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Alain Noël, Jean-Philippe Thérien
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Left and Right in Global Politics

Few notions are as universal as the idea of a left–right divide in politics. Despite its death being frequently foretold, the left–right metaphor remains the most common lens through which to interpret political life locally, nationally, and globally. *Left and Right in Global Politics* argues that the left–right divide connects these different levels in a world political debate. Interpreting the left–right dichotomy as an enduring debate about equality, Noël and Thérien analyze opinion polls and social discourses to demonstrate how this debate shapes both individual and collective views of public affairs. Setting their findings in a historical perspective, they then show that for more than two centuries the conflict between progressives and conservatives has structured both domestic and international politics. They conclude by discussing the implications of their argument for the analysis of world politics, and contend that the left–right opposition is here to stay.

ALAIN NOËL is Professor in the Department of Political Science of the Université de Montréal.

JEAN-PHILIPPE THÉRIEN is Professor in the Department of Political Science of the Université de Montréal.

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Everyone has an idea about the left and the right. This is why these notions are so engaging and so fascinating. Their universal relevance, however, also makes the two terms difficult to grasp in a systematic manner. As with every concept that seems meaningful and clear to all, “the left” and “the right” encompass a wide range of values and perceptions. In trying to make sense of these different standpoints, we were helped by a number of people, who discussed the issues at stake, made suggestions, and were always willing to share their views, usually firmly held, about the significance of left and right in global politics.

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This book claims that global politics is shaped and constructed through enduring and consistent ideological debates. If we are correct, not all readers will agree with us. We hope, however, that each will find this journey on the left and on the right engaging and...worth debating.