Issue trade-offs and the politics of representation: Experimental evidence from four European democracies

NORA KIRKIZH,[1,2] CATERINA FROIO[3] & SEBASTIAN STIER[2] (ID)
[1]*Munich School of Politics and Public Policy, Technical University of Munich, Munich, Germany;* [2]*Department Computational Social Science, GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, Germany, Cologne;* [3]*Centre for European Studies and Comparative Politics, Sciences Po, France, Paris*

Abstract. The politics of representation has become increasingly complex in recent years. Amid weakening traditional political cleavages, the emergence of new political divides and mounting anti-elitism that have helped the rise of radical populist parties, voters face significant cross-pressures when casting their ballots. Despite a wealth of studies on the role of issue preferences in voting behaviour, there are still many unknowns when it comes to understanding how voters trade off competing issue preferences against each other. Studying issue trade-offs is also important against the backdrop of the well-documented preferences of radical left and right voters for redistribution and restrictive immigration policies, respectively. To investigate the strength of issue preferences among radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters and the willingness to compromise on their most important issues, we conducted a conjoint survey experiment with 2,000 participants in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The voting scenario in the experiment featured proposals on salient political issues and different (non)populist stances on political representation. The results from the cross-country study, as well as a large replication study with a sample of 4,000 German respondents, show that voters of radical right parties are willing to accept large trade-offs regarding their other issue preferences as long as their preference for restrictive immigration policies is fulfilled. Differently, radical left, Green and mainstream party voters have a more variegated range of issue preferences, some of them so strong that they are not traded off for their preferred redistribution and European Union integration positions, respectively. The findings shed light on trade-offs related to emerging issues such as climate change and the distinct logics behind support for radical parties. They also have implications for the electoral prospects of mainstream and radical parties when trying to reposition themselves in the diversifying issue space of contemporary democracies. As such, understanding how voters navigate issue cross-pressures helps to explain the broader dynamics that are (re)configuring political conflict and voting behaviour in Europe.

Keywords: cleavages; issue trade-offs; radical right parties; radical left parties; survey experiment

Introduction

Individuals vote for political parties that represent them. This is at least what one can expect assuming that voting decisions are straightforward. However, the politics of representation is becoming more complex, at least in European multiparty systems where the diversity of party options and the variety of issue interests make individuals' voting choices increasingly difficult. The historical decline of party identification (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2002; Mair, 1989), together with the reconfiguration of the Rokkanian political cleavages and the emergence of radical populist parties (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012) contribute to make voting choices progressively less structured along the classic lines of political conflict (Hutter & Kriesi, 2019), putting traditional models of voting behaviour under strain. In this post-Rokkanian context, a voter who holds policy preferences across various issues can be pushed in different political directions because she can

value some issues more than others when casting her ballot (Chou et al., 2021). At times in which European party systems are undergoing major transformations, how do cross-pressured voters weigh different, at times conflicting, issue preferences? What are the issues on which voters are likely to compromise? And are there differences between voters of radical and mainstream parties in terms of the issue trade-offs they are willing to make?

The relevance of issue-cross pressures in voting decisions has been acknowledged before (He, 2016; Lefkofridi et al., 2014) but empirical findings on how citizens navigate competing issue preferences remain sparse. In fact, despite a wealth of single-country or comparative studies on electoral behaviour (Arzheimer, 2018; Rooduijn, 2018; Steiner & Hillen, 2021), the primarily survey-based evidence makes it hard to study issue-cross pressures, for at least two reasons. First, while available survey batteries offer insights on preferences concerning multiple issues independently, we cannot infer how respondents trade off their issue preferences *against each other* to satisfy their most important one. And second, surveys do not allow for drawing causal inferences about which issue preferences ultimately drive vote choices.

This paper employs an issue-centred research design that allows us to identify the conditions under which voters are (un)willing to trade off some preferences for others. We compare the behaviour of radical left and radical right voters who are known to have peculiar preferences on the issues of redistribution and immigration, respectively, with voters of mainstream parties. Specifically, we conducted conjoint experiments in France, Germany, Italy and Spain, where different types of radical parties have broken through. Participants were asked to choose between two hypothetical candidates in the next national parliamentary election who present diverging proposals on salient political issues and different stances on political representation. Randomizing the candidates' proposals on issues allowed us to identify the causal effect of each issue position on candidate choice. We avoided the confounding influence of party cues on issue trade-offs by not assigning party labels to candidates and taking information on party attachment from surveys run months before the experiment. As a validation of the results, we again implemented the same experimental setup almost 2 years later using a large German sample selection according to population margins.

The findings from all studies samples consistently show that voters of radical right parties are less likely to compromise on their most important issue. As a consequence, radical right voters are willing to accept even large trade-offs regarding undesirable proposals on climate change and European Union (EU) integration in order to achieve restrictive immigration policies. Differently, radical left voters have less skewed issue orientations: they have strong preferences on redistributive policies but are still less likely to accept candidates that additionally propose undesirable issue proposals, for example, climate denialist stances. Taken together, the study contributes to understanding long-term prospects for vote choices and the reconfiguration of politics in Europe, revealing complex patterns of issue (de)alignment of voters in contemporary democracies.

Political cleavages, issue-cross pressures and individuals' vote choices

The politics of representation is becoming increasingly multidimensional, at least in political systems where a variety of issue interests and political parties make individual vote choices more difficult. In this regard, an impressive body of research has examined the factors determining voting choices. Yet, despite recent advances (He, 2016; Lefkofridi et al., 2014; Steiner & Hillen,

2021), only scarce attention has been paid to measuring and examining the consequences of issue-cross pressures that relate to 'inconsistencies among individuals' attitudes towards various political objects' (He, 2016, p. 364). Our goal is to address this gap, shedding light on the impact of issue-cross pressures on vote choices and to examine the mechanisms of how voters of different party families trade off various issue preferences against each other.

The relevance of different kinds of cross-pressures in voting decisions has been the focus of three major research schools. To begin with, the sociological model of voting behaviour proposed by Lazarsfeld et al. (1944) and colleagues at Columbia University contended that individuals' vote choices were heavily influenced by demographic characteristics and that belonging to a social group would be the predominant factor in determining voting decisions. In follow-up studies, they acknowledged the possibility of issue-cross pressures as they found some inconsistencies between policy preferences related to demographic indicators and those emerging from the characteristics associated with the groups to which individuals belong (Berelson et al., 1954). In their interpretation, these tensions would make individual voting decisions more difficult as they need to trade off some concerns over others.

A second major contribution to the study of vote choices came from the socio-psychological model of voting behaviour, initiated at the University of Michigan (Campbell et al., 1960). These scholars assumed that party identification was central in informing voting decisions. Still, Campbell and colleagues also provided the theoretical tools to account for issue-cross pressures as they clarified that partisanship is not a factor that determines unambiguously how individuals will cast their ballots. Rather, it has to be understood as a 'filter' through which voters appreciate what is favourable to the orientation of the party and ignore (or value less) what is considered unfavourable. In other words, partisanship functions as an instrument to 'decipher' electoral campaigns and candidates' proposals.

Further theoretical elaboration came from the macro-sociological approach that understood Western European party systems as reflecting historical divisions originating in national revolutions (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Starting from the 1970s, the 'defreezing' of traditional political cleavages (Inglehart, 1971) contributed to the decreasing role of party identification in voting decisions (Dalton & Welzel, 2014). At the same time, these transformations of the political space have accompanied the emergence of novel parties in European party systems, notably Green parties and radical populist parties, increasing the diversity of available options and making voting choices even more complex (Ignazi, 1992). Scholars suggest that in this post-Rokkanian political space, voting choices are increasingly determined by two main socio-political divides: an economic and a cultural one that may also create contradictory policy preferences (Hutter & Kriesi, 2019; Kriesi et al., 2012; Rovny & Polk, 2020).

While the specific issues of economic competition may vary from election to election, at a more abstract level, political competition on the economy tends to include debates about pro-state and pro-market positions (Castles et al., 1997; Traber et al., 2018). Specifically, this emergent economic divide opposes the advocates of a more interventionist state in regulating the economy, promoting social policies and setting taxation levels to those who call for a more limited role of governments (Dalton, 2018; Kitschelt, 1994). Another core political divide in contemporary European societies involves issues underlying a cultural cleavage. Central in these debates are newer issues associated with globalization, notably EU integration, immigration and, more recently, climate change (Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Kriesi et al., 2012; Treib, 2021). The transformation of the political space provides critical opportunities for both mainstream and radical parties that try to take up evolving

preferences and values, (re)positioning themselves along these conflict lines. So far, cultural issues appear to be most central in explaining the vote for populist radical right parties but not for radical left or mainstream parties (Arzheimer, 2018; Rooduijn, 2018).

The literature on the drivers of voting behaviour helps understanding that voting decisions are far from being straightforward. They are mediated by multiple, at times conflictual, individual issue preferences that cut across established and newer political cleavages. Still, available knowledge tends to overlook that as a response to partisan dealignment and changing lines of political conflict, cross-pressured individuals must and do trade off issues in formulating voting decisions. In line with the notions of 'cross-cutting cleavages' (Rokkan, 1967), 'cross-cutting pressures' (Berelson et al., 1954) or 'issue cross-pressures' (He, 2016), a voter's congruence with a candidate's proposals on redistribution can be counteracted by a candidate's incongruent positions on immigration. Therefore, in most voting scenarios, the same voter has to trade off several more or less important preferences against each other to see her favourite one fulfilled.

More recently, researchers have started to use experimental designs to study the causal effects of voters' issue preferences on vote choice (Chou et al., 2021; Graham & Svolik, 2020; Hanretty et al., 2020; Neuner & Wratil, 2022). Most closely related to our work are several conjoint studies with related, yet distinct, research questions. Chou et al. (2021) designed candidate profiles with German party labels to investigate vote switching of radical right party supporters conditional on their issue preferences. The study found that *AfD* voters are willing to vote for mainstream parties that propose a complete stop of immigration. However, they also show that such an accommodation strategy alienates the core voters of mainstream parties. Another study of the Germany context investigated the electoral effects of 'thin' populist stances of candidates versus 'thicker' populist issue bundles. The authors identify differences in voters' issue priorities depending on individual levels of populist attitudes, but that anti-immigrant and pro-redistribution positions increase the appeal of German candidates, on average (Neuner & Wratil, 2022). Finally, Franchino and Zucchini (2015) used student samples to study the importance of valence issues in vote choices.

In sum, to the best of our knowledge, no existing study has experimentally compared the willingness to trade off different issue preferences among radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters across multiple countries. To address this gap, we designed a candidate conjoint experiment with respondents from France, Germany, Italy and Spain, including the most salient contemporary issues as well as an attribute capturing populist stances of candidates. In the next section, we formulate expectations about the drivers of issue trade-offs in vote choices for different groups of voters.

Hypotheses: How issue trade-offs shape vote choices

In our understanding, issue preferences cross-cut a bundle of distinct issues that may generate conflict in voting decisions. To resolve these conflicts, voters have to make issue trade-offs depending on the intensity of their specific preferences. In other words, when a candidate proposes the most desirable solution, voters will have to also accept less desirable proposals – at least to some extent. For example, voters who attach a high value to redistribution may be willing to compromise on EU integration and immigration as long as their redistribution preference is fulfilled. This theoretical framework has a high external validity, as a perfect party-voter congruence can only rarely be observed empirically (Costello et al., 2020; Steiner & Hillen, 2021; Traber et al., 2018). The literature on political parties helps identifying relevant overlapping

or contrasting issue preferences, informing how voters of different party families approach issue trade-offs.

Differently from voters of mainstream parties, which we understand as non-radical 'traditional' party families ranging from Green parties to conservatives, radical electorates have been shown to share dissatisfaction with the functioning of government, and express lower trust in political institutions. This more adversarial approach to conventional politics can be expected to yield major differences in issue trade-offs between voters of mainstream and radical parties (Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018). Radical voters, in fact, may have stronger preferences on specific questions they regard as underrepresented in mainstream party politics and may be less ready than their non-radical counterparts to trade off these. Accordingly, we expect that

H1: Voters of mainstream parties are willing to accept larger trade-offs regarding their most important issue preference than voters of radical left and radical right parties.

Beyond preferences about conventional politics, more specific campaigns associated with radical right and radical left parties can be expected to inform issue trade-offs. Various studies show that vote choices for radical right parties are primarily motivated by preferences on immigration (Arzheimer, 2018; Halikiopoulou & Vlandas, 2020; Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018). This does not mean that a prototypical voter of the radical right is only concerned about immigration, but it means that this voter has stronger political preferences for the anti-immigrant claims that feature prominently in the campaigns of these parties (Halikiopoulou, 2019; Mudde, 2007). We expect that radical right voters' resolute preferences over immigration might thus make them regard other issue preferences as less desirable or important.

H2: Voters of radical right parties are willing to accept large trade-offs regarding their other issue preferences as long as their preference for restrictive immigration policies is fulfilled.

It has also been shown that radical left electorates hold peculiar preferences over specific issues. While differences between mainstream left and right parties have become more blurred over time, radical left parties continue to campaign and appeal to voters who are primarily concerned about the skewed socioeconomic structure of contemporary capitalism (March, 2012) and to call for a reduction of inequalities through redistribution, state subsidies and other major changes in economic and power structures (Ramiro & Gomez, 2017; Rooduijn, 2018). In sum, one may expect that voters of radical left parties hold stronger preferences for redistribution and are ready to trade off other issues considered as less important.

H3: Voters of radical left parties are willing to accept large trade-offs regarding their other issue preferences as long as their preference for redistributive policies is fulfilled.

Assuming that radical left or right voters have rather peculiar tendencies when it comes to accepting trade-offs in their issue preferences, it is an intriguing question whether they differ in their desire to have their strongest preference fulfilled. While there is evidence that radical left and radical right electorates have different preferences about pluralism in society (Rooduijn et al., 2017), such as minorities' rights, other studies show that both groups tend to have strong preferences for opposition to globalization and EU integration (Visser et al., 2014), even if scholars identify different types of nationalism that inform these positions (Halikiopoulou et al., 2012).

Another issue where there may be more common ground than assumed in the previous hypotheses is redistribution. While radical right parties display and appeal to voters who hold more blurred positions on redistribution (Rovny & Polk, 2020), they still promise consumptive social policies while deemphasizing social investment policies (Enggist & Pinggera, 2022). A substantial share of so-called 'left authoritarians' without proper party representation (Lefkofridi et al., 2014; Steiner & Hillen, 2021) also speaks for similarities, or at least smaller issue trade-offs that radical left and radical right voters might be willing to accept for one specific issue. The group of radical left voters should have become even more cross-pressured with the advent of post-materialist issues such as climate change that are salient in the platforms of left parties (Farstad, 2018).

In sum, previous literature has identified contradictory trends when it comes to the relative weight of different issues in the preference order of radical left and right voters. After all, it might be that these voter groups feel more cross-pressured beyond their primary orientation towards redistribution and immigration, respectively. To accommodate for unresolved puzzles in the literature, we formulate additional open questions for the analysis: What are the issues important to radical left and right voters besides redistribution and immigration, respectively? Are there differences between radical left and radical right voters in their willingness to compromise on their most important issue preference?

Data and methods

Sample

To test our hypotheses on issue trade-offs and the differential reactions of voters of radical and mainstream parties, we needed to collect information about study participants' party attachment. While our survey experiment investigates candidate choice in national parliamentary elections, we identified supporters of different party families based on original surveys conducted during the 2019 European Parliament (EP) election, several months before the experiments took place. This two-step sampling frame allowed us to avoid asking participants about their party identification or previous voting behaviour in the immediate context of the experiment. Enquiring about party affiliation in such a setting might result in biases, either in the survey responses when asked post-treatment or experimental behaviour when asked pre-treatment.

In the first recruitment stage, we conducted online surveys as part of a bigger project in France, Germany, Italy and Spain 1 month before and immediately after the 2019 EP election that took place from 23 to 26 May 2019. These countries have been selected because they host both radical right (*AfD*, *FN/RN*, *Lega*, *Vox*) and radical left parties (*Die Linke*, *La France Insoumise*, *Podemos*, *Potere al Popolo*). We selected 6,374 respondents as quota samples from online access panels maintained by the market research firm *Netquest*. While the demographic composition came close to general population margins, the recruitment into the online access panel was not probability based. Additionally, our study contained a module including an incentivized tracking of web browsing behaviour. Therefore, the set of study participants has to be regarded as a convenience sample. However, the sample serves our purposes well, as we used the larger pool of respondents to identify a relevant subset of participants for our survey experiments.

In the second recruitment stage, we aimed to maximize participation of voters of radical right parties in the experiment and invited a set of radical left and mainstream party voters as the control group of equal size, with party classifications taken from PopuList and ParlGov (Döring &

Manow, 2019; Rooduijn et al., 2019) (a flowchart of the sampling process can be found in Online Appendix Section A1). To determine the party attachment of participants, we used the following criteria: (1) party identification (pre-election survey), (2) intention to vote for a party in the 2019 EP election (pre-election survey), (3) voted for a party in the 2019 EP election (post-election survey), (4) voted for a party in the previous national parliamentary election (in France, presidential election) or (5) party identification (post-treatment question in the experimental survey). While the final set of respondents did not necessarily vote for a given party in recent elections, they at least considered doing so and/or identified with one. Voters of Christian democratic, Conservative, Green/Ecologist, Liberal and Social democratic parties (Döring & Manow, 2019) were grouped together as the comparison group of mainstream voters (e.g., voters of *La République En Marche!*, *Les Républicains* in France, *CDU/CSU*, *SPD*, *Grüne* in Germany, +*Europa/Radicali*, *Partito Democratico (PD)* in Italy, *PP*, *PSOE* in Spain, along with smaller parties (see Table A5 in the Online Appendix). In cases where the party differed across an individual's survey responses, we prioritized the party identification response, which is the strongest signal of a partisan identity. Online Appendix Section A6.3 contains robustness tests for respondents with consistent and inconsistent party preferences.

In total, we invited 2,867 persons to take part in a conjoint survey experiment (Hainmueller et al., 2014), in which 1,951 respondents participated (see Online Appendix Section 1 for a description of the sample).[1] The experiment was in the field from 16 to 27 March 2020.[2] After the experiment, we also asked respondents about their party identification again. Comparing party identification responses in May 2019 and their responses post-treatment in the experimental survey in March 2020 reveals considerable stability: the party family remained unchanged for 82 per cent of respondents who reported having a party identification in both surveys.

To assess the robustness of our results, we reran the exact same experiment with another sample almost 2 years later in January 2022. We drew 4,016 German participants from the online access panel of *respondi* based on German population margins (see the sample composition in Online Appendix Section A8). A power analysis using the *R* package *cjpowR* (Schuessler & Freitag, 2020) demonstrates that the sample size provides sufficient statistical power for all subgroups (Online Appendix Section A9), including radical left voters that are underrepresented in the cross-country sample.

Survey experiment design

This study uses choice-based conjoint experiments that allow to identify voters' issue preferences in a multidimensional setting (Hainmueller et al., 2014). The survey experiment consisted of eight tasks (or screens), where participants were asked to choose between two hypothetical candidates who are running in the next national parliamentary election. Every candidate had five attributes with three randomized levels that each represent a different issue proposal. The attribute order was randomized for every respondent once at the beginning of the survey experiment.

By asking voters to choose their preferred candidate among two options we can assess the causal effects of each issue proposal on vote choices. Importantly, unlike traditional surveys, 'forced' choice-based survey experiments immerse a voter into a multidimensional issue environment where she is cross-pressured and has to trade off her issue preferences and eventually choose only one candidate, thereby revealing the relative preference for each issue proposal. Every candidate profile had a neutral label 'Candidate 1' or 'Candidate 2'. We avoided

gender-sensitive variants of 'candidate' (e.g., 'Kandidat*in' in German) as radical right voters might regard such labels as 'gender mainstreaming' which might affect response behaviour. We also did not assign party labels to candidate profiles. While we acknowledge that scenarios where voters will participate in elections without party cues are unrealistic, nevertheless, testing our hypotheses requires candidate profiles without party labels, as the literature shows that partisanship clearly affects vote choices (Kirkland & Coppock, 2018; Franchino & Zucchini, 2015; Hainmueller et al., 2014; Neuner & Wratil, 2022) and that issue preferences are confounded by party preferences and issue ownership (Campbell et al., 1960; Franchino & Zucchini, 2015, p. 224; Kirkland & Coppock, 2018, p. 573). Therefore, in our study, we aim to isolate voters' issue preferences from party cues as much as possible by not using party labels. The setup of the conjoint survey experiment including screenshots is described in Online Appendix Section A3.

Attributes and levels

The substantive goal of the experiment was to provide a realistic representation of the most salient contemporary issues across all party families that are reconfiguring political conflict in Europe (Kriesi et al., 2012). To create a list of relevant issues (or *attributes*) on which candidates present a specific proposal (*levels*), we did extensive research incorporating information from the demand side (voters) and supply side (political parties). As the point of departure, we analysed the most important problem perceptions ('MIP', using the standard Eurobarometer issue battery) of radical right and radical left voters in our own surveys. We studied in detail the party manifestos for the 2019 EP election and recent national elections to empirically identify the most important issues and associated issue positions (Online Appendix Section A4.2). We also downloaded 121,108 Facebook posts posted by the biggest national parties in 2019 to verify that the chosen issues were also salient in party communication (Online Appendix Section 4.3). Finally, we consulted with 11 experts on populism and party politics at various stages of the design of the experiment to create levels (issue proposals) that were applicable across countries.

Of the surveyed issue categories, living costs, unemployment and the economy were salient in our sample and also in parallel Eurobarometer surveys of the general population (Online Appendix Section A4.1). *Immigration* was by avfar the most important perceived problem for radical right voters, whereas social security and the environment ('The environment, climate and energy issues') stood out more clearly among radical left voters. In the survey, we also asked for free-text descriptions describing the chosen most important problem briefly so that we better understand how respondents interpret political issues. The issue descriptions provided by respondents indicate that their concerns boiled down to personal economic fears and not being able to cover the costs of daily life (see word clouds in Online Appendix Figure A6). Therefore, as a construct capturing preferences regarding *redistribution*, we tapped into a traditional survey question on the role of the state in the economy (interventionist vs. non-interventionist) but tailored it towards subsidies on staples and housing that would directly reduce living costs. Accordingly, the item should not just capture radical left voters' well-documented preference for state intervention in social policies but also radical right voters' consumption-oriented demands towards the welfare state (Enggist & Pinggera, 2022). In addition, we included positions on the *European Union* that have become entangled in an 'emerging centre-periphery cleavage' (Treib, 2021, p. 175) driven by Eurosceptic populist parties, and *Climate change*, an increasingly salient issue in European democracies (Farstad, 2018), most notably after the emergence of the movement

Table 1. Attributes and levels (proposals) in the conjoint survey experiment

Attributes	Levels for Candidate 1 and Candidate 2	Theoretical concept
Immigration	Introduce controls at [country's] border to prevent illegal immigration Keep current immigration policy Remove restrictions on immigration	Closed state Status quo (SQ) Open state
Redistribution	Individuals instead of the state should provide for their staples and housing Keep targeted state subsidies on staples and housing The state should increase subsidies on staples and housing	Non-interventionist state SQ Interventionist state
European Union	Leave the common currency Euro Keep the EU institutions like they are Weaken the veto rights of EU member states to empower the EU	Oppose EU integration SQ Support EU integration
Climate	There is no need to reduce CO_2 emissions Introduce a CO_2 tax for corporations Introduce a CO_2 tax for corporations and citizens	Climate change denial SQ/impersonal measure Universal measure
Reason for running	Because corrupt elites don't represent the real people To participate in policy making To continue to serve the government	Populist SQ/neutral Mainstream

Fridays for Future.[3] Finally, in order to capture preferences for a populist stance towards political representation, we included a *Reason for running* item, adjusted from the conjoint study of Chou et al. (2021).[4]

The final list of attributes and levels can be found in Table 1. Although we focus on radical right and radical left voters, we still wanted to compare their voting behaviour to voters of mainstream parties. Thus, we drew policy proposals from across the ideological spectrum (Online Appendix Section A4.2). We constructed attribute levels as follows: the first level is a right/authoritarian/nationalist policy proposal, the middle category is the status quo, and the third level is a left/liberal proposal, either in terms of economic or GAL-TAN issues. Choosing a similar number of levels for each attribute makes it possible to compare the relative importance of issue proposals across and within attributes.

Results

For reporting the key findings of the conjoint analysis, we used marginal means (MMs) as our estimand (Leeper et al., 2020), which has a straightforward interpretation as probabilities with binary outcome variables such as ours – the choice of a candidate. A MM of 0 means that respondents chose a particular profile feature with zero probability, a MM of 1 means the candidate profile with that feature was always chosen, ignoring all other features. Instead of a reference category, we chose a 0.5 probability to indicate that the feature was not significant for respondents in their choice of a candidate profile. We obtained MMs from simple ordinary least squares regression models. Because the features (levels) of candidate profiles were randomized, the effect of every feature on candidate choice in the conjoint experiment can be causally interpreted. We designed the levels in the conjoint experiment in a way that allowed for a complete randomization, meaning that a candidate profile could take any attribute combination
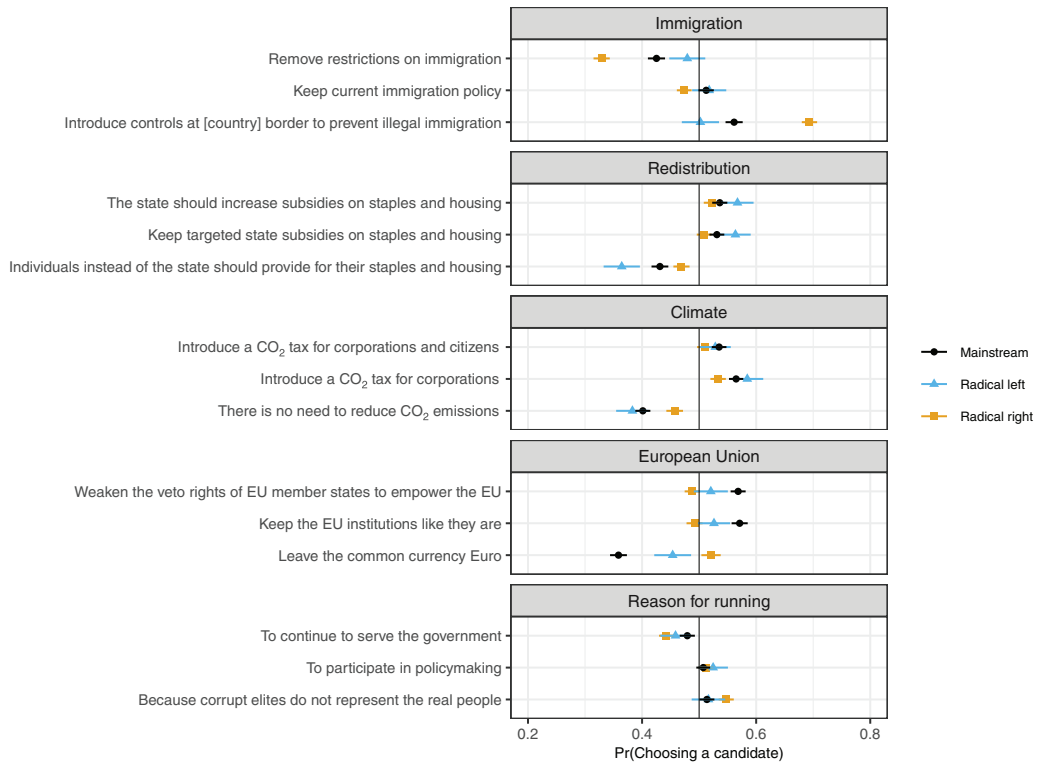
Figure 1. The effect of candidates' issue proposals on candidate choice in the conjoint survey experiment for radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters. Error bars represent 95 per cent confidence intervals. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

and every feature had the same probability to appear in a profile. All analyses were performed in *R*, version 4.2.1. Replication materials including data and *R* scripts are available on OSF: https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/8P54D

Identifying issue preferences among different groups of voters

To test our hypotheses, we first needed to examine if radical right, radical left and mainstream voters have a dominant issue preference. We plotted the results in Figure 1 and also included the numerical outputs from the regressions in the Online Appendix Tables A7– A9. Consistent with the literature, our experimental evidence shows that radical right voters respond strongly to the immigration issue, radical left voters to the redistribution issue. Meanwhile, the unifying issue for the diverse group of mainstream voters is the EU.

Three patterns stand out in Figure 1. First, in contrast to radical right voters who respond to the introduction of border controls (positively) and removing restrictions (negatively) with the same strength, the preferences of radical left and mainstream voters are more lopsided. They are more likely to *reject* proposals than to enthusiastically support proposals on their most important issue. Specifically, radical left voters only moderately supported candidates proposing to increase subsidies on staples and housing or keep the status quo but strongly oppose candidates

who promote economic self-sufficiency. Similarly, mainstream voters moderately supported empowering the EU through weakening the veto rights of EU member states (a proposal found in party programmes of many mainstream parties, see Online Appendix Section A4.2) but strongly opposed candidates proposing to leave the Eurozone.

Second, there is barely a candidate for the second most important issue of radical right voters, while radical left and mainstream voters were also concerned about climate change besides income redistribution or the EU, respectively. Both groups were firmly against ignoring the problem of rising CO_2 emissions, a proposal even radical right voters rejected.[5] There were few similarities between the two radical poles in the electorate and no evidence for left authoritarians who might appreciate redistribute policies and anti-immigration rhetoric at the same time (Lefkofridi et al., 2014).

Third, with 'Reason for running', we were aiming to signal to respondents a candidate's stance on political representation. All three groups of voters punished candidates running for a seat to continue to serve the government and ignored the neutral reason to participate in policy making. If a candidate was running for a seat to combat the corrupt elite and represent the real people, radical right voters' response to this anti-elitist candidate was more positive than the response of radical left or mainstream party voters. Taken together, the findings are only partially consistent with the literature (Van Hauwaert & Van Kessel, 2018), where radical right and left voters prefer anti-elitist candidates. This suggests that, on average, voters of all three party families were not satisfied with the current government but that only radical right voters endorsed anti-elitist stances. Overall, however, our multidimensional survey experiment demonstrates that in the presence of salient issues like immigration or redistribution, radical left and radical right voters did not put much weight on candidates' populist features.

Cross-pressured voters and issue trade-offs

We use the results of Figure 1 to test our hypotheses on issue trade-offs among radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters. We specifically zoom in on the choices of each group under the condition that they were offered their most preferred issue proposal – restricting immigration for radical right voters, increasing subsidies for radical left voters and empowering the EU for mainstream party voters.[6] This empirical strategy allows us to observe to what extent voters with strong issue preferences are willing to compromise (trade-off) to have their most (desirable issue proposal fulfilled.

Radical right voters. Since the results of the pooled conjoint analysis showed that a restrictive immigration policy was most preferred by radical right voters (Figure 1), we reran the analysis for each issue position on immigration individually. In other words, we obtained the effects of issue proposals on respondents' vote choices holding immigration policy constant. Figure 2 shows that radical right voters were consistent in their behaviour. As all coefficients are clearly on the right-hand side of the 0.5 probability threshold, the approval of candidates with restrictive immigration policies increased regardless of their at times undesirable proposals on other issues such as climate change or the EU. Conversely, radical right voters punished candidates who wanted to remove restrictions on immigration despite the presence of other issue proposals that radical right voters embraced in the pooled analysis.

Radical left voters. Figure 3 reports the results for radical left voters grouped by candidate proposals on redistribution. When candidates proposed an interventionist approach to subsidies,
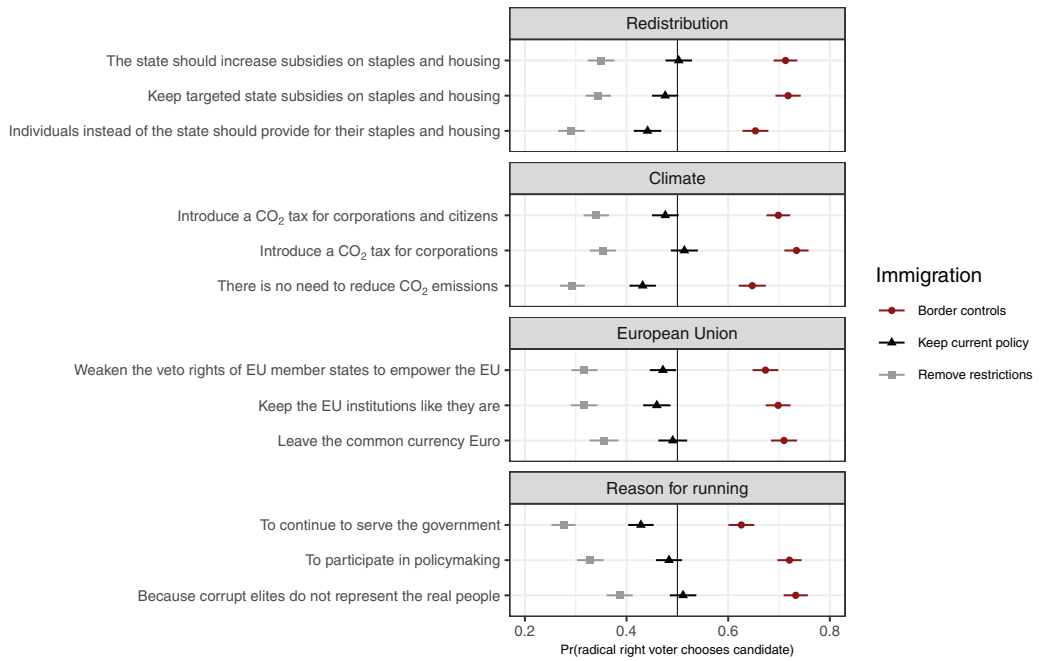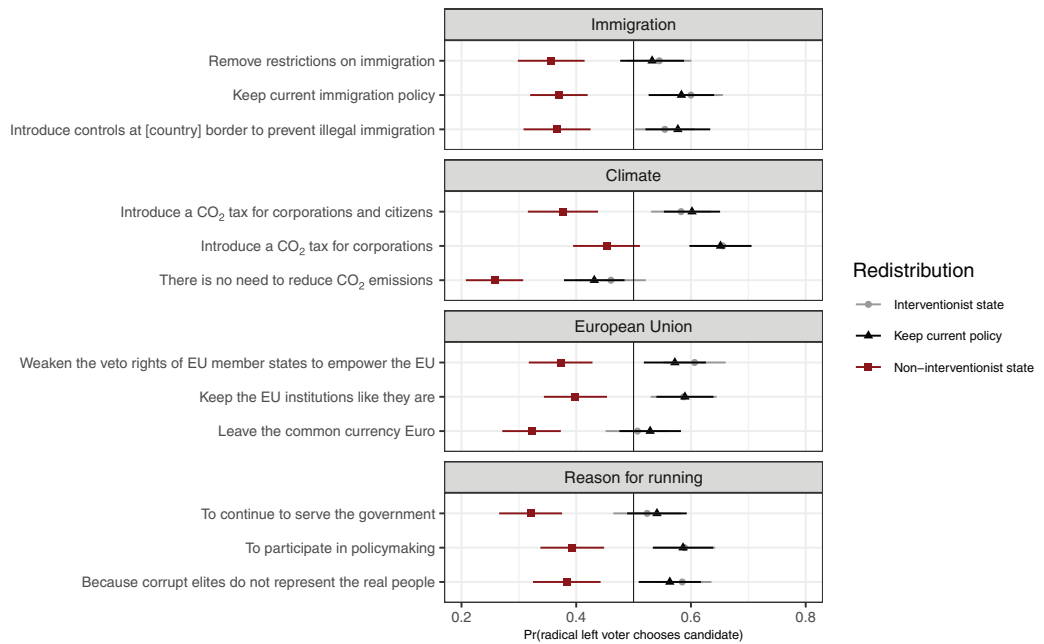
Figure 2. The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among radical right voters holding *candidates' proposals on immigration constant*: border controls, status quo or removing restrictions. Error bars represent 95 per cent confidence intervals. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Figure 3. The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among radical left voters holding *candidates' proposals on redistribution constant*. Error bars represent 95 per cent confidence intervals. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
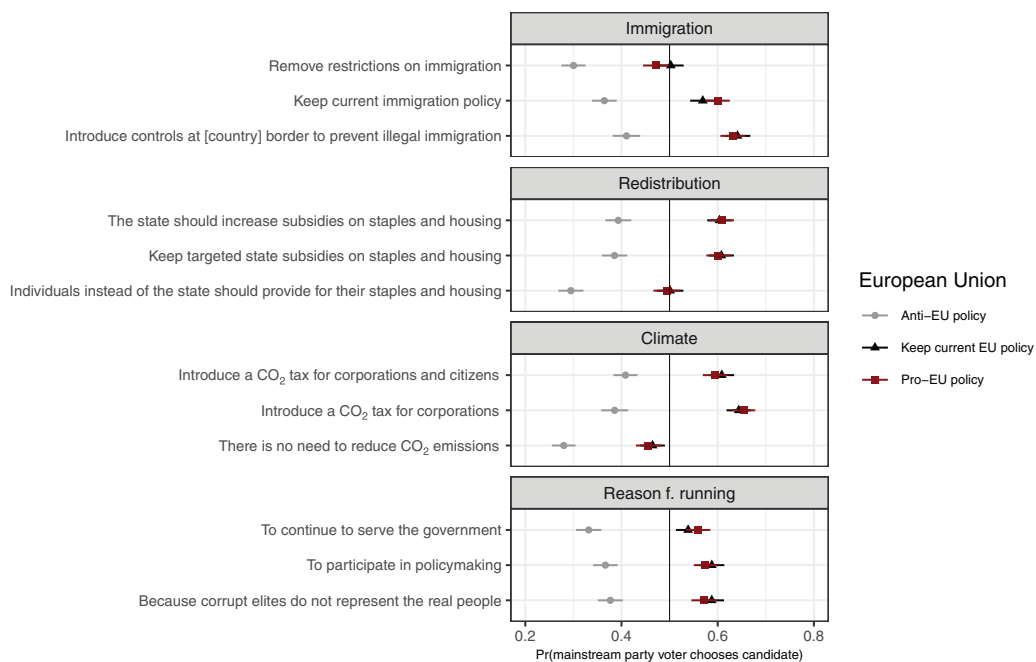
Figure 4. The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among mainstream voters holding *candidates' proposals on the EU constant*. Error bars represent 95 per cent confidence intervals. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

radical left voters mostly continued rewarding them. Yet the relative effect sizes were only moderate and almost identical to the coefficients of keeping the status quo. Some effects were even insignificant, meaning that some alternative issue proposals were of similar importance for radical left voters. More consistently, candidates who proposed non-redistributive policies were punished: all effects of other issues are on the left-hand (negative) side of the 0.5 probability threshold, with the sole exception being taxes on corporations for their CO_2 emissions. Overall, (dis)like of different redistribution policies played a less central role in vote choices of radical left voters compared to the consistently strong orientation of radical right voters towards immigration.

Mainstream party voters. Similar to radical left voters' balanced preferences over redistribution but unlike radical right voters skewed preferences, mainstream voters did not reward issue proposals for deeper European integration significantly more than keeping the status quo (Figure 4). However, mainstream voters consistently punished candidates proposing the anti-EU policy of leaving the Eurozone.

Comparing differences in issue trade-offs

To more systematically test our hypotheses, we subtracted the effect sizes for every issue position in the pooled regression model (Figure 1) from the effects in Figures 2–4. As in the previous analysis, we again focus on the most preferred issue proposal for each group. Figure 5 presents a formal comparison of results, with the dashed vertical line representing the mean difference for radical right voters.
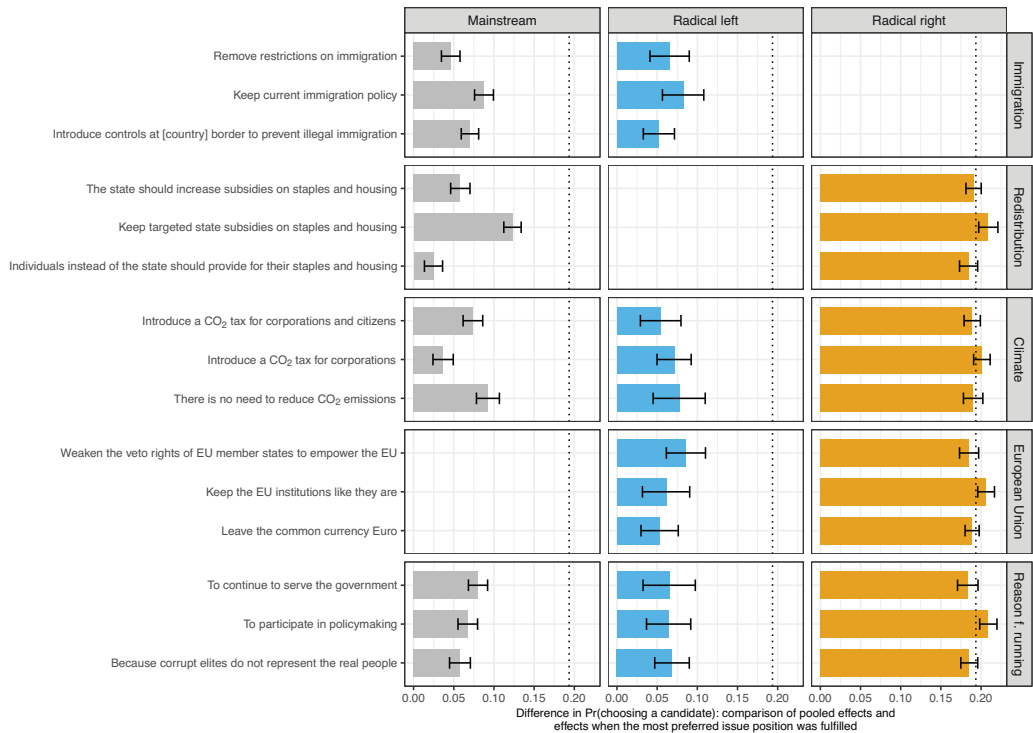
Figure 5. Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the most desirable issue proposal among radical left, right and mainstream voters was shown. Error bars represent 95 per cent confidence intervals. The dashed vertical line shows the mean change for radical right voters. [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Overall, the bars demonstrate that in the scenarios when the most preferred issue position was fulfilled by a candidate, respondents were also willing to accept other issue positions. For instance, mainstream party voters were much more likely to choose the status quo for redistribution under the condition that the EU issue is addressed in line with their preference. However, the most striking finding pertains to radical right voters: their strong preference for restricting immigration made them bear even positions that fundamentally ran counter to their overall preferences (Figure 1). Importantly, in contrast to mainstream party and radical left voters, there is no noteworthy variation between issues, meaning that the preference order of radical right voters is much more lopsided towards a single-issue preference.

But what about the *least preferred* instead of the most preferred issue proposal? After all, Figure 1 revealed an asymmetric reaction of radical left and mainstream party voters: *ceteris paribus*, they tended to reject certain issue positions (e.g., the climate denialist proposal) more strongly than to enthusiastically support one of the available positions per issue. To account for these scenarios, Online Appendix Figure A19 replicates the analysis for the least preferred issue proposal per group. While the differences were less stark, radical right voters still stand out in terms of the overall strength of issue preferences and their unwillingness to differentiate further between their lesser preferred issue positions. An analysis of the average duration respondents needed for a conjoint task sheds more light on these patterns: radical right voters were significantly quicker in

rejecting their least preferred and selecting their most preferred issue proposal than radical left and mainstream party voters (Online Appendix Figure A24).

Overall, there is mixed evidence regarding our hypotheses. As hypothesized, radical right voters were very much willing to accept issue trade-offs in order to fulfill their preference for restrictive immigration policies (*H2*). In fact, despite many different angles to look at the results, no clear second most important issue besides immigration emerged. Their radical left counterparts indeed had a preference for redistributive policies and an even more pronounced dislike of economic self-sufficiency. However, in contrast to the expectation in *H3*, radical left voters had a more variegated range of issue preferences, some of them so strong that they were not traded off for their redistribution preferences. Finally, *H1* is only partially supported, since in contrast to radical right voters' preference for restrictive immigration policies, both, radical left voters and mainstream party voters were equally unlikely to accept large trade-offs in other issues (most importantly, climate change) to have their most preferred issues fulfilled.

Robustness tests and replication study

We conducted various robustness tests. First, a heterogeneity test across countries shows that study participants from France, Italy, Spain and Germany had rather similar issue preferences (Online Appendix Figure A8). There are some noteworthy deviations among radical right voters, though. *AfD* voters were the only voter group preferring the climate-denialist proposal, whereas voters of *Vox* were more pro-EU compared with their radical right counterparts in the other countries. We also found only marginal and generally plausible divergences in issue preferences by respondents' age, gender, education and income (Online Appendix Figures A9–A12). We also reran the main models using post-stratification weights that correct for deviations of our sample from population margins, with similar results (Online Appendix Tables A7–A9).

We further assessed the robustness of effects by how consistent respondents were in their party identification and previous voting behaviour, which they reported in several survey waves. Online Appendix Figures A13–A17 generally reveal minor differences between consistent and inconsistent voter groups. The most noteworthy difference is that consistent radical right voters had more pronounced anti-EU preferences than their counterparts who were less loyal to a radical right party. We also included a robustness test based on (non-)voting in the 2019 EP election to distinguish non-voters – who potentially feel underrepresented in party politics – from radical left and right voters. Online Appendix Figure A18 reveals some commonalities of non-voters and radical left voters, for example, in their dampened enthusiasm for EU integration. Yet in the dimensions immigration and redistribution, non-voters are more similar to mainstream party voters.

As Green parties are niche parties with a strong orientation towards one issue – environmental protection – the preferences of their voters might be skewed as well. In additional analyses (Online Appendix Section A6.6), we show that Green party voters have an equal disdain for climate denialist stances as radical right voters dislike of open borders (Online Appendix Figure A20). Nonetheless, there is greater variety in their revealed preferences when taking the multidimensionality of the choices Green party voters were facing into account (Online Appendix Figures A22 and A23). While radical right voters were indifferent to other issue proposals when their most preferred or most disliked position was shown, Green party voters also

strongly disliked leaving the EU and were less likely to vote for a candidate with a stated populist reason to run.

Finally, the replication study was motivated by four downsides of our cross-country research design: (1) the study was not pre-registered; (2) the sampling strategy was especially targeting radical right voters; (3) there were only 170 radical left respondents in our sample resulting in underpowered findings for this group; and (4) the research period covered only an isolated time period in European politics before a period of dramatic political changes induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. We turn to the German replication sample to probe the generalizability of the main results. Despite being conducted almost 2 years later with a different coalition including the social democratic, green and liberal parties in government, the results of the replication study are remarkably similar to the cross-country findings (Online Appendix Section A8).

Conclusion

Voting behaviour is becoming increasingly complex in the post-Rokkanian political space that is so characteristic of contemporary European democracies. One of the reasons is that voters' issue preferences can cut across established and emerging political cleavages, pressuring them to prioritize and trade off their concerns against each other. Accordingly, researchers increasingly acknowledge the importance of issue cross-pressures in vote choices (He, 2016). Our goal was to examine the relative strength of issue preferences and to what extent voters of radical and mainstream parties are willing to make issue trade-offs.

Our study innovated by conducting a conjoint experiment featuring salient contemporary issues across four major European democracies. Setting a similar number of levels (proposals) per issue and avoiding party labels allowed us to identify the strength of issue preferences of different groups of voters. The results show that radical right voters were willing to make large issue trade-offs as long as their most important issue preference of restricting immigration is fulfilled. In contrast, radical left and mainstream party voters were more willing to compromise on their most important issue position in favour of issues ranked lower in their order of preference.

Our experimental findings have implications for several streams of research. The striking absence of a pronounced second most important issue preference among radical right voters adds to ongoing debates about the broader shifts in party systems due to the advent of radical right parties. Much of this research has centred on the (re)positioning of conservative and mainstream left parties on the issue of immigration and the (lack of) success of such accommodation strategies (Chou et al., 2021; Spoon & Klüver, 2020). Our research adds another perspective to these debates. If their voters are barely considering any issue proposals other than restrictive immigration policies, attempts of radical right parties to broaden their platform (e.g., Marine Le Pen's flirtations with ecological issues) seem futile. In many electoral scenarios, the chances of radical right parties will therefore hinge on the salience of the immigration issue.

While bundles of cultural explanations were identified as the core drivers of the radical right vote, voting behaviour of radical left voters most often tends to be reduced to economic concerns and traditional political cleavage structures. Yet in our study, radical left voters were not willing to accept climate denialist stances as a trade-off for their preferences over redistribution. These results were confirmed in the well-powered replication study where respondents were sampled systematically according to German population margins. Taken together with more EU-friendly preferences than found in previous studies, these results tentatively point towards

an increased sorting of radical left voters along a new post-materialist cultural axis. However, further issue-specific research is needed. More action-oriented proposals, for instance, to 'tax the rich' might trigger stronger reactions among radical left voters (Neuner & Wratil, 2022).

The unifying issue preference among the heterogeneous group of mainstream voters was in the field of EU politics. While they were equally likely to choose candidates who proposed to keep the status quo or who wanted to institutionally strengthen the EU, they despised leaving the common currency Euro. Voters of mainstream parties also clearly preferred climate policies aiming to curb CO_2 emissions while rejecting climate denialist positions. These experimental insights contribute to emerging research on the role of climate politics in European party systems (Farstad, 2018).

Beyond the need for additional replication studies with bigger samples for all four countries, our study design comes with additional limitations. The survey experiment took place while the COVID-19 pandemic was intensifying in spring 2020. Accordingly, the ongoing discussions about closing borders to curb the spread of the pandemic might have increased the appeal of border controls to restrict immigration. Reassuringly, there is first evidence that the pandemic did not drastically influence behaviour in experiments (Peyton et al., 2020). The replication study that we conducted in early 2022 also confirmed the results. We further acknowledge that the operationalization of populist stances might suffer from a limited external validity. While in line with other experimental studies (Chou et al., 2021; Neuner & Wratil, 2022), one possible explanation of why an anti-elitist stance of candidates did not have large effects might be that such strategies only appeal to radical electorates in combination with specific party cues. While being a necessary design choice to separate issue preferences from partisan identity, one specificity of the research design is the lack of party labels of candidates. Similarly, forced-choice conjoint experiments reveal preferences of participants but do not allow for abstention, a viable option when voters are feeling cross-pressured. Finally, while our process of identifying issues was informed by survey responses, party manifestos, parties' social media communication and consultations with experts, the issues and associated positions were chosen in a way that they are applicable across the four democracies under study during one specific research period. As a consequence, country experts perhaps regard other issue areas as more important than some of the ones chosen in this period.

Despite these caveats, the paper has offered an important step towards uncovering the similar and distinct issue considerations underlying vote choices of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters. Revealing these mechanisms holds implications not only for specialists of populism and political behaviour but also for scholars interested in how issue dynamics are re-configuring political conflict in Europe.

Acknowledgements

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical approval

The study was approved by the GESIS ethics committee (reference number 2019-2).

Online Appendix

Additional supporting information may be found in the Online Appendix section at the end of the article:

Table A1: Number of observations by country.
Table A2: Demographics by country (%).
Figure A1: Flowchart of the sample for the conjoint experiment.
Table A3: Count and share of voters' party family by country.
Table A4: Count and share of voters by party family.
Table A5: Included political parties and their party family.
Figure A2: Screenshot of a conjoint task.
Figure A3: Most important issue perceptions by party family.
Figure A4: Most important issue perceptions by study participants compared to the same survey items in Eurobarometer, March 2019 (European Commission 2019).
Figure A5: Gap in most important issue perceptions between radical left (blue) vs. radical right (red) voters.
Figure A6: Free text responses for 10 most important issues facing the country. Ordered by decreasing issue importance.
Table A6: Relevant positions in party programs.
Figure A7: Salience of relevant issues in parties' Facebook posts.
Table A7: Estimates of a linear regression model for radical left voters.
Table A8: Estimates of a linear regression model for radical right voters.
Table A9: Estimates of a linear regression model for mainstream party voters.
Figure A8: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by country.
Figure A9: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by gender.
Figure A10: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by education.
Figure A11: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by age.
Figure A12: Issue preferences of radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters by income.
Figure A13: Consistent vs. inconsistent radical right voters.
Figure A14: Consistent vs. inconsistent radical left voters.
Figure A15: Consistent vs. inconsistent mainstream voters.

Figure A16: Consistent radical right vs. consistent radical left voters.

Figure A17: Inconsistent radical right vs. inconsistent radical left voters.

Figure A18: Regression results based on party choice or abstention in the 2019 European Parliament Election.

Figure A19: Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the least preferred issue proposal among radical left, right, and mainstream voters was shown.

Figure A20: The effect of candidates' issue proposals on candidate choice in the conjoint survey experiment for radical left, radical right and Green party voters.

Figure A21: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among Green party voters holding candidates' proposals on climate.

Figure A22: Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the most desirable issue proposal among radical left, right, and Green party voters was shown.

Figure A23: Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the least desirable issue proposal among radical left, right, and Green party voters was shown.

Figure A24: Mean of task duration by candidate profile and issue type.

Table A10: Demographics in the German replication study (%).

Table A11: Count and share of voters' party family in the German replication study.

Figure A25: The effect of candidates' issue proposals on candidate choice in the conjoint survey experiment for radical left, radical right and mainstream party voters (replication of Figure 1 in main paper).

Figure A26: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among radical right voters holding candidates' proposals on immigration constant: border controls, status quo or removing restrictions (replication of Figure 2 in main paper).

Figure A27: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among radical left voters holding candidates' proposals on redistribution constant (replication of Figure 3 in main paper).

Figure A28: The effect of issue proposals on candidate choice among mainstream voters holding candidates' proposals on the EU constant (replication of Figure 4 in main paper).

Figure A29: Difference in effect sizes for other issue proposals when the most desirable issue proposal among radical left, right, and mainstream voters was shown.

Figure A30: Exaggeration ratio by sample size and effect size (AMCIE).

Notes

1. Non-response rates were higher than in usual re-contact surveys since our experimental survey was in the field almost 10 months after the first contact survey.
2. The overwhelming majority of responses took place during the first couple of days.
3. In the survey, only a small share of radical right voters chose the environment as the most important issue. Yet the survey results might be a by-product of the design of the most important problem question (Wlezien, 2005). Specifically, what we observe might be radical right voters' unwillingness to openly state the importance or existence of climate change.
4. Note that no party classified as radical right or radical left according to Rooduijn et al. (2019) was in government in the four countries at the time of our study.
5. On climate policy, the clearest cross-country differences among radical right voters emerged. While *AfD* voters were the staunchest climate change deniers, their counterparts in other countries saw a need to tackle rising CO_2 emissions, mostly by taxing corporations (see Online Appendix Figure A8). However, a bigger sample is needed to more thoroughly investigate differences between individual parties.

6. Introducing a CO_2 tax for corporations was even slightly more popular among radical left voters than increasing subsidies. We chose redistribution as the issue that more clearly distinguishes them from mainstream party voters for this analysis but show in Online Appendix Section A6.5 that radical right voters are still unique independent of the chosen reference issue.

References

Arzheimer, K. (2018). Explaining electoral support for the radical right. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (pp. 143–165). Oxford University Press.

Berelson, B.R., Lazarsfeld, P.F., & McPhee, W.N. (1954). *Voting: a study of opinion formation in a presidential campaign*. University of Chicago Press.

Campbell, A., Converse, P., Miller, W., & Stokes, D.E. (1960). *The American voter*. University of Chicago Press.

Castles, F.G., Mair, P., & Pedersen, M.N. (1997). Left-right political scales. *European Journal of Political Research*, *31*(1–2), 147–157.

Chou, W., Dancygier, R.M., Egami, N., & Jamal, A. (2021). Competing for loyalists? How party positioning affects populist radical right voting. *Comparative Political Studies*, *54*(12), 2226–2260.

Costello, R., Toshkov, D., Bos, B., & Krouwel, A. (2020). Congruence between voters and parties: The role of party-level issue salience. *European Journal of Political Research*, *60*, 92–113.

Dalton, R.J. (2018). *Political realignment: Economics, culture, and electoral change*. Oxford University Press.

Dalton, R.J., & Wattenberg, M.P. (2002). *Parties without partisans: Political change in advanced industrial democracies*. Oxford University Press.

Dalton, R.J., & Welzel, C. (2014). Political culture and value change. In R.J. Dalton & C. Welzel (Eds.), *The civic culture transformed* (pp. 1–16). Cambridge University Press.

Döring, H., & Manow, P. (2019). Parliaments and governments database (ParlGov): Information on parties, elections and cabinets in modern democracies. Development version. http://www.parlgov.org

Enggist, M., & Pinggera, M. (2022). Radical right parties and their welfare state stances – not so blurry after all? *West European Politics*, *45*(1), 102–128.

Farstad, F.M. (2018). What explains variation in parties' climate change salience? *Party Politics*, *24*(6), 698–707.

Franchino, F., & Zucchini, F. (2015). Voting in a multi-dimensional space: A conjoint analysis employing valence and ideology attributes of candidates. *Political Science Research and Methods*, *3*(2), 221–241.

Graham, M.H., & Svolik, M.W. (2020). Democracy in America? Partisanship, polarization, and the robustness of support for democracy in the United States. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(2), 392–409.

Hainmueller, J., Hopkins, D.J., & Yamamoto, T. (2014). Causal inference in conjoint analysis: Understanding multidimensional choices via stated preference experiments. *Political Analysis*, *22*(1), 1–30.

Halikiopoulou, D. (2019). Right-wing Populism as a nationalist vision of legitimating collective choice: A supply-side perspective. *The International Spectator*, *54*(2), 35–49.

Halikiopoulou, D., Nanou, K., & Vasilopoulou, S. (2012). The paradox of nationalism: The common denominator of radical right and radical left Euroscepticism. *European Journal of Political Research*, *51*(4), 504–539.

Halikiopoulou, D., & Vlandas, T. (2020). When economic and cultural interests align: The anti-immigration voter coalitions driving far right party success in Europe. *European Political Science Review*, *12*(4), 427–448.

Hanretty, C., Lauderdale, B.E., & Vivyan, N. (2020). A choice-based measure of issue importance in the electorate. *American Journal of Political Science*, *64*(3), 519–535.

He, Q. (2016). Issue cross-pressures and time of voting decision. *Electoral Studies*, *44*, 362–373.

Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2018). Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *25*(1), 109–135.

Hutter, S., & Kriesi, H. (2019). *European party politics in times of crisis*. Cambridge University Press.

Ignazi, P. (1992). The silent counter-revolution: Hypotheses on the emergence of extreme right-wing parties in Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, *22*(1), 3–34.

Inglehart, R. (1971). The silent revolution in Europe: Intergenerational change in post-industrial societies. *The American Political Science Review*, *65*, 991–1017.

Ivaldi, G., Lanzone, M.E., & Woods, D. (2017). Varieties of populism across a left-right spectrum: The case of the Front National, the Northern League, Podemos and Five Star Movement. *Swiss Political Science Review*, *23*(4), 354–376.

Kirkland, P., & Coppock, A. (2018). Candidate choice without party labels: New insights from U.S. Mayoral elections 1945–2007 and conjoint survey experiments. *Political Behavior*, *40*(3), 571–591.

Kitschelt, H. (1994). *The transformation of European social democracy*. Cambridge University Press.

Kriesi, H., Grande, E., Dolezal, M., Helbling, M., Höglinger, D., Hutter, S., & Wüest, B. (2012). *Political conflict in western Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Lazarsfeld, P., Berelson, B., & Gaudet, H. (1944). *The people's choice: How the votes up his mind in a presidential campaign*. Columbia University Press.

Leeper, T.J., Hobolt, S.B., & Tilley, J. (2020). Measuring subgroup preferences in conjoint experiments. *Political Analysis*, *28*(2), 207–221.

Lefkofridi, Z., Wagner, M., & Willmann, J.E. (2014). Left-authoritarians and policy representation in Western Europe: Electoral choice across ideological dimensions. *West European Politics*, *37*(1), 65–90.

Lipset, S.M., & Rokkan, S. (1967). *Party systems and voter alignments: Cross-national perspectives*. Free Press.

Mair, P. (1989). The problem of party system change. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, *1*(3), 251–276.

March, L. (2012). *Radical left parties in Europe*. Routledge.

Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Mudde, C., & Kaltwasser, C.R. (2012). *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or corrective for democracy?* Cambridge University Press.

Neuner, F.G., & Wratil, C. (2022). The populist marketplace: Unpacking the role of "thin" and "thick" ideology. *Political Behavior*, *44*(2), 551–574.

Peyton, K., Huber, G.A., & Coppock, A. (2020). The generalizability of online experiments conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. SocArXiv. osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/s45yg

Ramiro, L., & Gomez, R. (2017). Radical-left populism during the great recession: Podemos and its competition with the established radical left. *Political Studies*, *65*(1_suppl), 108–126.

Rokkan, S. (1967). Geography, religion, and social class: Crosscutting cleavages in Norwegian politics. In S.M. Lipset & S. Rokkan (Eds.), *Party systems and voter alignment: Cross-national perspectives* (pp. 367–444). Free Press of Glencoe.

Rooduijn, M. (2018). What unites the voter bases of populist parties? Comparing the electorates of 15 populist parties. *European Political Science Review*, *10*(3), 351–368.

Rooduijn, M., Burgoon, B., Van Elsas, E.J., & Van de Werfhorst, H.G. (2017). Radical distinction: Support for radical left and radical right parties in Europe. *European Union Politics*, *18*(4), 536–559.

Rooduijn, M., Van Kessel, S., Froio, C., Pirro, A., de Lange, S., Halikiopoulou, D., & Taggart, P. (2019). The PopuList: An overview of populist, far right, far left and Eurosceptic parties in Europe. http://www.popu-list.org

Rovny, J., & Polk, J. (2020). Still blurry? Economic salience, position and voting for radical right parties in Western Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, *59*(2), 248–268.

Schuessler, J., & Freitag, M. (2020). Power analysis for conjoint experiments. SocArXiv. osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/9yuhp

Spoon, J.J., & Klüver, H. (2020). Responding to far right challengers: Does accommodation pay off? *Journal of European Public Policy*, *27*(2), 273–291.

Steiner, N.D., & Hillen, S. (2021). Vote choices of left-authoritarians: Misperceived congruence and issue salience. *Electoral Studies*. *70*, 102280.

Traber, D., Giger, N., & Häusermann, S. (2018). How economic crises affect political representation: Declining party–voter congruence in times of constrained government. *West European Politics*, *41*(5), 1100–1124.

Treib, O. (2021). Euroscepticism is here to stay: What cleavage theory can teach us about the 2019 European Parliament elections. *Journal of European Public Policy*, *28*(2), 174–189.

Van Hauwaert, S.M., & Van Kessel, S. (2018). Beyond protest and discontent: A cross-national analysis of the effect of populist attitudes and issue positions on populist party support. *European Journal of Political Research*, *57*(1), 68–92.

Visser, M., Lubbers, M., Kraaykamp, G., & Jaspers, E. (2014). Support for radical left ideologies in Europe. *European Journal of Political Research*, *53*(3), 541–558.

Wlezien, C. (2005). On the salience of political issues: The problem with 'most important problem'. *Electoral Studies*, *24*(4), 555–579.

Address for correspondence: Sebastian Stier, Department of Computational Social Science, GESIS – Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, 50667 Cologne, Germany.
Email: sebastian.stier@gesis.org