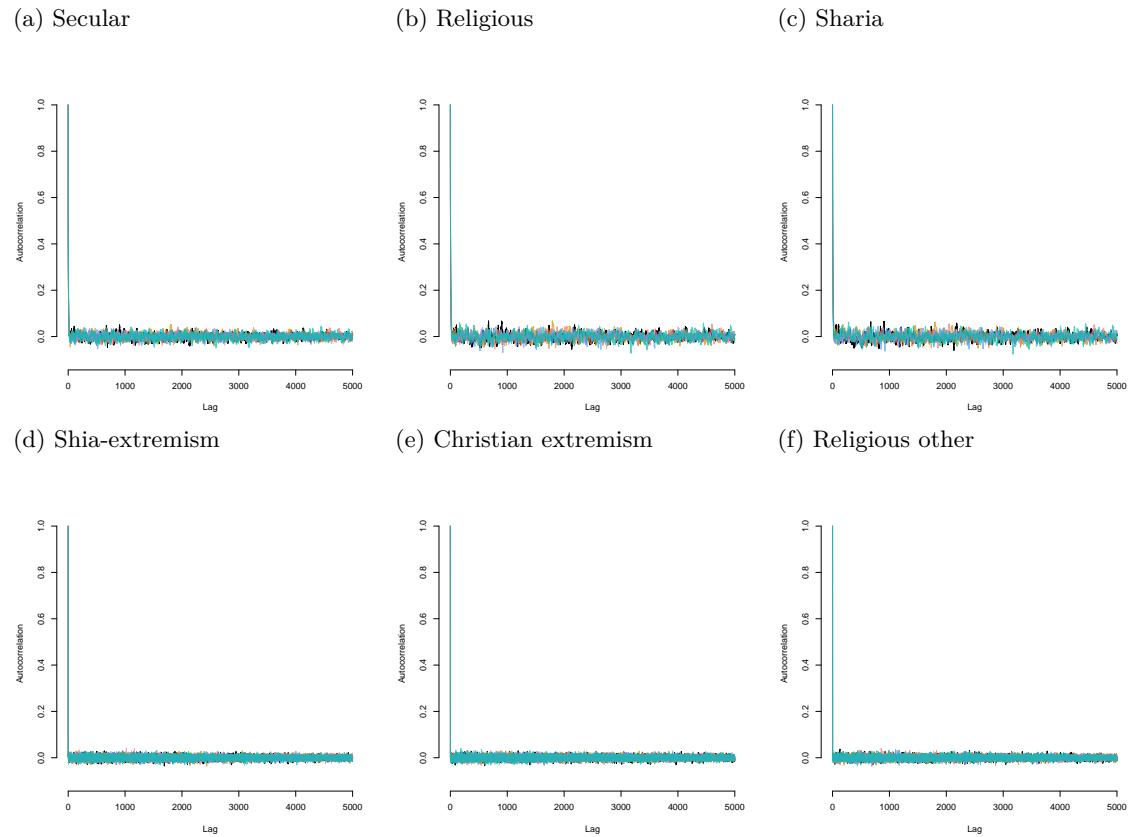


Figure 19: Autocorrelation plots for the discrimination parameter measured for the secular-religious dimension. The five colours identify the five chains. (Part 1)

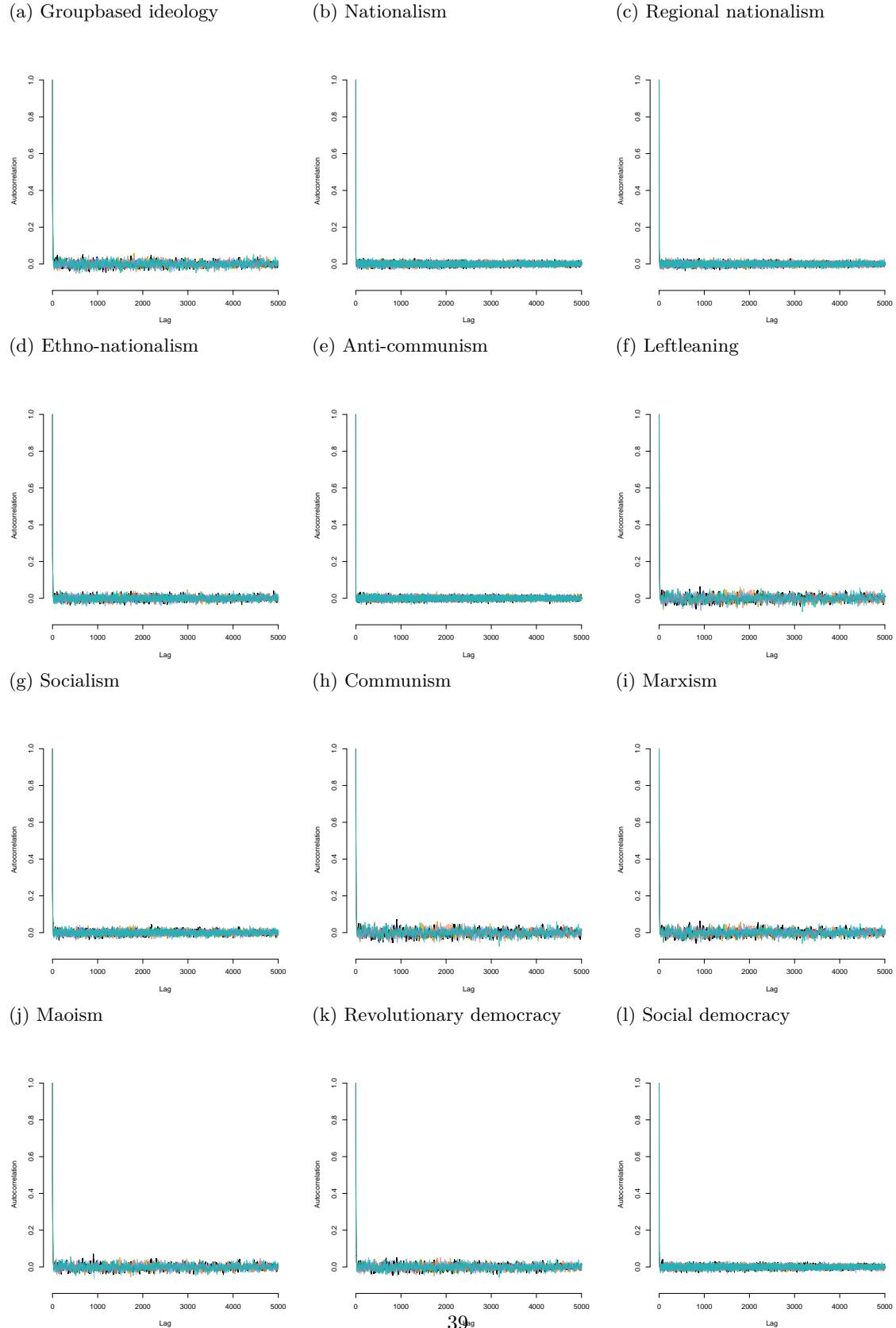


Figure 20: Autocorrelation plots for the discrimination parameter measured for the secular-religious dimension. The five colours identify the five chains. (Part 2)

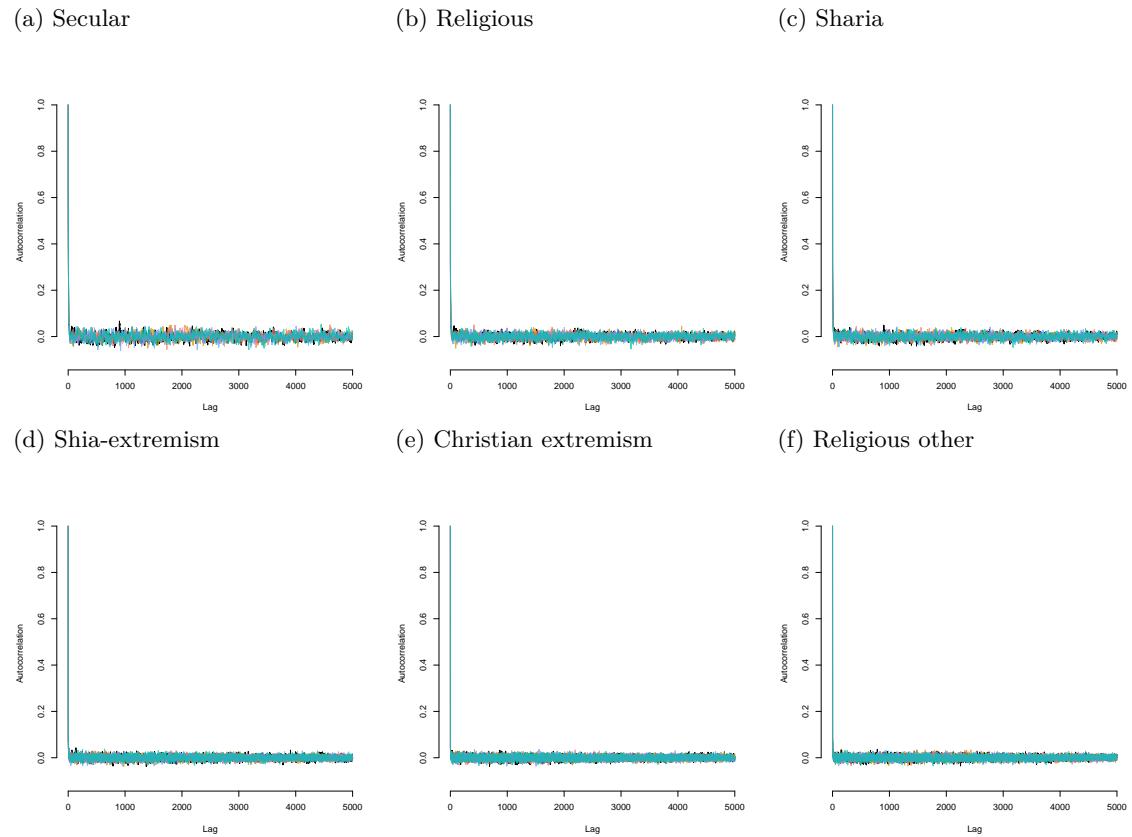
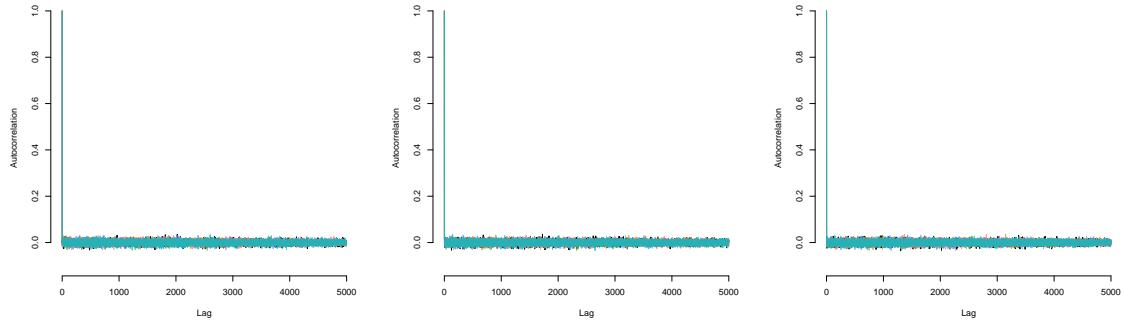


Figure 21: Autocorrelation plots for the difficulty parameter measured for both dimensions. The five colours identify the five chains. (Part 1)

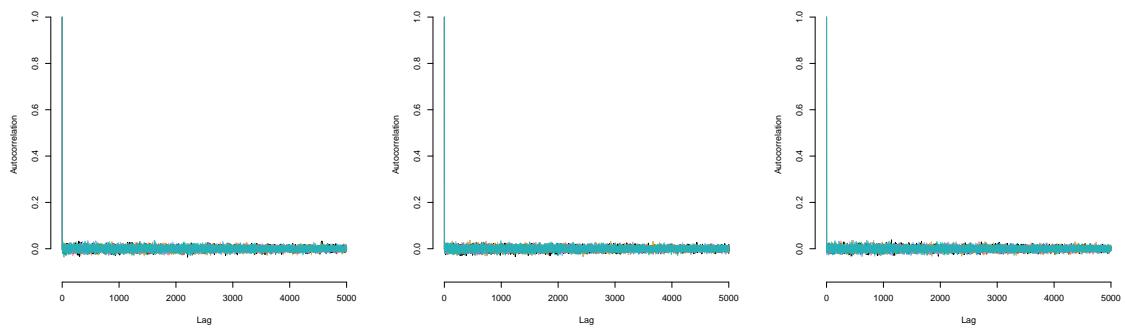
(a) Groupbased ideology (b) Nationalism (c) Regional nationalism



(d) Ethno-nationalism

(e) Anti-communism

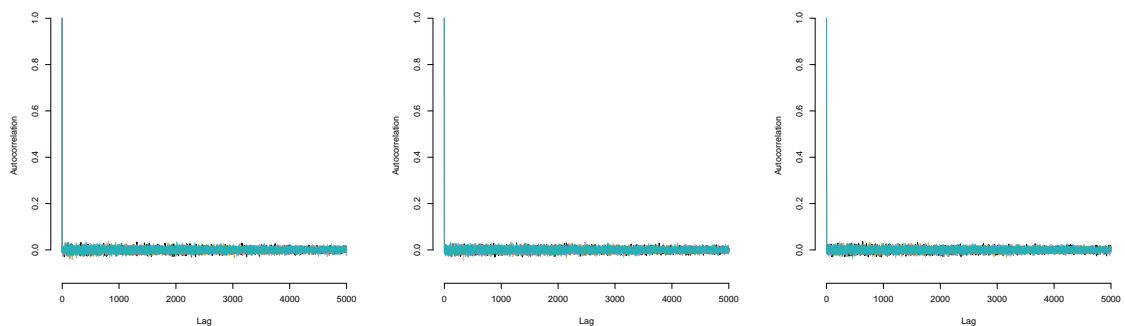
(f) Leftleaning



(g) Socialism

(h) Communism

(i) Marxism



(j) Maoism

(k) Revolutionary democracy

(l) Social democracy

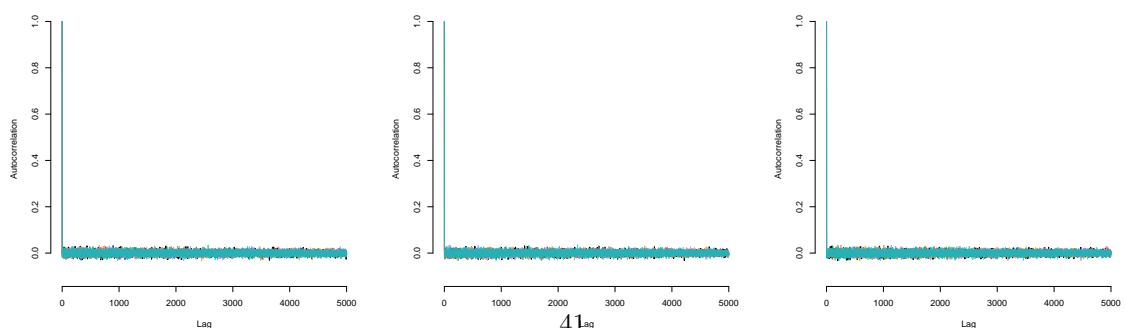


Figure 22: Autocorrelation plots for the difficulty parameter measured for both dimensions. The five colours identify the five chains. (Part 2)

