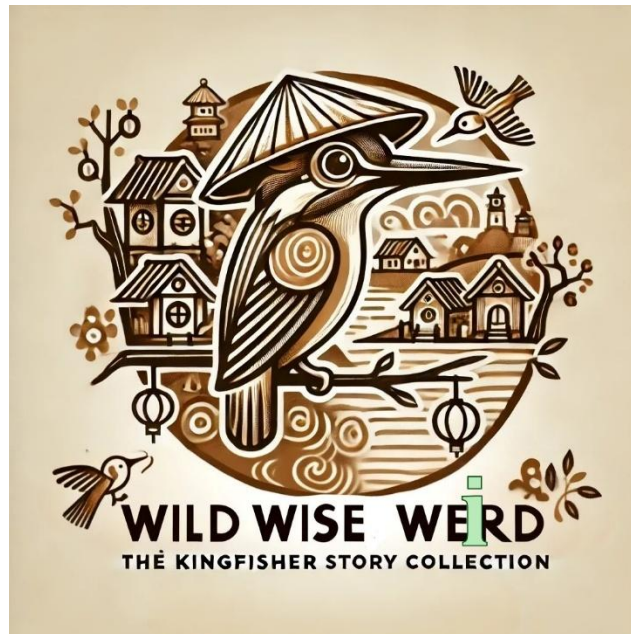


# Beyond the Issues: How Ideology Shapes Our Voting Choices

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“The Crows, however, find this Crow 2.0 to be a scammer, for he looks nothing like Crow but still claims to be in the family. They all gather to chase him away. It takes several beatings for the crow family to believe this is indeed a family relative. Crow 2.0 is shocked...

Yet, even as he is accepted back into the family, he becomes a new hate target, for they are envious of his beautiful feathers.

They turn to ostracize him. If they have food, they do not share it with him. Famished, Crow 2.0 dares not to sleep. He stays awake all night with his ears up to overhear the family talking. Crow 2.0 is exhausted...”

In “Contentment”; *Wild Wise Weird* [1]



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In an era where voters are encouraged to make choices based on individual policy preferences—a practice known as “issue voting” [2-4]— new research suggests that deeper ideological patterns may still exert a powerful influence. Monzel, Grünhage, and Reuter [5] investigated this phenomenon by analyzing 5,963 user responses to Wahl-O-Mat, Germany’s most widely used voting advice application (VAA), across three federal election cycles.

Using multiple correspondence analysis, the researchers uncovered stable, latent ideological factors that consistently shaped users’ response patterns. These ideological dimensions aligned closely with well-established psychological constructs—Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), and the moral intuitions described in Moral Foundations Theory [6]. Surprisingly, these underlying ideological patterns were more predictive of voting behavior than the issue positions themselves.

In other words, users did not respond randomly or strictly based on isolated issues. Instead, their choices reflected broader ideological leanings. For example, individuals who supported pro-refugee policies were also more likely to endorse gender-inclusive language or environmental taxation—issues not inherently related but often ideologically clustered.

This ideological coherence, the study warns, may constrain democratic discourse. Voters could feel pressured to conform to ideological “bundles” of beliefs, discouraging nuanced or independent positions. Those whose views span across ideological lines may feel politically homeless or disengaged altogether—risking increased polarization and decreased civic participation.

While VAAs like Wahl-O-Mat aim to enhance informed decision-making, this study reveals that even such tools may unintentionally reinforce ideological thinking. The findings call for greater awareness of how psychological predispositions shape our political judgments.

Just as values and cultural worldviews guide ecological choices, political behavior is also rooted in deeper cognitive and moral structures. Recognizing this ideological undercurrent is crucial for fostering more inclusive and diverse political landscapes. By embracing complexity and resisting ideological rigidity, societies can strengthen democratic resilience and promote healthier engagement between individuals and collective governance [7,8].

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