IDENTIFYING THE POLITICS OF TRUST AND BELONGING IN NOWADAYS' DEMOCRACIES: A STUDY OF THE PUBLIC CONSENSUS IN FOUR EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

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Abstract

Recent voices among the communitarian thinkers led by Adam Seligman and David Montgomery have formulated a new version of the communitarian critique, highlighting the downsides of Western political systems centered on human rights. The communitarian critique in all its facets never seems to extinguish its emotional appeal, but it would remain to a large extent inchoate if it is not backed up by empirical evidence showing popular support for its arguments in a significant number of countries. In its theoretical part, the paper reviews literature concerning the communitarian critiques of liberalism. In its empirical part, the paper discusses the fluctuation between liberal and communitarian policy-making in the agendas of the most important political parties in France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In the process, it presents indicators that reflect the values embedded in individualism and communitarianism upon analyzing data from the Manifesto Project database. It then weighs the scores of these indicators in the voting patterns of the main political parties in these four countries within the past half-century. The empirical results show an overall downward trajectory towards more communitarian policy-making, which has also opened a debate on the role of the welfare state in the framework of the communitarian argument.

In the post-cold war world of the 21ˢᵗ century, the liberal democracy has become the most advertised frame of political systems to such an extent that Francis Fukuyama was able to easily argue that the political history of the humankind was at the zenith of its path and that henceforth the world order would find an asymptotic long-term equilibrium.[1] The expected convergence towards liberal democracy in the Western hemisphere also meant that individualism was believed to attain the status of an unquestionable and prevailing value all over the world in the form of human rights. The latter rights are claim-rights that protect the individual human beings

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[1] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), pp. 3-7.

as such from the state and demand from the latter the positive obligation to fulfill the integral needs of each member of the society.

Recently, voices among the communitarian thinkers spearheaded by Adam Seligman and David Montgomery rebut the aura of optimism surrounding the liberal order and argue that political systems centering on human rights may end up in a tragedy.[2] On their view, half a century of human rights advocacy has seemingly promulgated an unstable democratic system that is prone to degenerate into autocracies, populism, and demagogy. Individual rights have proliferated at the expense of any sense of shared belonging, which can be seen as a primary ontological necessity of the human beings as social animals, as opposed to the liberal philosophical conception of an unencumbered self.[3]

The communitarian critique in all its facets seems to never exhaust its emotional appeal, but it would remain largely inchoate if no empirical checks are operated to indicate whether its arguments concur with a shared discomfort found in the democratic societies. The specific question that interests me here is To what extent is the communitarian critique a view shared by a significant majority of European Union citizens? In the first part of the paper, I address this quandary by reviewing the literature concerning the communitarian critique of individualism, giving special emphasis on Seligman and Montgomery's critique of human rights. In the second part, I analyze empirical evidence of the voting patterns of citizens of the European Union, particularly in France, Italy, Germany, and the United Kingdom, using data from the Manifesto Project database.[4] Although the United Kingdom recently left the European Union, it remains a very important country to study, especially in terms of understanding the voting metrics relating to the Brexit watershed event. To respond to policy demands, in the paper I will also try to set up reliable and comparable measures for all the analyzed states, which will open perspectives for further studies on the role of the welfare state in the framework of the communitarian argument.

1.   The Nuanced Conception of Liberty

Liberalism, rather than a one-sided, unambiguous political doctrine, is an array of discourses that prioritize the concept of liberty over other theorized values. It is a corpus of multi-faceted arguments, classical and contemporary, with a manifest proclivity towards freedom as the main normative societal pillar.[5] This definition does not encompass the essence of liberalism, which lies in the axiomatic premise of what the value of liberty is. In this regard, Benjamin Constant argued that from the dawn of humanity up to the French Revolution, freedom existed as a

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[2] Adam B. Seligman and David W. Montgomery, "The Tragedy of Human Rights: Liberalism and the Loss of Belonging," *Society*, Vol. 56 (2019), pp. 1-2.

[3] Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 70.

[4] Andrea Volkens et al., *The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR), Version 2020a* (Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung, 2020).

[5] Gerald Gaus et al., "Liberalism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Edward N.Zalta, 2020), retrieved from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/liberalism/

concept ascribed to the whole, or to the community.[6] He calls the liberty attached to collectivity the liberty of the ancients, consisting in the right to collectively decide the functions of the government, brought together in the public space, in order to make decisions regarding foreign policy, home affairs, voting legislation, and deliberation. This kind of liberty implies a total subjection of the individual to the whole, and has been very indicatively defined as holistic.[7]

After the French Revolution in 1789, there was a significant paradigm shift in the Western understanding of liberty. It was a result of a re-focusing from the aggregate entity that was free to the individual-monads that composed it: the liberty of the moderns was in its essence a liberty of the individual human beings. The individuals were henceforth free to speak up their minds without censorship, could not be exiled, and were not only free from government interference in private life but were also protected from the violation of that right by other individuals.[8] Luis Dumont would refine and nuance the concepts of holistic and individual liberty arguing that each of them can apply to different social classes within the same societies. He would also trace the birth of the individualism that underlies our liberal values today back to the first Christian traditions which would gradually build up to overthrow the old, hierarchy-based, tribalist values of collectivity.[9] Constant and Dumont, who were inspired by John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Immanuel Kant, and the classical liberal tradition, helped develop the various strains of liberal thinking that form the basis of today's conception of liberty. The contemporary individualist conception of liberty was further shaped by Isaiah Berlin (in his *Two Concepts of Liberty*) and John Rawls (in his *Political Liberalism*). For us, of particular importance here will be the powerful distinction that Berlin draws between *negative liberty*, or individuals' rights to be free of constraint imposed by other people or institutions, and *positive liberty* – the state which emancipates the individual, empowers her action, and enables her to achieve her willed goals.[10]

The review of the prominent thinkers who laid down the basics of the modern-day political sense of liberty is necessary for understanding the contemporary American liberalism, which I will refer to in this paper to elaborate on my claims. As Michael Walzer has it, liberalism is enacted in a society through the theoretical acceptance of four mobilities: geographic free movement, social mobility, material mobility, and political mobility.[11] The conception of the individual as free to move geographically, reach a desired place across the socio-economic ladder, achieve or break institutional and personal relationship, choose a political leader or adhere to a party is at the basis of today's notion of human rights. A liberal society thus upholds the four freedoms as claim-rights of the individuals; moreover, as Rawls

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[6] Benjamin Constant, "The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with that of the Moderns," *Political Writings* (London: Cambridge University press, 1819), pp. 1-2.

[7] Ibid., p. 2.

[8] Ibid., p. 4.

[9] Luis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 23-26.

[10] Joshua Cherniss and Henry Hardy, "Isaiah Berlin," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Edward N. Zalta, 2020).

[11] Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Capitalism," *Political Theory,* Vol. 18, No. 1 (1990), pp. 6-23.

argues, it grounds democracy and pluralism in the toleration of difference of opinions as a necessary condition for upholding the society's liberty.[12]

1.1 The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism

Communitarianism is not a school of thought or an alternative political paradigm to liberalism *per se,* unlike communism, state socialism, or fascism. It is an approach that emphasizes the importance of individuals' social relations and interactions that create a collectivity. At the same time, it offers a powerful critique of liberalism.[13] Collectivities, according to this stance, sometimes need to be prioritized over the individual in policy making, especially in stewarding global communities and tackling global threats. Furthermore, communitarians' claim to debunk what appears to be the universal imposition of political individualism in the form of human rights, which on their view is neither morally nor politically correct, as the forms of life and traditions of particular collectivities vary considerably from context to context.[14]

There are three main communitarian critiques of liberalism that are particularly significant. The first one is rooted in Karl Marx's *German Ideology* and holds that the liberal political theory is a product of particular liberal social practice and that it universalizes its discourse to obscure all other possibilities. In this way, Western societies have created a civil context, in which the individual citizen believes to be absolutely free and unencumbered from obligations to community but is actually deprived of his or her belonging to a group and its traditions.[15] By implementing their liberal freedoms, Western societies have deprived their human members of their communities of reference, common heritage, and stories, and have thus reduced them to fragments, such that each of them is a stranger to the others.[16] Arguing that liberalism puts forward the ideal of the Promethean humanity – the dogmatic and relentless trust in science, progress, and individuality – communitarians contend that the liberal view of historical process is an illusion. The blind faith in reason has brought about a disenchantment and irreversible losses of the sense of community and of a shared social universe.[17]

The second communitarian critique of liberalism is famously known as the critique of the *unencumbered self.* It highlights the point that the liberal political philosophy tacitly assumes an impoverished concept of the human self. To make its own case, neoliberalism claims that a common standard respect of freedoms ought to be applied to every human being, regardless of traditions and mores. It hails the act of dismissing thousands of years of accumulated knowledge and common heritage as an act of liberation of the unencumbered

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[12] Ibid., p. 16.

[13] Daniel Bell, "Communitarianism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Edward N. Zalta, 2020); Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, p. 71; Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "Individualism, the Validation of Faith, and the Social Nature of Religion in Modernity," in Richard K. Fenn (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion* (London: Blackwell, 2001), pp. 161-175.

[14] Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, pp. 23–38.

[15] Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Capitalism," pp. 6-23.

[16] Ibid, p. 9.

[17] Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*, p. 69.

individual, who is now ready to evolve. In this way, the liberal theory thoroughly misrepresents the real life and the phenomenology of human existence,[18] as it rests on a version of the Hobbesian assumption that views human connections as mere market friendships based on an expected reciprocity and hinging on a narrowly defined self-interest.[19] Conversely, against the self-perpetuating hypnotic discourse of liberalism, communitarians argue that being engaged in social interaction and communities of reference is in the very nature of the human enterprise. The unencumbered human being, cut loose from nearly all social bonds, is only a mythical, lonely figure completely disengaged with reality, as much as the Promethean ideal cherished in the liberal narrative. Finally, according to this critique, the remarkable divide between the everyday need for communal experience and the liberal ideology engenders in the individual a deep psychological problem which is a direct consequence of isolation and hinders innovation.[20]

1.2   The Tragedy of the Human Rights: Communities of Trust against Societies of Confidence

A third, recently released communitarian critique of liberalism is formulated by Seligman and Montgomery, who argue that the liberal moral institution of human rights as prioritized over natural or constitutional rights has played a silent role in the current rise of authoritarian and antiliberal leaders.[21] Ever since the bipolar system of the cold war collapsed along with the Berlin Wall, liberalism has been getting a ground on the international arena, but while universalizing the Western values as undeniable virtues, it has also neglected other meaningful human necessities and moral worldviews, which anchor the dimension of belonging into the sense of human identity.[22] The argument thus points to the socio-cultural processes involved in the formation of the human identities: communities play a pivotal role in framing the sense of belonging, which is the backbone of cognitive action, as well as of one's worldview and ability to engage with the world and others.

Echoing Nietzsche, Seligman and Montgomery claim that the conception of human rights has (1) institutionalized a situation in which the notion of God, the archetypical common good, is abolished via secularism; (2) fostered the idea of the morally autonomous individual; and (3) pushed towards the protection of different sets of individual rights, rather than of a collective idea of the common good. Consequently, the tendency to safeguard the conception of human rights has given a rise to a community of strangers with no common moral values, which is held together by the judicial system, with justice conceived as the highest virtue. Thus, the peculiar deficit ensuing from the existential alienation of the individual from her kindred has brought about a latent, sublimated longing for community, which finds an expression in a greater sense of national, regional, or religious belonging. It is to be noted here that as human

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[18] Ibid., p. 72.

[19] Ibid., p. 73.

[20] Michael Walzer, "The Communitarian Critique of Capitalism," pp. 10-11.

[21] Adam B. Seligman and David W. Montgomery, "The Tragedy of Human Rights: Liberalism and the Loss of Belonging," pp. 203-204.

[22] Ibid., p. 205.

rights by themselves provide no sense of belonging, no sentiment of a shared community or special bonds, they can be enacted uniformly only by bureaucratic organizations and welfare agencies. This however has brought up an unfortunate effect – the remarkable rift between an abstract regime of claim rights and what Seligman and Montgomery call a "community of mutual care and shared belonging."[23]

From this viewpoint, the proposed concept of belonging appears as the very antithesis of human alienation. Communities of trust feature shared dispositions and morality, feelings of solidarity and common experience, familiarity and peace, as well as a sense of security spurring from the idea of sameness. For their part, human-rights-centered societies cannot be further from the idea of trust or belonging: they foster multicultural values and diverse moral beliefs that are upheld via bureaucratic legal institutions, thus tacitly equating the idea of the other as a danger, which in turn requires security. The rise of right-wing populist movements seems an inevitable corollary of this analysis: xenophobia, identity politics, and group supremacy are instruments that can easily canalize a degenerate and disoriented longing for trust and belonging. The challenge here then is how to virtuously cultivate the claims to belonging to a community without building walls and exercising violence during the assimilation of refugees and migrants, without promoting racist and ethnocentric policies of segregation, which entail authoritarianism and apartheid.[24]

Seligman and Montgomery end their case by urging us to take belonging seriously in policies – such as development projects, awareness campaigns, and political undertakings – towards seeing difference as a resource, rather than a trigger for security.[25] These authors however do not go in-depth with a policy advise or a slightest indication over which institution should be tasked with making belonging the central societal framework. Now, having set the background of the individualism-communitarianism debate, I will proceed with a discussion of the extent to which the broad issues raised by the communitarian critiques are reflected in the voting pattern of three European Founding Member States with the addition of the United Kingdom.

II.   *Methodology and Data Analysis*

For a good sense of whether the communitarian critique matches the wishes, the desires, and the visions of a significant portion of the contemporary democratic societies, I shall search through the data of the comparative manifesto project. [26] The Manifesto covers the most insightful and updated resources used in the mainstream research literature, which synthesize the ideological stances of more than a thousand political parties on a number of policy areas, as published in their manifestos in more than 50 countries between 1945 and 2020. More specifically, the manifesto project indicates the share of the manifestos of the political parties in a specific policy area in terms of the number of sentences devoted to it. Thus, a value of *x* in

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[23] Ibid., pp. 206-207.
[24] Ibid., pp. 207-208.
[25] Ibid., p. 208.
[26] Andrea Volkens et al, *The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR), Version 2020a.*

one of the variables indicates that *x percent* of the sentences in the party's manifesto represented in that row were assigned to a policy category by an expert coder.[27] The data in the Manifesto are indicative for the stances of the various parties in terms of key policy areas, examples of which may be welfare extension and retrenchment, tendency towards military spending or peacefulness, preference for traditional or progressive values et cetera.[28] The indicated policy areas are listed in numbers and coded in terms of variables, which cover the key positions of the political parties on the most important issues.[29]

I have operationalized the citizens' demand for individualist or communitarian policies across the chosen countries for the period from 1990 to 2020 by composing the indicators of *Individualism and Holism Demand* for each election in the countries of France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom. The two metrics are meant to complement the Rile Index of the Manifesto Project, which assembles various policy demands into a measure for the right-left divide on an ideological level. I have thus defined individualism as a set of liberal values setting forth the predominance of the interest of the individuals and non-state organizations (supranational, sub-national) over the nation state, corporations, religious institutions and trade unions, herewith understood as the archetypal collective institutions. The metric *Individualism Demand* is composed by the sum of the frequencies of words in party manifestos that coded positive for: (a) support for the European Union, desirability of increasing the Union's competences and erosion of state sovereignty; (b) favorable mentions of federalism or decentralization of political and economic power; (c) necessity for administrative efficiency, such as cutting down on civil service; (d) the importance of the modernization of industry, technology, and science; (e) limiting state expenditure on education; (f) unfavorable mentions of patriotism and nationalism; (g) opposition to traditional or religious moral values, with support for divorce, abortion, separation for church and state; (h) freedom and human rights, featuring favorable mentions of importance of personal freedoms, the idea of individualism; (i) mentions fostering multiculturalism and ethnic heterogeneity; (j) negative stance towards trade unions and labor groups. Upon summing up the frequencies of the listed policy areas, I have multiplied the score of the share of the votes that each party won in parliament to obtain a weighed score accounting for the public demand for individualist policy areas.

As an antithesis to individualism, I have created the *Holism Demand* index*,* which is formed by the sum total of frequencies of policy areas that imply a preference for a collective welfare over that of the individual. The collectivity reference may vary according to the political narrative, including over policy areas such as the environment and the preservation of global commons, the safeguarding state sovereignty, as well as the protection of vulnerable groups and religious institutions. The variables chosen for this index are: (a) negative references to international cooperation and/or ones favoring national independence and autarky; (b)

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[27] Thomas König et al., "Estimating Party Positions Across Countries and Time – A Dynamic Latent Variable Model for Manifesto Data," *Political Analysis* (2013), pp. 468–491.

[28] Will Lowe, Kenneth Benoit, Slava Mikhaylov, and Michael Laver, "Scaling Policy Preferences from Coded Political Texts," *Legislative Studies Quarterly,* Vol. 36, No. 1 (2011), pp. 123–155.

[29] Andrea Volkens et al, *The Manifesto Data Collection. Manifesto Project (MRG/CMP/MARPOR), Version 2020a.*

Euroscepticism; (c) positive attitude towards corporations and government; (d) positive stance for Keynesian demand management, such as increase in aggregate demand and investment in public infrastructures; (e) support for anti-growth policies, such as ones in line with environmentalist claims against productive growth; (f) favorable mentions of environmental protection, including on the preservation of natural resources, the protection of animal and plant rights; (g) favorable mentions of traditional morality, that includes censorship for immoral behavior, maintenance of the traditional family, and support for religious institutions; (h) support for equality, special protection for vulnerable groups, and fair redistribution of resources; (i) negative references to multiculturalism, appeals to cultural homogeneity in society; (j) support for the agricultural sector and farming communities.[30] The *Holism Demand index* is aggregated as a mirror image of the *Individualism Demand index,* featuring an equal number of control variables, which are summed up into one score for each political party over time, then multiplied by the share of the vote that the party received in each election. To calculate a comparative score, I have summed up the two scores of all the parties weighed by the vote share for each election, so as to obtain the overall preference towards individualism and holism. I have finally drawn the difference between the obtained scores of *Individualism Demand* and *Holism Demand* that a specific country featured in parliament at each election point. In this way, a graph is created whereby scores above zero reflect the relative propensity towards individualism that the majority of a population has voted for in a country, whereas scores below zero show the relative preference towards communitarian policies. The graphs containing the findings are displayed in the Appendix at the end of the article.

III.   *Analyzing Comparative Voter Preferences for Individualism and Holism*

As Figure 1 shows, the four countries examined in the period 1970-2020 display an overall shift in the trend of public consensus towards communitarian policy making – the parties that have a greater voter share over time show a tendency toward supporting the communitarian arguments that compose the *Holism Demand Index.* Italy is an interesting example of change in the ideological resource of its political parties, scoring highly individualist with both peaks and troughs (in fact the absolute maximum of the function) between 1972 and 2008; then dropping more than thirty-five percentage points of its support for individualism from 2008 to 2013. Figure 2 offers a specific picture of how the Italian parties range in terms of both individualism and holism on the different elections, as well as an explanation on the shift from individualism to holism. After 2008, the preference for holism emerges with an increase in the voter share of the Five-Star Movement (coded in yellow under the label special party) and Lega Nord (coded in brown as nationalist party). For the same period, the main democratic parties (the left leaning Partito Democratico and Liberi e Uguali, as well as the conservative Forza Italia) also converge to lower scores for individualism, hypothetically attempting to compete with the populist parties as the voters turn to the latter.

For its part, France features as the most holist-scoring country over time, starting from a total of 4% in holism in the 1972 elections, reaching a relative maximum of 1% individualist in 1986, and then an absolute minimum of 13 points in holism in 1997, before going back to

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[30] Ibid.

lower holist values along the lines of its present-day communitarianism. The graph in Figure 4 also shows a lasting tendency toward holism in almost all of the key French parties, of which the highest-scoring are the nationalists of Front National, the socialists of France Insoumise, and the French Communist Party. The absolute minimum of 13 points in holism is due to the strong performance of Front National reaching 14% of the voter share, the strong ideological score of France Insoumise, and the overall holist attitudes of the other parties in the country. After a brief interval of positive individualism under the Fillon cabinet in 2007, the score goes back to the holist mean trend values towards the present.

Next, Figures 1 and 3 indicate, as intuitively expected, that the United Kingdom has on average a preference for individualist political stances, reaching a positive peak of 13 points in this regard in 1983 under the continuing Thatcher government. After 1992, the country embarks on a negative-sloping trajectory towards milder levels of individualism, reaching a local trough in 2001 and 2005 under the Blair leadership. A higher score of individualism characterizes the first Cameron government in 2010, and as Brexit is discussed and becomes closer within his second cabinet, the country turns holist, scoring two percentage points in holism for the first time. Interestingly, as Theresa May assumes office with a mandate for government in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum, the parliament assumes an individualist score of 8 points, whereas as Boris Johnson is elected in office in 2019 to replace May, the United Kingdom turns holist once again. The ideological change that generates the negative sloping trend towards holistic features is mainly produced by the Conservatives, which adopted less individualistic stances in 2015 and 2019, as well as by UKIP, whose high score in the communitarian arguments significantly affects the curve.

Finally, Figures 1 and 5 showing Germany's trajectory prove interesting to read. In the German case, the aggregated data from 1970 to 1990 belong to the Federal Republic of Germany, which after that incorporated under international law the German Democratic Republic within its continuous legal identity. In the examined timespan, the Federal Republic of Germany shows a sinusoidal trend, reaching the highest individualist score of 17 under the Helmut Schmidt chancellorship in 1976. Then, the trend embarks on a negative slope in the reunification period, reaching the highest score in holism under chancellor Helmut Kohl in 1990. After that, the country climbs up along individualist preferences, reaching a local maximum under the first Angela Merkel cabinet in 2002. In the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, and throughout the European sovereign debt crisis of 2012, the Merkel cabinets turned more holist as a consequence of the deep change in the public preferences induced by the economic depression. These changes are detectable in Figure 4, which sheds light on how the most important German parties advanced their ideological stance over time. The CDU and the Free Democratic Party have always maintained an individualist stance, whereas the more left-leaning parties of Die Linke, the Greens, and SPD have proven more versatile.

Overall, the findings show over time a long-term tendency of the public attitudes towards communitarian policies, namely Eurosceptic, national corporatist, and protectionist stances. This might be explained by the intense period of stagnation and depression following to the financial crisis and the later period of Brexit. Sensing a change in public preferences, the major political parties in Europe have adopted an inward-looking re-orientation, which

currently appears to be deepening. Italy shows a greater volatility in the scores, turning from one of the most proactive European Union and globalization supporter to being more Eurosceptic and less multiculturalist. Further studies can be conducted to extend the analysis of these composed scores to all EU member states, or to an in-depth analysis of the industrialized countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A further next step could also be to include a score of the countries' political ideologies in terms of their right/left narratives and create – along with the individualism-holism – a four-dimensional axis to achieve a better picture of the trends in the public attitudes. It is finally interesting to note that, *prima facie*, the countries that are well-known for their high score in the democracy indexes (such as those of Freedom House) show a steady orientation of their public attitudes towards a return to the community. Seligman and Montgomery's insight thus seems to be attested by an initial empirical analysis, although the small sample can only have a statistical value of limited significance.

IV. Conclusion

This paper first offers a review of the key points and the various nuances of liberalism, including the policies of individualism, which are a substantial part of it. It then outlines the three main communitarian critiques of liberalism, drawing on Seligman and Montgomery's argument of the perceived lack of trust and belonging in societies where individual differences are highlighted and upheld by law while the need of security is paramount. The paper further gives a preliminary answer to the question of the correlation between Seligman and Montgomery's intuition and the empirical voting patterns of the electorate of the three largest EU founding states and the United Kingdom. The findings from the four countries, which can be expanded further on by statistically significant studies concerning a larger pool of countries, show that, over time, a remarkable public sentiment has taken a shape towards communitarian policies and at the expense of liberalism. This tendency has given a rise to Euroscepticism, corporatism, a growing urgency to act on the climate change, and a push towards Keynesian economic policy, all of which can be detected even in countries with great individualist traditions, such as Germany and UK. The findings reflect the growing share of positive public attitudes towards the politics of trust and belonging to a community, which the preceding liberal policy making may have precipitated. As a shift towards higher levels of communitarianism is detected, further econometric studies could determine what would be the main watershed events that engender this change. It would be also interesting to find out whether the politics of belonging described by Seligman and Montgomery can be channeled through the institutionalization of a stronger welfare state. It is indeed clear that what Albena Azmanova[31] defines as a broad societal agreement on social rights under the ticket of welfare state is, so far, the only componential entity of the contemporary democratic societies that is capable of catering to the politics of belonging as advanced by the communitarians.

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[31] Albena Azmanova, *Capitalism on Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020).

APPENDIX

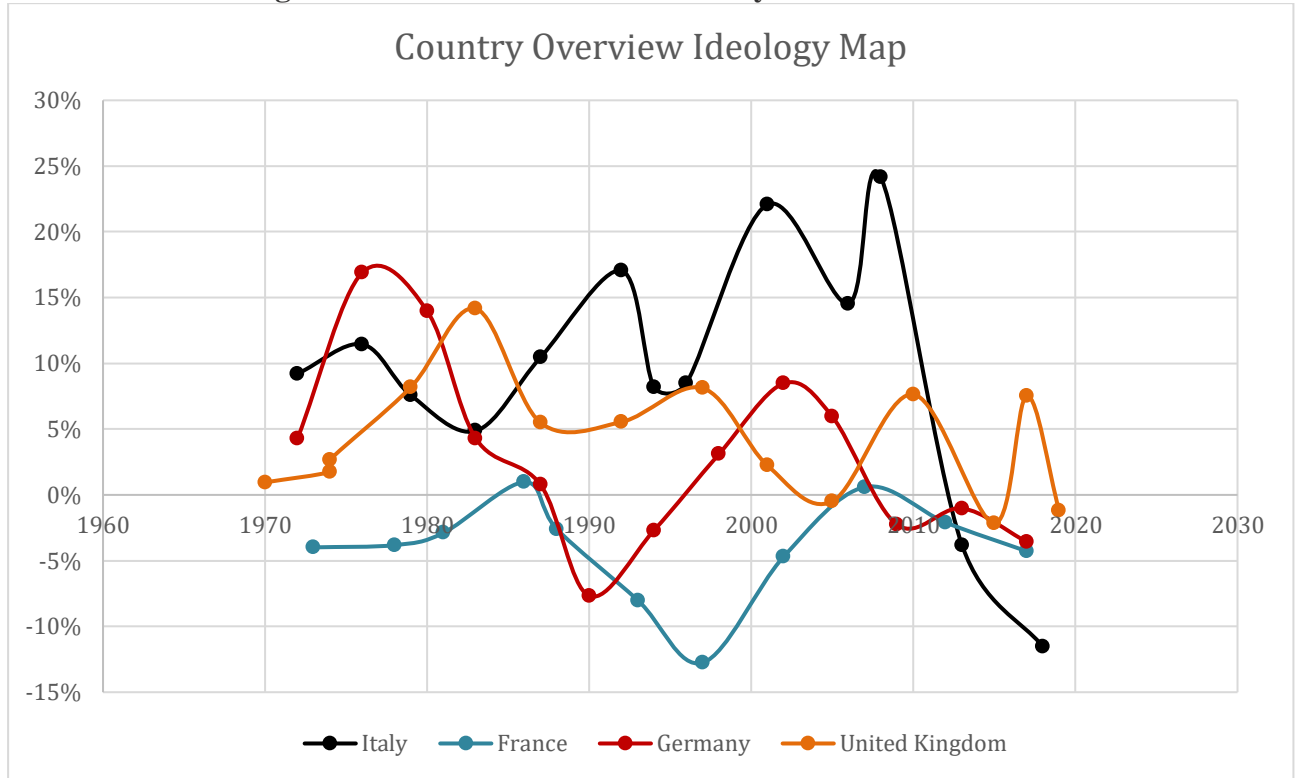### Figure 1: Individualism-Holism Policy Demand Score

Country Overview Ideology Map

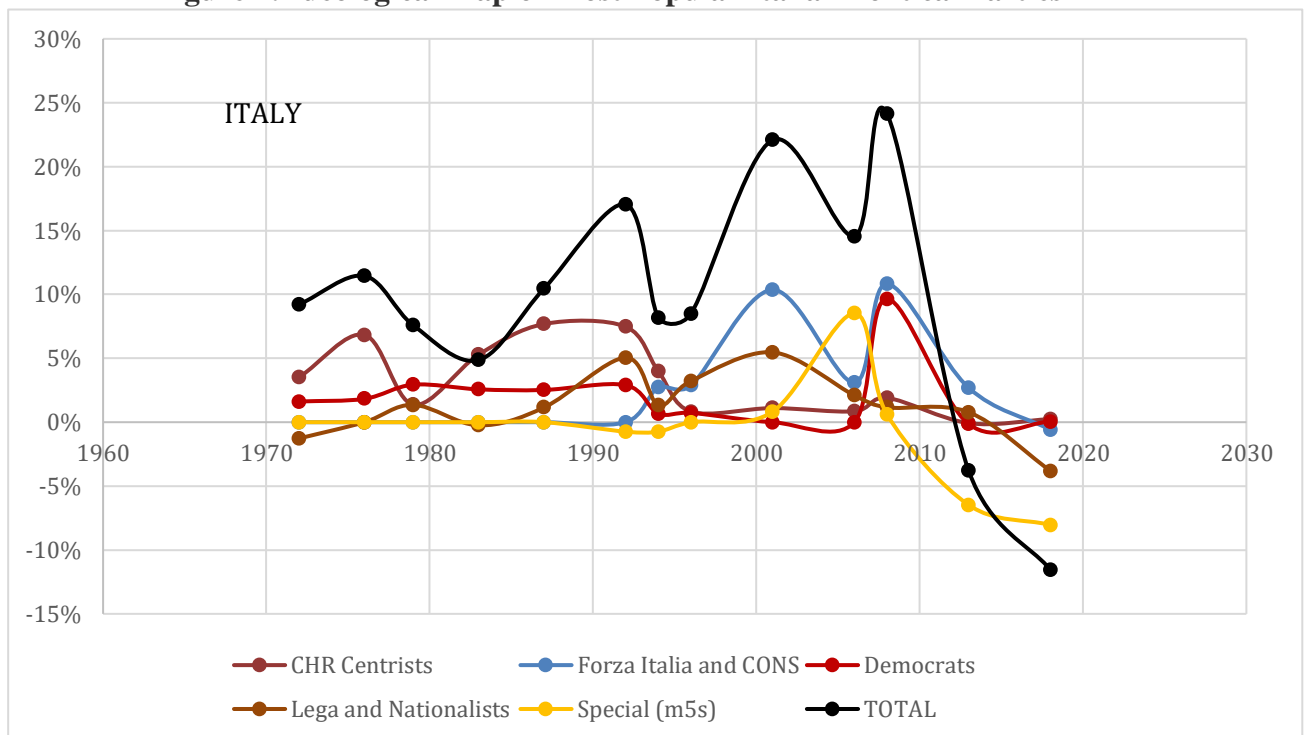### Figure 2: Ideological Map of Most Popular Italian Political Parties

ITALY

Figure 3: Ideological Map of the Most Popular British Political Parties
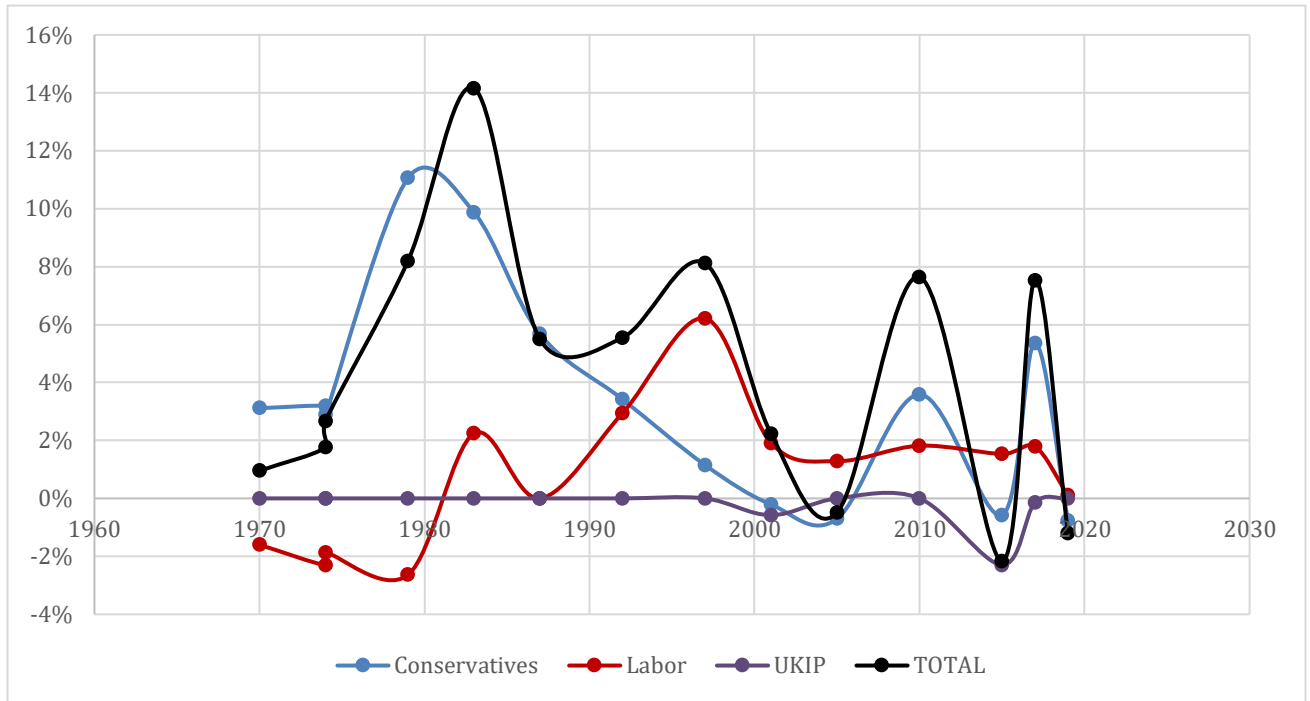

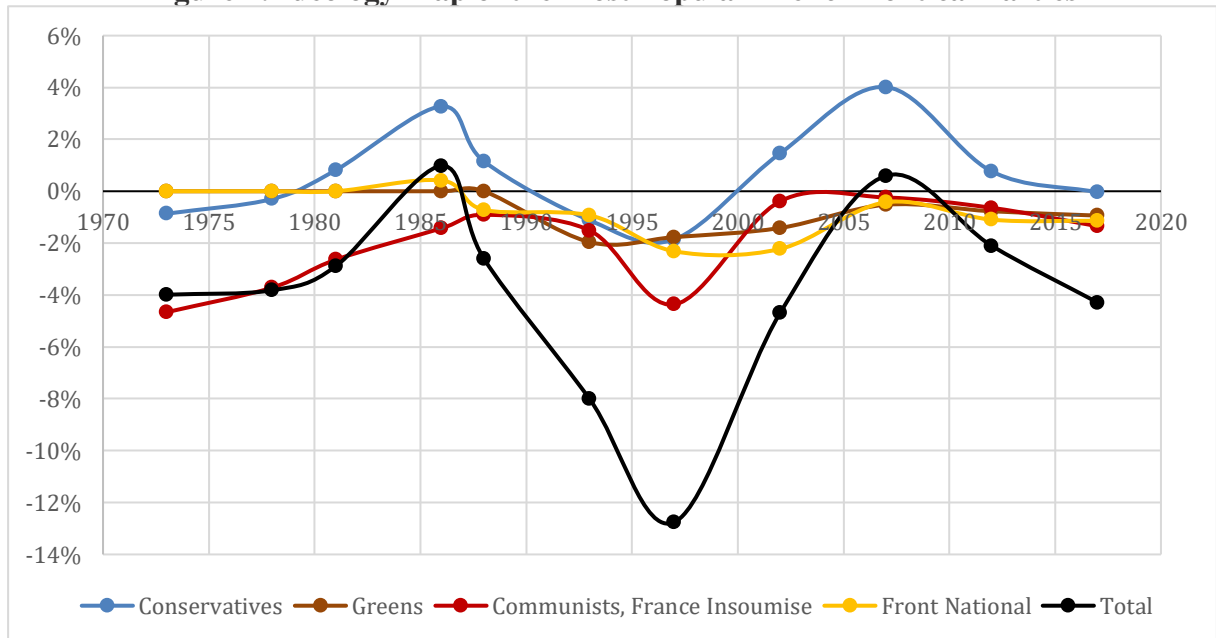**Figure 4: Ideology Map of the Most Popular French Political Parties**

Figure 5: Ideology Map of the Most Important German Political Parties

GERMANY