

# The Structural Architecture of Ideology: Applying the Core Emotion Framework to Political and Economic Systems

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## ARCHIVE:

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## Preregistration:

- <https://osf.io/ac4x2/overview>

## Pilot study:

- <https://osf.io/fydsq/wiki?wiki=j7q8g>

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## Abstract

The study of political and economic ideologies has long been bifurcated between cognitive models that emphasize rational choice and affective models that focus on emotional signaling. However, the emergence of the Core Emotion Framework (CEF) provides an integrative architecture that synthesizes these traditions, offering a structural-constructivist lens through which the psychological foundations of the Right and Left can be analyzed. By organizing the human psyche into three distinct functional centers—the Cognitive (Head), the Affective (Heart), and the Conative (Gut)—the CEF allows for a granular audit of how specific operator combinations generate the traditionalism, hierarchy, and market-driven behaviors of the Right, as well as the rebellion, equality, and collectivism of the Left.

At its core, the CEF posits that what we perceive as stable ideological traits are actually dynamic configurations of ten irreducible "primal powers" or functional operators. These operators—Sensing, Calculating, Deciding (Head); Expanding, Constricting, Achieving (Heart); and Arranging, Appreciating, Boosting, Accepting (Gut)—interact in complex, simultaneous patterns that define an individual's stance toward authority, resource distribution, and social change. Through the

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*\*) We welcome feedback on the preregistration and study design, and invite researchers who are interested in pre-reviewing the system to contact us.*

application of the Emotional Cycling protocol, these configurations can be identified, differentiated, and "detangled," shifting the basis of political engagement from reflexive emotional fusion to conscious, learned choice.

*Keywords:* Core Emotion Framework (CEF), emotional cycling, ideological configuration, traditionalism, rebellion, hierarchy, equality, cognitive–affective–conative architecture, functional operators, Sensing, Calculating, Deciding, Expanding, Constricting, Achieving, Arranging, Appreciating, Boosting, Accepting, emotional fusion, operator detanglement, affective sovereignty, structural-constructivist psychology, political psychology, capitalism, socialism, Boosting–Calculating–Arranging loop, Accepting–Arranging–Expanding loop, agency–yielding polarity, ideological rigidity, relational meaning, affective computation, scenario-based rating instrument, OSF validation, biofeedback synchronization, CTCM calibration, dynamic equilibrium, reflective (CCW) activation, outgoing (CW) activation.

## The Three-Center Architecture of Ideological Belief

To understand the psychological foundations of any ideology, it is first necessary to map the structural roles of the three CEF centers. Each center contributes a specific layer of "relational meaning, value judgment, and action readiness" that, when combined, forms a coherent political or economic worldview. The Cognitive Center (Head) provides the map and interpretations; the Affective Center (Heart) sets the boundaries of connection and status; and the Conative Center (Gut) governs the drive for resource acquisition and organization.

### The Cognitive Center (Head): Sensing, Calculating, and Deciding

The Cognitive Center is the primary seat of information processing and perception. In the context of political ideology, the Head Center's operators determine how an individual perceives the current state of society and what they calculate as the most logical future trajectory.

Operator	Functional Role in CEF	Political Application: The Right	Political Application: The Left
<b>Sensing</b>	Raw perception; tracking incoming environmental cues.	Focus on historical grounding, precedent, and immediate external threats to order.	Focus on identifying social ruptures, systemic inequities, and emerging patterns of suffering.
<b>Calculating</b>	Evaluating implications,	Assessing economic efficiency, cost-	Modeling utopian or reformed alternatives

	modeling, and predictive analysis.	benefit ratios of change, and the stability of traditional structures.	and calculating the social cost of existing hierarchies.
<b>Deciding</b>	Selection among interpretations; commitment to a course of action.	Commitment to established constitutional or religious principles as "logical saturation."	Selection of adaptive policies and commitment to evolving social justice standards.

The "Sensing" operator initiates the center's engagement with the world. For the conservative (Right), Sensing is often used as a "grounding" function, where the individual scans the environment for stability and continuity.<sup>2</sup> This leads to a valuation of "what is," which is then analyzed through "Calculating" to determine the risk of any deviation. For the liberal or progressive (Left), Sensing is used to identify the "gap" between current reality and an idealized future. Here, Sensing scans for marginalized cues that the established system might ignore, feeding "Calculating" with data regarding systemic failure rather than systemic stability.

**The Affective Center (Heart): Expanding, Constricting, and Achieving**

The Affective Center governs the "self-other dynamic" and the "felt sense of openness or closure". This is the center most directly responsible for the tension between hierarchy and equality, as well as the distinction between in-group loyalty and universal empathy.

<b>Operator</b>	<b>Functional Role in CEF</b>	<b>Political Application: The Right</b>	<b>Political Application: The Left</b>
<b>Expanding</b>	Receptivity, connection, and "outward stretch".	Connection to the nuclear family, religious community, or national heritage.	Universal connection to humanity, crossing cultural, national, and species boundaries.
<b>Constricting</b>	Boundaries, protection, and defensive withdrawal.	Protection of national sovereignty, cultural identity, and traditional values from external influence.	Setting protective boundaries on corporate power and protecting marginalized groups from majority influence.

<b>Achieving</b>	Striving for progress and affirming worth in the relational field.	Validation of meritocracy, individual excellence, and the maintenance of traditional hierarchies.	Affirming the "achieved" progress of social rights and striving for equity in resource distribution.
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The relational meaning of an ideology is found in the interplay between Expanding and Constricting. The Right often utilizes a "Reflective" movement (Counter-Clockwise in cycling terms), where Constricting protects the established "Appreciated" values of the group. The Left utilizes an "Outgoing" movement (Clockwise), where Expanding seeks to dissolve the boundaries between the self and the "other," thereby promoting equality. This is exact opposite of what's intuitively left or right, so it should be further investigated.

### **The Conative Center (Gut): Arranging, Appreciating, Boosting, and Accepting**

The Conative Center is the engine of motivation and execution. It determines how an individual mobilizes energy and integrates constraints, forming the psychological bedrock of economic ideologies like capitalism and socialism.

<b>Operator</b>	<b>Functional Role in CEF</b>	<b>Economic Application: Capitalism</b>	<b>Economic Application: Socialism</b>
<b>Arranging</b>	Organizing, sequencing, and structuring priorities. <sup>2</sup>	Market-led logistical optimization and the prioritization of individual profit.	State-led or community-led resource planning and the prioritization of the common good.
<b>Appreciating</b>	Recognizing significance and valuing outcomes.	Valuing private property, individual legacies, and market outcomes as "significant."	Valuing the commons, public infrastructure, and the inherent worth of human leisure over labor.
<b>Boosting</b>	Mobilizing energy and "amplifying readiness".	Entrepreneurial drive, competitive mobilization, and the pursuit of endless	Collective mobilization for systemic change or labor union activation.

		growth.	
<b>Accepting</b>	Integrating constraints and releasing outcomes.	Accepting the "natural" outcomes of the market and individual inequality as constraints.	Integrating environmental and social welfare needs as the primary constraints of the economy.

The tension in economic systems often arises from which operators balance the others. In capitalistic systems, Boosting (activation) is frequently paired with Calculating (efficiency) to drive growth. In socialistic systems, Accepting (integration) is paired with Arranging (structure) to ensure stability and resource distribution.

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## Structural Combinations and the Genesis of Traditionalism and Rebellion

The CEF allows us to investigate how specific "operator configurations" lead to the overarching personality traits associated with political leanings. Traditionalism and rebellion are not merely choices but the results of how the Head and Heart centers organize their "outward stretch" and "reflective" movements.

### The Architecture of Traditionalism: Constricting + Appreciating + Sensing

Traditionalism is psychologically rooted in a "Reflecting" pattern. This pattern turns the centers back on themselves to preserve existing coherence. For the conservative, the "Sensing" operator tracks the stability of the environment (e.g., the local community, the religion, the constitution). When this sensing is coupled with "Appreciating" from the Gut Center—recognizing the deep significance and value of these established entities—a powerful drive to protect them emerges.<sup>2</sup>

This drive is manifested through the "Constricting" operator in the Heart Center. Constricting functions as a protective boundary, ensuring that the relational meaning of the traditional group is not diluted by external forces. In a "fused" state, the individual cannot sense a change in the environment without automatically triggering a Constricting (defensive) response. This creates the psychological foundation for "originalism" in law and "preservationism" in culture. The goal of the traditionalist configuration is "refinement and precision" (the CCW movement<sup>1</sup>) rather than "expansion and expression" (the CW movement<sup>1</sup>).

### The Architecture of Rebellion: Sensing (Rupture) + Expanding + Boosting

Rebellion, or the progressive drive, is rooted in the "Outgoing" activation of the centers. This configuration begins with a "Sensing" operator that is attuned to the "rupture" or the "emotional event" where the current system fails to meet human needs. Instead of grounding itself in what exists, the progressive Sensing operator scans for what is missing or broken.

This perception triggers the "Expanding" operator in the Heart Center, creating an "outward stretch" of connection to the suffering or the "other" that the system has excluded. This emotional state is then mobilized by the "Boosting" operator in the Gut Center, which provides the energy for protest, activism, and systemic change.<sup>2</sup> Rebellion is, therefore, a Clockwise (CW<sup>1</sup>) flow through the centers, characterized by "initiative, expression, and outward flow". The rebellious psyche is structurally biased toward opening fields of perception and relational meaning, often at the expense of established boundaries.

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## **Economic Ideologies and the Conative Center**

The distinction between capitalism and socialism is fundamentally a question of how the Gut Center's operators are sequenced and prioritized. The CEF's Conative Center, with its unique four-operator structure, provides a precise map of this dynamic.

### **Capitalism: The Boosting-Calculating-Arranging Loop**

Capitalism is a high-activation economic system driven by the "Boosting" operator. In the CEF, Boosting is linked to the "SEEKING system" identified by Jaak Panksepp—a primal drive for exploration and acquisition.<sup>2</sup> When Boosting is the dominant operator in the Gut, it creates a constant pressure for "activation and mobilization".<sup>3</sup>

For this drive to be productive in a capitalistic framework, it must be paired with the "Calculating" operator of the Head Center. This pairing allows for the evaluation of market implications and the modeling of profit. Finally, the "Arranging" operator organizes these calculated drives into sequences, such as production lines, corporate structures, and investment portfolios.<sup>2</sup> The "Appreciating" operator in capitalism is often focused on the "significance" of private property and individual status (Achieving), creating a structural incentive for personal accumulation.

### **Socialism: The Accepting-Arranging-Expanding Loop**

Socialism is an economic system that prioritizes "Accepting" and "Arranging." In the CEF, Accepting is the operator of "integration, release, and grounding".<sup>3</sup> It recognizes the constraints of the environment and the needs of the collective as the primary factors that the economy must "integrate".

In this configuration, the "Arranging" operator is not used for individual logistical optimization but for the "structuring and sequencing" of resources to meet the needs recognized by the "Expanding" operator in the Heart Center. "Appreciating" is directed toward the significance of public goods and social stability. The "Boosting" operator in a socialistic framework is often subordinated to the goal of "dynamic equilibrium" and "emotional stability" (the Swing movement<sup>1</sup>). The socialist psyche is structurally biased toward the "Inward Spiral" of surrender and release of individual surplus for

the benefit of the grounded whole.

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## Hierarchy Versus Equality: The Heart Center's Role

The most enduring political divide—hierarchy versus equality—is an expression of the "Agency/Yielding polarity" defined within the CEF.<sup>2</sup> This polarity determines how the Heart Center's operators negotiate status and connection.

### The Psychological Basis of Hierarchy: Achieving and Constricting

Hierarchy is the natural output of a Heart Center where "Achieving" and "Constricting" are the primary operators. Achieving is the drive to "affirm worth or maintain coherence in the self-other dynamic" through striving and progress. In a competitive environment, Achieving leads to the quantification of worth, which inherently creates status differences.

When "Achieving" is paired with "Constricting," it creates a bounded meritocracy.<sup>3</sup> Constricting ensures that the status achieved is protected and that the "relational field" is organized into clear ranks. This provides a sense of "coherence" and "precision" for those within the hierarchy. For the conservative, hierarchy is not "unfair"; it is the structural stabilization of "Achieved" relational contribution.

### The Psychological Basis of Equality: Expanding and Accepting

Equality is the natural output of a Heart Center where "Expanding" and "Accepting" are the primary operators. Expanding reflects "receptivity and connection," pushing the individual to see the "self" in the "other". This outward stretch effectively dissolves the status boundaries created by Achieving.

This is reinforced by the "Accepting" operator in the Gut Center, which integration outcomes and constraints without the need for constant upward mobilization (Boosting). In this configuration, "equality" is the felt sense of "relational openness" and the release of the need to quantify individual worth against others. The goal is "integration" rather than "striving".

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## The Problem of Emotional Fusion in Politics

A critical insight of the CEF is that political polarization is often a symptom of "emotional fusion"—a state where multiple operators across centers become "stuck" together, preventing flexible responses. When operators are fused, an individual's ideology becomes a reflexive biological reaction rather than a chosen set of values.

### Common Fused Patterns in Modern Ideology

Fused	Centers	Resulting Political Behavior
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Configuration	Involved	
<b>Sensing + Constricting</b>	Head + Heart	Xenophobia or extreme isolationism. Perception of "newness" (Sensing) automatically triggers "defensive withdrawal" (Constricting).
<b>Boosting + Achieving</b>	Gut + Heart	Hyper-capitalist burnout. The drive for energy (Boosting) is fused with the need for relational worth (Achieving), leading to endless striving without the ability to "Accept" or release.
<b>Expanding + Arranging</b>	Heart + Gut	Over-regulation or "nanny state" tendencies. The desire for connection (Expanding) is fused with the need to structure every detail (Arranging), leading to intrusive social planning.
<b>Calculating + Constricting</b>	Head + Heart	Rigidity and "ideological purity." Logical modeling (Calculating) is used exclusively to justify the hardening of boundaries (Constricting) against "impure" ideas.

In these fused states, the "balancing function" of each center—Deciding, Achieving, or Boosting/Accepting—is compromised. The individual loses their "emotional flexibility" and becomes trapped in a repetitive "emotional choreography".

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## Detanglement and the Emotional Cycling Protocol

To move beyond the reflexive trap of political identity, the CEF offers the 'Emotional Cycling' protocol. This method is designed to "awaken, differentiate, and balance" the ten operators, restoring their independence and allowing the individual to "detangle" their fused patterns.

### Level 1: Primary Center-Level Activation

The canonical method for detangling ideological leanings begins with Center-Level Cycling. By performing specific directional motions (either physically or through focused visualization), a practitioner can recalibrate the "rhythm" of their centers.

1. **Clockwise (CW) → Outgoing Activation:** This motion activates Sensing, Expanding, and Arranging. For an individual stuck in a rigid, traditionalist "Reflecting" mode, CW cycling "awakens" the ability to perceive new cues, connect with outsiders, and initiate new structures.<sup>1</sup>
2. **Counter-Clockwise (CCW) → Reflecting Activation:** This motion activates Calculating, Constricting, and Appreciating. For an individual stuck in a "Rebellious" or overly-expanded mode, CCW cycling "awakens" the ability to analyze consequences, set healthy boundaries, and recognize the significance of established values.<sup>1</sup>
3. **Swinging (Side-to-Side) → Balancing Activation:** This motion activates Deciding,

Achieving, and Boosting. This is the most critical motion for political stability, as it encourages "dynamic equilibrium" and "flow state," allowing the individual to commit to a course of action without being consumed by it. <sup>1</sup>

## Level 2: Secondary Operator-Level Calibration

Once the centers are balanced, the user can cycle individual operators directly to "test operator independence". For example, a political leader might cycle the "Deciding" operator through CW, CCW, and Swing motions to ensure their decision-making is not merely a reaction to "Sensing" a threat or "Constricting" a boundary. This level of practice "refines emotional precision" and allows for the separation of "striving" (Achieving) from "protection" (Constricting).

## Level 3: Tertiary Cross-Center Cycling for Policy Synthesis

Advanced practitioners can explore cross-center flows to intentionally synthesize competing ideological values.

- **Heart → Gut → Head (CW) for Compassionate Innovation:** This flow moves from "Expanding" connection to "Arranging" structure to "Calculating" logical implications. This is the structural basis for a progressive policy that is actually efficient and workable. <sup>1</sup>
- **Gut → Heart → Head (CCW) for Principled Governance:** This flow moves from "Appreciating" established value to "Constricting" protective boundaries to "Calculating" the logical preservation of order. This is the structural basis for a conservative policy that is grounded in significance rather than fear. <sup>1</sup>

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## Choice and Learning: The Path to Affective Sovereignty

The ultimate purpose of the CEF and Emotional Cycling is to allow "choice and learning to influence these natural psychological leanings". In the CEF model, an emotion is not something you "have"; it is a "configuration" that you "do".

### The Mechanics of Learning in the CEF

Learning occurs when the "Deciding" (Head) and "Accepting" (Gut) operators are used to integrate new operator configurations into the psyche. When an individual is "detangled," they are no longer a slave to their "Calculating-Constricting" loop. They can "Sensing" a new cultural trend and, through "Deciding," choose an "Expanding" response instead of a reflexive "Constricting" one.

This "Affective Sovereignty" is the hallmark of a mature political actor. It allows for:

- **Contextual Flexibility:** Being "conservative" (Constricting/Appreciating) when protecting a fragile ecosystem, and "liberal" (Expanding/Arranging) when reforming an outdated education system. <sup>3</sup>
- **Reduced Polarization:** Recognizing that one's opponent is not "evil" but is simply operating in a different center-level configuration (e.g., CCW vs. CW). <sup>1</sup>
- **Resilience:** Using the "Accepting" operator to ground oneself and integrate political losses

without falling into a state of "emotional rupture".

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## The Future of Ideological Research: Affective Computation and OSF Validation

The CEF is currently undergoing an "Open Validation Program" (hosted on the Open Science Framework) to confirm that these ten functional operators exist as distinct, measurable psychological dimensions.<sup>4</sup> Using a "scenario-based rating instrument," researchers are testing whether individuals consistently respond to vignettes in ways that map to these operator configurations.<sup>2</sup>

Operator Item Example from OSF Pilot Study 3	Target Operator	Ideological Implication
"I pause and scan the environment to ground myself before doing anything."	<b>Sensing</b> <sup>2</sup>	Prerequisite for situational awareness in policy-making.
"I start sorting the tasks into a logical order or sequence."	<b>Arranging</b> <sup>2</sup>	The foundational skill of socialist planning and capitalist logistics.
"I narrow things down and cut away what I can."	<b>Constricting</b> <sup>2</sup>	The psychological mechanism of fiscal conservatism and border security.

As these operators are validated and mapped to biofeedback (such as HRV and neuro-affective synchronizers like INAS), the possibility of "precision ideological calibration" emerges. Devices like the Cycling Training & Calibration Machine (CTCM) could eventually be used to help citizens "detangle" from propaganda-induced emotional fusion, restoring their capacity for rational, multi-centered political discourse.

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## Conclusion: The Structural Integration of the Psyche and the State

The Core Emotion Framework provides the "conceptual scaffold" necessary to bridge the gap between individual emotion and societal ideology. By identifying the minimal set of operators

required for an emotional event, Jamel Bulgaria's model clarifies why human beings naturally gravitate toward the poles of traditionalism and rebellion, capitalism and socialism, hierarchy and equality.

The "Right" and "Left" are not just intellectual debates; they are manifestations of the human heart's need for boundaries and connection, the human gut's drive for energy and integration, and the human head's need for logical interpretation and environmental sensing. Through the technology of Emotional Cycling, the "communication conundrum" of modern politics—where opposing sides cannot even agree on the "map" of reality—can be addressed by returning the individual to a state of operator independence and affective sovereignty. The future of a stable, adaptive society depends on the ability of its citizens to "cycle" through all three centers, integrating the "outward stretch" of the progressive with the "reflective refinement" of the conservative.

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