

Young Journal of European Affairs

*The Student Journal of
European Policy*

Issue 4

YJEA



Dear reader,

It is our great pleasure to, once again, present our annual issue of the *Young Journal of European Affairs (YJEA)* to you, for the fourth consecutive year. This issue's editorial marks the end of an important chapter for the YJEA, and a transition for our journal in 2025. After nearly five years of growing, developing and leading the YJEA to where it is today, a new generation of young, talented and passionate team members will carry on the cause that founded our journal nearly half a decade ago: to provide an outlet dedicated to BA and MA students to receive high-quality, in-depth feedback, learn and publish their first academic articles. This editorial is brought to you by both generations, outgoing and incoming. And it gives us a chance to officially welcome our team members Nadia el Ghali, Lilia Gwaltney and Mercedes Vergara to the YJEA Management Team.

From the Co-Founders & Co-Editors in Chief - Florian Lenner and Lara Breitmoser...

Looking back, we are proud to say that what started as an idea in a student dorm in Helsinki turned into a sustainable and lasting project that has over the years been carried by more than 25 students from across countries and continents, with a class of eleven new YJEA members joining in January 2025. We have led the journal since its start in 2020 and every year since, we had the honour of presenting you the work of so many contributors as Co-Editors in Chief. While we have done so with great pleasure and dedication, the YJEA was always meant to be a student project. Having both finished our studies a while ago, we deemed it time to pass on the YJEA's management and the learning and leadership opportunities that come along with it. However, letting go of an initiative founded by oneself is not easy - both for us personally as founders as well as the journal itself. Times of transition bring to light the strengths and weaknesses of an organisation's structure. Therefore, after years of expanding the YJEA's team and projects, 2024 has been dedicated to formalising roles and processes while maintaining our scope. We are very thankful to our Managing Editors Angelo Krüger and Mirjam Seiler, who enabled us to fully focus on preparing for this transition by taking over the editorial daily business from us. The same amount of gratitude goes to Nadia el Ghali, Lilia Gwaltney and Mercedes Vergara for leading our journal into the future. We wish them all the best and are certain to leave this journal in very capable hands! We will remain close to the YJEA, as advisors where desired, and as curious readers of the yearly issues to come.

...from the Managing Editors - Angelo Krüger and Mirjam Seiler...

Having taken on the role of managing editors in late 2023, we are immensely grateful to the YJEA team for all the hard work, creativity and time they have put in this past

year. We look back on a year full of changes, with new faces across all branches of our team and a record number of article submissions. There have been many exciting new projects, such as the increased presence of publications on the YJEA blog, internal skill-building sessions and efforts to expand our network further, to name a few. The YJEA has grown, both in numbers and in the diversity of our talent, and we have been very fortunate to be able to guide this process. We could not have done this without the support of the full management team, and we want to warmly welcome Nadia, Lilia, and Mercedes as the incoming leadership of the YJEA! Looking ahead, we are sure the journal is set to break new records in the next few years under this new superb leadership team to carry on the exemplary work Florian and Lara have started.

...from the incoming Management Board - Nadia el Ghali, Lilia Gwaltney, Mercedes Vergara, and from all of us...

In light of these remarks, we are delighted to introduce the fruits of this year's labour of our team and our authors. We are thrilled to open this issue with an interview on representation of women and gender diversity in academia, an issue which we have experienced in its structural obstacles at the YJEA as well. Prof Jessica Fortin-Rittberger, PhD sheds light on what we have achieved so far and what still needs to be done to foster gender equality in academia. We thank her for her insights and contribution to setting the tone for this issue!

This year's issue contains three articles by talented junior researchers. While we publish our Calls for Papers without a specific thematic focus, we often see varying trends in research interests from one year to the next. In our very first issue, many authors looked at EU foreign policy in its many different forms. The second issue saw a focus on fiscal policy across various policy fields. Last year's issue saw multiple contributions focussing on welfare spending. This year's successful articles all concern populist parties. The first by Yannis Grabbe questions the longstanding assumption that Euroscepticism is equally high at each end of the political spectrum. Our second contribution by Linus Hormuth analyses the effect of labour immigration on the vote share for radical right parties and seeks to understand if this effect differs for different qualification levels of those entering a country's labour market. Our third and last contribution by Nelson Tang investigates the relationship between welfare spending of Western European countries and the electoral support for Populist Radical Right Parties. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our authors and everyone who submitted their work this year. Knowing how little time in university curricula is devoted to publishing as a student, we feel it is a privilege to be entrusted with the work of so many young researchers over the years.

As every year, it remains on us to highlight the various contributors whose work is the very reason you are reading this publication. A very special thank you goes to our peer reviewers whose expertise and commitment are essential in the development of the high-quality articles you will find in this issue. Furthermore, as every year, we would like to highlight the contribution of the Geschwister-Scholl-Institute of Political Science at the University of Munich and express our profound gratitude for their continued financial and ideational support. Those remarks equally pertain to the LMU's University Library team, who have provided us with a platform to publish the YJEA open access from the very beginning. Last but most certainly not least, we are extremely proud of

and thankful for our team: Valentin Berov, Amy Bland, Lennart Eckle, Lili Gabadadze, Eleonora Guseletova, Raghda Jaja, Sophia Khan, Leonie Köhler, Emilija Krysen, Grace Lundell, Freya Moorhouse, Alexandra Qvist, Leonard Xu, and Duru Yavuz. Every single one of them made an important contribution throughout the year to the publication of this magazine – either through editorial work or other support of the journal’s workings.

With this, we wish you a pleasant and enriching reading experience on behalf of the YJEA team and authors!

Lara Breitmoser and Florian Lenner

Co-Founders and Co-Editors in Chief

Angelo Krüger and Mirjam Seiler

Co-Managing Editors

Nadia El Ghali, Lilia Gwaltney and Mercedes Vergara

Incoming Management Board 2025



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Make My Money Mine! How is Macroeconomic Welfare Spending associated with the Electoral Support for Populist Radical Right Parties in Western European Countries?

How can academia become more diverse and equitable, Prof Jessica Fortin-Rittberger, PhD?

This interview was conducted by Lara Breitmoser & Lilia Gwaltney, Co-Editor in Chief and Editor of the Young Journal of European Affairs (YJEA).



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Jessica Fortin-Rittberger is a professor of comparative politics at the University of Salzburg in Austria. She is originally from Montreal, Canada where she completed her PhD at McGill University in 2008. Afterwards, she held a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Lüneburg and served as a senior researcher at GESIS - Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences in Mannheim. Professor Fortin-Rittberger's research interests centre around electoral systems, transformation and democratisation processes as well as the political representation of women. She served as co-lead editor of the European Journal of Politics and Gender (EJPG) from 2020 until 2024.

YJEA: Can you tell us a bit about yourself and how you became interested in diversity and representation in academia?

Prof Jessica Fortin-Rittberger, PhD: My name is Jessica Fortin-Rittberger, I am a professor of comparative politics at the University of Salzburg in Austria. I am originally from Montreal, Canada.

My focus on diversity stems from my research on the representation of women in political office and gender gaps across different political attitudes and behaviours. In politics, as in many other fields, there's a phenomenon often referred to as 'the higher, the fewer,' where the presence of women and other marginalised groups – racial minorities, economically disadvantaged, LGBTQ+ – diminishes as one ascends the ranks. Unfortunately, academia is no exception to this trend.

What does underrepresentation in academia look like, and how widespread is this issue?

The issue of underrepresentation of minorities in academia remains widespread. We have the most data on women¹, so I will use this as an example: At the beginning of their studies, men and women are relatively balanced. By the time we arrive at promotion, women are 46%, for habilitations – the qualification required for professorial appointments in German-speaking and some other European countries – the proportion drops

to 36.5%, and at the rank of professors, we only find some 28% women in universities in Germany. This is a sharp drop as we move higher in academic echelons; we call this the “leaky pipe” where talented women drop out of the career path. Talent fleeing the employment pool is not a positive outcome and signals some red flags.

What do you see as the most significant barriers preventing equal access and representation in both academic institutions and academic publishing?

It’s a very good question, and if we knew the solution, this imbalance might not exist. The root of the problem is largely structural, rather than a result of ill-will. For many academics, career paths involve long periods of instability between the promotion and securing a permanent position. During this time, individuals may relocate across countries several times, often at a stage when family planning comes into play. This instability drives many women to leave academia for more secure employment.

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What are some of the consequences of a lack of diversity and representation in academia?

Homogeneous intellectual perspectives, in both research and teachings, might make instruction and research narrow in their focus. This might be an impediment to innovation in the long run.

A lack of diversity also serves to perpetuate stereotypes and inequalities. The image of the male professor of a certain age is what comes to mind when one says “professor.” Role models, but also mentors, have to come in different shapes and sizes. Underrepresented students could feel isolated or unsupported if there is no one like them.

In your opinion, how has representation evolved over the past few decades? Have there been any significant advances or setbacks?

Representation has evolved. I think the issue of underrepresentation has become more important for students, faculty members and universities in general. Twenty years ago, we were not as mindful of making sure lists of invitees for a job or events with speakers were not entirely composed of men. There is a change in culture.

However, these things take time because of the structure of employment in academia. Tenured jobs at the highest ranks are lifetime appointments. So, the change can only be slow, as only a few positions are renewed every year.

What specific strategies can academic institutions and individuals implement to effectively dismantle these barriers, and how can they ensure lasting change?

Effective strategies require academic institutions to first acknowledge existing issues and demonstrate a commitment to correcting disparities in both hiring practices and significant pay gaps. Many universities have equal opportunity officers to ensure that

“A lack of diversity also serves to perpetuate stereotypes and inequalities. Role models, but also mentors, have to come in different shapes and sizes.”

hiring is conducted fairly. Institutions also emphasize the importance of committees being aware of these inequalities during recruitment and generating diverse and inclusive candidate lists. Additionally, it's essential to remember that universities are workplaces and should offer infrastructure such as childcare and other support for employees with caregiving responsibilities.

How can academic institutions collaborate with external organisations, communities, or industries to foster diversity and inclusion?

Many research institutions have embarked on a journey of self-assessment. External organisations now award certifications for 'family and career compatibility,' and universities have embraced this to enhance their attractiveness as employers and foster family-oriented workplaces. Still, there is significant untapped potential, including collaborations with industry, research on diversity and inclusion, unconscious bias training, and revising advisory boards.

¹ Data retrieved from Statistisches Bundesamt (2024). Frauenanteile nach akademischer Laufbahn. Available at: <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bildung-Forschung-Kultur/Hochschulen/Tabellen/frauenanteile-akademischelaufbahn.html>, last accessed 19.12.2024

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Ideology, Euroscepticism and the (misleading?) U-Curve – a Comparative Study of German and French Parties

Abstract

The concept of Euroscepticism has been debated and researched for several decades. One central finding, albeit heavily contested, is that Euroscepticism is at its highest at the extremes of the political spectrum and thus forms a U-curve. According to this framework, both left- and right-wing parties tend to engage actively against the European Union and the integration process, whilst mainstream, moderate parties support it in a pragmatic manner. This study empirically challenges these findings based on the election programs of German and French parties for the European elections 2009-2019: to what extent do left- and right-wing parties *really* contest the EU similarly, or is the U-curve an oversimplifying concept? In doing so this paper first presents a new way to *think* Euroscepticism by distinguishing between a Polity and a Policy dimension and then continues to show empirically that Euroscepticism does not result in a symmetric U-curve concerning party political ideology. These findings show in the conclusion that the long-defended U-curve, for the cases of Germany and France, must be replaced by a new concept: the *J-curve*.

Keywords: EU, Euroscepticism, Germany, France, Parties

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Introduction

“If a summit was successful, Merkel, Sarkozy, Brown, and Zapatero tell their journalist compatriots: ‘I was able to enforce my demands.’ When it goes wrong, they say: ‘Brussels is too sluggish.’ In the EU, success is nationalized, and failure is Europeanized.” (Martin Schulz in: Beste & Kurbjuweit, 2009, para. 36, author’s translation).

Ever since its creation, the European Union’s role in Europe and the world has been intensely and controversially debated. Even today, many people in the public are sceptical towards the perceived inefficiency of the EU. European elections mostly function as second-order-elections, implying that voters aim to sanction the national government and its policies rather than to actively shape future European politics (Norris & Reif, 1997). And yet, support for the EU and its democratic processes is, in many states, higher than ever before (Pew Research Center, 2019; Eurobarometer, 2024).

The relationship between political parties and the European integration process has been discussed and researched in the literature for a long time (Harmsen, 2010). Countless different definitions, typologies, and taxonomies have been proposed and a lasting consensus is still not in sight. A common framework which visualises the way party-ideology relates to Euroscepticism is the U-curve, according to which the ideological extremes of the political spectrum show higher aversion towards European integration compared to more moderate parties (Hooghe et al., 2002; van Bohemen et al., 2019; Toshkov and Krouwel, 2022).

However, even though this concept has been long-established, some existing studies reject the idea that far-right and far-left parties consistently and systematically behave similarly towards European integration (e.g. van Elsas et al., 2016). Therefore, it is appropriate to ask, whether the U-curve in its symmetric character is still relevant in today’s party landscape or whether it is misleading. To what extent is the U-curve still an accurate finding and is it, at least partially, oversimplified? Does Euroscepticism behave differently for far-left and far-right parties and if so, to what extent? These questions will be addressed for the cases of Germany and France by utilising a new typology of Euroscepticism. It is to be noted that the theoretical assumptions regarding the U-curve will not be challenged in this paper but rather it seeks to re-conceptualise it by applying an empirical analysis. The long-established finding of the U-curve will be empirically examined by introducing a new way by which to distinguish Euroscepticism: in a *Polity* and a *Policy* dimension.

The paper is structured as follows: in the first part the main hypotheses will be laid down alongside a review of contemporary research on Euroscepticism and the U-curve. After that, a new typology of Euroscepticism will be deduced from existing literature in order to better capture the nature of Euroscepticism in two new dimensions. Thereafter the research design and methodology for the empirical research will be laid out, followed by

the empirical analysis. The paper is concluded by a discussion of this study and its limitations as well as a conclusion of theoretical and empirical findings.

Literature review

Euroscepticism has shown to be a very stretchable and heavily debated concept that is often used without too much precision and afterthought (Kopecký & Mudde, 2002, p. 299; Boomgaarden et al., 2011, pp. 243-244). Termini such as Eurocriticism, Europhobia, or Europragmatism are all (falsely) used interchangeably and subsumed under the umbrella-term 'Euroscepticism' (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2018, p. 12). At the same time, *however*, there are countless variants, typologies, taxonomies, and understandings of this sole term.

A simple and groundbreaking definition was conceptualised by Taggart (1998): "*Euroscepticism expresses the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration.*" (1998, p. 366). This is also the underlying definition adopted by this paper. Ever since, and even before, this definition was established, countless scientific studies analysed Euroscepticism from an *empirical* point of view. A large body of literature analysing the intercorrelation between ideology and Euroscepticism has been compiled over time. Hooghe et al. (2002, pp. 968-973) for the first time theoretically and empirically introduced the concept of a U-curve (although they titled it the *inverted* U-curve) to describe the relationship between Euroscepticism and a party's ideology. They identified a correlation between the two concepts: far-left and far-right parties are increasingly Eurosceptic, whilst more moderate parties show a positive stance toward European integration: "*So we expect a party's support for European integration to decline with its distance from the centre of the Left/Right dimension. Both explanations [referring to Paul Taggart's (1998) concept of European integration as a "touchstone of domestic dissent" for peripheral parties.] find confirmation in our data.*" (2002, pp. 969-970).

For this, Hellström (2008) summarises three possible explanations: "*The first is based on ideological elements of party contestation, the second is mainly based on strategies of party contestation, and the third views preference formation over European integration as more or less ideologically immune.*" (2008, p. 191). The theoretical assumptions and causal mechanism of these explanations will not be challenged in this paper, instead, a re-conceptualisation of the U-curve will be proposed through empirical analysis. For that, two of the three explanations will be empirically analysed: the first explanation that a party's ideology influences its position and the third explanation after which the positioning on European integration is seen as ideologically immune. This may, at first, seem contradictory, as both explanations appear to be mutually exclusive. However, as will be shown in the theoretical framework, they ought to be linked.

Research on the U-curve has been theoretically, methodologically, and empirically diverse. Many case-studies and comparative frameworks (Marks et al., 2002; De Vries

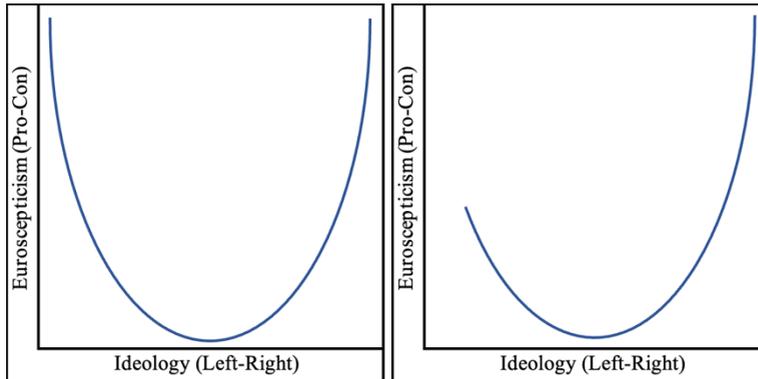
& Edwards, 2009; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2010; van Elsas & van der Brug, 2015; van Elsas et al., 2016; König et al., 2017; van Bohemen et al., 2019) have examined the relationship between ideology and the respective stance on European integration and have come to similar results. Whether when observing party manifestos, voter's positions, or other materials, the (inverted) U-curve was almost always and in some form the result. It is important to note that while the symmetry of said curve is contested, there is a consensus that the motives underlying Euroscepticism differ substantially (Habersack & Wegscheider, 2021, p. 202).

So why conduct *another* study on the relationship between ideology and Euroscepticism? The answer is as simple as it is complex: the U-curve, as established as it may be, is today prone to uncertainty and possibly inaccuracy. Whilst, as already described, many scholars still utilise the concept for further analyses and also find a U-shape in different studies, the curve does not necessarily depict a "U". Indeed, the U-curve has shown to be inconsistent when comparing different countries (Kaniok & Havlík, 2016; Toshkov & Krouwel, 2022). Some scientists ascertain that the U-curve is oversimplifying and misleading (e.g. Kaniok & Havlík, 2016). Judging by newer results regarding the correlation, it appears like the U-curve has still not yet been contested or rebranded only due to it being an established concept. This ought to change, however, as the idea of said U-shape may cause empirical misunderstandings and oversimplification, as will be shown later.

The shape of a "U" insinuates a *symmetric* relationship between Euroscepticism and ideology, whereas existing studies have found that left-wing parties are not only often Eurosceptic to a lesser degree but also in a fully different sense: against the capitalist or neo-liberal *realisation* of the EU and not against the concept of an intergovernmental or even supranational organisation itself (Hooghe et al., 2002; van Elsas and van der Brug, 2015; Braun et al. 2019).

The main scientific innovation this paper presents is empirical evidence for the existence of a J-curve instead of a U-curve when regarding Euroscepticism. It is to be noted that the term J-curve has not been systematically proposed as an alternative to the U-curve in existing studies. However, the underlying assumptions (that left-wing and right-wing Euroscepticism are asymmetric) have been explored before (see e.g. Habersack & Wegscheider, 2021, pp. 203-205; Toshkov & Krouwel, 2022). Figure 1 depicts two different schemes that show possible relationships between Euroscepticism and ideology. The goal of this paper is to identify whether the second, asymmetric curve can be confirmed with new data. If this is confirmed, the long-standing U-curve must be regarded as (at least partially) oversimplifying and in need of a re-conceptualisation: towards a J-curve (Figure 1, right).

Figure 1: U- and J-curve relationship between Euroscepticism and political ideology



Source: author's work, based on Hooghe et al. (2002)

Theoretical framework

Polity and policy Euroscepticism

Following Paul Taggart's (1998) first definition on Euroscepticism, a scientific debate ensued in which different typologies were discussed, criticised, and reconceptualised by several scholars.¹ Following his original work, Taggart, together with his colleague Szczerbiak, refined the definition (2001): for the first time, they distinguished between *hard* and *soft* Euroscepticism. A further partition was then applied to *soft* Euroscepticism, which was subdivided into *Policy-* and *National-interest-*Euroscepticism (2001, pp. 10-11). According to the authors, hard Euroscepticism implies the outright rejection of the European integration, whilst soft policy Euroscepticism means the opposition to new policies that would deepen the European integration. Soft-national-interest Euroscepticism employs a "rhetoric of defending or standing up for 'the national interest' in the context of debates about the EU" (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2001, p. 10).

An intensive counterdraft was then published by Kopecký and Mudde (2002). They introduced two new dimensions, *diffuse* and *specific* Euroscepticism. Both are defined the following: "By *diffuse* support we mean support for the general ideas of European integration that underlie the EU. By *specific* support we denote support for the general practice of European integration; that is, the EU as it is and as it is developing." (Kopecký & Mudde, 2002, p. 300).

Derived from that, the presence and absence of diffuse and specific Euroscepticism leads to a fourfold table with four ideal types of attitudes towards European Integration: *Euroenthusiasts*, *Europragmatists*, *Eurosceptics*, and *Eurorejects* (2002, pp. 300-

¹ A detailed summary of the state of the art for the concept of Euroscepticism is presented by Szczerbiak and Taggart (2018).

304). Their counterdraft led Taggart and Szczerbiak to integrate new elements into a revised typology which still only differentiated between *hard* and *soft* Euroscepticism. However, this revision was more sophisticated, especially in clarifying what soft Euroscepticism is, which was one of the main points of critique by Kopecký and Mudde (2002, p. 300) (Taggart & Szczerbiak, 2008, pp. 6-10).

Their work will be the first of two bases for the new conceptualisation of Euroscepticism this paper offers. The second base is by Kröhnert (2018). In an original typology that builds on Kopecký and Mudde (2002) he distinguishes not only between *hard* and *soft* (*reformist*) Euroscepticism but also between a *political* and an *economic* dimension (2018, p. 19). Especially his economic dimension showed to be most innovative compared to prior understandings of Euroscepticism: Kröhnert deliberately distinguished political factors (which may also be called polity factors) from economic ones, which represent a type of policy field. One can, however, abstract even further by combining all policy fields into one single policy dimension. Therefore, soft Euroscepticism (Szczerbiak & Taggart, 2008) and an abstracted form of Kröhnert's economic dimension combined form the first part of the typology: *Policy Euroscepticism*.

For the second part of the typology, the *hard* Euroscepticism proposed by Taggart and Szczerbiak and Kröhnert's *political* dimension may be seen as essentially congruent. Thus, said two ideas can be combined into a renamed dimension of Euroscepticism: *Polity Euroscepticism*. The main difference between both dimensions is the modus of eurosceptic criticism. Polity-Euroscepticism includes attacks on the EU's most fundamental principles, institutions, and conventions. It explicitly refers to the type of criticism that seeks to either abolish or completely rework the concept or current realisation of the EU, e.g. a party demanding their country to leave the EU. Furthermore, a polity Europhily can be described as stronger than the simple contentment with EU institutions: the active advocacy for and defending of EU institutions (or even the demand for increased EU competence, such as advocating for the EP's right to introduce legislation) is far more the centre of polity Europhily and thus the contrary to polity Euroscepticism. Polity-Euroscepticism can be seen as very similar to Taggart and Szczerbiak's hard Euroscepticism. A key difference between this study's and other studies' typologies only arises when observing the second dimension.

The meaning of policy Euroscepticism is best explained by an example borrowed from Kopecký and Mudde: "*For example, despite some criticism of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, the Polish Peasant Party (PSL) is EU-optimist, not only because it sees the EU as a vital instrument for the support of farmers' communities [...], but also because it supports the general shape and development of the EU's political, institutional, and social elements.*" (2002, p. 302). The basic premise of policy Euroscepticism is that an actor need not necessarily reject the basic idea of the EU when being opposed to one or more policies imposed by it. The grouping of all policy fields in one dimension may, at first, seem counterintuitive. After all, there is an immense range of policy fields, most of which never or only sparsely interact with one another. In this case, however, this approach is justified because the actual *content* of a policy is without

any relevance for the policy dimension. Merely the question “Is the opposition to/approval of a specific policy in favour of or opposed to European Integration” marks the key question relevant for this category, regardless of deeper substance. This marks a clear distinction between policy Euroscepticism and soft Euroscepticism.

Similar to the concept introduced by Kopecký and Mudde (2002) the new typology creates four distinct subtypes of stances towards European Integration: *Europragmatics*, *Eurorejects*, *Europhiles*, and *Eurosceptics*. The typology is schematically depicted in Figure 2. For the denotation of said categories, the terms proposed by Kopecký and Mudde (2002) in their own typology are partially reused. The main advantage of the newly formed typology is its conciseness compared to the former ones. When considering any demand of a political party, one can simply sort it into one of the two dimensions by qualitatively analysing whether the criticism is addressed *towards the practical configuration and arrangements of the policy*, or towards the basic *institutions and configurations of the polity*. An example of this would be criticism towards illegal migration between European countries, which is incongruent with the outright rejection of the Schengen treaty, and therefore would be classified as policy Euroscepticism.² This typology also allows to simply but systematically, in one word, distinguish between different types of party-stances towards European integration. Many of the advantages of said typology are similar to the ones stemming from Kopecký and Mudde (2002) as the terms for the types have also been partially adopted from them.

Figure 2. Typology of Euroscepticism

		Policy-Dimension	
		<i>Eurosceptic</i>	<i>Europhile</i>
Polity-Dimension	<i>Eurosceptic</i>	Euroreject Against the EU and against its policymaking	Europragmatic Against the EU but in favour of its policymaking
	<i>Europhile</i>	Eurosceptic In favour of the EU but against its policymaking	Europhile In favour of the EU and its policymaking

An additional advantage is the possibility to analyse different policy areas systematically. The newfound typology allows for comparisons, such as comparing polity-contestation regarding the existence of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) versus contestation of specific policies undertaken or proposed by the European Commission. Due to the existing similarities of the new typology to the other ones

² It is noteworthy that, due to the complex nature of the EU, in some cases the concise distinguishing between polity and policy may still be very difficult.

discussed, it must not be seen as a competing concept but rather as a modification of existing typologies to better fit specific research questions.

Hypotheses

Several studies found a correlation between a party's ideology and its stance toward the EU and the integration process (Toshkov & Krouwel, 2022). This correlation is often depicted as a U-curve, as the very edges (or extremes) of the ideological-political spectrum show higher Euroscepticism than mainstream-parties (van Bohemen et al., 2019). Therefore, hypothesis H1 can be stated as follows:

H1: The level of polity and policy Euroscepticism is higher for far-left and far-right parties than for moderate parties:

$$EI_{Polity\ and\ Policy}(far\ right) > EI_{Polity\ and\ Policy}(moderate)^3$$

$$EI_{Polity\ and\ Policy}(far\ left) > EI_{Polity\ and\ Policy}(moderate)$$

This tendency, however, is not unanimously agreed upon. Some researchers find that the relationship between ideology and Euroscepticism is asymmetric and differs between right- and left-wing parties in a sense that far-right parties are more eurosceptic than far-left parties (e.g. Meijers, 2017). Furthermore, the modus of criticism differs heavily between both extremes. Far-right parties often advocate against the entire concept of the EU and approve of re-nationalisation of competences as well as their country's exit from the EU. Far-left parties on the other hand are often more critical of the substantive configuration of the current EU. For example, they are more hostile towards policies, however, not towards the EU as an institution itself (Hooghe et al., 2002; van Elsas and van der Brug, 2015; Braun et al., 2019). From these findings, H2 and H3 can be derived:

H2: The level of polity-Euroscepticism is higher for ideologically far-right parties than for far-left parties whose level, in turn, is similar to moderate parties.

$$EI_{Polity}(far\ right) > EI_{Polity}(far\ left) \approx EI_{Polity}(moderate)$$

H3: The level of policy Euroscepticism for far-left parties is higher than for moderate ones but lower than for far-right ones.

$$EI_{Policy}(far\ right) > EI_{Policy}(far\ left) > EI_{Policy}(moderate)$$

³ *EI* = Euroscepticism Index

All three hypotheses are theoretically explained by the argument that party positioning on European integration is based on ideological elements of party contestation (Hellström, 2008, p. 191).

The fourth hypothesis is founded on the research-based assumption that French and German parties (which will be the point of observance in the empirical section) behave different in different policy fields, including their stance on European Integration (Bornschier, 2012; Evrard, 2012). This is particularly important when considering that, empirically, support for European Integration varies from country to country (both when observing public opinion and party positioning, see Kopecký & Mudde, 2002; De Vries & Edwards, 2009). As mentioned above, Hellström (2008) refers to this argument as the preference formation being “ideologically immune” (p. 191). In other words, distinct national features such as individual culture, history, and identity also form the stance on European Integration *aside from* an ideological influence (Hellström, 2008, p. 195).

Different studies have found varying patterns of Euroscepticism between countries (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2010; van Bohemen et al., 2019) which further raises the question of whether the U-curve is even a phenomenon to be observed in *all* European countries and, if so, to what extent they are similar. As this study only compares two cases, Germany and France, this problem cannot be resolved fully. Nevertheless, systematic differences between party-Euroscepticism of German and French parties may be a snapshot of a wider picture that sees different U-curves all over the Union. For instance, Lubbers and Scheepers also discovered that Dutch parties, over time, grew more Eurosceptic whilst Spanish and Greek parties developed more Europhile positions (2010, p. 800). Therefore, it is appropriate to assume the following hypothesis:

H4: The level of polity and policy Euroscepticism differs between German and French parties.

$$EI_{Polity\ and\ Policy}(France) \neq EI_{Polity\ and\ Policy}(Germany)$$

Research design and methodology

Case-selection

The two introduced dimensions of Euroscepticism provide the room for a detailed analysis of positions towards European Integration. In their cross-country comparative analysis, Habersack and Wegscheider (2021) find that the role of ideology towards a party’s position on European Integration is evident. Nevertheless, right-wing parties show higher levels of Euroscepticism than left-wing parties (Habersack & Wegscheider, 2021, pp. 203-205). Further comparative (Pirro et al., 2018; Kneuer, 2019) and case studies (Franzosi et al., 2015; Herkman, 2017; van Boehmen et al., 2019) came to similar conclusions opting for a strong correlation between Euroscepticism and ideology. The

overwhelming consensus that there is a correlation between the two concepts leads to a focus on right- and left-wing parties in much of the literature. While this paper shares this approach, moderate (or mainstream) parties will also be analysed and then compared to their radical counterparts in order to increase comparability. The inclusion of moderate parties within the same research design enables one to identify clear differences and patterns between extremist parties in stark contrast with mainstream ones.

The units of investigation in this paper are German and French parties. To be precise, a comparative, medium-n study of German and French parties will be conducted to examine their stances on the EU regarding policy and polity Euroscepticism. In the analysis, only party manifestos for elections to the European Parliament have been examined. The selection of German and French parties, whilst partially based on external limitations, is also substantially justified. Germany and France possess very different electoral and party systems. Whilst Germany utilises a form of Mixed-Member-Proportional system, France uses a Two-Round-Runoff system with a dominant majoritarian component (Lijphart, 2012, p. 133). The party systems of Germany and France also differ quite heavily. On one hand, Germany has evolved into a solid multiparty system with about six different parties all depicting different interests and political ideologies (Ismayr, 2009, p. 539). On the other hand, France is, to some extent, still divided into a two-block-system, often referred to as Bipolarisation (Kempf, 2009, pp. 374-475). The variation of both variables is appropriate when trying to cautiously generalise these findings to other countries. This is, of course, only appropriate in a very constrained manner, however, said variation at least accounts for some EU-wide variation.

Furthermore, Germany and France were and are seen as *tandem for European Integration* (Krotz & Schild, 2012) as well as central players in the EU. This makes the fact that Eurosceptic parties fare well in both countries all the more critical and worthy of examination. Especially over the last decade, the electoral success of the French Rassemblement National (RN, formerly Front National, FN) and the German Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) has grown substantially while left parties have maintained relatively stable electoral outcomes. Simultaneously, eurosceptic sentiment has increased both among parties and the public (van Elsas & van der Brug, 2015). Accordingly, six French and six German parties⁴ were selected based on their relevance in prior elections to the European Parliament. The only material that was examined was the electoral manifestos of all parties.⁵ Electoral manifestos pose, formally, the base for everything that a party stands for: its policies, its ideas, and its key ideology. Therefore, as this paper seeks to identify patterns for a party *as a whole* (in contrast to factions, prominent political figures, and others), the examination of party manifestos is an

⁴ *Front de Gauche* (FDG), an electoral coalition consisting of multiple parties, is, in this paper, handled as one party. The name *CDU* also includes the *CSU*. *Parti Socialist* (PS) contested both elections in an electoral coalition, nevertheless, it is still referred to as PS.

⁵ The author was not able to obtain a genuine manifesto of the *Front National* for the European election 2014. Therefore, it was not analysed then.

appropriate and suitable method.⁶ Figure 3 depicts the distribution of all analysed party manifestos by country and by the share of right and left-wing extremist parties.

The classification of the selected parties for the empirical part of this paper has been adopted from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al., 2019). The Chapel Hill Expert Survey codes overall ideology with the variable “LRGEN”, and its variation goes from 0 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). Accordingly, all parties can be distinguished into three groups: the left-wing-group (values 0-2), the moderate-party-group (3-7), and the right-wing-group (8-10). Both countries possess at least one party that can be grouped into either category. For Germany, Die Linke fits into the first group, CDU/CSU, SPD, Greens and FDP into the second, and AfD into the third one. For France, LFI and FDG represent the left-wing-group, PS, Renaissance and UMP the moderate, and FN/RN the right-wing-group.

Figure 3. Distribution of analysed party manifestos

Party	Elections examined	N	N by country	N by 'extremism'	
AfD	2014, 2019	2	13	11	11
DIE LINKE	2009, 2014, 2019	3			
CDU	2014, 2019	2			
SPD	2014, 2019	2			
Bündnis90/DieGrünen	2014, 2019	2			
FDP	2014, 2019	2			
FDG	2009, 2014	2	9	11	11
LFI	2019	1			
RN / FN	2009, 2019	2			
PS	2014, 2019	2			
Renaissance	2019	1			
UMP	2014	1			
			22		

Notes: 'N by extremism' depicts the number of cases classified as either far-right or far-left (*green*) or as moderate parties (*blue*); **Source:** author's work; all the examined manifestos stem from the European Parliamentary Election Study 1979-2019 (Euromanifesto Study)

Based on the case selection a key implication needs to be addressed. Whilst the case selection includes different national political systems and thus shows variation for the institutional foundation on which the parties operate and originated from, the fact remains that only *two* countries are being analysed. Therefore, generalisations derived from this study's results are far-fetched and may distort actual tendencies. Only further

⁶ The *Manifesto Project* is the most prominent research project examining party manifestos and coding them content-wise. The data provided by the Manifesto Project was, in this paper, not used for two reasons. First, the Manifesto Project does not systematically examine manifestos for *European Parliament elections*, which is the main point of focus in this paper. Second, the Manifesto Project does not consider the newly conceptualised policy and polity dimensions of Euroscepticism and thus does not provide suitable data to examine these two dimensions. This is, of course, not the fault of the Manifesto Project database: it is merely not conceptualised to suit the research methodology used in this study.

research can clarify whether the Franco-German results of this study are applicable to a wider range of countries and parties.

The timespan of electoral manifestos examined differs between established and extreme (left- or right-wing) parties: the manifestos of German and French left- and right-wing parties will be analysed for the European Elections from 2009 to 2019 while for the mainstream parties, only a selection of manifestos will be examined. This includes the manifestos of the German mainstream parties (CDU/CSU, SPD, B90/The Greens, and FDP) as well as those of the French PS for the elections 2014 and 2019, the UMP only for the 2014, and Renaissance only for the 2019 European Election. This selection is justified by two core reasons. First, as the research question is only concerned explicitly with left- and right-wing (eurosceptic) parties, a large coverage of their variation is more important to this study than of the mainstream parties. Secondly, no large and substantial variation between the mainstream parties' stance towards European Integration is expected (Hooghe et al., 2002; Halikiopoulou et al., 2012) which makes an even larger analysis unnecessary. Covering all important Eurosceptic parties is far more important for the proposed research question.

Operationalisation and coding

For the analysis, all electoral manifestos were qualitatively examined. For the operationalisation of the dimensions of Euroscepticism, both dimensions were dissected into a total of 45 issues. By conducting a detailed qualitative content analysis most of the formulated issues were manually assessed by the author. The content of eight issues, however, is provided by the data offered by the European Parliamentary Election Study 1979 – 2019 (Euromanifesto Study) and was therefore not ascertained again. The formulated items were deliberately phrased in a dichotomous way and generally have one answer that was coded as eurosceptic ($X_N=1$) and one answer that was coded as Europhile ($X_N=0$).

In total, 15 individual issues were formulated and examined for the polity dimension and 30 individual issues for the policy dimension. To ensure sufficient variation in the policy dimension, a total of 30 individual policies from five broad policy fields were examined. Appendix A.1 lists all of them as well as their corresponding Euroscepticism dimensions and their corresponding policy field. Appendix A.2 displays each examined party manifesto, its number of pages, and the proportion of the formulated issues that could be answered in each program.

The identification process of all items was fully inductive. In order to find issues suitable for the analysis, combined with an intensive literature review, four electoral programs were analysed and all 45 hypotheses induced from them with the help of the software MAXQDA. The manifestos in question were from AfD, B90/The Greens, CDU, and LFI (all for the 2019 election). By including items from different policy fields and stemming from parties with different ideologies, the confirmation bias of the study minimised as

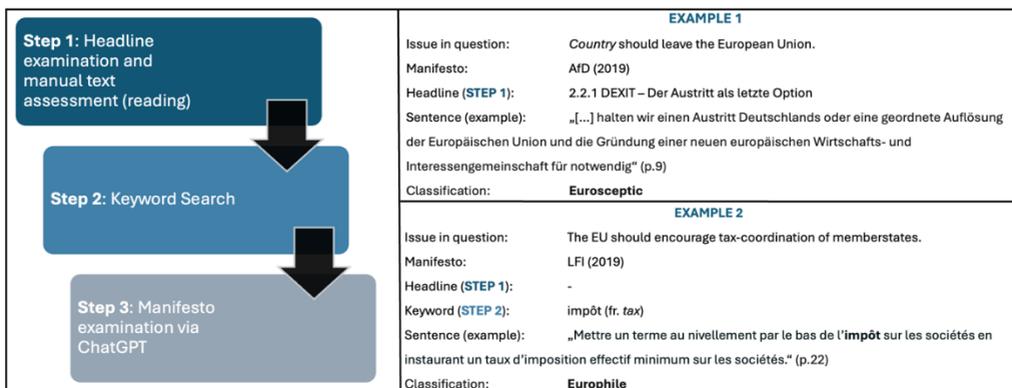
much as possible. Thus, the identification process tried to keep four different and important aspects in balance for the formulation of the items:

1. Avoiding a biased formulation (toward one ideological direction) in all issues
2. Incorporating multiple (five) different policy fields
3. Ensuring that French and German parties would both have an interest in all issues (in either direction) as to not indirectly exclude certain parties
4. Refraining from formulating too specific statements as not all electoral manifestos may be specific and detailed enough to answer very specific issues or questions

The issues were kept as generalised as possible without losing any relevant substance to ensure that most party manifestos could provide answers to them. The coding process was conducted qualitatively. The process itself was multi-levelled and split into three sequential parts.

First, after all issues were formulated, the manifesto's structure was examined and all headlines in the list of contents relating to a specific item were examined. If at this point a clear answer to an item could be found, the coding process for said item ended. If not, a keyword-search through the entire manifesto was conducted. For each item, keywords that were intuitively near to its content were searched for in the manifesto. This was done with German keywords for German party manifestos and with French keywords for French party manifestos. If at this point a clear answer to the item examined could be found, the coding process ended.

Figure 4: Schematic coding process and examples



If not, then the issue was temporarily disregarded and at the end, after all remaining issues were coded, the manifesto was, in its entirety, fed into the AI software ChatGPT. ChatGPT was then tasked to evaluate whether said item could be answered for the party with the help of *only* the manifesto (under the assumption that the author simply overlooked the information). The reasoning behind the utilisation of ChatGPT was to,

possibly, find information corresponding to certain issues that have either been subsumed under a headline with misleading phrasing, which would have led for the author to miss the information the first step of analysis, or formulated in an unorthodox way without keywords that normally would be associated with a topic.⁷ Figure 4 schematically depicts the coding process as well as exemplary coding for steps 1 and 2. Missing values were coded with -999 and disregarded for further analysis in the empirical part. The answers to all issues were coded as either 1 (Eurosceptic) or 0 (Europhile) and then used to calculate Euroscepticism Indices, first for the respective dimension and subsequently for the total Euroscepticism Index, according to the following simple formulas:

$$EI_{Policy} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_{Policy}} X_i}{n_{Policy}};$$

$$EI_{Polity} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_{Polity}} X_i}{n_{Polity}};$$

$$EI = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_{Policy}} X_i + \sum_{i=1}^{n_{Polity}} X_i}{n_{Policy} + n_{Polity}};$$

Note: EI = Euroscepticism Index; $\sum_{i=1}^{n_{Policy}} X_i$ = Sum of feature values of n; n = Number of answered items excluding n/a

Figure 5: Example Index Calculation

<p>Party / Election. DIE LINKE / 2012</p> $EI_{Policy} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_{Policy}} X_i}{n_{Policy}} = \frac{10}{21} = 0,476$ $EI_{Polity} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_{Polity}} X_i}{n_{Polity}} = \frac{2}{12} = 0,167$ $EI = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n_{Policy}} X_i + \sum_{i=1}^{n_{Polity}} X_i}{n_{Policy} + n_{Polity}} = \frac{10+2}{21+12} = \mathbf{0,364}$

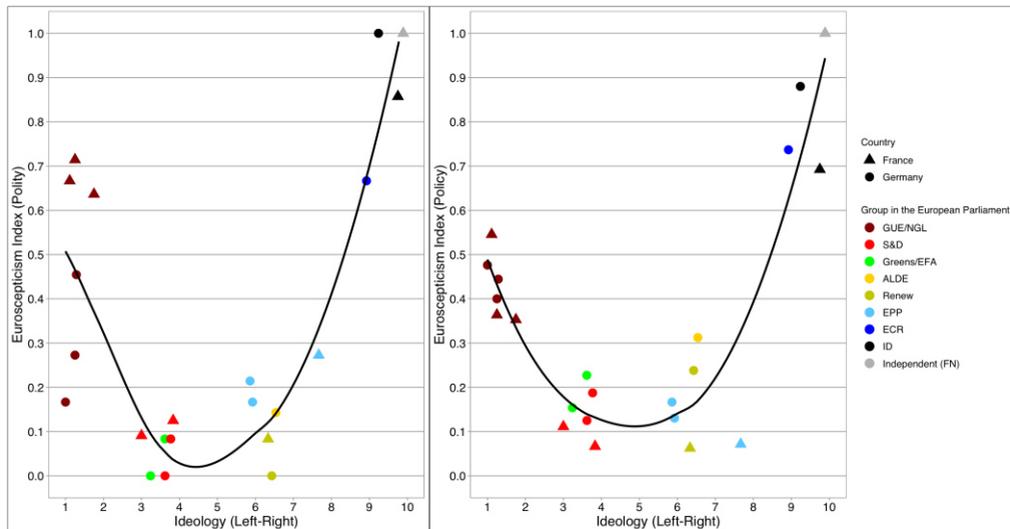
Analysis

In the empirical analysis of ideology and Euroscepticism, numerous studies have found a correlation between both concepts. This correlation is often described as a U-curve, according to which right-wing and left-wing parties are perceived as more Eurosceptic than moderate parties (van Elsas et al., 2016, p. 1992; van Bohemen et al., 2019; initially, the U-curve was identified as an "inverted-U-curve" by Hooghe et al., 2002; for a critique of this concept, see van Elsas & van der Brug, 2015).

⁷ Nevertheless, all issues were either already coded after the first or second step or were not able to be coded entirely due to a lack of information in the manifesto.

For the empirical findings, figure 6 depicts two graphs: shown on the left side is the *EI* for the polity and on the right side for the policy dimension. Figure 7 depicts the correlation between ideology and the general *EI*-Index. Figure 8 shows the same relationship grouped by country.⁸

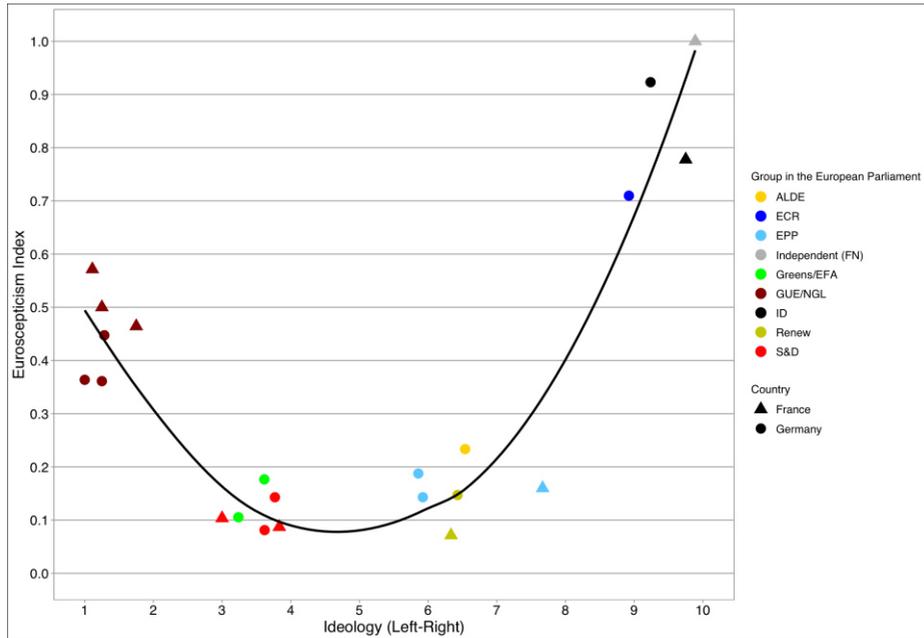
Figure 6: Correlation between polity and policy Euroscepticism Index and ideology



Note: The “Left-Right-ideology” variable was borrowed from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al., 2019).

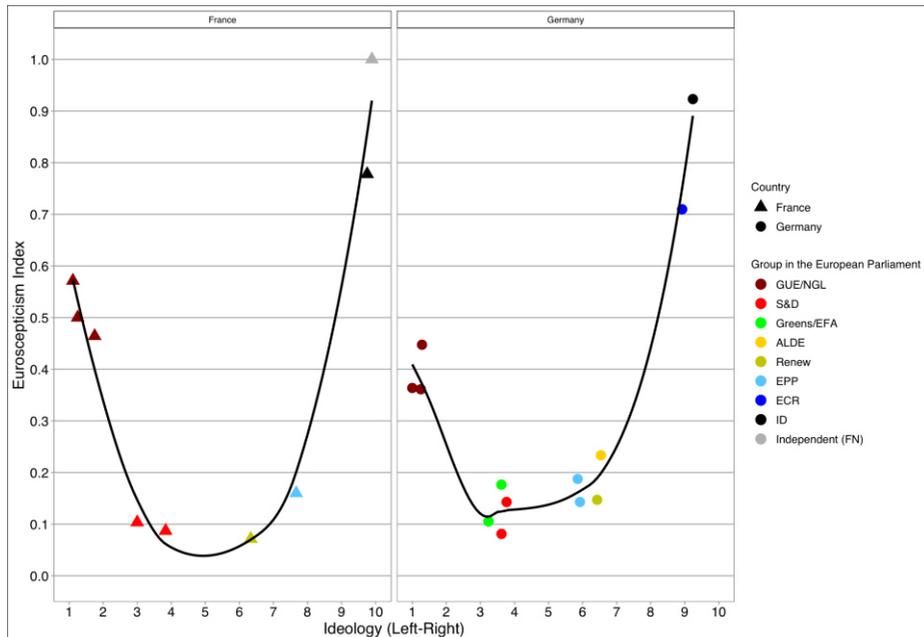
⁸ All party manifestos have been treated as singular and independent observations for the analysis. The study does not provide for a systematic longitudinal analysis of party Euroscepticism. For an example of such a longitudinal analysis, see e.g. van Elsas and van der Brug, 2015.

Figure 7: Correlation between Euroscepticism Index and ideology



Note: The “Left-Right-ideology” variable was borrowed from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al., 2019).

Figure 8: Correlation between Euroscepticism Index and ideology by country



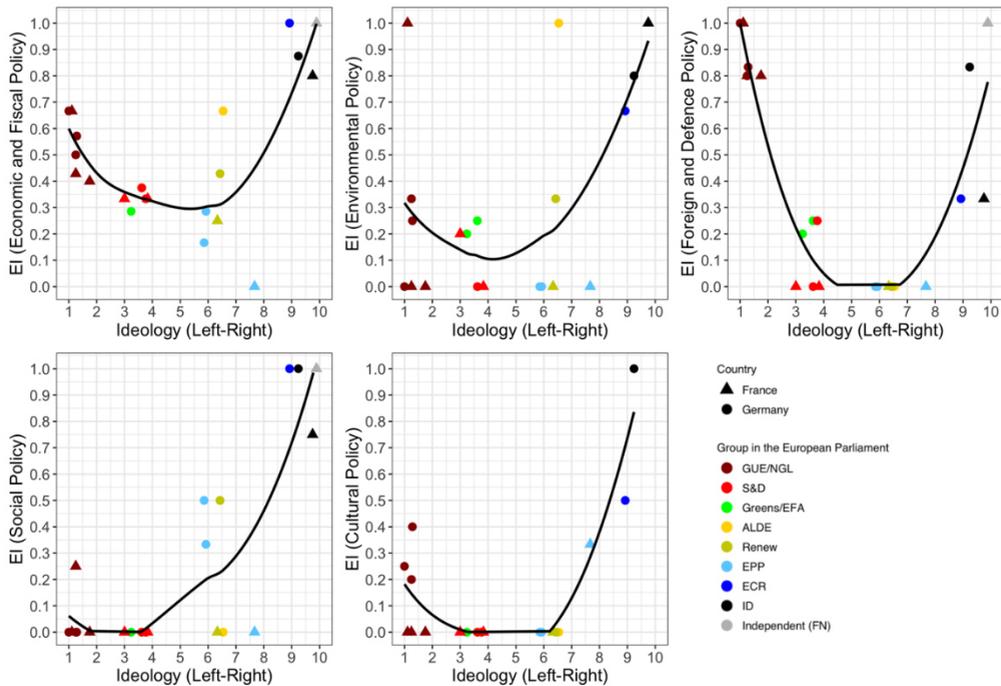
Note: The “Left-Right-ideology” variable was borrowed from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al., 2019).

With the exemption of two cases, Social Democratic, Liberal, Green, and Christian democratic parties show values of < 0.25 in all cases, indicating lower levels of Euroscepticism. Right-wing parties are more consistently Eurosceptic, while the positions of left-wing parties vary significantly among themselves. In the policy dimension, there is a certain homogeneity among left-wing parties and their scepticism, particularly regarding the idea of European solutions in social policy, while, for example, a common defence policy is rejected. In the polity dimension, on the other hand, there is a strong variance: particularly the French left tends to reject the EU as an institution, while the German Die LINKE takes a more moderate stance towards it.

Thus, in all three figures, a shape like the U-curve can be drawn, indicating that left-wing and right-wing parties indeed tend towards higher Euroscepticism. And yet, the assumed symmetry does not feature everywhere. Right-wing parties show greater and consistent levels of Euroscepticism than left-wing parties.

This finding can be mostly amplified by looking at figure 9, which depicts the policy *EI* values for the different policy fields examined. For economic and fiscal policy, environmental policy, social policy, as well as cultural policy, a clear J-curve can be drawn. Only foreign policy depicts an almost perfect and, most notably, symmetric U-curve. These findings should, however, be treated with caution. Whilst they undoubtedly amplify the argument proposed, most policy fields were only ascertained by very few issues (e.g. only five issues for environmental policy) and therefore are prone to deviation. Nevertheless, relying on the empirical findings, from this point on it is more appropriate to speak of a J-curve, rather than a U-curve, as the letter J depicts the results more accurately.

Figure 9. Euroscepticism Indices for different policy fields

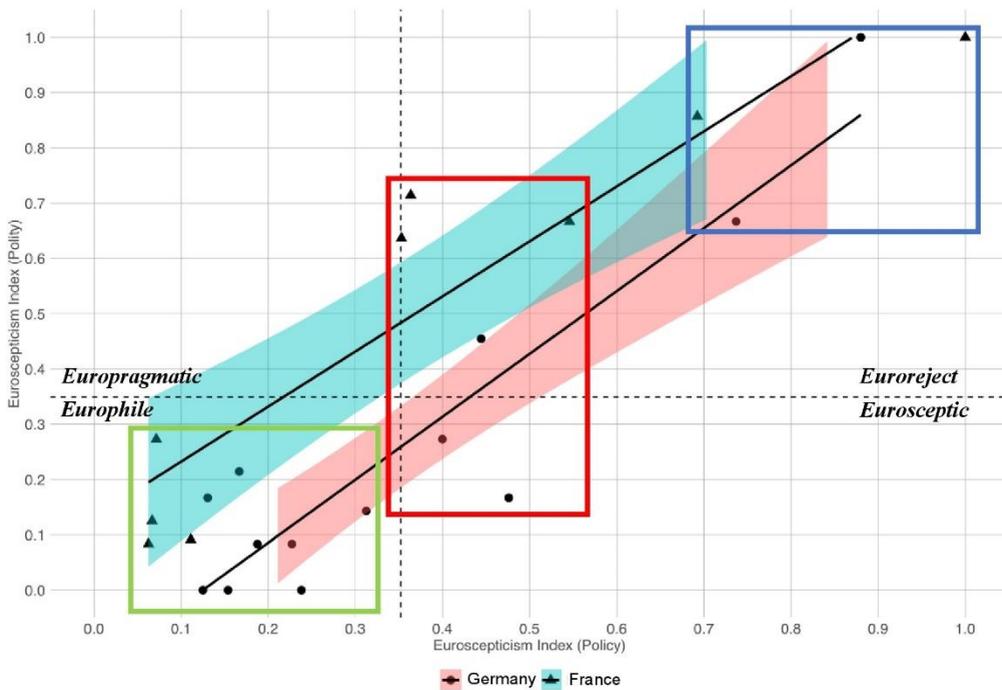


Note: some manifestos did not include any information on a specific policy field (e.g. FN 2009 on environmental policy) which is why these manifestos do sometimes not appear in the figures. The “Left-Right-ideology” variable was borrowed from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Jolly et al., 2019).

Hypothesis **H1**, after which the level of *EI* in both dimensions would be highest for extreme and lowest for moderate parties can be confirmed. **H3** can also be seen as confirmed, as the level of policy *EI* is indeed highest for far-right, lowest for moderate and in-between for far-left parties (J-shape). The hypotheses **H2** and **H4**, on the other hand, are not confirmed at this stage. It appears that far-left parties show higher levels of polity Euroscepticism than moderate parties (**H2**). Furthermore, German and French parties do not show any apparent systematic differences, the variation is mostly limited to ideology, aside from the exception of the far-left.

To clarify both unconfirmed hypotheses, figure 10 illustrates the relationship between both *EIs*. The x-axis represents the *EI*-Index for the policy dimension, and the y-axis represents the polity dimension. Firstly, a positive correlation is evident for both French and German parties: higher polity Euroscepticism correlates with higher policy Euroscepticism. Secondly, in this depiction a systematic variance in the country context is noticeable: French parties generally exhibit higher polity Euroscepticism, while German parties generally show higher policy Euroscepticism. Thus, hypothesis **H4** can also be confirmed. The insights from the graph can generally be divided into three clusters, which are marked by coloured boxes.

Figure 10: Two dimensions of Euroscepticism in comparison



Firstly, the bottom-left, green box, which includes all moderate or mainstream parties, demonstrates that Euroscepticism is indeed a phenomenon of the extremes. Moderate parties have Euroscepticism values < 0.32 in both dimensions, with only one exception: the FDP's policy dimension in 2014, where the value exceeds 0.3. The classification of both dimensions into the four types as outlined by the typology is somewhat difficult with this research design, as only Euroscepticism (or rather: the degree of Euroscepticism) is measured and not Europhilia. Depending on the division and thereby the level of Euroscepticism one deems sufficient for a party to be deemed any typus, different pictures were to arise from the figure. For figure 10, the averages of the two *EIs* (polity and policy) were calculated ($\bar{x}_{EI,Policy}=0.352$; $\bar{x}_{EI,Polity}=0.349$).

Secondly, in the middle the red cluster is of significance. This cluster includes all far-left parties observed. Again, a clear distinction between German and French parties is apparent: Whilst all left-wing parties exhibit similar levels of Euroscepticism on the policy level, the French parties are all significantly more polity Eurosceptic than the German DIE LINKE. This difference is more pronounced here than in the average of other parties. When observing only the German DIE LINKE, its polity *EI* level is mostly approximately at the level of the moderate parties. However, when observing the French left, a clearly higher level of polity Euroscepticism can be measured. This comes back to Hellström's (2008) third explanation for position formation on European integration, after which a position is also formed in country-specific contexts and is somewhat ideologically immune. Due to these findings, **H2** can neither be confirmed nor rejected.

Still, the level of polity Euroscepticism is highest for far-right parties. DIE LINKE was classified as Eurosceptic for its manifestos from 2009 and 2014, whilst its 2019 manifesto as well as LFI and FDG are classified as Euroreject according to the typology, although LFI 2019 and FDG 2014 are at the brink of classifying as Europragmatic.

Another important point is that left-wing parties tend to exhibit strong Europhilia in social policy matters. Contestation in the policy dimension is strongly rooted in the ideology of the parties. They advocate common EU-wide policies in social policy, while often rigidly rejecting current common foreign, security, and defence policies. However, a clear distance to the last, blue cluster, is recognisable. Left-wing parties are thus decidedly more Eurosceptic than moderate parties in both dimensions, but far less so than right-wing ones. This also aligns with the findings of van Elsas et al. (2016).

The third and final cluster is the upper, blue box, which includes all far-right nationalist parties. As is apparent, these are the most Eurosceptic in both the polity and policy dimensions. This aligns with the findings of recent research on Euroscepticism, according to which since the emergence of the so-called Radical Right Parties in the 1990s, Euroscepticism has been one of their central characteristic(s), which previously was assumed to be a characteristic of Radical Left Parties (see Halikiopoulou et al. 2012).

The findings in Figure 10 underline and elucidate the points already made and discussed substantively. The U-curve, often observed in the context of Euroscepticism, may be too simplistic, at least for the cases of Germany and France. While both right and left-wing parties are Eurosceptic, this Euroscepticism is by no means symmetric and equal in both dimensions, as in a U. Instead, it is an asymmetric relationship, which gains further complexity when systematically disaggregating the dimensions of Euroscepticism. Therefore, the formulation of a J-curve is far more appropriate for any finding that was presented in this section and should, as many other researchers have found similar results, be discussed as a possible successor-model to the U-curve.

Reflection of methods and results

This study has several, partially self-imposed, limitations that ought to be addressed in this section. Firstly, not all party-manifestos are of equal size and substantial value. Empirically, the study has shown that particularly French parties often had less detailed information written down in their manifestos, resulting in missing information on some hypotheses. The other way around, this limitation leads to the problem that there are only so many aspects to be examined and answered by manifestos. Secondly, the study conducted is hardly exhaustive, as only 30 policy issues covering five different policy fields were formulated. Yet, there are countless additional topics that could and ought to be examined in Euroscepticism analyses.

A third problem is the possible selection bias. Since not all policy fields were systematically, comprehensively, and exhaustively analysed, it is likely that there will be

a substantive shift in favour of certain positions. This is partly because some parties, due to ideology, are more Europhile or Eurosceptic in certain policy fields. For instance, Brack (2020) observes that left-wing parties actively support European solutions in the field of social policy, unlike right-wing parties (Brack, 2020, pp. 3–5). By including multiple policy fields, this study attempted to minimise this bias to the best of the author’s ability within this limited scope. However, it is likely that complete elimination could only be achieved in a study with a much larger sample size. Paradoxically, this would, again, conflict with the second problem that even with “only” 45 items, the average proportion of party programs containing suitable information was 78.2% for the polity dimension and only 62.9% for the policy dimension (see Appendix A.2). This share would only decline as the number of aspects and items covered increases.

A final, fourth shortcoming is inherent to the dichotomised nature of the items. This might lead to an over-simplified view whereas many of the issues could be understood in a more nuanced way. However, this paper primarily seeks to unveil general tendencies and patterns with the help of the new typology and could serve as a starting point for further analyses. Regardless of the shortcomings described, the findings that this paper presents still hold value for research on Euroscepticism.

To analyse the U/J-curve and its hypothesised simplification more precisely, four hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study. Each hypothesis provided unique insights into the complex interplay of ideological positioning and Eurosceptic sentiments. The hypotheses **H1**, after which the level of both *Eis* was higher for extreme than for moderate parties was confirmed. Additionally, **H3** showed that policy Euroscepticism is indeed highest for far-right parties and lowest for moderate parties, with far-left parties in between. These findings are explained by the theory that positioning on European integration is “*based on ideological elements of party contestation.*” (Hellström, 2008, p. 191). However, **H2** could not be proven nor denied. It is evident that far-right parties show the highest polity Euroscepticism. However, the hypothesis that far-left parties would show approximately similar levels of polity Euroscepticism to moderate parties could not be confirmed. This is due to French parties showing comparably high levels of polity Euroscepticism, while the German DIE LINKE is closer to the level of moderate parties.

Table 11: Hypothesis results of this study

#	Hypothesis	Status
1	The level of polity and policy Euroscepticism is higher for far-left and far-right parties than for moderate parties.	✓
2	The level of polity Euroscepticism is higher for ideologically far-right parties than for far-left parties whose level, in turn, is similar to moderate parties	○
3	The level of policy Euroscepticism for far-left parties is higher than for moderate ones but lower than for far-right ones	✓

4	The level of polity and policy Euroscepticism differs between German and French parties	✓
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Notes: ✓ = confirmed, X = rejected, ○ = neither confirmed nor rejected

Hypothesis **H4** examined the systematic difference in the stance towards European integration between German and French parties. The analysis indicates that French parties tend to be more polity sceptical towards the EU, questioning the EU's structure and governance, whereas German parties exhibit more scepticism on the policy level, criticising specific EU policies rather than its overall structure. This national difference is particularly pronounced among left-wing parties, with French left-wing parties showing higher levels of polity scepticism compared to their German counterparts, who “focus” more on policy scepticism. The findings of **H2** (regarding far-left parties) and **H4** highlight the importance of national contexts in shaping party positions towards the EU, reflecting historical, cultural, and political differences between countries. It is also theoretically explained by the view that “*preference formation over European integration [is] more or less ideologically immune.*” (Hellström, 2008, p. 191). Due to this study not producing generalisable insights into all political parties from all different countries of the European Union, this tendency must for the moment be seen as specific for the German and French cases. However, further studies could include a wider range of countries and thus confirm or reject the findings proposed by this paper.

The study was successful in introducing a new way to understand Euroscepticism, in the polity and policy dimensions. It also incorporated these dimensions by showing general tendencies of party Euroscepticism and suggesting that the U-curve might be outdated and should be replaced by a new concept, the J-curve. The newly proposed typology unveils a new framework by which to think, observe, and examine Euroscepticism in a more detailed and constructive way.

The study also highlights several broader implications for political science research. Firstly, it underscores the necessity of moving beyond one-dimensional analyses of Euroscepticism. The multidimensional nature of the European Union necessitates more sophisticated models that can capture the nuances of Euroscepticism. The results show gaps between a party's stance towards the EU as an institution or a concept and its current policies. These differences ought to be included in any study of Euroscepticism, it cannot merely be seen as one dimension, ranging from anti- to pro-EU-sentiment. Secondly, the findings emphasise the role of both ideology and national contexts in shaping party positions towards the EU. Future research should continue to explore both dimensions to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Euroscepticism across Europe.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this study was to develop a new, two-dimensional framework for understanding Euroscepticism and to critically evaluate the suitability of the U-curve as a scientific concept for describing the relationship between Euroscepticism and ideology. This objective was pursued through a detailed qualitative content analysis of 22 party manifestos from German and French parties for European Parliamentary elections.

This paper was able to theoretically conceptualise a new typology of Euroscepticism based on existing scientific literature by distinguishing Euroscepticism in two distinct dimensions: policy and polity. With this new framework, party Euroscepticism in selected German and French parties was thoroughly examined and new conclusions were drawn. This study's findings reaffirm the longstanding consensus in political science regarding the relationship between ideology and Euroscepticism. Traditionally, this relationship is depicted as a U-curve, with parties at the extremes of the political spectrum exhibiting the highest levels of Euroscepticism. This study both confirms and challenges this depiction, proposing a new way to see the relationship between Euroscepticism and ideology: the J-curve.

As the results have shown, there are two separate results to be observed. Both ideology and cultural/historical background influence party positioning on European integration as defined in the two possible explanations. In light of these findings, the continued use of the U-curve remains (to say the least) problematic. The U-curve, while historically significant, oversimplifies the complex and evolving dynamics of party positions on European integration. The J-curve better captures the empirical realities of contemporary political landscapes, where the intensity and consistency of Euroscepticism vary significantly between right- and left-wing parties. Adopting the J-curve in political science discourse will allow for a more precise analysis of the diverse and complex positions parties hold towards the European Union. This approach not only refines theoretical models but also has practical implications for policymakers and political strategists aiming to navigate the complexities of European integration in an era of growing ideological polarisation and populist influence. Further research on Euroscepticism ought to examine whether the results produced by this study may be generalisable for other countries and parties in the European Union and thereby – additionally – test the empirical validity and reliability of the conceptual frameworks proposed and imposed by this study, or possibly whether the J-curve exists in certain countries and the U-curve in others, and why.

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Appendix

A.1 All issues and descriptive information

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Issue</i>	<i>Policy-field</i>	<i>Manifesto %</i>
Polity	"COUNTRY should exit the EU."	-	100,00%
Polity	"The EU as an institution brings more advantages than disadvantages"	-	100.00%
Polity	"COUNTRY should a.) leave the Schengen-treaty entirely or b.) reintroduce border controls again."	-	95.45%
Polity	"The common market brings more advantages than disadvantages."	-	81.82%
Polity	"COUNTRY should leave the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) and return to a national currency."	-	90.91%
Polity	"The EU should retransfer competences to the nation-states."	-	95.45%
Polity	"The European Commission should loose (some of) its competences."	-	81.82%
Polity	"The European Parliament should loose (some of) its competences."	-	95.45%
Polity	"The principle of unanimity in the European Council should be kept or expanded."	-	63.64%
Polity	"The European Court of Justice should loose (some of) its competences."	-	45.45%
Polity	"National law should always apply first; European law should come after that."	-	45.45%
Polity	"There should be more referenda on the European level to increase the veto-possibilities of the people (against the European Commission and Parliament)."	-	63.64%
Polity	"The European Parliament should not be granted the right of initiative."	-	81.82%
Polity	"The long-term goal of a European federal state is to be prevented."	-	68.18%
Polity	"The EU should not encourage more states to join it."	-	63.64%
Polity	Average		78.18%

Policy	"The EU should encourage tax-coordination on the EU-level."	Economy and Finance	95.45%
Policy	"The EU should propose a minimum tax."	Economy and Finance	81.82%
Policy	"The EU (European Commission) should nominate a <i>European Finance Minister</i> ."	Economy and Finance	13.64%
Policy	"Companies should be supported by the EU through subsidies."	Economy and Finance	45.45%
Policy	"The ESM should be kept and applied in the entire EU."	Economy and Finance	54.55%
Policy	"The European Central Bank is an essential institution for the successful functioning of the EU and the EMU."	Economy and Finance	72.73%
Policy	"The current system of lobbying at EU-level is good and should be kept that way."	Economy and Finance	63.64%
Policy	"The EU should continue to be able to negotiate free-trade agreements with other countries."	Economy and Finance	86.36%
Policy	"The EU should introduce and enforce a CO2-emission trading system."	Economy and Finance	59.09%
Policy	"The CAP should continue to be financed and supported."	Environment, Climate and Agriculture	86.36%
Policy	"Ecological agriculture should be encouraged at EU-level (e.g. by utilizing subsidies)."	Environment, Climate and Agriculture	45.45%
Policy	"The subsidies of the CAP should be kept the way they are (for now)."	Environment, Climate and Agriculture	59.09%
Policy	"The EU should introduce binding limits for the pollutant emission."	Environment, Climate and Agriculture	59.09%
Policy	"The EU should introduce EU-wide standards for food and nourishments."	Environment, Climate and Agriculture	27.27%
Policy	"The EU should introduce an EU-wide minimum wage or encourage nation-states to introduce own minimum wages."	Social	72.73%
Policy	"The EU should introduce EU-wide standards for working conditions."	Social	86.36%

Policy	"Unemployment should be combated at the EU-level."	Social	86.36%
Policy	"The EU should be able to propose measures for better integration of immigrants."	Social	40.91%
Policy	"The pension-systems of the EU-countries should be harmonized."	Social	45.45%
Policy	"The disadvantages women encounter in society should be combated at EU level, e.g. by initiatives to improve the number of women in leadership positions."	Education, Culture, Science and Technology	77.27%
Policy	"The Bologna-reforms were good and should be kept in place or expanded."	Education, Culture, Science and Technology	50.00%
Policy	"The EU should encourage life-long-learning."	Education, Culture, Science and Technology	40.91%
Policy	"The EU should implement own infrastructure projects at the EU-level."	Education, Culture, Science and Technology	63.63%
Policy	"The EU should introduce binding rules for data protection (GDPR)."	Education, Culture, Science and Technology	59.09%
Policy	"The EU-peace-missions and military missions in areas of crisis should be kept in place and continued."	Foreign, Security and Migration	50.00%
Policy	"The EU should introduce an own EU-army."	Foreign, Security and Migration	59.09%
Policy	"The CFSP is good and should be kept or expanded."	Foreign, Security and Migration	90.90%
Policy	"FRONTEX is a necessary institution to secure the EU's borders and needs to be kept."	Foreign, Security and Migration	81.82%
Policy	"The sanctions imposed on Russia are good and should be kept or expanded at EU-level."	Foreign, Security and Migration	36.36%
Policy	"An EU-wide common migration policy is good and necessary."	Foreign, Security and Migration	95.45%
Policy	Average		62.88%

Notes: all purple marked issues were not examined by the author but borrowed from the European Parliament Election Study 1979-2019 (Euromanifesto Study). If there is no value in a cell there may be two possible explanations: 1.) the electoral Manifesto did not have any information on said item or 2.) there were

equally many positive and negative text passages (*Null effect*). **Source:** author's work and European Parliament Election Study 1979-2019

A.2 Share of answered issues and Length of Manifestos

<i>Party</i>	<i>Election examined</i>	<i>Length in pages</i>	<i>Share of answered issues</i>
AfD	2014	25	68.89%
AfD	2019	88	86.67%
Bündnis90/DieGrünen	2014	145	75.56%
Bündnis90/DieGrünen	2019	197	84.44%
CDU	2014	103	77.78%
CDU	2019	26	71.11%
DIE LINKE	2009	24	73.33%
DIE LINKE	2014	76	80.00%
DIE LINKE	2019	64	84.44%
FDG	2009	3	31.11%
FDG	2014	36	62.22%
FDP	2014	28	66.67%
FDP	2019	150	75.56%
LFI	2019	36	80.00%
PS	2014	17	51.11%
PS	2019	36	64.44%
Renaissance	2019	32	62.22%
SPD	2014	14	62.22%
SPD	2019	76	82.22%
RN (FN)	2009	4	40.00%
RN	2019	20	60.00%
UMP	2014	12	55.56%

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The Electoral Consequences of Labor Immigration – Analysing the Effect of Immigrant Skill on the Vote for a Populist Radical Right Party

Abstract

Previous studies have shown that individual attitudes towards immigration vary over immigrant skill and that native citizens are generally more open towards highly-skilled migrants compared to lower-skilled migrants. Assuming that these attitudinal differences and supposed micro-foundations have consequences for observed political outcomes, this paper draws on previous findings and analyses whether they translate into actual voting behaviour. Accordingly, the impact of immigrants' presence on native citizens' opposition to immigration leading to the vote for anti-immigration and populist radical right parties, varies contingently upon the skill levels of immigrants. Using district-level data from 400 districts in Germany (NUTS-3 level) for the 2017 and 2021 federal elections, this paper shows that the share of foreigners with no and with lower levels of professional qualification is positively related to Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) vote shares, while the share of foreigners with an academic qualification has no effect on AfD vote share. Testing whether the effect is moderated by natives' own labour market position and increased labour competition due to immigration provides limited support for the so-called *Labor Market Competition Hypothesis*.

Keywords: Labour Immigration, Voting Behaviour, Populist Radical Right Parties, Europe

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, immigration has become one of the most politicized issues in Europe, making it an important topic over which parties compete in elections at the supra-national, national and sub-national levels. Conventional wisdom suggests that political competition over this issue and rising immigrant inflows have contributed to the success of populist radical right parties across many European countries. This conjecture is partly supported by evidence at the national level (Barone et al., 2016; Halla et al., 2017; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014). At the same time, globalization and demographic are driving increased demand for foreign labour, especially highly skilled labour, in industrialized countries (cf. Rhein & Spilker, 2022). Most recently, this has been illustrated by the passage of the new “Skilled Immigration Act” in Germany that aims to address the shortage of skilled workers by facilitating the migration of qualified workers from outside the European Union (EU) to Germany (Bundesregierung, 2023).

Furthermore, studies have shown that individual attitudes of natives towards immigration are contingent upon immigrant skill (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010; Malhotra et al., 2013; Mayda, 2006; Rhein & Spilker, 2022; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). Theoretical explanations regarding this effect range from accounts of economic self-interest to cultural and sociotropic mechanisms. However, to better understand the transformation of the European party landscape, it is crucial to see if and how this effect translates into actual voting behaviour. So far, only a few studies at both the individual and aggregate levels, have explored the link between immigrant skill levels and the political preferences of native citizens, examining how this relationship affects vote choices (Mayda et al., 2022; Moriconi et al., 2022).

This paper assumes that attitudinal differences and underlying micro-foundations influence observed political outcomes. By synthesizing two strands of literature – one showing that the presence of immigrants increasing opposition towards immigration (Barone et al., 2016; Edo et al., 2019; Halla et al., 2017; Harmon, 2018; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014) and the other identifying the attitudinal differences of natives based on immigrant skill levels (Malhotra et al., 2013; Mayda, 2006; Rhein & Spilker, 2022; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001) – results in an explicit expectation. Namely, that the presence of immigrants will affect natives’ opposition to immigration contingent upon immigrants’ skill levels, and ultimately affect the vote for anti-immigration populist radical right parties.

Using district-level data from 400 districts in Germany (NUTS-3) for the 2017 and 2021 federal elections, this paper empirically tests whether the share of foreigners in the workforce differently affects the vote share of a populist radical right party contingent upon the professional qualification of foreigners. The district level is the second smallest administrative unit in Germany and the smallest unit for which this data is available. Districts in Germany usually include a city or several smaller municipalities, suggesting that native citizens are likely to have realistic perceptions about the presence of immigrants in their own district. This paper estimates the effect of the share of three different groups of foreigners, i.e. with *no qualification*, *with qualification*, and with

academic qualification, on the share of second votes for the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland).¹ The paper's empirical approach relies on exploiting regional variations between districts and on an informed selection of observable potential confounders. This strategy aims to identify the key differences between areas where migrants live while maximizing the explanatory variation in the data. However, the decision to condition only on observables implies that causal interpretations of the results should be made with caution.

The paper finds the effect to be heterogeneous over different levels of foreigner qualifications. Conditional on a set of observables, the share of foreigners with *no qualification* as well as *with qualification* is found to increase the vote share for AfD. At the same time, the share of foreigners with an *academic qualification* seems to have no effect on AfD vote share. Further, the evidence suggests that for the group with non-academic qualification, the effect might be driven by labour market pressure induced by the presence of foreigners.

First, this paper adds in a broader sense to literature focusing on the electoral consequences of globalization in highly industrialized countries (cf. Ahlquist et al., 2020; Colantone & Stanig, 2018; Hellwig & Samuels, 2007). Second, it adds to the literature on the determinants of individual preferences towards immigration and tests whether the heterogeneity effect across immigrant skill can be observed on the aggregate level (cf. Malhotra et al., 2013; Mayda et al., 2022; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001), and whether the effect on individual attitudes translates into voting behaviour. Third, it adds to research linking the surge of the populist radical right in Europe to immigration (cf. Halla et al., 2017; Haugsgjerd & Bergh, 2023) and tests this relationship with more new and refined data.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: The second section reviews the related literature and outlines the theoretical argument. The third section describes the data that used to test the hypotheses, discusses the operationalization of variables, and presents the estimation strategy. The fourth section presents the empirical findings. Finally, the last section concludes the paper, discusses limitations, and suggests possibilities for future research.

¹ One point of caution is that not all qualifications foreigners have acquired might be easily acknowledged in Germany. This would mean that foreigners with some professional qualifications would be counted as without qualification. While such concerns cannot be ruled out completely, since 2012, the German federal government's introduction of a new law that regulates the acknowledgement of professional qualifications means the large majority of degrees acquired outside of Germany or the EU are officially acknowledged (Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung, 2019).

Immigrant Skill and the Electoral Behaviour of Natives

The exposure to globalization of industrialized countries in recent decades has not only affected local industries by facilitating the import and export of goods, but has also significantly changed labour conditions in both importing and exporting countries (cf. Dancygier & Walter, 2015). The overall increase in labour mobility, but also a decentralization of several factors of production, has largely affected the labour supply and demand equilibria. Among other external economic factors, labour markets today are largely affected by labour immigration. From an economic perspective, it is not far-fetched to state that "[...] immigration has consequences, and these consequences generally imply that some people lose while others benefit" (Borjas, 2014, p. 4). Even more than other factors related to globalization, immigration has entered to the forefront of the political arena and is politicized being stepstone for the populist radical right in Europe (cf. Hutter & Kriesi, 2022; Kriesi et al., 2006; Shehaj et al., 2021). However, it is not without reason to suspect that the aggregate effect of labour immigration on the electoral success of populist right parties is likely to be heterogeneous across immigrant skill, as shown by previous work on the individual level.

Immigrant skill and individual attitudes towards immigration

The literature has identified several economic and non-economic channels through which immigration can affect natives and their attitudes towards immigration (cf. Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). First and foremost, immigration can generate direct or indirect costs for natives. Depending on how high these costs are perceived to be, they are likely to affect individual attitudes on immigration.

Generally, the inflow of foreign labour can increase competition in domestic labour markets. An increase in labour supply coupled with a stable demand for labour can worsen the bargaining positions of native workers negatively affecting their wages or even risking their employment. From this perspective, labour immigration can generate high costs for natives if it increases job competition. Following this rationale, the *Labor Market Competition Hypothesis* states that natives form opposing attitudes towards immigration if immigration puts them in a worse economic position due to an increase in job competition. However, not every immigrant will pose the same labour market threat to a given native. Therefore, the literature has assumed that natives compete with immigrants within the industry they work in (Dancygier & Donnelly, 2013) or only with immigrants that have similar skill levels as themselves (Malhotra et al., 2013; Mayda, 2006; Rhein & Spilker, 2022; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). Low-skilled natives should only feel threatened by low-skilled immigrants and highly-skilled natives should only feel threatened by highly-skilled immigrants. In short, natives should have stronger negative attitudes towards immigrants with the same skill level than towards immigrants with a different skill level.

While some studies have found evidence that both low- and highly-skilled natives tend to oppose low-skilled immigration (Goldstein & Peters, 2014; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010), only a few studies report that opposition is actually higher among highly-skilled natives when it comes to highly-skilled immigrants compared to low-skilled immigrants (Malhotra et al., 2013; Rhein & Spilker, 2022). The literature introduces two different explanations for these findings. Hainmueller and Hiscox (2010) argue that skill or education is positively associated with cultural traits, so highly-skilled natives are generally more open to immigration. On the other hand, Malhotra et al. (2013) and Rhein and Spilker (2022) both point to the low prevalence of cases where highly-skilled natives compete against highly-skilled immigrants, and show that when competition for highly-skilled jobs is high, highly-skilled natives hold more negative attitudes towards highly-skilled immigration. As globalization has increased job pressures for low-skilled workers in industrialized countries, it has created relatively favourable conditions for highly-skilled workers (Dancygier & Walter, 2015). Immigration of low-skilled immigrants is likely to exacerbate this situation while immigration of highly-skilled immigrants should not be met with the same concerns by natives. Therefore, on average, natives might have stronger negative attitudes towards low-skilled than highly-skilled immigrants.

Lastly, not only economic self-concerns but also cultural anxieties and worries about compositional amenities have been shown to determine opposition to immigration (Card et al., 2012; Dustmann & Preston, 2007). Furthermore, perceptions of so-called sociotropic effects, i.e. effects of immigration on society or the economy as a whole, are found to influence immigration attitudes (cf. Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). Arguably, highly-skilled immigrants might be perceived to be beneficial for the economy while the opposite might be the case for low-skilled immigration (Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2015). Additionally, the political salience of issues such as demographic changes and the shortage of skilled workers in some European countries, exemplified by the newly introduced German Skilled Immigration Act (Bundesregierung, 2023), could further amplify this effect.

Immigration and electoral behaviour

Moving from individual attitudes to electoral behaviour, another strand of the literature assesses the electoral consequences of the exposure to globalization in industrialized countries (Ahlquist et al., 2020; Colantone & Stanig, 2018; Dippel et al., 2015). The underlying assumption of these studies is that import penetration boosted by globalization, along with the exposure to other external economic shocks, creates winners and losers, and that the losers are generally more inclined to vote for the far right driven by the issue of economic nationalism (Colantone & Stanig, 2019). In a similar vein, the exposure to foreign labour in the form of labour immigration should have similar consequences.

Without taking immigrant skill into consideration, previous work has shown that immigration can have a positive effect on the vote share of populist radical right parties.

In Austria, Halla et al. (2017) have shown that the presence of immigrants is positively related to votes for the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ). On the city district level, a study that looks at Germany similarly finds that the share of foreigners positively affects the vote share of a radical right party (Otto & Steinhardt, 2014). Without further disaggregating the groups of immigrants or foreigners, the literature suggests that there is a positive relationship between the share of foreigners and the vote shares of centre-right or populist right parties, i.e. parties that are generally perceived as “anti-immigration” (Barone et al., 2016; Edo et al., 2019; Harmon, 2018). Combining these results from the literature with the findings on individual immigration attitudes, this paper suspects that the presence or inflow of immigrants has a similar effect on natives’ electoral behaviour conditional on immigrants’ skill level. The presence of highly-skilled immigrants should provoke less opposition than the presence of low-skilled immigrants, and the latter should more strongly lead to an increase in votes for populist radical rights parties than the former.

With some important exceptions, the literature is limited in dealing with the question of how immigrant skill can influence electoral behaviour. Combining individual level survey data with aggregated immigration data from Europe, Moriconi et al. (2022) show that an inflow of highly-skilled immigrants is associated with native citizens being less likely to vote for nationalist parties, while an inflow of less educated immigrants increases the likelihood of native citizens to vote for nationalist parties. Mayda et al. (2022) show that in the U.S., an increase in low-skilled immigrants positively affected the Republican vote share while an increase in highly-skilled immigrants negatively affected the Republican vote share. Therefore, the evidence provided by these two studies is consistent with the evidence on the effect of immigrant skill on individual attitudes of natives. Furthermore, it even suggests that the presence or inflow of highly-skilled immigrants can have a *negative* effect on the electoral success of “anti-immigration” parties (cf. also Harmon, 2018).

Hypotheses

Previous research has shown that the presence of immigrants can increase opposition towards immigration and the vote for populist radical right parties (Barone et al., 2016; Edo et al., 2019; Halla et al., 2017; Harmon, 2018; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014). At the same time, the literature suggests that individual attitudes towards immigration and immigrants differ contingent upon immigrant skill (Goldstein & Peters, 2014; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2010; Malhotra et al., 2013; Rhein & Spilker, 2022). Assuming that such attitudinal differences have consequences for actual political outcomes, the derives the first hypothesis:

H1: The positive effect of immigrant presence on the vote share of populist radical right parties decreases with an increase in immigrants’ skill level.

To be more specific, some researchers suggest that natives especially oppose immigrants with whom they compete for jobs if they work in the same industry or share the same skill level (Malhotra et al., 2013; Mayda, 2006; Rhein & Spilker, 2022; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). Based on the so-called *Labor Market Competition Hypothesis*, the second hypothesis is:

H2: The effect of the presence of immigrants with a given skill level is especially high in districts with high labour market competition on the same skill level.

Methodological Approach

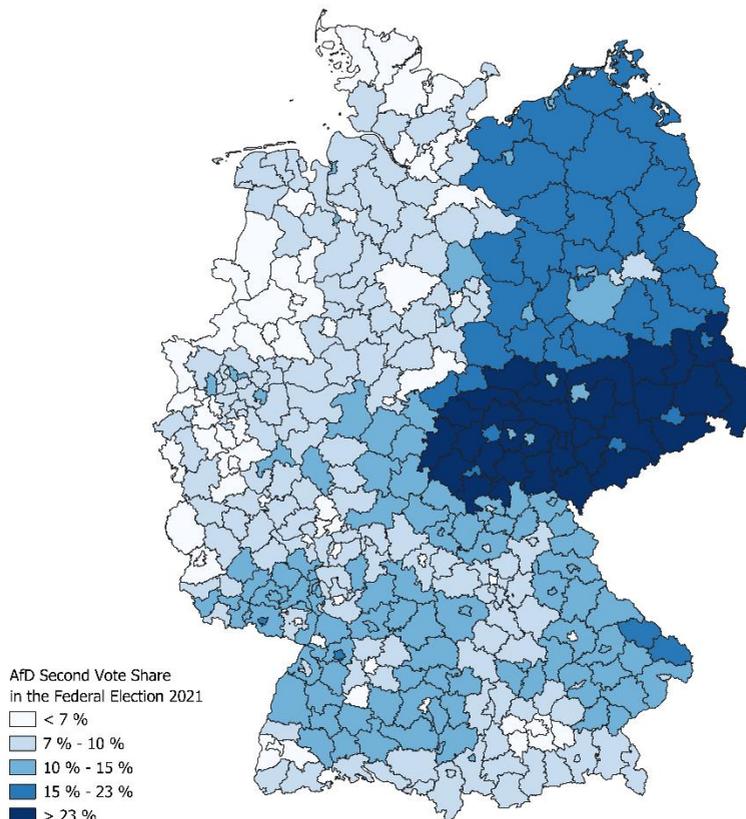
This paper tests these two hypotheses using aggregate level data on electoral outcomes and the presence of foreigners from all 400 German districts (*dt.: Landkreise und kreisfreie Städte*) at the NUTS-3 level (Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2023). It observes every district twice, i.e. in the years 2017 and 2021 when the last two federal elections in Germany took place. Using aggregate-level data faces the limitations of always yielding some problems in terms of accuracy, and does not allow to draw direct inferences at the individual level or about micro foundations. Nonetheless, this method permits the observation of the whole electorate and to use the actual election results in the sample. Furthermore, solely relying on individual level survey data and not measuring the presence of immigrants at the aggregate level means that other studies have to rely on the respondents' perceptions regarding the presence of immigrants. While such perceptions are important determinants of individual attitudes, they might fall short of explanatory power when trying to answer how the actual presence of immigrants can affect the vote share of populist radical right parties. Using the German case is justified for several reasons. Since 2015, Germany has seen a significant increase in immigration and refugee arrivals, being the most popular European destination for immigrants overall. However, beginning with guest workers, immigration is not a new social, political, or economic phenomenon for Germany, as this is the case for other European countries such as France or the United Kingdom. Additionally, the presence of the AfD – a populist, radical right party with a distinctly anti-immigration stance since 2015 – aligns Germany with other European countries like France, Italy, and Austria, which also have strong populist, anti-immigration movements and parties.

AfD Vote Shares

As the dependent variable for analysis, this paper uses the second AfD vote shares (*dt.: Zweitstimmenanteil*) for which data is available at the district level. The AfD is a German populist radical right-wing party that has drastically changed the German political party landscape since entering the Bundestag in 2017. With its adoption of a clear anti-immigration agenda, it gained politically from the inflow of refugees in Germany in 2015 (Decker, 2022). The AfD first took part in the 2013 German federal

elections where it just missed the 5% threshold to enter into parliament. In the 2017 elections, it received 12.6% of the general second vote entering the Bundestag. In 2021, the party received 10.3% remaining in the Bundestag for the second consecutive term. The paper uses election data from the 2017 and 2021 federal elections in its main analysis, but it is important to note that it does not include data from the 2013 federal election. Although the party had already formed anti-immigration positions in 2013, its core political agenda was a Euro-/EU-sceptic position (Schmitt-Beck, 2014). Looking at the election results from the 2021 federal election, Figure 1 reveals that there exists a large degree of regional variation in vote shares for the AfD, which is important for the analysis conducted in this paper. At the same time, however, this variation is not evenly distributed across Germany. Vote shares appear to be systematically higher in eastern Germany than in the west, which is important to account for in developing the research design further.

Figure 1. AfD second vote shares in the 2021 federal election.



Presence of Foreigners with Different Levels of Professional Qualification

To analyse the different effects of immigration on AfD vote shares according to immigrants' skill level, this paper measures the share of employed foreigners in the workforce of a given district summarized in three different groups.² The first group includes all foreigners that have no formally recognized professional qualification (*No Qualification*). The second group includes all foreigners with some non-academic professional qualification (*With Qualification*). Lastly, the third group includes foreigners with an academic professional qualification (*Academic Qualification*). As this measurement of professional qualification relies on peoples' educational degrees, some cautionary remarks are necessary. Some argue that education is not a well-suited proxy for skill, as skill can be extremely heterogeneous for people with the same educational level (cf. Malhotra et al., 2013, pp. 393–394). This is relevant when focusing on the labour market threats posed by immigrants. For example, a political scientist and a physicist might both have an academic degree, but do not compete in the labour market since they possess two completely different skillsets. Hence, it is not certain whether labour market competition actually varies across and within the three different levels of professional qualifications that the paper measures. Related to this point is the question of whether the division of foreigners into the different groups measures different systematic differences between the groups besides professional qualification. For example, one possibility could be that one type of qualification is correlated with a particular country or region of origin. Note that the data used does not provide any information about the origin of foreigners. Therefore, stereotypical or xenophobic judgements and perceptions by natives that are unrelated to the immigrants' actual skill level, education, or professional qualification could influence individual attitudes towards immigration and natives' voting behaviour.

² The data that the paper uses measures all those that are employed subject to social insurance (*dt.: sozialversicherungspflichtig beschäftigt*). This group includes the large majority of formally employed people in Germany. Groups of employees that do not fall into this category are people that are self-employed, in minor employment, or not formally employed. It should be noted that the International Labour Organisation estimates the share of informal employment in Germany is around 2.5% (International Labour Organisation, 2024). People that are unemployed are not counted by this statistic which is another reason why the paper controls for the unemployment rate in each district as explained later in this section.

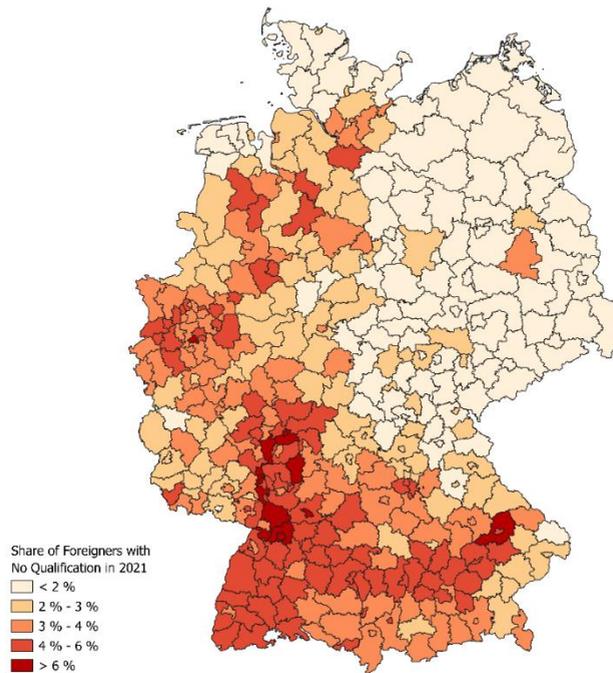
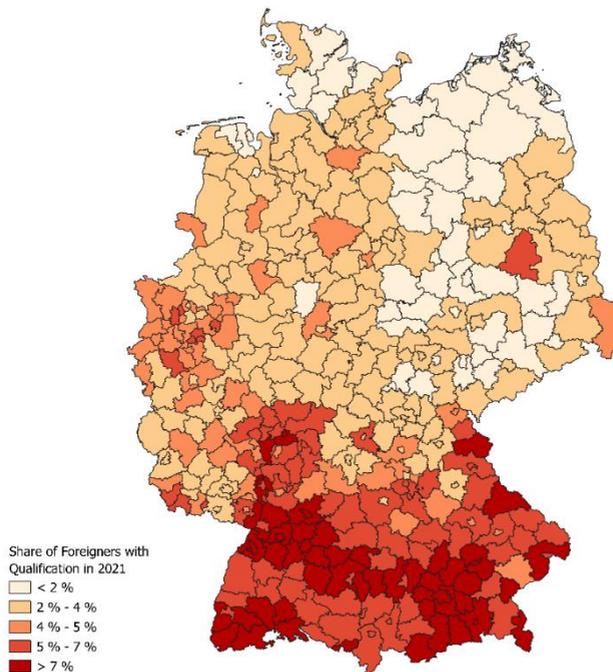
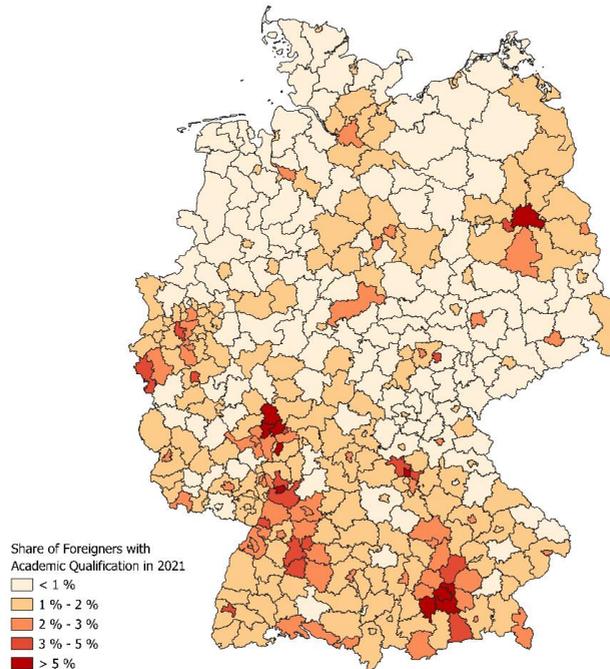
Figure 2. Share of Foreigners with No Qualification in 2021**Figure 3.** Share of Foreigners with Qualification in 2021

Figure 4. Share of Foreigners with Academic Qualification in 2021

Figures 2, 3, and 4 illustrate the regional variation of the share of foreigners with the three different types of qualification across Germany in 2021. As described in Figure 2, employed foreigners with *no qualification* are particularly scarce in eastern Germany. This is notable considering that eastern Germany has a systematically higher AfD vote share than the west. The share of foreigners *with qualification* are strongly clustered in southern Germany (Figure 3). Lastly, the share of foreigners with an *academic qualification* are concentrated in and around large cities, which is most apparent for Berlin, Munich and Frankfurt (Figure 4). The most important but equally unsurprising insight from these figures is that the location of foreigners is not random. Foreigners in Germany might choose to work in more welcoming districts or districts where natives have more positive attitudes towards immigration. Other studies account for such cases of reverse causality with instruments relying on previous immigration inflows disaggregated by country of origin (Mayda et al., 2022), or on randomly located immigration settlements (Moriconi et al., 2022). Unfortunately, this paper is unable to implement the former method as the data does not differentiate between different origins of foreigners. The latter method is not well-suited for this paper's purposes either, as the location of foreigners in all of the three qualification groups is not likely to be equally affected by such settlements. This paper, therefore, relies on the inclusion of observable control variables to account for potential endogeneity caused by the non-random location of foreigners.

Control Variables

To control for potential endogeneity that could induce biases in my estimations, this paper includes two sets of observable covariates as control variables. First, it includes a set of time varying district specific variables. It includes the *Share of Natives* with the respective qualification level, i.e. the *Share of Natives with No Qualification* in the model that estimates the effect of the *Share of Foreigners with No Qualification* etc. Also, it includes the *Logged Total Population* of a district, as population size might be related to the presence of foreigners in a district as well as to AfD vote shares. This paper further controls for the *Share of Youth*, i.e. the share of people under 18 years old, the *Share of Elderly*, i.e. the share of people over the age of 64, and the *Share of Foreigners* in the overall population. It uses two aggregate economic measurements, namely *GDP Per Capita* and the *Unemployment Rate*, to control for the overall economic strength of a district that might be related to the AfD vote share and the share of foreigners in the workforce. Second, it includes a set of time-independent dummy variables to control for systematic differences between districts that are fixed over time. The variable *East* is 1 if a district is located in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) territory and 0 otherwise³, and controls for systematic differences between East and West Germany that might be related to the AfD vote shares and the share of foreigners in the workforce as is suggested by Figures 1 through 4. The descriptive finding supporting the claim that the AfD vote share is comparatively higher in Eastern Germany, i.e. in areas of the former GDR, compared to West Germany, can be explained by an East-West divide in terms of economic development and political representation which still persists thirty years after the reunification (Weisskircher, 2020). Not controlling for this continuing persistent divide would likely confound the results, because systematically, fewer foreigners live in eastern compared to western Germany. Likewise, the paper controls for two other structural characteristics of districts that might affect where foreigners live or do not live and might be related with the AfD vote share, leading to confounding variation in the data. As universities might attract especially higher educated foreigners, the population living in cities/districts with a university tends to be more progressive and might be less likely to vote for populist radical right parties. Hence, the variable *University* is 1 if a university or other tertiary education institution is located within a district and 0 otherwise. Additionally, this paper controls for systematic differences between urban and rural districts, as foreigners are likely to live in urban areas, so support for the AfD might be generally higher in rural areas. To account for this, the variable *Urban* is 1 for every district for which the population density is equal to or higher than the median population density and 0 if population density is below the median. Lastly, the district independent variable *Election 2021* is 1 for the observations from the year 2021 and 0 for observations from the year 2017, as this aims to control for unobserved election-specific effects affecting all 400 districts.

³ Note that this paper has coded the variable *East* as 0 for Berlin.

Estimation Strategy

This paper estimates the effect of the presence of foreigners in the workforce with different levels of professional qualifications on AfD vote shares using a linear model described by

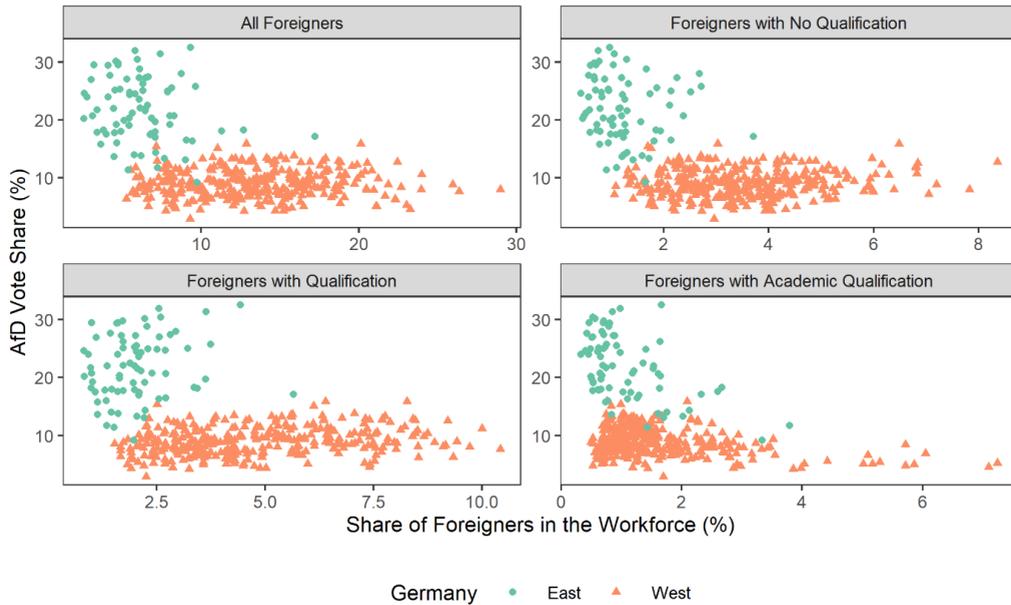
$$AfD_{dt} = \beta \frac{\text{Foreigners in Workforce}_{dtq}}{\text{Total Workforce}_{dt}} + X'_{dt}\delta + Z'_d\gamma + \alpha_t + \varepsilon_{dt},$$

where the share of foreigners with different professional qualification, i.e. *No Qualification*, *With Qualification* and *Academic Qualification*, is given by the ratio of foreigners in the workforce with qualification q to the total amount of people in the workforce in district d at time t . X'_{dt} is a vector of district-specific time-varying control variables that are described above. Note that even though this paper uses a balanced panel dataset, it does not include district-specific fixed effects as the main variation in the data that it aims to exploit is regional, i.e. across district. Relying solely on intra-district variation over the two elections in 2017 and 2021, which this paper would do using a fixed effects estimation, would likely discard explanatory variation of the independent variables. However, this paper uses a set of time-fixed dummy variables described by the vector Z'_d , that include the variables *East*, *University* and *Urban*, to partly account for structural and cultural effects that are likely to be fixed over the two elections in the sample. α_t is a time fixed effect that controls for unobserved election-specific effects that might influence AfD vote shares over all 400 districts. Lastly, the idiosyncratic error is described by ε_{dt} .

Empirical Findings

Before turning to the presentation of the main results from the regression analysis, Figure 5 provides a descriptive insight into the relationship between the presence of foreigners in the workforce and AfD vote shares at the district level. For all three groups with different qualification levels as well as for the total share of foreigners in the workforce, there seems to be an overall negative relationship with AfD vote share. The visual evidence, however, supports the considerations from the previous section and suggests that this negative relationship is largely driven by differences between East and West Germany. Districts in East Germany seem to have significantly lower shares of foreigners in the workforce while at the same time AfD vote shares are significantly higher.

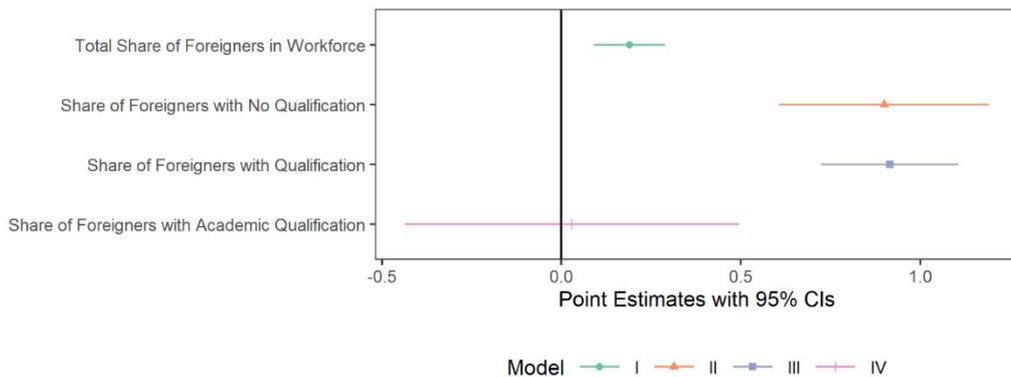
Figure 5. Shares of foreigners in the workforce and AfD vote share for each district, in East and West Germany, in the federal election 2021.



Main Results

Estimates of the effect of the presence of foreigners with different levels of professional qualification on the vote share for the AfD, i.e. the main coefficients of interest, are shown in Figure 6, while the full regression results are reported in Table 1. Conditional on the observables for which this paper controls, the overall share of foreigners in the workforce, i.e. all three groups with different qualifications taken together, has a positive and significant, yet comparatively small effect on AfD vote share (Model 1).

Figure 6. Effects of Foreigners with different Qualifications on AfD Vote Share (%) in the 2017 and 2021 federal elections. Point estimates and 95% CIs are taken from the respective models for which full results are reported in Table A1 in the Appendix.



Further disaggregating the share of foreigners into the different qualification levels, however, reveals that heterogeneity across the qualification of foreigners does exist. Both the share of foreigners with *no qualification* (Model 2) as well as the share of foreigners *with qualification* (Model 3) have a positive and sizable effect conditional on the set of covariates that are controlled for. In both cases, an increase in the share of foreigners with *no qualification* and *with qualification* by 1 percentage point is on average associated with an increase in the AfD vote share by nearly 0.9 percentage points. On the other hand, the share of foreigners with *academic qualification* shows to have no effect on the AfD vote share conditional on the set of observables (Model 4).

Table A1. Effects on AfD Vote Share

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>			
	AfD Vote Share (%)			
	I	II	III	IV
Total Share of Foreigners in Workforce	0.190***			
	(0.051)			
Share of Foreigners with No Qualification		0.899***		
		(0.149)		
Share of Natives with No Qualification		-0.096		
		(0.087)		
Share of Foreigners with Qualification			0.915***	
			(0.097)	
Share of Natives with Qualification			0.311***	
			(0.029)	
Share of Foreigners with Academic Qualification				0.029
				(0.237)
Share of Natives with Academic Qualification				-0.352***
				(0.053)
Logged Population	-0.814***	-0.785***	0.181	0.014
	(0.185)	(0.186)	(0.202)	(0.190)
Share of Youth	0.278**	0.231*	0.319***	0.141
	(0.118)	(0.120)	(0.099)	(0.110)

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>			
	AfD Vote Share (%)			
	I	II	III	IV
Share of Elderly	0.583*** (0.078)	0.571*** (0.077)	0.353*** (0.068)	0.463*** (0.073)
Share of Foreigners	0.083 (0.057)	0.025 (0.048)	0.137*** (0.051)	0.298*** (0.036)
Unemployment Rate	-0.135* (0.074)	-0.100 (0.073)	0.111 (0.071)	-0.319*** (0.060)
GDP Per Capita (in thousands)	0.005 (0.009)	0.014* (0.009)	0.026*** (0.007)	0.032*** (0.007)
East Germany	11.256*** (0.471)	11.071*** (0.650)	11.018*** (0.389)	13.006*** (0.440)
University	0.248 (0.250)	0.302 (0.247)	0.175 (0.225)	0.285 (0.240)
Urban	-1.340*** (0.278)	-1.502*** (0.276)	-0.213 (0.248)	-0.443* (0.252)
Election 2021	-3.268*** (0.236)	-3.461*** (0.236)	-2.867*** (0.196)	-2.577*** (0.218)
Constant	2.261 (4.068)	3.737 (4.170)	-29.439*** (4.770)	-0.095 (3.745)
Observations	800	800	800	800
R2	0.744	0.750	0.793	0.767
R2 Adj.	0.740	0.746	0.789	0.763

Note: Regression coefficients shown with robust standard errors in parentheses.
 $p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

First, the positive effect of the overall share of foreigners is consistent with previous studies that provide evidence for a positive effect of the presence of immigrants or foreigners on votes for populist radical right parties at the aggregate level (Barone et al., 2016; Halla et al., 2017; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014). Furthermore, the findings lend some support to the hypothesis that the effect of the share of foreigners in the workforce on

the vote share of a populist radical right party is heterogenous depending on the professional qualification of foreigners. However, the effect does not consistently seem to decrease with an increase in foreigners' qualification levels. Even though the paper finds a substantial change in the effect when moving from the category *with qualification* to *academic qualification* and the effect is not significant, it finds no difference in the effect size between the share of foreigners with *no qualification* and the share of foreigners *with qualification*. Lastly, the null effect of the share of foreigners with an *academic qualification* and AfD vote share diverges from previous findings that report a negative association between the share of highly skilled immigrants and the vote share of "anti-immigration" parties on the aggregate level (Harmon, 2018; Mayda et al., 2022; Moriconi et al., 2022).

Robustness

Some scholars argue that it is actually the demographic changes of communities due to influxes of immigrants that shape opposing attitudes towards immigration, and not the static measurement of immigrant shares at one point in time (Hopkins, 2010). To follow this line of argumentation and to probe the robustness of the main findings against model specification, this paper estimates the effect of a change in the share of foreigners between the 2017 and 2021 elections on AfD vote share in the 2021 federal elections. All four models with changes in the share of foreigners, instead of static shares, are reported in Table A2 in the Appendix. The results of this robustness analysis are largely consistent with the main findings presented above. Changes in the overall share of foreigners as well as changes in the share of foreigners with *no qualification* and *with qualification* are shown to have a positive effect on AfD vote share. A change in the share of foreigners with an *academic qualification* has no significant effect on AfD vote share. This diverges from the main findings in one critical aspect, as the effect of changes in the share of foreigners with *no qualification* is substantively smaller than the effect of changes in the share of foreigners *with qualification*. Taken from the main analysis and from this robustness test together, the results do not support the hypothesis that the effect of the presence of immigrants on the votes for populist radical right parties consistently decreases when immigrant qualifications increase. On the other hand, the results still show that heterogeneities across the levels of qualifications of foreigners do exist, and that the qualification of foreigners matters when it comes to the electoral consequences of labour immigration.

Labor Market Competition

One possible explanation for the main findings presented in Figure 6 could be that there is a stronger competition for jobs where no qualification or some non-academic qualification is needed. This could explain why on average voters might see their own labour market position threatened by the presence of foreigners with these qualification levels. On the other hand, lower competition for jobs where an academic qualification

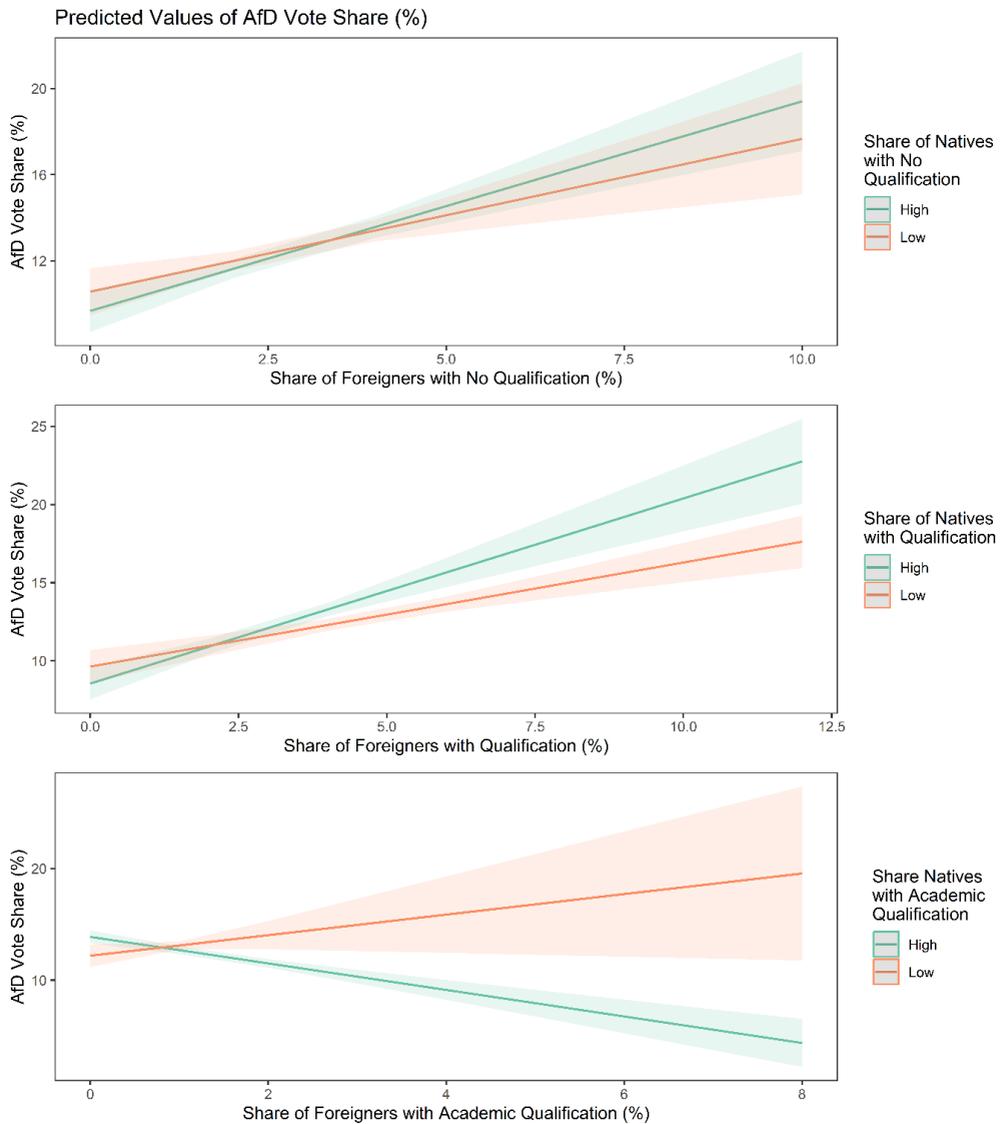
is needed could explain the null finding when it comes to foreigners with an *academic qualification*. In order to test whether different levels of competition drive the different observed effects, the paper will now construct a dummy variable for each category, that measures whether the share of natives in the respective category compared to the overall workforce is higher or smaller than the sample median. It will estimate the interaction effects between the share of foreigners with the respective qualification levels and the dummy that measures the share of natives in the overall workforce with the same qualification using the original set of control variables.⁴

As can be seen in Figure 7, the paper finds no difference in effect sizes of the share of foreigners with *no qualification* when comparing districts with a high share of natives with *no qualification* with districts with a low share of natives in the same category. The effect of the share of foreigners *with qualification*, however, varies with the share of natives in the same category. As seen in Figure 7, the effect is bigger in size in districts with both a high share of foreigners and natives compared to districts with either a low share of foreigners or a low share of natives. The share of foreigners with an *academic qualification* only shows to have null-effect on AfD vote share in districts with a low share of natives with an *academic qualification* and a substantially large negative effect in districts with a high share of natives with an *academic qualification*. Full regression results are reported in Table A3 in the Appendix.

Overall, these results provide some, yet limited, support for the *Labor Market Competition Hypothesis* across the three different levels of qualification that this paper can observe. Accordingly, the performed test yields no support for a hypothesized mechanism relating to labour market competition for the effects of the share of foreigners with *no qualification* or with an *academic qualification*. The findings for foreigners *with qualification*, however, suggest that concerns of the native population about their own labour market competition might at least partly drive the positive effect of the share of foreigners *with qualification* on AfD vote share – under the assumption that a higher share of people working in this category indicates a higher competition for jobs where such a form of qualification is needed. Lastly, the results for the category *academic qualification* should be treated with some caution. Specifically, the negative effect of the share of foreigners with *academic qualification* observed in districts with a high share of natives with the same qualification is inconsistent with the findings from the main models (Figure 5), where this paper estimates an average null-effect. Foreigners with an *academic qualification* might also self-select into districts with a high share of academically qualified natives, which arguably might be districts in which voters have more open attitudes towards immigration in general and are less likely to vote for the AfD.

⁴ To avoid problems arising from multicollinearity, the paper excludes the shares of natives with the respective qualification levels from the models, because they are each highly correlated with the dummy variables constructed for this test. The full models are reported in Table A3 in the Appendix.

Figure 7. Predicted values of AfD vote share conditional on the share of foreigners with respective level of qualification for high and low share of natives with same qualification. The slopes and 95% confidence intervals refer to the results reported in Table A3 in the Appendix. The sample median of the variables *share of foreigners with no qualification*, *share of foreigners with professional qualification*, and *share of foreigners with academic qualification* is 2.55, 3.50 and 0.99.



Conclusion

Although the exact theoretical explanations are contested, previous research shows that the presence of immigrants differently affects natives' attitudes towards immigration for different levels of immigrant skill (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Malhotra et al., 2013; Mayda, 2006; Rhein & Spilker, 2022; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001). The insight from previous literature that natives are generally more opposed to lower-skilled immigrants compared to highly-skilled immigrants suggests that such considerations also play a role when it comes to the votes for "anti-immigration" parties. This paper has showed that the share of foreigners with no and with low-levels of professional qualification is positively related to AfD vote shares while the share of foreigners with an academic qualification has no such effect. The main results of this paper are therefore largely consistent with previous work considering individual attitudes, as it shows that on the aggregate level, the presence of immigrants with different skill levels has varying effects on electoral behaviour. Other work looking at electoral behaviour has reported positive effects of the presence of immigrants on vote shares of right-wing and radical right parties (Barone et al., 2016; Edo et al., 2019; Halla et al., 2017; Otto & Steinhardt, 2014). By showing that the presence of foreigners has varying effects on the votes for the AfD in Germany, this paper contributes to the generalization of similar results from France (Harmon, 2018) and the U.S. (Mayda et al., 2022). The consistency across this limited set of countries leads to the expectation that similar results can be predicted in other countries. This might be especially the case in larger European countries where the presence of immigrants with different skill levels can be expected to vary on the same level, i.e. NUTS-3. On the other hand, varying welfare and labour market structures across countries might affect such results and future research could help identify the limits of generalisability. Importantly, this paper has found no negative effect of the presence of foreigners with an *academic qualification* on AfD vote share, while previous studies have reported a negative effect of highly skilled immigration on the votes for "anti-immigration" parties (Harmon, 2018; Mayda et al., 2022; Moriconi et al., 2022). Lastly, this paper's results only report preliminary and limited evidence in relation to labour market competition and can therefore only tentatively contribute to the ongoing debate about the so-called *Labor Market Competition Hypothesis* (Malhotra et al., 2013; Rhein & Spilker, 2022; Scheve & Slaughter, 2001).

While the results are mostly consistent with the theoretical expectations and findings from relevant literature, this paper has limitations as discussed earlier. The non-random locations of foreigners and other unobserved endogenous factors might affect the results, which implies that the results remain correlational to a certain extent. Immigrants with lower levels of professional qualifications might self-select into districts that already are more prone to voting for the AfD for reasons not observed by this paper's methodology. Furthermore, the specific origin of foreigners might be correlated with their qualification. Stereotypical or xenophobic judgements towards immigrants from non-European or non-Western countries, who might also systematically exhibit lower levels of professional qualification, could have affected the

results. Further research could help clarify the causal pathways through which immigrant skill levels influence native citizens voting for populist radical right parties.

These results might also help explain dynamics in European party landscapes regarding the topic of immigration. Some research suggests that mainstream parties respond to the success of radical right parties in altering their positions towards immigration (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2020). In that light, the latest “Skilled Immigration Act” in Germany (Bundesregierung, 2023) could be seen as an attempt to relatively increase higher-skilled immigration compared to lower-skilled immigration, thereby, tackle the electoral fortunes of the AfD. Furthermore, the empirical observation that low-skilled immigration has the potential to increase votes for “anti-immigration” parties could also be understood as motivation for legislators to reduce immigration of lower qualified migrants in order to reduce votes for the populist radical right parties. While this can be seen as one possible implication of this paper’s results and also that of previous studies (cf. Harmon, 2018; Moriconi et al., 2022), it should be noted that politicians and parties themselves play an important role in influencing citizens’ attitudes towards immigration (Vrânceanu & Lachat, 2021). The behaviour of so-called mainstream parties and radical right or “anti-immigration” parties should not be left unnoticed when it comes to the political space in which citizens shape their attitudes towards immigration and their decision for whom to vote.

Lastly, the data used in this paper does not allow accounting for sector-specific differences. Yet when it comes to the effects of immigration on labour competition, sector-specific differences might play an important role. Future research could focus on the electoral consequences of immigration to different industrial sectors, as has been done in a similar manner concerning individual attitudes by Malhotra et al. (2013). More generally, the results have shown that immigrants’ characteristics can differently affect electoral behaviour and the vote share of radical right parties. Future research might turn to other characteristics of immigrants in order to gain a more refined and complete picture of how immigration affects the votes of radical right parties. In that regard, one interesting question would be whether the presence of immigrants that migrated for different reasons, i.e. persecution or economic reasons, also has varying effects on voting behaviour because it has been previously shown to affect individual attitudes towards immigration (Bansak et al., 2016; Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2015).

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Appendix

Table A1. Effects on AfD Vote Share

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>			
	AfD Vote Share (%)			
	I	II	III	IV
Total Share of Foreigners in Workforce	0.190***			
	(0.051)			
Share of Foreigners with No Qualification		0.899***		
		(0.149)		
Share of Natives with No Qualification		-0.096		
		(0.087)		
Share of Foreigners with Qualification			0.915***	
			(0.097)	
Share of Natives with Qualification			0.311***	
			(0.029)	
Share of Foreigners with Academic Qualification				0.029
				(0.237)
Share of Natives with Academic Qualification				-0.352***
				(0.053)
Logged Population	-0.814***	-0.785***	0.181	0.014
	(0.185)	(0.186)	(0.202)	(0.190)
Share of Youth	0.278**	0.231*	0.319***	0.141
	(0.118)	(0.120)	(0.099)	(0.110)
Share of Elderly	0.583***	0.571***	0.353***	0.463***
	(0.078)	(0.077)	(0.068)	(0.073)
Share of Foreigners	0.083	0.025	0.137***	0.298***
	(0.057)	(0.048)	(0.051)	(0.036)
Unemployment Rate	-0.135*	-0.100	0.111	-0.319***

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>			
	AfD Vote Share (%)			
	I	II	III	IV
	(0.074)	(0.073)	(0.071)	(0.060)
GDP Per Capita (in thousands)	0.005	0.014*	0.026***	0.032***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.007)	(0.007)
East Germany	11.256***	11.071***	11.018***	13.006***
	(0.471)	(0.650)	(0.389)	(0.440)
University	0.248	0.302	0.175	0.285
	(0.250)	(0.247)	(0.225)	(0.240)
Urban	-1.340***	-1.502***	-0.213	-0.443*
	(0.278)	(0.276)	(0.248)	(0.252)
Election 2021	-3.268***	-3.461***	-2.867***	-2.577***
	(0.236)	(0.236)	(0.196)	(0.218)
Constant	2.261	3.737	-29.439***	-0.095
	(4.068)	(4.170)	(4.770)	(3.745)
Observations	800	800	800	800
R2	0.744	0.750	0.793	0.767
R2 Adj.	0.740	0.746	0.789	0.763

Regression coefficients shown with robust standard errors in parentheses.

p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

Table A2. Effects of Changes in the Share of Foreigners (between 2017 and 2021) on AfD Vote Share in 2021

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>			
	AfD Vote Share (%)			
	I	II	III	IV
Change in Total Share of Foreigners in Workforce	0.441**			
	(0.176)			
Change in Share of Foreigners with No Qualification		0.460*		
		(0.259)		
Change in Share of Natives with No Qualification		-1.945***		
		(0.386)		
Change in Share of Foreigners with Qualification			2.226***	
			(0.488)	
Change in Share of Natives with Qualification			0.207	
			(0.159)	
Change in Share of Foreigners with Academic Qualification				-1.031
				(0.866)
Change in Share of Natives with Academic Qualification				-1.600***
				(0.354)
Logged Population	-0.617**	-0.340	-0.471*	-0.236
	(0.249)	(0.260)	(0.257)	(0.263)
Share of Youth	0.421***	0.491***	0.340**	0.160
	(0.154)	(0.151)	(0.153)	(0.163)
Share of Elderly	0.682***	0.706***	0.635***	0.493***
	(0.109)	(0.103)	(0.104)	(0.101)
Share of Foreigners	0.190***	0.190***	0.136***	0.236***
	(0.044)	(0.043)	(0.048)	(0.053)
Unemployment Rate	-0.159*	-0.027	-0.013	-0.225***
	(0.081)	(0.084)	(0.087)	(0.084)

Dependent Variable:

AfD Vote Share (%)

	I	II	III	IV
GDP Per Capita (in thousands)	0.001 (0.010)	-0.007 (0.009)	0.008 (0.011)	0.022** (0.011)
East Germany	11.030*** (0.705)	13.080*** (0.698)	10.921*** (0.702)	10.508*** (0.762)
University	0.043 (0.341)	0.003 (0.317)	0.052 (0.325)	-0.049 (0.320)
Urban	-1.629*** (0.385)	-1.265*** (0.367)	-1.268*** (0.365)	-1.175*** (0.366)
Constant	-7.425 (5.738)	-13.284** (5.628)	-7.848 (5.600)	-0.780 (5.351)
Observations	400	400	400	400
R2	0.787	0.804	0.800	0.805
R2 Adj.	0.782	0.799	0.795	0.799

Regression coefficients shown with robust standard errors in parentheses.

$p < 0.1$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table A3. Interaction Effects with High Share of Natives with same Level of Qualification

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>		
	AfD Vote Share (%)		
	I	II	III
Share of Foreigners with No Qualification	0.709*** (0.184)		
High Share of Natives with No Qualification	-0.893 (0.597)		
(Share of Foreigners with No Qualification)*	0.264		
(High Share of Natives with No Qualification)	(0.162)		
Share of Foreigners with Qualification		0.665*** (0.112)	
High Share of Natives with Qualification		-1.084* (0.646)	
(Share of Foreigners with Qualification)*		0.518***	
(High Share of Natives with Qualification)		(0.153)	
Share of Foreigners with Academic Qualification			0.920* (0.556)
High Share of Natives with Academic Qualification			1.691*** (0.571)
(Share of Foreigners with Academic Qualification)*			-2.107***
(High Share of Natives with Academic Qualification)			(0.538)
Logged Population	-0.750*** (0.188)	-0.630*** (0.182)	-0.299 (0.191)
Share of Youth	0.237** (0.120)	0.296*** (0.109)	0.264** (0.107)
Share of Elderly	0.582*** (0.077)	0.538*** (0.076)	0.550*** (0.074)
Share of Foreigners	0.047	0.001	0.316***

	<i>Dependent Variable:</i>		
	AfD Vote Share (%)		
	I	II	III
	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.037)
Unemployment Rate	-0.143*	0.072	-0.347***
	(0.074)	(0.075)	(0.061)
GDP Per Capita (in thousands)	0.014	0.012	0.013*
	(0.009)	(0.008)	(0.007)
East Germany	11.137***	11.722***	12.028***
	(0.567)	(0.480)	(0.455)
University	0.268	0.291	-0.077
	(0.246)	(0.235)	(0.240)
Urban	-1.498***	-1.045***	-1.068***
	(0.278)	(0.275)	(0.280)
Election 2021	-3.449***	-3.309***	-2.850***
	(0.236)	(0.217)	(0.233)
Constant	2.668	-0.680	-2.963
	(4.049)	(3.819)	(3.882)
Observations	800	800	800
R2	0.750	0.767	0.758
R2 Adj.	0.746	0.763	0.754

Regression coefficients shown with robust standard errors in parentheses.

p < 0.1, ** p < 0.05, *** p < 0.01

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Make My Money Mine! How is Macroeconomic Welfare Spending associated with the Electoral Support for Populist Radical Right Parties in Western European Countries?

Abstract

This paper argues that consumptive welfare state expenditures reinforce the electoral support for Populist Radical Right Parties (PRRPs) among their active sympathisers, since this part of the electorate perceives higher expenditures as unjust towards the deserving parts of society and subsequently becomes (more) receptive to the welfare state agendas of PRRPs. This effect may be extrapolatable to the broader electorate. The findings contribute to discussions on the recalibration of the welfare state and its partisan implications. Theoretically, the paper picks up on recent literature on PRRPs' welfare state politics and discourse, the welfare preferences of their voters as well as relative deprivation. Methodologically, the paper employs basic multiple regressions at the macro-level political conflict within the EU-15 countries between 1990 and the present day, and a multi-level logit model at the individual level.

Keywords: Public Policy, Western Europe, Populist Radical Right, Welfare State

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Introduction

In January 2024, the German politician Sahra Wagenknecht launched the party Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht (BSW). Previously, Wagenknecht had been a member of the left-wing party Die Linke but was startled by the party's liberal stances towards immigration. From the outset, experts certified the freshly founded BSW as having great potential to appeal to voters critical towards immigration but in favour of left-leaning economic policies. Unsurprisingly, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) – Germany's largest Populist Radical Right Party (PRRP) – was quickly identified as the potential main competitor of Wagenknecht's new party (Vock, 2024).

These developments resonate with the standing contention that PRRPs and left-wing parties compete over a culturally conservative but economically progressive part of the electorate (Oesch & Rennwald, 2018). Moreover, they relate to an evolving focus on socio-economic matters within political science research on PRRPs (Keskinen, 2016; Röth, Afonso & Spies, 2018). Until recently, scholars have attributed the electoral success of PRRPs predominantly or even exclusively to their positions on the cultural axis of political conflict, like their opposition to immigration (Rooduijn, 2015). In particular, inquiries increasingly call for investigations into the role that the welfare state plays in the vote choice of said part of the electorate (Rathgeb & Busemeyer, 2022). The demand-side-oriented account presented here builds on an integrated approach to the variations in the electoral support for PRRPs. It argues that PRRPs conceptualise the welfare state as a political issue cutting across axes by publicly portraying high consumptive welfare state expenditures as means distributed to undeserving immigrants and not to deserving natives. In this argumentative avenue, the subsequent considerations are tied to the following research question: Firstly, how are macro-level welfare state spendings associated with the electoral fortunes of PRRPs in Western European countries; and secondly, how does this association relate to their traditional anti-immigration positions on the cultural axis of political conflict?

Finally, the paper posits that the broached claims about an unfair distribution of welfare provisions appeal to feelings of relative deprivation within (sympathising) parts of the electorate. The respective voters become (more) receptive to the welfare state agenda of PRRPs, which results in reinforced support for PRRPs. In sum, consumptive welfare expenditures positively affect the electoral support for PRRPs. This picks up on a scientific need for bridging welfare state and party research as well as on previous suggestions to shift respective research from the local to the national level. Lastly, the argument hypothesises the interconnections of the welfare state, immigration, and populist radical right support by theoretically departing from the welfare state rather than from immigration. Such a somewhat unconventional approach contributes to the literature on the recalibration of the welfare state and can inspire fresh perspectives on the interconnections under analysis.

The remainder of the study is organised as follows: The first section briefly reviews the literature on the welfare state and its relationship with PRRPs in Western Europe, showing how bridging these two branches of political science from a welfare-related

starting point is theoretically valuable. A second section expands this review by hypothesising how consumptive welfare state expenditures may affect electoral support for PRRPs. The third section establishes a research design to test the hypotheses put forward. Subsequently, the hypotheses are tested both at the macro-level through descriptive statistics, a simple measure of correlation (Pearson's R) as well as normal ordinary least squares regressions; and at the individual level by employing a multi-level logistic regression. Finally, the last section discusses the results of the analyses.

Literature review

Since Esping-Andersen's (1990) seminal book *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, scholars have eagerly discussed his assignment of (Western) countries to either a liberal, conservative, or social democratic welfare regime. This led to a dominance of welfare regime analyses in comparative social policy research, with *regime* referring to "[...] specific patterns of work and welfare", which result from the interactions between societal institutions such as the state, market, or family (Vis & van Kersbergen, 2013, p. 53). While these approaches produce valuable insights into the overall faring of Western welfare states, they reveal little about the implications of public welfare spending on party competition within individual nation-states. For instance, many studies also acknowledge that immigration interacts with national welfare spending (e.g., Soroka et al., 2016) and assess the impact of immigration on the welfare state regime as a whole (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2011; Freeman, 2020), but do not take national partisan dynamics into the equation. However, looking at these interlinkages is fruitful as there is substantial literature suggesting a link between variations in the immigration rate within a country and electoral outcomes for PRRPs (Otto & Steinhardt, 2014; Barone et al., 2016; Halla, Wagner & Zweimüller, 2017). Interestingly, the studies suggesting such a link typically utilise triggered economic as well as welfare insecurities as explanations. For instance, Otto and Steinhardt (2014) note that the relationship between immigration and increasing votes for PRRPs across city districts in the German city of Hamburg is "driven by natives' concerns about negative implications for welfare and local amenities" (p. 76).

Similar to Otto and Steinhardt (2014), most of the work on the (causal) relationship between immigration and populist radical right supports focuses on the local (welfare-related) effects of immigration (Cavaillé & Ferwerda, 2023). Notwithstanding, in a recent meta-analysis of studies, Cools, Finseraas and Rogeberg (2021) found the average causal effect of local immigration on populist radical right vote choice to be weaker than commonly assumed in the literature when correcting for reporting bias. Simultaneously, they discovered a great heterogeneity in effect sizes and concluded that (a) immigration could be of importance for populist radical right vote choice only under specific circumstances and (b) that "[...] immigration at the national level might be more important for voters than local immigration [...]" (p. 1003). This calls for research examining how other matters of political competition interact with national-level immigration regarding electoral support for PRRPs. Here, national-level welfare

spending constitutes an important complementary theme because, as outlined, inquiries connecting variation in immigration to electoral outcomes (for PRRPs) often point towards welfare insecurities in the electorate. Hence, such spending is a vital object of political competition.

Ranking individual-level anti-immigration stances among the independent variables with the most explanatory power over electoral support for PRRPs (Rooduijn, 2015, p. 5) further motivates interconnecting welfare spending, immigration, and electoral support for PRRPs. Moreover, the majority of studies to date have related this support to the cultural axis of political conflict (e.g., Werts, Scheepers & Lubbers, 2013; Ziller & Schübel, 2015). Some have even described the economic positions of PRRPs as intentionally “blurry” (Rovny, 2013). Only recently, the literature started challenging this assessment by showing that PRRPs indeed hold clear contentions on the economic axis and pursue a distinct welfare state agenda voters know about. This agenda emphasises consumptive welfare expenditures like public pensions or cash benefits over investment policies such as job training or active labour market programs (Otjes et al., 2018; Enggist & Pinggera, 2022). The rationale behind the current interest in consumptive welfare state spending versus spending on social investment originates from previous research on the recalibration of the welfare state, which shows that welfare attitudes in the electorate go beyond simple approval or resentment (van Oorschot & Meuleman, 2012). Rather, these attitudes are, *inter alia*, contingent upon the overarching orientation of the specific provisions. A multitude of research stresses the importance of juxtaposing social investment with passive – or consumptive – measures of income (Roosma, Gelissen & van Oorschot, 2013; Fossati & Häusermann, 2014; Busemeyer & Garritzmann, 2017; Ronchi, 2018). In line with many of these inquiries, this paper conceptualises consumptive welfare spending as passive social policy instruments (e.g., income redistribution, public pensions, social spending disbursed in cash), as opposed to measures aiming to foster the educational and labour market activities of their recipients (compare Fossati & Häusermann, 2014).

Over time, left-wing parties have started to emphasise social investments over consumptive welfare provisions to appeal to “[...] their growing constituency of progressive socio-cultural professionals [...]”. However, this shift fuels their contest over voters traditionally favouring high consumptive welfare spending (Abou-Chadi & Immergut, 2019, quote on p. 697). In light of this contest, it is not surprising that PRRPs stress the significance of consumptive welfare state expenditures in their welfare politics. The emphasis on consumptive welfare spending is also embedded in a distinct, chauvinistic welfare state model: On the one hand, PRRPs advocate a chauvinistic welfare approach, which restricts social services to allegedly deserving natives. On the other hand, PRRPs pronounce the importance of former productivity in the distribution of welfare state provisions. The more a person contributes to society, the more this person is deserving of high welfare state benefits (Abts et al., 2021). These perceptions of deservingness have been identified as predictors of populist radical right vote choice in previous research (Attewell, 2020). Furthermore, PRRPs communicate their welfare state agenda in a populist and moralising manner, which denounces the current welfare state as inefficient and depicts immigrants as “welfare state tourists” who are not

deserving of welfare state provisions from both the chauvinistic and the productivity perspective. The combination of striving to restrict (consumptive) welfare provisions to deserving natives and moralising discursive strategies allows PRRPs to publicly defend “welfare arrangements in principle, and even to argue in favour of their expansion in some areas like old age care and pensions, while, at the same time, criticising the concrete functioning of the welfare state” (Abts et al., 2021, pp. 26–27, quote on p. 27). Several studies underscore the societal effectiveness of this discursive proceeding (Nordensvard & Ketola, 2015; Van Hootegem, Abts & Meuleman, 2021; Enggist & Pinggera, 2022), which solidify the established proposition that voters are aware of PRRPs’ welfare state agenda. Although a fair share of the existing work on the correspondence between immigration, welfare chauvinism, and subsequent PRRP support acknowledges interdependencies among the three, these studies often do not account for the salience of consumptive expenditures as opposed to social investments.

Finally, studies mainly view welfare chauvinism and chauvinistically motivated welfare attitudes/actions of the electorate and policymakers as the consequence of immigration and its factual economic consequences (Brils, Muis & Gaidytė, 2022). However, the welfare chauvinism of PRRPs does not necessarily function on the grounds of immigration’s objective, material consequences but appeals to the consequences of immigration as *perceived* by voters (Heizmann, Jedinger & Perry, 2018; Hameleers, 2020; Cervi, Tejedor & Villar, 2023). Hence, PRRPs do not need to base their welfare chauvinistic discursive political strategies on factually present immigration, but on illustrating the consequences of possible immigration for the (existing) welfare spending of most interest to their electorate (i.e., consumptive welfare spending). The next section draws on the conducted literature review and theoretically substantiates this assessment.

Theory and Hypotheses

Bridging welfare state and party research

The conducted literature review indicates that bridging welfare state and party research presents a promising avenue of research because PRRPs reside at an ideological intersection between immigration and consumptive welfare state spending (also compare Rathgeb & Busemeyer, 2022, p. 15). Although welfare state regime analyses are predominant, several studies recognise the scientific valence of these interlinkages. Notwithstanding, they tend to (a) focus on the local level and (b) their arguments depart from the standpoint of measurable impacts of immigration on social policy and welfare provisions. However, considering that PRRPs do not rely on facts in their discursive proceeding, it appears sensible to reverse this conceptualisation and select welfare state measures – in particular, measures of consumptive welfare state spending – as the theoretical starting point. Therefore, this paper is interested in theorising the effect of macro-economic consumptive welfare state provisions on the electorate’s stances towards PRRPs in the context of national-level immigration measures.

Theoretical mechanism: Relative deprivation

As implied, large-scale cross-sectional studies exploring the link between recalibrated welfare spending and voting behaviour against a backdrop of immigration are scarce in contemporary literature on PRRPs. Nevertheless, such inquiries can still draw on neighbouring research when hypothesising the exact interplay between national consumptive welfare expenditures, immigration, and the electoral fortunes of PRRPs (Otto & Steinhardt, 2014; Barone et al., 2016; Halla, Wagner & Zweimüller, 2017). Besides work shedding light on triggered economic insecurities within the electorate through high influxes of immigration and subsequent tendencies to vote for PRRPs (Lubbers, Gijsberts & Scheepers, 2002; Burgoon et al., 2019), the described discursive strategies, which PRRPs adopt in communicating their welfare state agenda, are also smoothly compatible with recent academic contributions on feelings of relative deprivation as an important driver of vote choice.

The term relative deprivation describes a situation “[...] where a person: (i) desires to have X but does not have it; (ii) believes that someone else, or some other people, which may include him/herself at some previous point in time, do have X; and (iii) perceives it as both feasible and just that he/she has X” (Burgoon et al., 2019, p. 57). Hence, in the context of relative deprivation, economic hardship is not necessarily examinable through consulting aggregated data like the unemployment rate, replacement rates, or income, but is based on the individual’s perception of their unsatisfactory situation. Moreover, scholars argue (a) in favour of a negative association between relative deprivation and institutional trustworthiness (Klandermans, Roefs & Olivier, 2001) and (b) regularly find a positive effect of subjective social status loss on PRRP vote choice (Gidron & Hall, 2017).

PRRPs offer a distinctive welfare state agenda, which comprises a welfare chauvinistic emphasis on consumptive welfare provisions and former productivity. They effectively communicate this agenda in an anti-elitist, populist manner by depicting immigrants as welfare state tourists who are undeserving of welfare provisions and deprive natives of the provisions to which they are entitled. Since voters are aware of PRRPs’ welfare stances, the described narrative invokes sentiments of relative deprivation among the electorate – especially among voters regularly exposed to PRRPs’ political communication. These sentiments of relative deprivation facilitate electoral support for PRRPs. It should be noted that the outlined theoretical mechanism, which connects PRRPs’ welfare state agendas and their discursive strategies to electoral support for PRRPs, rests on theoretical assumptions rather than on standing knowledge. All these assumptions are grounded in contemporary research. A short discussion of the repercussions for the explanatory validity of the theoretical mechanism can be found in the limitations section.

There are two possible consequences of variation in national expenditures on consumptive welfare provisions in the context of the established mechanism. On the one hand, social policies generally play a crucial role in addressing concerns among citizens (compare Chung & Mau, 2014). Hence, voters might support a PRRP because they

perceive their agenda as the best-fitting remedy for their concerns and insecurities. There are, in fact, empirical arguments according to which PRRP vote choice is partly also attributable to pragmatic considerations of voters (Van Der Brug, Fennema & Tillie, 2005) and for societal groups exposed to high social risks, evidence shows that directed consumptive social expenditures (unemployment benefits, pensions, etc.) reduce the likelihood of PRRP support by mitigating socio-economic concerns (Vlandas & Halikiopoulou, 2022).

Consumptive welfare spending on the macro-level

On the other hand, people tend to unfavourably evaluate policies from which they do not benefit (Busemeyer & Neimanns, 2017). Therefore, higher expenditure levels could fuel feelings of relative deprivation and, subsequently, increase PRRP support because most of the electorate does not directly profit from consumptive welfare provisions. Thus, this provides PRRPs with the opportunity to discursively frame high consumptive welfare expenditures as a symptom of a malfunctioning welfare state that favours undeserving immigrants over deserving natives. In a similar vein, consumptive welfare state expenditures may be perceived as a service that is reserved for deserving natives, and the possibility of undeserving immigrants also profiting from this service in the future could induce insecurities about future social status loss and future relative deprivation. Thus, considering the national-level research context, this paper hypothesises:

H1: A greater amount of consumptive welfare expenditures at the national level increases the (overall) electoral support for PRRPs.

Finally, the effect of consumptive welfare expenditures is expected to differ contingent on the immigration rate because variations in immigration are theoretically interlinked with economic and welfare concerns. The relationship between consumptive welfare expenditures and PRRP support is thus conceptualised as a dynamic factor of electoral behaviour conditional on the immigration rate. The claims about the distribution of consumptive welfare provisions made by PRRPs only function based on their anti-immigration stances, and the effect hypothesised under H1 should, therefore, be greatly affected by variations in the immigration level. The precise form of this interaction effect remains unclear. On the one hand, high consumptive welfare expenditures may mitigate feelings and perceived risks of relative deprivation and subjective social status loss in the face of the external factor of immigration. On the other hand, consumptive welfare expenditures could enhance such feelings within the broader electorate since the distribution of the financial means is again perceived as unjust towards natives – a claim predominant in the welfare state agenda of PRRPs. These unclarities also apply to situations of low immigration. Here, PRRPs could have less discursive space to play off immigration against welfare provisions. On the contrary, PRRPs could still capitalise on

feelings of relative deprivation, as they are, by definition, not dependent on facts. Therefore, the second hypothesis of this paper is kept vague and reads:

H2: The effect of consumptive welfare expenditures is conditional on the immigration rate.

Research Design, Data, and Methods

Definition of the populist radical right

Although most scholars have similar approaches to defining the populist radical right¹ – sometimes also denoted as extreme right, radical right, or populist right – there is no consensus (Mudde, 2016a) on the exact composition of the party family. This is not only due to the occasional emergence of new parties in the ideological environment of the PRRPs which previous studies could not account for, but also reflected in a disagreement over the populist definitional element of PRRPs and the (not) belonging of certain parties. For example, some studies incorporate the British United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in their analyses (Enggist & Pinggera, 2022), whereas other research disregards them as members of the PRRP party family (Mudde, 2016b). It is beyond the scope of this paper to present a theoretically and empirically complete outline of PRRPs. Therefore, the following sections use a modified version of the overview provided by Mudde (2007). All parties mentioned by Mudde are part of the analyses conducted here, and the modifications pertain to PRRPs founded after the publication of the used overview and some additional parties that are argued to contain a PRRP character within the political science discourse.

Table 1: PRRPs considered in the analyses

Country	Party
Austria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bündnis Zukunft Österreich (BZÖ) • Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ)
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front National • Vlaams Belang • Vlaams Blok
Denmark	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dansk Folkeparti
Finland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perussuomalaiset (PS) True Finns
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Front National

¹ Often, nativism, authoritarianism, and populism are presented as the three core elements of PRRPs' ideologies.

Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)² • Die Republikaner (REP)
Greece	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)
Italy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fratelli d'Italia³ • Lega Nord
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum for Democracy • List Pim Fortuyn⁴ • Party for Freedom
Portugal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partido Nacional Renovador (PNR)
Sweden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sverigedemokraterna
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VOX
United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)⁵

Since this inquiry aims at shedding light on the linkages between consumptive welfare expenditures, the immigration rate, and the electoral support of PRRPs in Western European countries, the broached support constitutes the main dependent variable of interest. The national consumptive welfare expenditures represent the central independent variable, and the immigration rate resembles the most viable control and interaction variable. The reason why this paper uses welfare spending measures rather than generosity measures such as replacement rates is a theoretical one: In essence, the argument made here is about the discourse of PRRPs, not the factual performance of the welfare state. For this discourse, welfare spending appears more suitable, because they are easier to process in a framework of a striking message towards the electorate than more abstract measures like replacement rates.

The precise measurements and application contexts are introduced below. All data utilized for assessing the expenditure levels is drawn from the Comparative Political Dataset (CPDS) (Armingeon et al., 2023), the data on the national immigration rates stems from the Eurostat database and the information on electoral support is taken from both the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and the European Social Survey (ESS). The sample of countries is limited to Western European countries – namely to the EU-15 countries – because the referenced literature almost exclusively analyses this group of countries. In addition, evidence suggests that the PRRPs of Central and Eastern European countries (CEE) differ from their Western European counterparts in some of their ideological premises (Buščíková, 2018). The reasoning behind limiting the sample

² Sola (2018)

³ Donà (2022)

⁴ Koopmans & Muis (2009)

⁵ Webb and Bale (2014)

to EU-15 countries is hence twofold: Firstly, almost all of the literature explored in the theory section draws on data from Western European Countries. Consequently and secondly, the established hypotheses may not be generalisable to other political contexts. In fact, immigration has until recently not been a particularly salient issue in the CEE countries (Minkenberg, 2017), and evaluating the electoral performance of PRRPs “[...] in terms of a native backlash against the immigration population serves poorly as an explanation in countries where immigration does not represent a salient issue” (Brils, Muis & Gaidytė, 2022, p. 59). However, immigration and, in particular, anti-immigration stances form an integral part of the theorised mechanism. By construction, this mechanism could, therefore, not apply to the political context of CEE countries.

Methodological challenges and levels of society

The first part employs a simple measure of correlation, namely Pearson’s R, and runs basic OLS regressions to gain a descriptive, superficial insight into the interdependencies between the main variables on the macro level. This may seem oversimplistic. However, in the final data set, the initially low number of observations is further reduced due to missing values, rendering a straightforward multiple regression with party- and time-level fixed effects of PRRP vote shares in a given national election on the level of consumptive welfare expenditures⁶ statistically inefficient. Nevertheless, considering both the macro- and the micro-levels of society is still a desired mode of analysis that contributes to a more nuanced perspective on the interrelations under analysis.

Since the sketched approach returns nothing more than mere correlations at the macro-level of political conflict, which could possibly be induced through all kinds of (causal) mechanisms, a second part attempts a more thorough investigation by employing a multi-level logit model to an ESS data set compiled from seven survey waves (waves three through nine). This logit model takes the self-indicated closeness to PRRPs of respondents as a proxy for electoral support. The ESS also comprises a question that relates to the vote choice of the respondents in the national election and is used widely in contemporary research (e.g., Abou-Chadi & Wagner, 2019). At first sight, this recall question might seem more suitable for the established research context. But considering the theory section, the interplay between consumptive welfare expenditures and the immigration rate is conceptualised as a dynamic factor in the electoral behaviour of voters. Notwithstanding, respondents do not necessarily answer the ESS recall question on vote choice in the same year in which the corresponding election took place. Hence, respondents could support a PRRP due to shifts in the immigration rate (and the expenditure level) without having voted for a PRRP in the last national election. Consider the case of Germany: In the 2013 federal elections, immigration was of secondary topical salience (Muno & Stockemer, 2021). Two years later, the 2015

⁶ These two variables would correspond to the measurement strategies of neighbouring endeavours. Compare for example Starke, Obinger and Castles (2008) and Werts, Scheepers and Lubbers (2013)

immigration crisis had not only boosted the topical salience of immigration and the immigration rate (roughly 0,8% in 2013 vs. roughly 1,9% in 2015)⁷ but had also triggered previously latent anti-immigration stances in the population as well as an increase in the electoral support for the PRRP AfD (Sola, 2018). Consequently, respondents may not have voted for the AfD in the 2013 election despite supporting the party at the time of the interview. Bearing in mind that the established research design builds on several hundred observations for a specific country-year combination, such situations would potentially bias the results of the envisaged model. The self-indicated closeness to a PRRP at the time of the interview, therefore, offers a more goal-oriented option. Moreover, the measurement of electoral support through self-indicated partisan closeness has a handy theoretical implication: While vote choice at some point in the past may have been conditional on a plethora of factors and not necessarily a good proxy for affiliation with a party, the question about the party closest to a voter allows respondents to resort to the residual category “Don’t know”. Hence, indicating a PRRP as the closest party to oneself becomes an intentional decision. Therefore, the question effectively captures the part of the electorate that is actively sympathetic towards PRRPs. For the interpretation of the results, this subtle but important distinction means that analyses at the macro-level pertain to the broader electorate, whereas individual-level analyses focus on the active sympathisers of PRRPs.

In contrast to the dependent variable of electoral support, the central independent variable is based on the same two measurements, expressed as a percentage of national gross national product, in all analyses. The first measurement encompasses all social spending of a nation-state in a given year disbursed in cash. The second consists of a self-crafted consumptive welfare spending index. The index conceives of consumptive welfare state spendings as the unweighted sum of total public and mandatory private expenditure on old age, public and private mandatory expenditure (in cash) on early retirement for labour market reasons, public and mandatory private unemployment compensation and severance pay (in cash), and cash expenditure for unemployment benefits. The immigration rate is defined as the number of foreigners establishing their “usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country” (Eurostat⁸), expressed as a percentage of the total population in a given year. All in all, the data used for the analyses on the individual level ranges from 2006 until 2020 and includes more than 100 country-year combinations – in the employed multi-level logit model, these combinations provide the clusters.

⁷ These numbers are based on own calculations using the described data set.

⁸ The full reference plus link is given in the reference section.

Analyses and Results

Political conflict at the macro-level

The immigration rate seems to be highly correlated with PRRP vote share. On the contrary, a look at the joint trajectories of consumptive welfare expenditures and the vote shares of PRRP does not suggest a relationship. The employment of a simple measure of correlation, namely Pearson's R, corroborates this impression: While there is a loose negative correlation between PRRP vote shares and consumptive welfare spending and total social spending in cash, the two respective correlation estimates are far from being statistically significant. By contrast, computing the correlation between the immigration rate and the vote shares of PRRPs yields a considerably positive, statistically significant estimate.

Figure 1: immigration rate (% of population) and vote shares (%) of PRRPs in EU-15 countries between 1990 and 2019. All graphs created using the ggplot-package in R. Data extracted from the CMP, the CPDS and Eurostat.

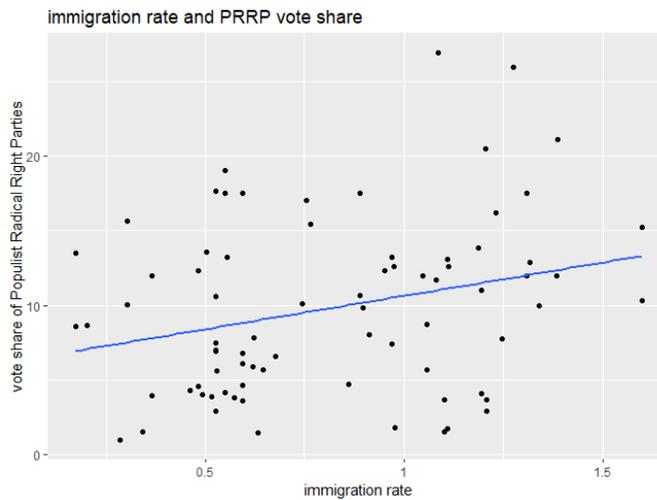


Figure 2: Social Spendings in Cash (% of GDP) and vote shares (%) of PRRPs in EU-15 countries between 1990 and 2019.

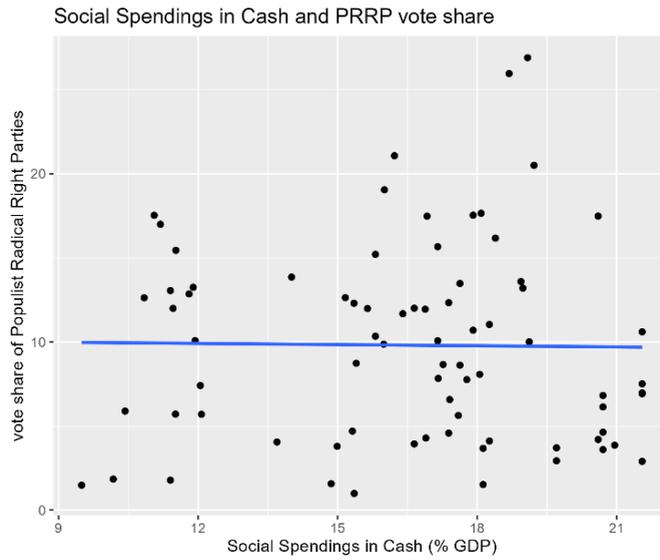


Figure 2: Consumptive Welfare Spending (% of GDP) and vote shares (%) of PRRPs in EU-15 countries between 1990 and 2019.

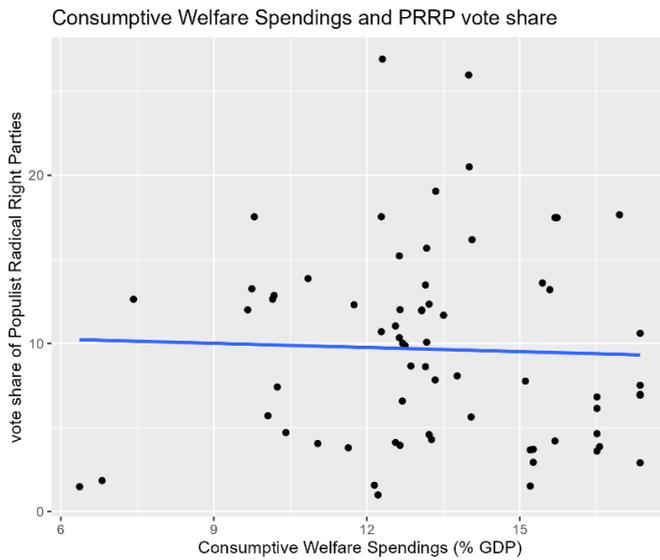


Table 2: Correlations between consumptive welfare state expenditures/the immigration rate and PRRPs' vote share

	Pearson's R	p-value 95% confidence interval (lower and upper bound)	t-value degrees of freedom
Consumptive Welfare Spendings	-0.03	0.77 -0.27, 2.0	-0.30 666
Social Spendings in Cash	-0.01	0.91 -0.23, 0.21	-0.11 75
Immigration rate	0.26	0.02 0.05, 0.47	2.48 75

Nonetheless, these estimates can only serve as a starting point, since the evaluated findings are not only based on a small number of observations but also do not account for other possibly confounding factors and lack general methodological appropriateness. Moreover, the hypothesised interaction between consumptive welfare expenditures and the immigration rate cannot be tested in the established setting. To address this shortcoming at least roughly, the results of four basic linear ordinary least regressions are shown below:

Table 3: Regression results, macro-level

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	PRRPs' vote share			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Consumptive Welfare Spending	0.725*			
	(0.393)			
Social Spendings in Cash		0.535*		
		(0.272)		
immigration rate (log)	2.795	3.737*		

	(2.036)	(2.035)		
share of people older than 60 as % of population	0.005	-0.227	-0.028	-0.343
	(0.378)	(0.336)	(0.372)	(0.345)
real GDP growth	-0.194	-0.349	-0.067	-0.315
	(0.339)	(0.328)	(0.342)	(0.327)
unemployment rate	-0.490***	-0.424**	-0.555***	-0.507***
	(0.172)	(0.161)	(0.173)	(0.171)
Consumptive Welfare Spendings × immigration rate (log)			-2.008*	
			(1.184)	
Social Spendings in Cash × immigration rate (log)				-1.261
				(0.925)
Constant	2.905	6.215	-19.927	-11.658
	(7.342)	(6.124)	(15.280)	(14.455)
Observations	65	76	65	76
R ²	0.185	0.170	0.224	0.191
Adjusted R ²	0.116	0.110	0.143	0.121

Note: Standard Errors in Parentheses.
No additional model specifications.

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

After controlling for basic co-variates such as the percentage of people older than 60 or real GDP growth and in line with H1, a positive relationship between consumptive expenditures emerges that is significant at the 10% level. This relationship remains, regardless of whether expenditures are measured through consumptive welfare spending or social spending disbursed in cash. Notably, this effect reverses when interacting expenditures with the immigration rate, offering some superficial support

for H2. In situations of high immigration, the effect of expenditures is mitigated and potentially reversed.

Individual level: Building a multi-level logit model for PRRP support

The following analyses are motivated by the superficial insights at the macro-level and apply the broached multi-level logit model to the individual level of PRRP support. Following the Maximum Likelihood Approach outlined in King (1998), the baseline logit model used here reads:

$$(1) Y_i \sim f_{bern}(y_i | \pi_i)$$

$$(2) \pi_i = \frac{1}{(1 + \exp(-(x_i\beta)))}$$

where $x_i\beta$ is a short expression for $\beta_0 + \beta_1x_{i1} + \beta_2x_{i2} + \dots + \beta_kx_{ik}$, Y_i denotes the dependent variable (identification with a PRRP) and π_i corresponds to the probability of a respondent identifying with a PRRP. A multi-level logit model acknowledges that the observed outcomes (level 1) are nested in clusters of a higher-level structure (level 2) and potentially allows the relationship of x_i and y_i to vary across clusters. In the set-up research design, a dummy variable delineates respondents of the ESS sample who indicated a PRRP as the party closest to them from respondents who feel closest to other parties in a given year and country. The central predictors of interest are the consumptive welfare spending and the social spending in cash, as well as their interaction with the immigration rate. Against this backdrop, the model estimates the average change in the probability⁹ of feeling close to PRRPs if consumptive welfare spending increases or decreases while recognising that respondents are exposed to the ESS interview in a specific country-year combination with a specific baseline probability of PRRP identification.

The procedure for modifying the introduced baseline model in a multi-level sense follows the three-step guide proposed by Sommet and Morselli (2017). The guide, *inter alia*, comprises centring the predictor variables around their grand mean in the whole sample. This centring facilitates the interpretation of the resulting regression coefficients, because the average change in the parameter of the outcome variable associated with a one-unit increase in the predictor variables consequently reflects the average change when all predictor variables are set to their grand mean. The corresponding regression coefficient can then be interpreted as the overall sample effect of the predictor of interest on the outcome (*ibid.*, p. 211). In other words, centring all

⁹ In the strict sense, a logistic regression estimates the change in log-odds. However, logit models are commonly used to predict the probability of an event against the background of different levels in the included independent variable. This is also the goal here.

variables included in the multi-level logistic regression around their grand sample mean yields an estimate of the average statistical effect of consumptive welfare expenditures on the electoral support for PRRPs measured through self-indicated closeness to PRRPs in the sample drawn from seven ESS rounds. This proceeding matches the purpose of this inquiry since it is interested in the average effect of consumptive welfare state expenditures in EU-15 countries and not necessarily in estimating effect sizes for specific country-year combinations.

The intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC) in the final data set lies at 27%, meaning that 27% of the chances of supporting a PRRP are explained by the differences between country-year combinations. This assessment underscores the relevance of the chosen methodological approach.

Lastly, Sommet and Morselli (2017) advise evaluating the variance of the effect of relevant lower-level variables across clusters to guarantee a good model fit (pp. 212-213). This proceeding is particularly important when examining the interplays of level-1 and level-2 predictors. However, the established hypotheses only pertain to level-2 variables (variables measured for one country-year combination, e.g., total social spending in cash). Furthermore, there is no theoretical reason why the effect of consumptive welfare state expenditures would vary contingent on country and year other than the immigration rate – a level-2 interaction included in the further model specifications. Hence, the implemented model does not allow the relationship between consumptive welfare expenditures and PRRP support to vary within clusters, as this can also help prevent over-parameterisation (p. 212). Nevertheless, the results of a likelihood ratio test¹⁰, which compares a model specification with random slopes for the effect of consumptive welfare spending to one without models, as recommended by Sommet and Morselli (2017), can be found in the appendix.

The considered control variables are the unemployment rate, a battery of commonly used individual-level variables, the effective number of parties in the electoral system, real GDP growth, and the immigration rate. For nearly all these control variables, scholars have at least suspected a relationship with electoral support for PRRPs at some point in time. For example, economic performance has often been connected to the success of radical right forces (Engler & Weisstanner, 2020). Similarly, researchers are interested in the influence of age (Miller-Idriss, 2018), religion (Minkenberg, 2018), education (Ivarsflaten & Stubager, 2012), unemployment (Sipma & Lubbers, 2020), general fractionalisation (Hudde, 2022), and political trust (Söderlund & Kestilä-Kekkonen, 2009) on PRRP support. Besides controlling for possible confounding, the respective coefficients point in reasonable directions: More trust in political parties and perceiving immigration as a culturally enriching process reduce the probability of supporting PRRPs (Ziller & Schübel, 2015), while a self-placement further right on the left-right scale increases the probability. The models use the ESS weights as recommended. The results of the final models are shown below:

¹⁰ The results are insignificant and therefore do not suggest a better fit when allowing random slopes.

Table 4: Regression results, Individual-Level Analyses (European Social Survey)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	self-indicated closeness to PRRPs			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Consumptive welfare spending	0.194** (0.094)	0.221** (0.097)		
Social spendings in cash			0.042 (0.055)	0.085 (0.071)
Immigration rate (log)	0.760 (0.478)		0.922** (0.424)	
High immigration		0.410 (0.410)		0.151 (0.388)
Low immigration		-1.435** (0.607)		-0.927 (0.653)
Electoral fractionalization	-0.727 (1.870)	-0.542 (1.889)	0.959 (1.913)	1.175 (2.042)
Unemployment rate	-0.127 (0.089)	-0.191** (0.088)	-0.021 (0.083)	-0.107 (0.088)
Real GDP growth	0.051 (0.072)	0.041 (0.071)	0.027 (0.074)	0.013 (0.076)
Left-right scale placement ¹¹	0.304*** (0.009)	0.304*** (0.009)	0.296*** (0.009)	0.296*** (0.009)

¹¹ 1 = left, 10 = right

Trust in political parties ¹²	-0.118***	-0.118***	-0.134***	-0.134***
	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
Cultural life enriched by immigrants ¹³	-0.309***	-0.309***	-0.304***	-0.304***
	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Age	-0.019***	-0.019***	-0.019***	-0.019***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Gender ¹⁴	0.337***	0.337***	0.316***	0.316***
	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.041)
Years of education	-0.047***	-0.047***	-0.055***	-0.055***
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.006)
Self-indicated religiosity ¹⁵	-0.064***	-0.064***	-0.065***	-0.065***
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
Satisfaction with democracy ¹⁶	-0.190***	-0.190***	-0.184***	-0.184***
	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Total welfare state generosity	0.019	0.044	0.046	0.062
	(0.055)	(0.054)	(0.045)	(0.047)
Consumptive welfare spendings×high immigration		-0.312**		
		(0.141)		
Consumptive welfare spendings×low immigration		0.242		
		(0.172)		
Social spendings in cash×high immigration				-0.149

¹² 1 = no trust, 10 = full trust

¹³ 1 = cultural life undermined, 10 = very enriched

¹⁴ 1 = male, 0 = female

¹⁵ 0 = not at all religious, 10 = very religious

¹⁶ 0 = extremely dissatisfied, 10 = extremely satisfied

				(0.123)
Social spendings in cash×low immigration				0.083
				(0.175)
Constant	-4.330***	-4.293***	-3.930***	-3.953***
	(0.278)	(0.316)	(0.228)	(0.291)
Observations	44,201	44,201	51,474	51,474
Log Likelihood	-7,318.528	-7,314.223	-7,921.547	-7,921.948
Akaike Inf. Crit.	14,669.060	14,666.440	15,875.090	15,881.900
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	14,808.200	14,831.680	16,016.680	16,050.020

Note: Standard errors in parentheses. All coefficients were estimated using the lme4 package in R

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The first model examines the relationship between consumptive welfare spending and electoral support for PRRPs among sympathisers. In line with H1, consumptive welfare spendings increase the probability that a respondent indicates a PRRP as closest to them. This effect remains in model 3 in which the consumptive welfare state expenditures are measured as the yearly social spending in cash of an EU-15 country between 2006 and 2020, rather than in the form of the consumptive welfare spending of this country-year combination, although the effect is not significant. This may speak in favour of the ability of the crafted index to adequately capture consumptive welfare expenditures. When removing some of the individual-level controls, the effect of social spending in cash reaches statistical significance at conventional levels.¹⁷

Predicted probabilities: parametric bootstrap

To predict probabilities for the overall sample of European countries, the coefficients of model 1 were used to bootstrap one thousand hypothetical effect coefficient vectors from the sampling distribution (compare King et al., 2000)¹⁸. Although barely mentioned, bootstraps of some kind are frequently used in political science to obtain confidence intervals for an estimated parameter (Puth, Neuhäuser & Ruxton, 2015). In cases of multi-variate models applying to an unbalanced design and a large number of

¹⁷ Please refer to the appendix for the respective regression results.

¹⁸ To be more specific: The estimated variance-covariance matrix of model 1 and the estimated coefficients were used as the variance and mean parameter of a multi-variate normal distribution. Then, a thousand draws from this distribution were generated.

observations, parametric bootstraps usually perform best (Konietschke et al., 2015). Since all utilised predictor variables are already grand-mean centred, this paper chooses an at-average approach, meaning that all control variables are held constant at their average¹⁹. While this proceeding has some inferential shortcomings, it is still common in quantitative political science research that involves logit models (compare Hanmer & Ozan Kalkan, 2013). Based on the thousand bootstrapped coefficient vectors, the average predicted probabilities of a respondent who indicated a PRRP as closest to them at different levels of consumptive welfare spending were generated by using equation (2) before averaging over the resulting probability estimates for each level of consumptive welfare spendings. The 26th and 975th values of the respective distribution of probabilities estimated through the bootstraps were used as the bounds of a 95% confidence interval:

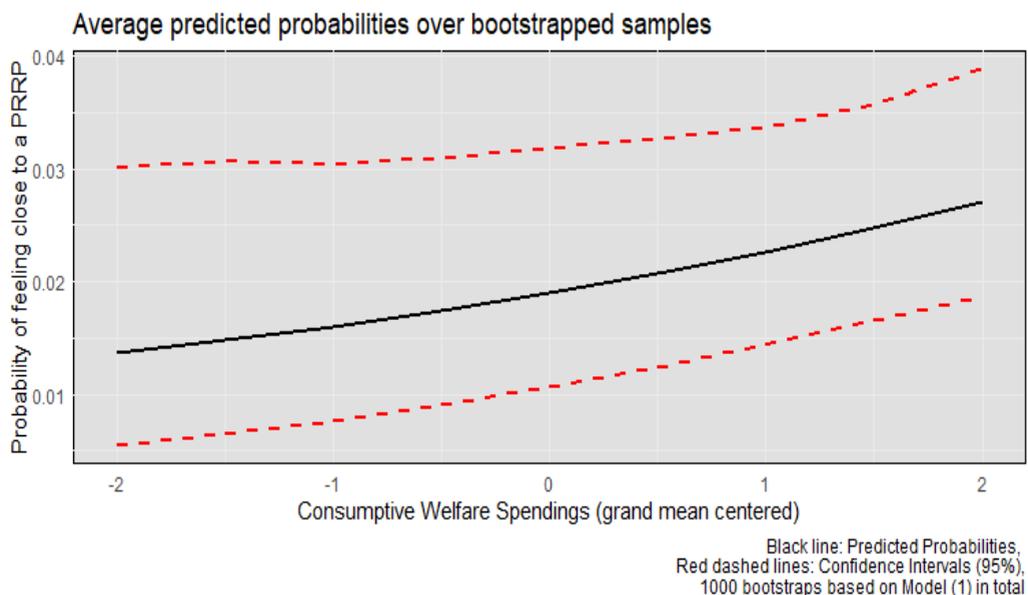


Figure 4. Probability of PRRP identification at different levels of consumptive welfare spendings

All in all, consumptive welfare expenditures reinforce the electoral support for PRRPs among sympathising parts of the electorate. However, a back-of-the-envelope calculation –as performed in the graph above – illustrates that this effect is small: On average, an increase of expenditures from two percentage points below the mean to two points above the mean for an average respondent in an average country-year cluster raises the probability of actively sympathising with a PRRP by no more than 1.2%. Nonetheless, this finding may be extrapolatable and have important implications for broader parts of the electorate, because a similar trend is observable at the macro-level of political conflict on which electoral support is measured through vote shares rather than self-indication.

¹⁹ The gender variable was held constant at “male”.

Interaction between consumptive welfare state expenditures and the immigration rate

The second and fourth models add the interaction term with the immigration rate to both measures of consumptive welfare state expenditures. The immigration rate in a country is classified as low if it lies within the first quartile of all the observed values in the sample, as medium (reference category) if located within quartile 2 or 3, and as high if it exceeds the cut-off value separating the third from the fourth quartile. Interestingly, the positive association found in models 1 and 3 now reverses, and in country-year combinations with high immigration rates, consumptive welfare state expenditures seemingly reduce the effect of expenditures on PRRP support among respondents compared to country-year combinations with a medium immigration rate. On the contrary, consumptive welfare state expenditures increase the effect in country-year combinations with a low immigration rate compared to combinations with a medium immigration rate. These results are consistent with an alternative approach, which abstains from coding a dummy variable for the immigration rate and only interacts with the not grand mean-centred version with the two measures of consumptive welfare state expenditures²⁰: If the immigration rate inclines, the positive effect of consumptive welfare expenditures on electoral support for PRRPs decreases and eventually reverses. Again, the observed individual-level trend among sympathisers mimics the tendencies found at the macro-level, and consumptive welfare state expenditures hence matter most in instances of low immigration. This exacerbates H2 and underpins the argument that consumptive welfare expenditures are a (tiny) piece in the puzzle of electoral support for PRRPs in Western Europe. More precisely, the effect of consumptive welfare state expenditures on actively sympathising with PRRPs could be stronger in instances of low immigration due to fears of spiralling future status loss if more immigrants enter the country. However, these results on the immigration rate generally come with high standard errors, and the interaction effects only partly reach statistical significance.

Discussion of results

Although confronted with a small-N problem at the macro-level, which precludes the application of methodologically appropriate tools, some descriptive evidence underlines the finding of a positive association between consumptive welfare state expenditures and electoral support for PRRPs. The analyses conducted at the individual level corroborate this assessment by employing a multi-level logistic regression, and the data thus speaks in favour of H1. The same holds for H2, but the estimates are less clear-cut and should be taken with caution.

On the grounds of the outlined theoretical premises, this suggests that (sympathising) parts of the electorate perceive high consumptive welfare state expenditures as unjust towards deserving members of society. In turn, these parts become more receptive to

²⁰ A respective version can be found in the appendix.

the welfare state agenda of PRRPs. Surprisingly, but in line with H2, interacting consumptive welfare state expenditures with the immigration rate reverses the direction of the effect. In countries and years with a high immigration rate, consumptive welfare state expenditures reduce the chances of electoral support for PRRPs in the model, *compared* to countries with a medium immigration rate. While this is counterintuitive at first glance, two mechanisms could explain the results. First, eyeballing the small effect sizes, the impact of consumptive welfare state expenditures may be of secondary relevance. Thus, consumptive welfare state expenditures might only be of relevance for societal groups at risk and not for the broader electorate or sympathisers not at risk. As shown in the theory section, directed consumptive welfare state expenditures reduce the likelihood of PRRP support within these groups (Vlandas & Halikiopoulou, 2022).

Secondly, high consumptive welfare state expenditures embedded in countries and years with low or medium immigration rates could be connected to insecurities about redistributions of the services when the immigration rate inclines. In contexts of high immigration rates, this link to fears of relative deprivation could break, and consistently high consumptive welfare state expenditures may help mitigate experienced and feared hardships. The latter explanation could prove particularly valuable for further theory building on the contest between parties like the BSW – which strongly oppose immigration but speak out for more welfare provisions – and PRRPs. In times of low immigration, consumptive welfare provisions allow both partisan types to discursively capitalise on fears of relative deprivation and concerns about future immigration. Be that as it may, the general finding of the paper is that consumptive welfare state provisions can affect support for PRRPs. This is a promising insight for future research on electoral competition within multi-polar party spaces in Western Europe, comprising emerging parties such as Wagenknecht's BSW. Said finding also underpins the relevance of a recalibrated perspective on the welfare state when theorising its interrelations with partisan politics. Scholars have only recently begun to bridge welfare state literature and examinations of the populist radical right (Rathgeb & Busemeyer, 2022). The theoretical and empirical understanding of corresponding integrated factors driving the electoral faring of PRRP is still far from sufficient.

Limitations

The limitations of the paper and the possible avenues for future research are manifold. Despite accounting for the different baseline probabilities of PRRP support across countries and years through choosing a multi-level approach, the presented findings are not causal. They posit a positive association between consumptive welfare state expenditures and (individual-level) support for PRRPs. However, the developed theoretical mechanism behind this association was not tested itself but derived from existing literature. Therefore, the presupposed assumptions about the connections between high expenditure levels and sentiments of relative deprivation are not established facts and require further exploration. This is a viable avenue for future research because consumptive welfare state expenditures connect to PRRP support. A

closer look at the channels and methods through which PRRPs communicate their welfare state agenda could thus be promising (compare Poblete, 2015). Moreover, the direction of the posited theoretical chain remains unclear: Do people perceive consumptive welfare state expenditures as unjust after becoming receptive to the welfare state agenda of PRRPs, or do people become receptive to this agenda because they experience consumptive welfare state expenditures as means disbursed to undeserving members of society?

Furthermore, this paper did not consider how high consumptive welfare state expenditures interact with individual-level anti-immigration stances. Especially for further theory building, exploring these cross-level interactions is a point of departure as auspicious as methodologically challenging. The implementation and interpretation of cross-level interaction is itself a controversial topic within social sciences (Sommet & Morselli, 2017, pp. 213–214), and a complete operationalisation of individual-level anti-immigration stances necessitates sophisticated attitudinal indexes (compare, e.g., Cutts, Ford & Goodwin, 2011) beyond the scope of this paper.

Conclusion and findings

This paper has sought to contribute to the literature researching PRRPs against the backdrop of the welfare state by exploring the association between consumptive welfare state expenditures and electoral support for Western European PRRPs. It has argued that PRRPs discursively conceptualise the welfare state as a political issue cutting across the economic and cultural axes of political conflict, and they publicly centre their welfare state agenda around increasing consumptive welfare state expenditures for deserving recipients only. As part of this discursive strategy, PRRPs exploit high levels of consumptive welfare state expenditures to portray the disbursed provisions as means distributed to undeserving “welfare state tourists” and not to deserving natives. This discursive proceeding links to people’s insecurities about (future) relative deprivation and (future) subjective social status loss in the face of immigration influxes. Therefore, electoral support for PRRPs should rise when consumptive welfare state expenditures are high – especially among parts of the electorate already sympathising with the party family. The findings indicate that consumptive welfare state expenditures are indeed associated with higher electoral support for PRRPs among sympathisers. The respective effect is small and may be conditional on the immigration rate and extrapolatable to broader parts of the electorate.

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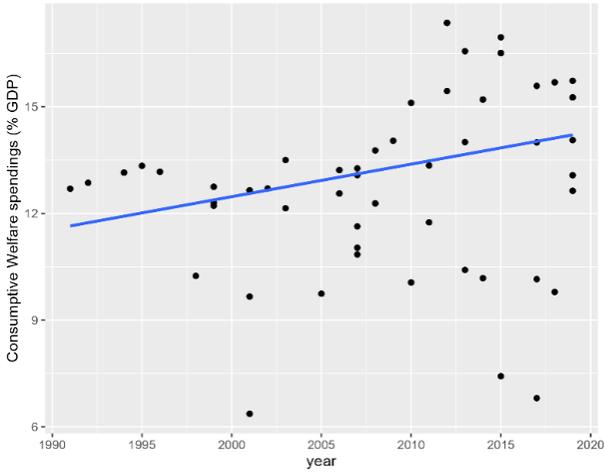
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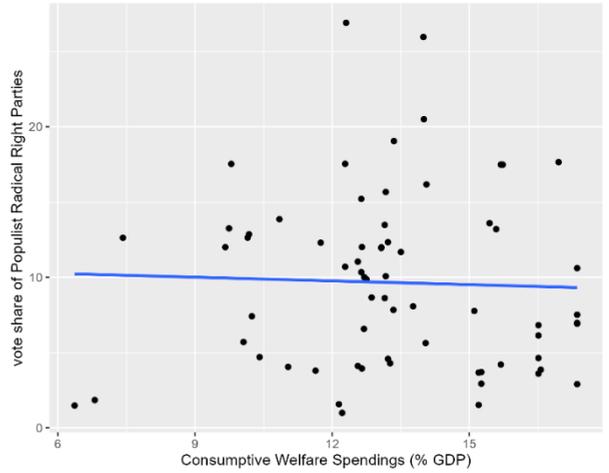
Appendix

Appendix 1: descriptive statistics: immigration rate and consumptive welfare state expenditures between 1990 and 2019 in EU-15 countries

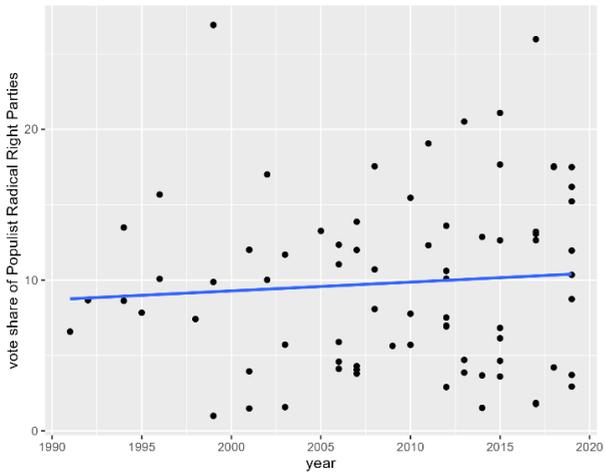
Consumptive Welfare Spendings over time



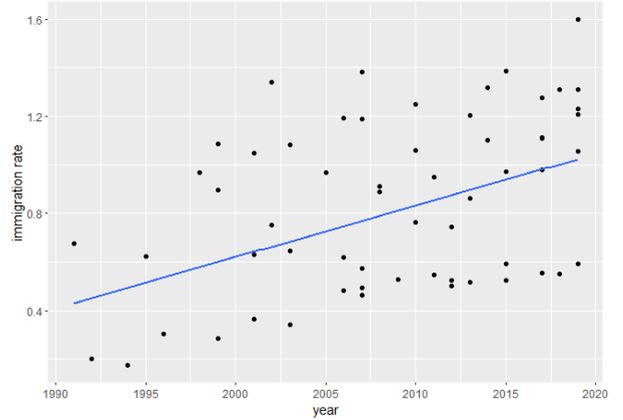
Consumptive Welfare Spendings and PRRP vote share



PRRP vote share over time



immigration rate over time



Appendix 2: regression table from adjusted models: Predictor variables not grand-mean centred, less predictors and interaction between consumptive welfare state expenditures and the continuous version of the immigration rate variable instead of the categorical dummy variable. Note that interactions in Model 2 and 4 contribute to variance inflation and make the coefficients of the consumptive welfare state expenditures and the immigration rate hardly interpretable

Dependent variable:

	self-indicated closeness to Populist Radical Right Parties			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Consumptive Welfare Spendings	0.283 ^{***} (0.077)	0.792 ^{***} (0.162)		
Social Spendings in Cash			0.175 ^{**} (0.081)	0.955 ^{***} (0.203)
unemployment rate	-0.129 (0.083)	-0.206 ^{***} (0.080)	-0.047 (0.104)	-0.233 ^{**} (0.110)
immigration rate	1.150 ^{**} (0.448)	8.410 ^{***} (2.114)	2.515 ^{***} (0.595)	14.860 ^{***} (3.028)
effective number of parties	-0.160 (0.101)	-0.053 (0.099)	0.080 (0.121)	0.143 (0.115)
real GDP growth	0.088 (0.060)	0.070 (0.056)	0.096 (0.081)	0.083 (0.077)

left-right scale	0.225*** (0.010)	0.225*** (0.010)	0.220*** (0.009)	0.220*** (0.009)
trust in political parties	-0.219*** (0.011)	-0.219*** (0.011)	-0.235*** (0.010)	-0.235*** (0.010)
cultural life enriched by immigrants	-0.346*** (0.010)	-0.347*** (0.010)	-0.351*** (0.009)	-0.351*** (0.009)
Consumptive Welfare Spendings and immigration rate		-0.581*** (0.167)		
Social Spendings in cash and immigration rate				-0.791*** (0.191)
Constant	-4.594*** (0.976)	-11.137*** (2.070)	-7.307*** (1.298)	-18.606*** (2.958)
Observations	41,564	41,564	53,825	53,825
Log Likelihood	-7,538.625	-7,533.487	-8,761.122	-8,754.385
Akaike Inf. Crit.	15,097.250	15,088.980	17,542.240	17,530.770
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	15,183.600	15,183.960	17,631.180	17,628.600

Note:

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Appendix 3: Comparison of the deviances of two versions of Model 1 with and without random effects. The conducted likelihood-ratio test did not yield significant results and allowing the effect to vary across clusters does hence not guarantee a better model fit.

	log likelihood	deviance	chi squared (degrees of freedom)	p-value
Model 1 (no random effects)	-12195	24422		
Model 1 alt (random effects)	-12194	24442	1.0753 (2)	0.5841

Appendix 4: Pseudo R^2 (McFadden) for Models 1 through 4

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
0.46	0.46	0.49	0.49

Appendix 5: Variance Inflation Tests for expenditure parameters Models 1 through 4

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
2.46 (Consumptive Welfare Spendings)	2.83 (Consumptive Welfare Spendings)	1.46 (Social Spendings in Cash)	2.61 (Social Spendings in Cash)

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