

Responses to Extremists and the Implications for Extremist Support

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With the recent surge in support for far-right parties, xenophobia and nativism have suddenly become mainstream across Europe. The far-right's success has put fundamental civil and political liberties under threat at home, especially for visible minorities, and raised the question of how more mainstream parties should react to these extremists. Should they refuse to cooperate with the far-right and seek to *isolate* them from power? Or, should they accept them as legitimate democratic actors and *include* them in the political process? This study examines this question, focusing in particular on how isolation or inclusion strategies matter for the far-right's support. Drawing on the four waves of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems data set and examining both party thermometer ratings and vote choice over time, we find that strategy matters— isolation appears to decrease support for the far-right, whereas inclusion appears to increase it among both voters and non-voters of these parties.

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In recent years Europe has seen a dramatic rise in support for extremist political parties, particularly far-right nativist and anti-establishment parties that challenge the basic principles of the democratic system (Mudde 2007; Bustikova 2014; Golder 2016). The far-right first gained representation in the 1980s and 1990s in several central and southern European countries, most notably in France with the National Front (Betz and Immerfall 1998). Since the early 2000s, it has ridden a new wave of anti-immigrant sentiment and a growing backlash against European integration and multiculturalism to become a formidable presence across the continent. Indeed, today, it is among the largest three parties in 15 European national parliaments—Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, and Switzerland. Add to this the recent election of Donald Trump in the United States, and it is clear that anti-establishment, anti-immigrant political parties are a long-term force in contemporary democracies (de Lange 2007; Bustikova 2014).

Such extremist parties present a major quandary for mainstream parties and other political actors, as well as for proponents of democracy more generally. This is because they use the basic procedural principles of democracy, freedom of expression, open and free elections, and majority rule, to undermine the democratic system itself. Specifically, they seek to restrict the civil and political rights of immigrants and ethnic or religious minorities.

Historically, established parties have reacted to extremists in two principal ways: isolation and inclusion. *Isolation* refers to efforts to limit their influence on the political process and range from using the legal system to try to outlaw the parties or prosecute their leaders (for example, through hate speech provisions), to changing the electoral rules to prevent them from entering parliament, to simply adopted a principled opposition to forming a coalition or working with them in government. *Inclusion* means no

response at all—that is, simply accepting them as legitimate political actors and treating them like all other parties, including forming governing coalitions with them.

There is a significant literature on the sources of support for extremist parties (Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1997; Ignazi 2003; Norris 2005; Oesch 2008) and some research on other parties' responses to them, but interestingly, we do not have a very good understanding of how established actors' strategic choices actually affect support for extremist parties on the long-run.¹ Do efforts to outlaw or ostracize extremists lead citizens to see them as illegitimate and weaken their support, or does it perversely increase their anti-establishment appeal and strengthen their support in the electorate? Similarly, does accepting them as a legitimate party boost their electoral fortunes or does it undermine their appeal, as they become a part of the political establishment?

This study examines these questions and seeks to develop a better understanding of how mainstream parties' strategic responses to the far-right affect citizen support for these parties. We begin by defining what we mean by extremist parties and providing an overview of the different strategic reactions to them. We then review competing individual and contextual level theories of far-right party support. Finally, using vote choice and party thermometer ratings from the four waves of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES), we examine how these responses affect support for the extremist parties at the individual level.

Our results indicate that how mainstream parties respond to the far-right very much matters for these parties' long-term support in the electorate: isolation strategies appear to undermine support for them, whereas inclusion appears to actually legitimize their claims and increase support in the electorate. This is the case in terms of both voter support and like/dislike ratings among voters of other parties. We take this as evidence that mainstream parties should be wary of accepting far-right parties as legitimate

¹ See, however, Downs 2001, Bale 2007, and Van Spanje and van der Brug 2009.

democratic actors—it is likely to further bolster the support of the far-right, thereby undermining their own support.

What is an Extremist Party?

While extremism is often discussed in policy or ideological terms and treated as a relative phenomenon, that is, relative to one's own ideological position (Mudde 1996; Fennema 1997), we define extremism here in more specific terms. Specifically, we focus on political parties that aim to undermine or restrict the basic civil and political rights of certain members of the population. In other words, we are interested in parties that seek to redefine legitimate membership in the political community in some form.

Far-right, anti-immigrant parties do just that. They openly advocate for the restriction of fundamental rights for immigrants and religious and ethnic minorities. Few far-right parties today are overtly xenophobic or racist, and indeed, toning down the rhetoric and focusing their opposition more against multicultural policies than immigration and immigrants *per se* seems to be instrumental in their recent success (Golder 2003; Carter 2005). Nonetheless, their anti-immigrant stance clearly also entails an effort to restrict the basic democratic freedoms of religion, expression, association, and consciousness for certain minorities.

Responses to Extremist Parties

In this section, we outline the different strategic responses to extremist parties and review the evidence on the implications for them. As noted above, extremists present a major and well-known quandary for the established parties and proponents of democracy more generally. This quandary is whether and to what extent should one “tolerate the intolerant” (Rummens and Abts 2010; Rawls 1999).

On the one hand, democracy entails freedom of speech and free and fair elections, and accordingly, advocates should support these principles for all political actors, even those they find objectionable (Dahl 1989). On the other, intolerance is decidedly undemocratic and supporting the intolerant on principled grounds ultimately risks the loss of civil rights and political exclusion for some—or worse, as history has shown.

Given the nature of this dilemma, it is not surprising that there are several potential responses to extremist parties. These range from the repressive, such as seeking to outlaw them constitutionally, to the inclusive, such as accepting them as legitimate political actors (Capoccia 2007; Eatwell and Mudde 2004). We categorize strategic responses into two basic types: isolation and inclusion.

Isolating Extremists: Outlawing, Procedural Barriers, and Principled Non-Cooperation

At one end of the continuum is the repressive strategy of seeking to legally outlaw extremist parties and force their disbandment. While not common in contemporary democracies, this strategy is based on the notion that “democratic procedures are not an end in themselves but only the means for realizing and protecting a set of substantive values and rights” (Rummens and Abts 2010: 650). Prioritizing basic substantive rights over the procedural aspects of democracy opens the door to aggressively containing extremists or what has been termed “militant democracy” (Lowenstein 1937; Pedahzur 2004). This includes banning them, and as Capoccia (2007, 2001) shows in his study of interwar Europe, it also may involve special legislation to protect state institutions, anti-propaganda measures and media restrictions, and the outlawing of extremist behavior to preserve public order.

In contemporary democracies, the most common legal strategy for dealing with extremist parties is either to outlaw them, for example, as has been done in Spain and Turkey and was attempted twice recently in Germany with the NPD (Bale 2007; Leggewie, Lichdi, and Meier 2016), or prosecute their

leaders for hate speech and inciting violence against minorities. The latter happened in both 2011 and 2016 in the Netherlands with trials of Geert Wilders, the leader of the Party for Freedom. He was acquitted of all charges in 2011; in December 2016, he was found guilty of inciting discrimination against Moroccans, but given no punishment. This strategy was used to greater effect recently in Germany, leading to prison time for two past leaders of the NPD.

What are the effects of an aggressive and repressive strategy on extremists? In a detailed analysis of Finland, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Italy and Germany in the interwar period, Capoccia (2007, 2001) notes that the former three were more aggressive, instituting a broader range of legislation to curtail the rising power of extremists. Germany and Italy, in contrast, failed to aggressively limit fascist parties and extremist behavior. More recently, Bale (2007) examines the concern that banning extremist political parties will lead to the perverse outcome of actually increasing their support and further undermining the democratic system. He finds no evidence for this in Turkey and Spain.

Enacting procedural barriers and raising entry costs

Formally banning extremist parties or associations is relatively rare in contemporary democracies. This may be because the constitution strongly enshrines the right to freedom of association and other democratic procedures, or because mainstream elites do not have the collective political will to take such a drastic step (Bale 2007). An alternative, less radical strategy then is to change democratic procedures related to elections to make it more difficult for extremists to win political office—in other words to increase the barriers to entry. The most obvious way to do this is to change the electoral system itself. Proportional representation (PR) systems with low electoral thresholds provide the easiest access

to parliament for smaller political parties, including extremists. Indeed, anti-immigrant extremist parties predominate in the PR systems of continental Europe.²

Moving from PR to a plurality system, which has higher barriers to entry and greater distortion of votes into seats, is often an effective strategy for pushing extremists out of the legislature. The experience of the French National Front in the 1980s illustrates this. In 1981 France used a majority-runoff electoral system; it switched to proportional representation in 1986, and then back to majority-runoff in 1988. In 1981, the National Front received 0.36% of the electoral vote in the first round and no parliamentary seats in the National Assembly. In 1986, under PR it jumped to almost 10% of the vote and secured 35 seats. In 1988, despite receiving the same share of the popular vote, it fell to just one seat in parliament, and it has never won more than one seat in the National Assembly since, even though it has consistently received 10-15% of the popular vote.

A second strategy for increasing the barriers to entry is to limit or eliminate public funding for extremist parties. This strategy was used in Belgium, primarily against the Vlaams Bloc (see Erk 2005). In 2004, Courts condemned civil organizations associated with the Flemish Bloc for violation of the Belgian anti-racism law and for failure to uphold the basic rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights—both of which are grounds for stripping parties of their public funding in Belgium. They changed their name to Vlaams Belang and modified their program and party literature in order to avoid loss of their public funding, but also in the hope to break the *cordon sanitaire*, or principled non-cooperation from the other Belgian parties.

² Moreover, following a recent debate in Canada about changing the electoral system from first-past-the-post to some type of proportional representation, the Liberal Party decided to retreat from its promise to change the system. In so doing, the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, cited the risk of far-right elements entering parliament in PR systems and pointed to a far-right, anti-immigrant candidate (Kellie Leitch) vying to become the next leader of the Conservative Party.

Principled non-cooperation

The logistics of implementing procedural barriers often make it prohibitive as a strategy. Another approach that does not involve changing the rules of the game is the *cordon sanitaire*, or principled non-cooperation where mainstream parties refuse to work with extremists and form governing coalitions with them. Like implementing procedural barriers, this requires mainstream parties to coordinate their efforts and show a common front. Given immediate electoral interests and the temptation of gaining governmental power, non-cooperation can be challenging to sustain on the long-term (Downs 2001; De Lange 2012). Moreover, depending on the strength of extremists, it may lead to either minority governments or grand coalitions. Nonetheless, it is a common strategy especially when extremist parties initially come on the scene and break into parliament (De Lange 2007).

Principled non-cooperation has several potential theoretical advantages (see Art 2007). First, while it does not change the rules of the game in such a way that may be deemed unfair or undemocratic, it does send a clear signal to voters that the party is unacceptable in a democratic society. This elite cue alone may weaken support for extremists, or at least prevent them from gaining additional support (Van Spanje and Van Der Brug 2007, 2009; Zaller 1992). There is some evidence, for example, that supporters of far-right parties are reluctant to express their support in public opinion surveys, presumably due to the social stigma.

Second, an inability to gain government power means that extremists are consigned to being a protest party, and strategically minded voters may opt for a mainstream party rather than cast a “wasted vote” (Cox 1997). Finally, isolated parties with no prospects of gaining power may have difficulty

attracting ambitious candidates for office and activists, which is critical for expanding a party's appeal and mobilizing voters on Election Day (Art 2007).³

The isolation strategy has been used in several national-level party systems, albeit not always on a consistent basis. In Belgium (Flemish Interest), Germany (DVU, Republikaner, and NPD), Sweden (Swedish Democrats) and Denmark (Progress Party) parties have steadfastly refused to cooperate with the respective extremists. Throughout most of its history, the Norwegian Progress Party also was isolated; however, in 2010 the Conservative Party signaled that it was open to ending the boycott. The mainstream conservative parties in France went in the other direction. After cooperating with the National Front in the 1980s and early 1990s, they have since embraced a strong *cordon sanitaire* (De Lange 2007). A similar pattern is evident recently in the Netherlands—once the supporter of a minority CDA-VVD government (2010-2012), all main Dutch parties refused to cooperate with Geert Wilders' PVV in the 2017 election campaign.

How effective has an isolation strategy been in curtailing extremist parties? The evidence is mixed. On the one hand, most isolated parties have either gradually lost support or failed to notably increase their electoral share, including the three German extremist parties and the Danish Progress Party. Even the Flemish Interest saw a drop in support in the 2010 Belgian federal election, although it very much remains an important player in Belgian politics. On the other, we saw the swift increase of public support for the Alternative for Germany (AfD) and ascend of the Norwegian Progress Party to become the second largest party with nearly 25% of vote share in Norway's 2009 elections.

³ Strategic voting would likely be relevant for any type of isolation strategy if it is relevant for one of them. However, a strong principle of non-cooperation may also be a more significant barrier to government influence than the type of electoral system.

Inclusion: Legitimizing and acceptance

In contrast to the different isolation strategies, mainstream parties may simply opt to accept them as legitimate political actors and treat them like all other parties, including forming governing coalitions with them. As noted above, it can be difficult for mainstream parties to maintain a united front in light of the temptations to gain political power and hold office (Downs 1957; De Lange 2012). Particularly for conservative parties, the temptation to capture the chief executive position with a far-right party as a junior partner may prove too appealing.

Yet, it is not just strategic politics and the desire to gain public office that may lead to legitimizing and cooperating with extremist parties. Some have argued that it is actually an effective strategy for undermining extremist support (Mudde 2007). This is because one of the primary motivations for supporting extremist parties is their anti-system appeal (Kitschelt 1995). Accepting them as legitimate political parties and forming governing coalitions with them, in theory, undercuts this appeal and exposes them as being part of the establishment. The collapse of the Austrian Freedom Party in the 2002 federal election seemed to provide evidence for this view, when it received just 10% of the vote, after getting 27% in the previous election and forming a coalition government with the Conservatives (Mouffe 2005, but see below).

In addition to Austria, this inclusive and legitimizing strategy has been used most evidently in Italy with the Northern League and National Alliance, Denmark with the Danish People's Party, Finland with the True Finns, in the Netherlands in 2010 with Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom, and in several Eastern European countries. Also, as noted above, in Norway the Conservatives recently signaled a new willingness to cooperate with the Progress Party.

Looking at these parties together, it seems that treating extremists as legitimate democratic actors can actually boost their electoral fortunes. They are among the strongest extremist parties in Europe, and

have significant policy influence in their respective countries. To be sure, the Austrian Freedom Party lost significant electoral support in 2002; however, it stayed on as a junior partner in the following government, and in the 2008 election, it and its splinter party, the Alliance for the Future of Austria, combined to return to 27% of the vote. Moreover, in May 2016 the Freedom Party came within a single percentage point of capturing the Austrian Presidency, being the top vote getter in the first round before falling just short in the second round run-off against a respected consensus-candidate who was backed by all moderate parties.

Based on the above discussion, there are two basic competing hypotheses about how the mainstream parties' strategic responses affect extremist support on the long-term. On the one hand, the defending democracy perspective indicates that voters take cues from elites on how they should view extremist parties. Thus, if mainstream parties adopt isolation strategies (outlawing, procedural barriers, or principled non-cooperation), this sends a strong message from elites to voters that extremist parties are illegitimate actors, and we should expect to see this reflected in their support (Blinder, Ford, and Ivarsflaten 2013; Zaller 1992). On the other, advocates of the collaboration strategy argue that a good deal of extremist party support is based on their anti-system appeal. By collaborating and adopting an inclusive approach, this undercuts the far-right's attractiveness as political mavericks and outsiders who are going to shake up the system. To the extent that their support is based on their anti-system appeal, ultimately, this should decrease their support among the electorate.

Individual-Level Theories of Far-Right Support

While our main interest lies in how mainstream parties' strategic responses affect support for the far-right, we also need to control for individual-level predictors. Previous research points to two key motivations for voting for far-right parties. The first, as noted above, is their anti-establishment appeal—

that is, the idea that far-right support is primarily an expression of frustration and protest against mainstream political elites (Taggart 1995; van der Brug and Fennema 2003). This explanation was especially common in earlier research on this party family (Betz 1994; Mayer and Perrineau 1992). It has long been a point of emphasis in far-right parties' rhetoric (de Lange 2007), and the emergence and growth in far-right party support also has coincided with the growing cynicism and distrust toward parties across advanced democracies (Klingemann and Fuchs 1995; Dalton and Weldon 2005). Furthermore, several studies have found that far-right supporters tend to be particularly distrustful of parties and politicians, express greater dissatisfaction with democracy, and have lower levels of political efficacy than supporters of established parties (Lubbers, Gijsberts, and Scheepers 2000; Oesch 2008).

The second key factor hypothesized to motivate support for the far-right is simply the fact these parties represent the policy interests of a growing segment of the electorate—particularly on issues of immigration and cultural diversity. Indeed, there is little debate that immigration is the key issue for the far-right—what unites all far-right parties is their opposition to immigration, especially for ethnic and religious minorities (Ivarsflaten 2008). According to this perspective, far-right parties are no different than mainstream parties in terms of how they appeal to voters and why voters choose to vote for them (van der Brug and Fennema 2003). However, even regarding this issue, there are differing views on how exactly anti-immigrant sentiment relates to support for the far-right (Sniderman et al. 2004; Lucassen and Lubbers 2011).

One view focuses on economic insecurity, rising inequality, declining real incomes, and the perceived threat that new immigrants pose to the economically vulnerable. According to this *realistic group conflict theory*, it is those that are in direct competition with immigrants for jobs and possibly those dependent on social welfare benefits who are most likely to express support and vote for far-right

parties. This includes unskilled or low-wage workers, as well as males, the unemployed, less educated, and older people. Some far-right parties, as well as Donald Trump, have also tried to capitalize on these concerns by railing against globalization, neoliberalism, and the kinds of policies that have allegedly contributed to lost manufacturing jobs. Similarly, Trump has linked his opposition to environmental protection and climate change skepticism to the loss of mining jobs in the coal industry.

A second perspective sees anti-immigrant sentiment as simply part of a more general backlash over changing cultural norms and the perceived breakdown of traditional morals and conservative values (Inglehart and Norris 2016; Mudde 2010). This includes changing policies and views on the role of women in society, LGBT rights, alternative lifestyles more generally, and declining religiosity. Far-right, anti-immigrant sentiment in this sense is linked to a more idyllic time when “men were men”, “women stayed at home”, one left their house and car doors unlocked without fear of break-ins, and diversity referred more to the share of apple, cherry, and peach pies at the neighborhood summer block party than its ethnic or racial composition. To examine this notion, we examine how left-right ideology and closeness to far-right parties on the left-right scale relate to vote choice.

Data and Measurement

In this study, we use two measures to tap support for extremist parties and their agendas. Arguably, the most important indicator of support is electoral success or vote share. It is a behavioral rather than attitudinal measure and it has a direct link to government power, making it the most reliable indicator of support among the electorate and the one that matters most for the extremist threat. We collected data on electoral vote share for all extremist parties from the 1990s until 2014 that received

more than one percent of the vote. Information on the parties used in this study can be found in the appendix.

While we agree with the importance of electoral success for measuring extremist support, this measure is also limited in that it does not tap potential broader support for their agenda. Voters may choose to support a different party on Election Day but still hold sympathies for extremists' policies and believe they have an important role in policy decisions. To get at this psychological aspect of support, we draw on party thermometer ratings from the three waves of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). Specifically, we use the following question:

I'd like to know what you think about each of our political parties. After I read the name of a political party, please rate it on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means you strongly dislike that party and 10 means that you strongly like that party. If I come to a party you haven't heard of or you feel you do not know enough about, just say so.

We aggregate the results to produce a general measure of party support. Over the four waves of the study, survey respondents were queried about different anti-immigrant parties over 55 elections in 20 countries. Because several countries were included in multiple waves of the CSES, we have a total of 24 far-right, anti-immigrant parties.

Finally, to classify elite strategic responses, we draw on a range of academic resources and consider whether the extremist party has entered into government in the past. Notably, and as discussed above, elite responses have not necessarily been consistent over time in several cases. Our data, however, does not include any of these special instances. To control for the clustering of individual-level respondents, we employ multilevel random effects models with individual voters nested in elections.⁴

⁴ We do this using the lme4 package in R (Bates et al. 2015).

Analyses

We start with a graph of vote share for extremist right-wing parties over time in Figure 1. As we can see, far-right support has been increasing in recent years with a sharp rise since 2012. There is a good deal of variation across Europe—some countries still have no far-right party in the national parliament, including Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, and Portugal. Others, like Hungary and Poland, have far-right parties with majority control of government. Regardless, wherever the far-right has a presence, it appears to be getting stronger over time.

<<< Figures 1 and 2 about here >>>

Turning to Figure 2, we show the first analysis for our key hypothesis. The boxplot shows the relationship between mainstream parties' strategic responses to far-right parties (Inclusion vs. Isolation) and average like-dislike scores on a 10-point scale. Higher scores mean higher affinity. The graph shows that strategic response matters. Isolated far-right parties tend to be less liked, with an average like score of 3.8. Far-right parties facing a welcoming or inclusive environment from other political parties score an average of 4.7. This holds even when including an extreme outlier—the Greater Romania Party in 1996. Despite being isolated, this party had an average like-rating of 7.4, which is 1.4 points higher than the next closest party, the Swiss People's Party in 1999.

Despite the higher variance within the 'isolated' group, a t-test confirms the difference between both groups as significant at a 95% confidence level. Elite response itself matters for the assessment of right-wing parties by the electorate. A simple bivariate regression with like-scores as dependent and elite response as single explanatory variables (table 1) suggests that the average like-score for a party that is

chastised by established actors is 0.85 points lower than for included parties. A set of more sophisticated regressions helps us to investigate the effect in greater detail.

<<< Table 1 about here >>>

Multilevel Regression Models: Affinity Scores for Far-Right Parties

The first three models are multi-level regressions with fixed effects, where respondents are grouped by elections. This allows for differing intercepts between elections to focus on the effects of our explanatory variables regardless of different baseline-conditions among countries. The first model is a test of our macro-level predictors. The coefficient for CSES-wave controls for time-effects and indicates that like-scores decrease slightly over time. Strategic response remains significant at the 95%-level, while the extremeness of a party fails to clear the hurdle. Model 2 establishes a good foundation for the choice of our individual-level predictors. The difference between model 2 and a Null Model with only micro-level variables⁵ is significant at the 95%-level ($\text{Chi}^2=11.47$, $p= 0.0094$).

For model 2, all but two of the explanatory variables are statistically significant, only coefficients for Union membership and the extremeness of a party cannot be confirmed to have a systematic influence. All but one predictor point in the expected direction: the negative coefficients for post-secondary education, urban environment, gender democratic satisfaction, and feeling of efficacy are in line with previous findings. Only age is inconsistent with previous research, as it indicates that each additional year of life decreases the affinity to extremist parties by 0.03.

⁵ Mixed-effect model, grouped by Election, correlating Affinity-Scores with: Employment Status, Age, Age², Post-Secondary Education, Gender, Union membership, Rural or Urban residence, Democratic Satisfaction, Feeling of democratic Agency, and CSES-wave

Additionally, we selected individuals from working class backgrounds since previous findings suggest its individuals rate right-wing parties more positively. The data confirms this: All else being equal, a blue-collar profession goes hand in hand with half a point more positive rating of extremist parties. As for position on a left-right-scale, the negative relationship between self-placement and perceived party position points in the right direction. It indicates a somewhat flexible link between attitudes and affinity by having these scales related but not directly correlated. All other coefficients being equal, an increase in 1 for distance decreases the likes-core by 0.46.

<<< Table 2 about here >>>

The treatment of right-wing parties by established parties, our main interest in this analysis, is the largest influencer for all three mixed effects models. In the macro-level model 1, all else being equal, the average like-score for an included party is 0.77 points higher than for an isolated party at the 95% confidence level. In our second, multilevel model the effect for strategic response is 0.88.

The third model includes interaction terms to evaluate a difference in effects dependent on working class-membership. The effects of the absolute left-right-distance between self and party is lower for workers than for other social classes: Instead of -0.48 for non-workers, the sum of coefficients and interaction-term adds up to a slightly positive coefficient for blue-collar individuals. On average and with all other values held at their means, each point increase in perceived political distance coincides with an increase in affinity score by 0.14. A small, but surprising effect. At the same time, the effects of strategic response on like-scores appear to be larger for individuals from working class backgrounds: Adding the coefficients for the indicator-dummies and interaction-term tallies up to an effect of -0.84 for isolating strategies. All else being equal, isolated right-wing parties score 0.08 lower on affinity with

blue-collar individuals than with the rest of the respondents. Workers appear to pay slightly more attention to how an extremist party is treated.

Modelling Mainstream Party Strategy and Vote Choice

The deterring tendency of isolating strategy is confirmed when we consider vote-choice instead of like-scores as dependent variable, as model 4 does. It is a generalized linear model with the outcome coded for “right-wing vote” for each respondent. The odd ratios in table 3 result from the logged odds listed in table 2.

The largest influence on likelihood for a right-wing vote is the strategic response by mainstream parties. In line with what we concluded from theory, an isolating strategy is negatively associated with an extreme right vote. The odd ratio of 0.37 means that if all other variables are kept at their means likelihood drops by over 60 percent. The effect is slightly larger for working class voters: calculating the sum of the logged odds and interaction for both indicators results in an odd of 0.31. This is despite the fact that working class voters have a higher tendency to vote right wing. A cordon sanitaire reduces the likelihood of a right-wing vote for blue-collar voters. The deterring effect of isolating strategies is slightly increased for this group of individuals.

Another difference in effects between workers and non-workers appears in the role of distance between self and party. Overall, an increase of 1 in left-right-distance decreases likelihood of right-wing-voting by 38.1 percent, as the odd ratio of 0.619 indicates. But for workers the odds for this indicator are at 0.83 (resulting from the sum of logged odds for worker-dummy, distance-coefficient, and interaction), meaning that, on average, each increase in distance only results in a decrease of 17 percent for the likelihood of a right-wing vote. Increased distance between self and party has a smaller impact on the likelihood for a right-wing vote of workers.

<<< Table 3 about here >>>

All other prefixes for the statistically significant indicators point in the expected directions as well. Unlike in our previous models predicting like-scores, the measure of a right-wing party's extremeness is significant in the generalized mixed effect model. While the party's perceived left-right stance does not appear to matter for affinity, it is positively associated with right-wing vote likelihood. From the odd ratio in table 3 we can conclude that, all else being equal, each additional point of perceived extremeness increases the likelihood for right-wing voting by over 40 percent. The influences by employment, education, and gender fall in line with expectations and previous findings. Age and urbanized residency does not show as associated with the likelihood of a right-wing vote. Of the two subjective assessments of the political process, democratic satisfaction has a larger impact than perceived power agency.

Discussion and Conclusion

We have sought in this article to outline how mainstream political parties react to far-right, anti-immigrant parties and how this matters for the far-right's support. Such extremist parties present the advocates of democracy with the dilemma of whether to "tolerate the intolerant". Our findings remain preliminary; nonetheless, they point to the importance of mainstream elites in shaping extremist parties' electoral success and citizen opinion of them. Clearly the strategy of mainstream political elites matters for the fate of extremist parties. Specifically, it appears that if elites present a united front against extremists, voters receive the message and also express a greater dislike toward extremists, especially anti-immigrant parties. This is broadly consistent with John Zaller's theory of mass-elite opinion

dynamics (Zaller 1992). It is also consistent with Blinder, Ford, and Ivarsflaten's 2013 study of how anti-prejudice norms affect party and policy preferences. In an experimental study of German and British voters, they find that even among those harboring anti-immigrant sentiments, voters are reluctant to express those sentiments when prompted with a statement about inclusion and acceptance of minorities.

Yet, we should also be cautious in assuming the efficacy of an isolation strategy. It is definitely not a panacea. As the 2002 French presidential election brought to light, for example, reducing the openness of a political system and increasing barriers to entry can have drastic consequences if extremists are ever able to capture the government apparatus. To be sure, Jean Marie Le Pen had no realistic chance of beating Chirac in the run-off election, but it still reinforces the notion that closing off the system with increased procedural barriers increases the risks if mainstream parties were ever to lose power to extremists.

We see this risk again in the lead-up to the 2017 French election where Marine Le Pen has regularly led in opinion polls and, like her father in 2002, seems destined to at least make it to the second round. Donald Trump's 2016 election as U.S. President, running on a populist, anti-immigrant platform very similar to that of the far-right in Europe, further underscores the potential risks of mechanically limiting the transfer of far-right, populist preferences into government power through the electoral system.

A final consideration is how strategic responses and far-right success relates to policy outcomes more broadly. Obviously if the far-right has majority control of government or is a coalition partner, it can matter a great deal. Beyond that though, the electoral strength of extremist parties and the level of acceptance of their ideas among the population likely have a crucial impact on the policies pursued by mainstream political elites. Facing a challenge from the far-right, conservative parties especially have an

incentive to adopt at least some elements of the far-right platform. This kind of “soft anti-immigrant” position was on display in the recent Dutch election with the VVD, for example. However, a recent systematic study of election manifestoes finds no evidence that mainstream parties adopt more populist and anti-immigrant positions in response to successful challenges from such parties (Rooduijn, de Lange, and van der Brug 2012).

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Figure 1: Vote Shares of Far-Right Parties

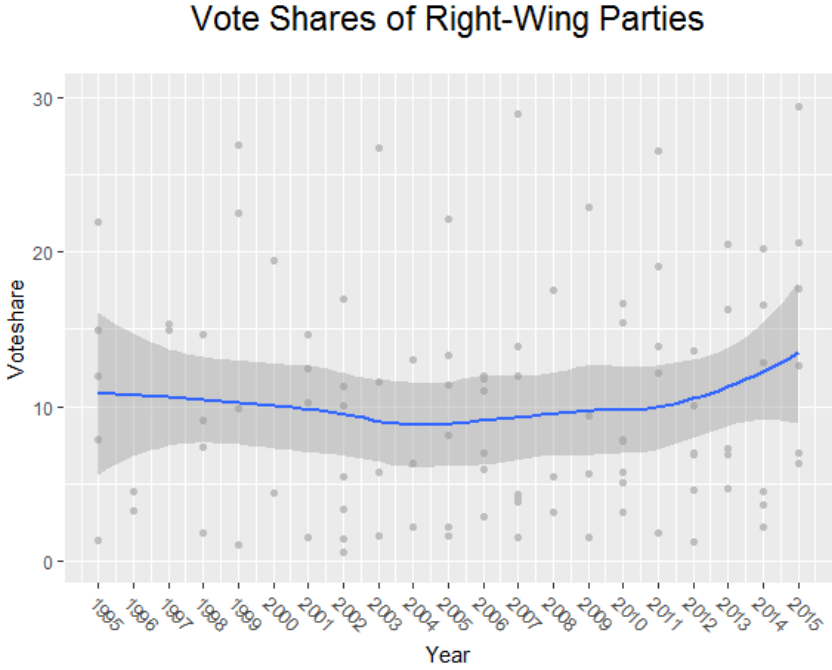


Figure 2: Average Like-Dislike Scores of Far-Right Parties by Strategic Response

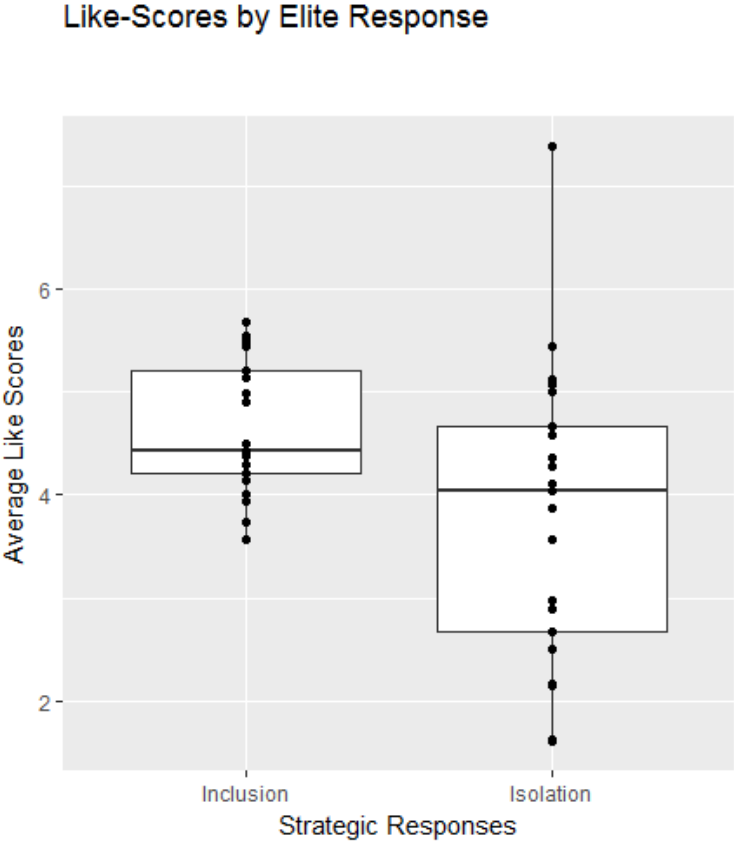


Table 1: Bivariate Regression of Elite-Response and Far-Right Like Scores

Bivariate Regression	
<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
Right-Wing Like-Score	
Elite-Response: Isolation	-0.854*** (0.025)
Constant	4.647*** (0.017)
Observations	60,321
R ²	0.019
Adjusted R ²	0.019
Residual Std. Error	3.080 (df = 60319)
F Statistic	1,157.010*** (df = 1; 60319)
<i>Note:</i>	* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table 2: Multilevel Models Of Support for Far-Right Parties

Multilevel-Models				
<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Right-Wing Like-Score <i>linear mixed-effects</i>			Right-wing Vote <i>generalized linear mixed-effects</i>
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
CSES-Wave	-0.374** (0.190)	-0.437** (0.195)	-0.439** (0.196)	0.027 (0.221)
Elite-Response: Isolation	-0.773** (0.344)	-0.880** (0.348)	-0.765** (0.350)	-1.004** (0.414)
Left-Right Extremeness	-0.194 (0.148)	0.131 (0.148)	0.136 (0.148)	0.379** (0.176)
Not in regular Labour-Force		0.381*** (0.052)	0.378*** (0.051)	0.094 (0.074)
Retiree		0.261*** (0.048)	0.260*** (0.047)	0.212*** (0.068)
Student		-0.335*** (0.063)	-0.333*** (0.063)	-0.229** (0.105)
Unemployed		0.369*** (0.060)	0.367*** (0.060)	0.111 (0.091)
Age		-0.031*** (0.005)	-0.031*** (0.005)	0.010 (0.006)
Age ²		0.0002*** (0.0001)	0.0002*** (0.0001)	-0.0002* (0.0001)
Post-secondary Education		-0.686*** (0.029)	-0.684*** (0.029)	-0.579*** (0.047)
Male		0.286*** (0.026)	0.284*** (0.026)	0.322*** (0.039)
Unionmember		-0.047 (0.032)	-0.046 (0.032)	-0.002 (0.047)
Town or Urban Residence		-0.160*** (0.029)	-0.158*** (0.029)	-0.013 (0.041)
Democratic Satisfaction		-0.198*** (0.012)	-0.199*** (0.012)	-0.325*** (0.017)
Feeling of Agency		-0.020** (0.010)	-0.021** (0.010)	-0.066*** (0.014)
Working Class		0.513*** (0.034)	0.500*** (0.061)	0.205*** (0.077)
Left-Right Distance		-0.459*** (0.007)	-0.481*** (0.007)	-0.480*** (0.015)
Isolation * Working Class			-0.579*** (0.063)	-0.375*** (0.086)
Left-Right Distance * Working Class			0.116*** (0.015)	0.089*** (0.027)
Constant	6.135*** (0.697)	8.588*** (0.713)	8.601*** (0.716)	-1.356* (0.815)
Observations	59,151	44,563	44,563	48,838
Log Likelihood	-146,608.400	-105,950.900	-105,894.400	-10,703.760
Akaike Inf. Crit.	293,228.800	211,941.800	211,832.900	21,449.530
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	293,282.800	212,115.900	212,024.400	21,634.250
<i>Note:</i>	* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01			

Table 3: Multilevel model of vote choice for far-right parties

Odd Ratios for Model 3				
Variable	Odd Ratios		Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI
Intercept	0.258 *		0.052	1.273
CSES-Wave	1.028		0.666	1.585
Elite-Response: Isolation	0.366 **		0.163	0.825
Working Class	1.227 ***		1.055	1.428
Left-Right Extremeness	1.461 **		1.034	2.064
Not in regular Labour-Force	1.099		0.951	1.27
Retiree	1.236 ***		1.083	1.412
Student	0.795 **		0.647	0.977
Unemployed	1.118		0.934	1.337
Age	1.01		0.998	1.022
Age ²	1 **		1	1
Post-secondary Education	0.56 ***		0.511	0.615
Male	1.379 ***		1.278	1.488
Unionmember	0.998		0.909	1.095
Town or Urban Residence	0.987		0.91	1.071
Democratic Satisfaction	0.723 ***		0.698	0.748
Feeling of Agency	0.936 ***		0.91	0.962
Left-Right Distance	0.619 ***		0.601	0.637
Isolation * Working Class	0.688 ***		0.581	0.814
Left-Right Distance * Working Class	1.093 ***		1.036	1.152
<i>Note:</i>			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

Appendix: List of Extremist Parties and Information

Country	Party Name	Years	Strategic Response
Austria	Freedom Party (FPO)	1956 - Current	Inclusion
Belgium	Flemish Bloc/Interest (VB)	1978 - Current	Isolation/Procedural
Bulgaria	Patriotic Front – NFSB And IMRO	2014 - Current	Isolation
Croatia	Croatian Party of Rights (HSP)	2009 - Current	Isolation
Czech Republic	Dawn of Direct Democracy (Usvit)	2013 - Current	Isolation
Denmark	Danish People's Party (DFP)	1998 - Current	Inclusion
Finland	True Finns (PS)	1995 - Current	Inclusion
France	National Front (FN)	1972 - Current	Isolation/Procedural
Germany	Alternative for Germany (AfD)	2013 - Current	Isolation
Germany	Die Republikaner (REP)	1990 - 2005	Isolation
Germany	National Democratic Party (NPD)	1980 - Current	Isolation/Outlaw
Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	2004 - Current	Isolation
Greece	Golden Dawn	1980 - Current	Isolation
Italy	National Alliance - Italian SM (AN)	1946 - 2008	Inclusion
Latvia	For Fatherland and Freedom (LNNK)	1993 - 2011	Inclusion
Netherlands	List Pim Fortuyn (LPF)	2002 - 2006	Inclusion
Netherlands	Party for Freedom (PVV)	2006 - Current	Inclusion
Norway	Progress Party (FRP)	1973 - Current	Isolation
Poland	Self-Defence Alliance (SRP)	1992 - Current	Inclusion
Romania	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	1991 - Current	Isolation
Slovakia	Slovak National Party (SNS)	1990 - Current	Inclusion
Slovenia	Slovenian National Party (SNS)	1992 - Current	Isolation
Sweden	Swedish Democrats (SD)	1988 - Current	Isolation/Procedural
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	1983 - Current	Inclusion