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Federice, Alexa

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The Perils of Populism: Democratic Backsliding and Elite Conflict in Europe

By

ALEXA FEDERICE
DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Political Science

in the

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Approved:

James Adams, Chair

Josephine Andrews

Lauren Young

Committee in Charge

2026

To my family, friends, and mentors,
whose love and unwavering support
made this all possible

Abstract

This dissertation consists of three chapters analyzing the consequences of populism in Europe. The first two chapters use Difference-in-Differences designs to study how populist parties in government affect liberal democracy. In the first chapter, I show that populist entry into government reduces liberal democracy scores—an effect driven entirely by right-wing populist parties. The second chapter disaggregates these effects, finding that right-wing populists in government specifically erode civil liberties and freedom of expression. Together, these two chapters establish that government status and host-ideology are important moderators of populism’s democratic consequences. In the third chapter, my co-authors and I examine elite-level party conflict and cooperation in the European Union. We show that growing support for populist and Eurosceptic parties has generated a new transnational cleavage that challenges European integration. Our findings show that elite-level, cross-national party conflict and cooperation is related to parties’ differing orientations towards European integration and populism, as well as their governing status. This dissertation demonstrates that populism can impact elite-level party competition and subsequently be linked to the erosion of democratic institutions. Together, this research offers new insights into the challenges facing democracy in Europe, contributing to the growing literature on how the emergence of populism has reshaped European politics, the strategic incentives that shape elite behavior, and the consequences these choices have for citizens and democratic institutions.

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Chapter 1

Populism as a Threat to Liberal Democracy: Evidence from Europe

Abstract

Over the past two decades, populism has emerged as a significant political phenomenon across Europe and many parts of the globe. With a growing number of populists elected to government, it is widely accepted that populism has negative effects on liberal democracy. However, there have been few empirical studies—and virtually no causal ones—that test how and if this is true. In this paper, I unpack the different ways populism may affect a country’s level of democracy. Specifically, I analyze how government status and host-ideology of the populist party may moderate the relationship between populism and level of liberal democracy. I use the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), PopuList, and ParlGov datasets to conduct a Difference-in-Differences (DiD) design across 30 European countries over 23 years (2000-2022), concluding that liberal democracy scores decrease in the years following populist entry into government, when compared to elections in which populists do not enter government. Critically, these results only hold for right-wing populists. Among left-wing populists, I find no evidence of democratic deterioration. The findings imply that both government status and host-ideology are key factors that determine how populism affects liberal democracy.

Introduction

Over the past few decades, populism has emerged as a defining feature of politics across Europe and beyond. Once considered insignificant, populist parties now attract substantial popular support in national elections and, in many cases now hold positions in government. Victor Orbán's 16 year rule in Hungary, the success of the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom (along with the rise of the UK Reform Party), and Giorgia Meloni's rise to the Italian Prime Ministership are striking examples of populism's impact in Europe. While scholars have begun to examine the causes of this rise in populism (Berman 2021; Hawkins and Littvay 2019), they have become increasingly worried about populism's potential consequences for liberal democracy. Although populism may be seen as a legitimate expression of discontent with the political system, it also threatens the core principles of liberal democracy such as checks and balances and the protection of civil and minority rights.

Some scholars theorize that populism may serve a corrective function for democracy, while others emphasize populism's negative consequences. For example, there is evidence that populist parties can adversely affect media freedom and election quality (Kenny 2020; Huber and Schimpf 2016) as well as institutional checks and balances (Houle and Kenny 2018). Yet more work is needed to understand when and how populism produces these divergent effects.

To address this gap, I analyze how the government status and host-ideology of a populist party may moderate the relationship between populism and the level of liberal democracy. Whether a populist party is in government affects its ability to change the political system, and subsequently contribute to democratic backsliding. Only when in government do populists have the ability to alter the rules of the game. Additionally, I argue that whether the populist party is right-wing or left-wing has implications for the level of liberal democracy. While both right-wing and left-wing

populists claim to represent “the people”, they diverge sharply on their policy positions, their attitudes toward pluralism, and their commitments to liberal democratic norms. These differences suggest that both government status and host-ideology should condition the effect of populism on liberal democracy. To analyze these dynamics I use a country-year dataset that combines V-Dem’s Liberal Democracy Index with variables related to parties’ ideology and cabinet composition from ParlGov and PopuList. Using a stacked Difference-in-Differences event-study design, I analyze the impact of cabinet formation episodes on levels of liberal democracy in 30 European democracies between 2000 and 2022.

This paper makes several key contributions to the study of populism and democratic backsliding. It is the first to analyze the relationship between populism and liberal democracy causally using a Difference-in-Differences event-study design, which allows me to isolate the short-term effects of populist cabinet entry on levels of liberal democracy, an advance over previous correlational approaches. Second, I find that populist parties’ entrance into government leads to a subsequent decline in the country’s liberal democracy scores, while the presence of populists in the opposition has no effect. Third, I show that this relationship is driven by right-wing populist parties; the presence of left-wing populists in government is not associated with liberal democratic decline.

These findings suggest that populism’s impact on democracy is not uniform, rather, it is the entry of right-wing populists into government that predicts the deterioration of liberal democracy. In contrast, populists in the opposition or left-wing governing populists do not appear to generate the same deleterious effects. This paper underscores the importance of distinguishing between populist government status and ideological orientation when analyzing the democratic consequences of populism.

Defining Populism

With the re-emergence of populist parties in the 1990s and 2000s, scholars increasingly sought a cross-national definition of populism. Earlier work, rooted largely in Latin American studies from the 1960s onward, had emphasized structural, economic, or strategic accounts of populism (Hawkins and Littvay 2019). Yet, the rise of neo-liberal populists in Latin America in the 1990s and the spread of populist parties across Europe in the 2000s made clear that existing definitions were too narrow (Hawkins and Kaltwasser 2017) and scholars shifted their focus to populism's ideas. The ideational approach reduces populism to its simplest core: a political discourse that views politics as the struggle between the will of the people and the evil elite. With this approach, populism is considered a set of ideas that can manifest across the spectrum of ideologies; it is a thin-centered ideology that can latch on to a host ideology that is based on broader governing principles and a more elaborated policy agenda (Stanley 2008). Therefore, the identities of both “the people” and “the elite” vary according to the host-ideology.

Right-wing populists often define the people on a cultural or nativist basis and claim that they will protect the nation from dangerous outsiders (Mudde 2004) . A prominent European example is the Alternative for Germany (AfD), which strives to preserve both Western and German culture by emphasizing nativism and expressing opposition to immigration. On the other hand, left-wing populists often define the people based on class and seek to protect the proletariat from capitalists' exploitation Mudde (2007). The Syriza Party is a progressive and socialist populist party in Greece that opposes the economic establishment, but has a more inclusionary societal view.

Although populist parties can differ on their host-ideology, they are tied together through their shared view that politics is the struggle between the good people and the corrupt elite, and that politics must solely be based on the common will of the people. Thus, while there may be ideological differences in these populist parties, using the ideational approach to populism facilitates comparisons across countries.

Populism and Democracy

Not only has there been debate about how to define populism, but many scholars have also debated how populism impacts democracy. How to define democracy is an important consideration when distinguishing between populism's positive and negative effects. When looking at the general concept of democracy, we can identify populism as a form of direct democracy: populists believe the common will of the people should be the sole basis for politics, implemented without restrictions (Caramani 2017). With this more general conception of democracy some even argue that populism is the purest form of democracy (Tännsjö 1992). On the other hand, if we focus on liberal democracy, we can begin to see how populism is in direct conflict with core democratic principles (Taguieff 1995; Urbinati 1998).

Liberal democracy can be characterized by “the intrinsic importance of transparency, civil liberty, the rule of law, horizontal accountability (effective checks on rulers), and minority rights” (Coppedge et al. 2011, p. 253). Here it is clear that there must be limits on how much control or influence any one group should have in politics. Minority rights and checks and balances are two liberal democratic features that run counter to the way populists believe democracy should function: populists frame society as a homogeneous entity and think politics should follow the general will without restrictions.

A number of works highlight the negative relationship between populism and liberal democracy. Scholars theorize that populists in a liberal democracy can become resentful if they perceive too many checks and balances in the system. Populists may also become resentful of elites whom they perceive as being out of touch with the general will of the people and feel as though popular sovereignty is being undermined (Abts and Rummens 2007). When these grievances arise, populists can capitalize on them and promise to the people that if they are elected, they will create new constitutions and rewrite the rules of the game, limiting power for those that are not part of their conception of “the people”. For example, European radical right parties such as Lega in Italy or the Party for Freedom (PVV) in the Netherlands, often segment society such that a particular dominant ethnic group is considered the “common people,” excluding other ethnic minorities from politics in the process. This sort of worldview is in direct conflict with liberal democracy because it threatens and limits minority rights (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser 2012; Kaltwasser 2014).

From the discussion above, we can see how when elected to government, populists can roll back liberal democracy through the exercise of power. However, populists in opposition may actually serve a corrective function to democracy by publicizing institutional and political shortcomings of the system (Müller 2002) and by speaking on behalf of groups that are otherwise underrepresented (Hanley and Sikk 2012). In doing so, they may generate electoral and political pressure on the incumbent mainstream government to respond to their concerns with democratic reforms, either to address legitimate grievances or to defuse a possible populist electoral threat. Based on this literature, we may expect that populists can roll back liberal democracy when they are in government, but have a positive effect when they are not in opposition.

Although many scholarly works theoretically and qualitatively explore how populism is a threat to liberal democracy, scholars have just begun to empirically test this relationship. A small, but

growing, body of literature suggests that populist governance is associated with declines in institutional checks and balances on executive authority (Houle and Kenny 2018; Huber and Schimpf 2016; Ruth 2018). When a populist party enters the cabinet, they often try to change the rules of the game and limit checks and balances in order to implement their policies. (Batory 2016; Huber and Schimpf 2017; Albertazzi and Mueller 2013).

Given prior findings in the literature, I expect that when populists enter the government, there will be a subsequent decrease in the overall level of liberal democracy because governing populists may undermine civil and minority rights and attempt to remove checks and balances. I also test the relationship between populists in opposition and levels of liberal democracy, hypothesizing that when there are only populists in the opposition (and there are no populist parties in the government), populist parties will serve a corrective function for liberal democracy. First, they cannot change the rules of the game or limit minority rights because they are not in power. Second, they may instead call attention to the shortcomings of the democracy and include those previously left out of politics. I argue then that populists in the opposition will have a positive effect on the overall level of liberal democracy in the following years.

H1a: Countries that form governments including populist parties will experience a subsequent decline in liberal democratic quality, relative to countries that form governments without populist participation.

H1b: Countries that form governments without populists, but which feature populist opposition parties, will experience a subsequent increase in liberal democratic quality, relative to countries with no populist parties present in the government or opposition.

Populism and Host-ideology

Beyond government status, the host ideology of populist parties plays a central role in shaping their effects on liberal democracy. At their core, all populist parties share an anti-elitist discourse that pits “the pure people” against “the corrupt elite” and claim to represent the general will exclusively (Rooduijn and Akkerman 2017). This anti-elitism often goes hand-in-hand with a rejection of pluralism and institutional constraints, since populists argue that effective opposition, judicial review, or checks on the executive interfere with implementing the people’s will (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013). Yet what differs across cases is who is included within “the people” and who is cast as the corrupt elite. These boundaries are shaped by the party’s host ideology, producing important differences between left-wing and right-wing populists.

Right-wing populist parties typically define “the people” in cultural or nativist terms. Immigrants, religious minorities, and other marginalized groups are often portrayed as dangerous outsiders who threaten national unity and cultural homogeneity. For example, the Slovak National Party (SNS) not only attacked Hungarian minority parties but even proposed banning all ethnic parties in Slovakia (Koev 2015). This exclusive definition of the people, combined with nativist rhetoric, makes right-wing populists particularly likely to advocate restricting minority rights and weakening liberal democratic protections for political inclusion (Mudde 2007). Thus, right-wing populists both limit who counts as a legitimate citizen and reject pluralism and contestation.

Left-wing populist parties, by contrast, define “the people” primarily in socio-economic terms, often framing their struggles as the working class versus capitalist elites. The Greek Syriza party, for example, opposed austerity by positioning itself as the defender of ordinary citizens against corrupt elites. Similarly, the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) and the Respect coalition in the

United Kingdom actively included Muslim minorities within their conception of “the people” and sought to extend protections to them (March 2011). In this way, left-wing populists tend to adopt a more inclusive definition of society and are generally more supportive of minority rights than their right-wing counterparts (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013). However, inclusiveness at the societal level does not imply acceptance of pluralism. Left-wing populists, too, often reject the legitimacy of opposition parties and institutional oversight, arguing that such constraints only serve to protect elites and block the implementation of the popular will (Katsambekis 2017).

The above considerations suggest that populism’s effects on liberal democracy are not uniform but vary across ideology. On the one hand, minority rights are especially vulnerable under right-wing populist governments, where cultural and nativist definitions of “the people” foster exclusion and discrimination. Left-wing populists, by contrast, often recognize minorities as part of the national community, making their impact on minority rights less consistently negative. On the other hand, when it comes to mutual constraints, both leftwing and right-wing populists share an antagonism toward institutional checks and balances. Because they present themselves as the sole legitimate representatives of the people, they frame judicial oversight, opposition parties, or independent institutions not as safeguards of democracy but as obstacles to popular sovereignty (Dahl 1971; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013).

These dynamics suggest clear expectations for how populists in government may affect liberal democracy, namely that right-wing populist parties in government will exert consistently negative effects, particularly in undermining minority rights and political pluralism. At the same time, we should also expect both left- and right-wing populist governments to erode institutional checks and balances, reflecting their shared hostility to power constraints and opposition. In short, while the host ideology of populist parties shapes their inclusiveness at the societal level, their

populist core makes them similarly anti-pluralist at the political level. These considerations suggest the hypothesis:

H2: Right-wing populist parties in government will be more destructive to liberal democracy than left-wing populist parties in government.

Data and Methods

To evaluate whether populist parties' entry into government affects the quality of liberal democracy, I estimate a stacked event-study Difference-in-Differences model on cabinet formation events for 30 European countries between 2000 and 2022. I leverage data from V-Dem, PopuList, and ParlGov to 1) assess how populist parties in government and opposition impact liberal democracy and 2) determine whether right-wing and left-wing populists exert disparate effects.

Variables

Liberal Democracy

To measure the level of liberal democracy I use the Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) dataset (Coppedge et al., 2011). I rely on a composite index that takes into account experts' ratings on key liberal democratic indicators such as the protection of civil liberties and minority rights, strong rule of law, an independent judiciary, and effective checks and balances that help limit the exercise of executive power. This variable is an interval from 0 (low) to 1 (high). A score of 0 signifies liberal democracy is not present in that country, and a 1 signifies the country has perfect liberal democracy. This measure captures the varying components of liberal democracy and to what extent that ideal is achieved. Across the European countries and years in my dataset, the

liberal democracy level ranges from 0.264 to 0.896. The liberal democracy level is measured for each year between 1997 and 2023.

To assess the face validity of the measure, Figure 1 plots the V-Dem liberal democracy scores for each country from 1997-2022. Although the range of liberal democracy scores is quite large, the within country variation over time tends to be more limited, which is consistent with the expectation that democratic institutions change gradually overtime rather than quickly. As expected, Scandinavian and most Western European countries exhibit relatively high and stable liberal democracy scores over the years. By contrast, several Eastern and Central European democracies (such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Malta, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia) maintain consistently lower scores. Hungary and Poland exhibit the sharpest declines around 2010 and 2015 respectively, corresponding with the rise of Fidesz under Viktor Orbán and Law and Justice under Jarosław Kaczyński.

Populism and Government Status

To operationalize government status I create a series of dummy variables using the Parliaments and governments (ParlGov) cabinet level dataset (Doering & Manow, 2015) and the PopuList dataset (Roodujin et al. 2019). The PopuList dataset identifies which parties in each country are categorized as being populist using expert ratings. This is a dummy variable where parties are assigned a 1 if they endorse the set of ideas that society is separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite,” and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people (Mudde 2004). The ParlGov cabinet dataset details for each country

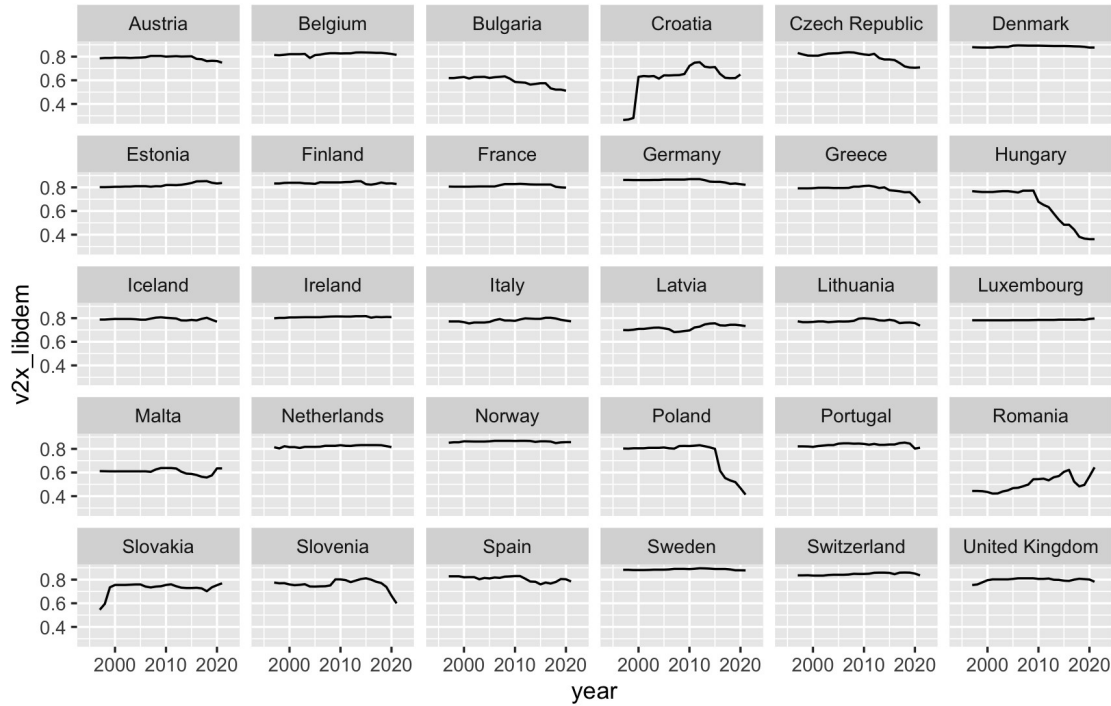


Figure 1: Level of Liberal Democracy in Countries Over Time

which parties ran in every election and which parties were elected into government. After combining these datasets, I create two dummy variables that capture the composition of the government and opposition in a given cabinet formation event: one dummy variable indicates whether there is a populist party in government, and the other indicates whether there is a populist party in opposition. I created these variables for each national election in each country and expanded the data to fill in the missing years. The cleaned data contains the government status of populist parties in each of the 30 countries in my data from 1997 and 2022.

Additionally, I use the use the ParlGov ideology codings to distinguish between rightwing and left-wing populist parties. ParlGov uses expert ratings to code parties along a 0-10 ideological scale where 0 is extreme left, 5 is center, and 10 is extreme right. These codings are primarily based on expert ratings (from Benoit and Laver’s expert survey or the Chapel Hill Expert Survey)

and in some cases may be supplemented with other sources if the data is missing. I categorize parties with a score less than 5 as left-wing and parties with scores greater than 5 as right-wing.

GDP Growth

To account for potential confounding economic conditions, I add GDP growth as a control to all models. While country and year fixed effects capture time-invariant country characteristics and economic trends respectively, they do not fully account for within-country economic fluctuations that vary over time. Economic downturns are commonly associated with populist success and democratic decline, making it important to control for in all models so as not to overestimate the effects of populist entry on liberal democracy scores. Using the V-Dem GDP per capita variables, I construct yearly GDP growth rates as the percentage change in GDP per capita from the previous year.

Stacked Panel Formation

To estimate the effects of populist entry into government, I implement a stacked Difference-in-Differences event-study design. The unit of analysis is the country-year, focusing on the years surrounding cabinet formation episodes. For each country, I use ParlGov to identify which years cabinets formed. I then classify each cabinet formation as either 1) a treated event if the newly formed government includes at least one populist party identified by PopuList and the previous cabinet did not have a populist party or 2) a control event, if neither the former or current government includes a populist party.

To analyze the changes in liberal democracy around these events, I construct an event window spanning three years before and three years after each cabinet formation. Event time is

coded relative to the year of cabinet formation, such that $t=0$ is the year of the cabinet formation, negative values ($t = -3, -2, -1$) capture pre-treatment years and positive values ($t = +1, +2, +3$) capture post treatment years. Each cabinet formation therefore contributes a seven year window of observations. All cabinet-level windows are then pooled into a stacked panel which re-indexes country-years relative to the timing of cabinet formation.

This stacking procedure allows for comparisons of liberal democracy score trajectories across treated and control cabinets on the same event-time scale.

Because European governments often change frequently, some event windows overlap. This means that a given country-year may contribute to more than one event window. The results should therefore be interpreted as the average episodic effect of populist participation in government relative to non-populist cabinets, rather than as a permanent break after the first populist entry. I address potential concerns about the representation of high cabinet turnover countries and overlapping periods in my robustness checks (see the Robustness Checks section).

I estimate the following two-way fixed effects regression:

$$LD_{it} = \sum_{\tau \neq -1} \delta_{\tau} P_{i\tau t} + \alpha_i + \lambda_t + \varepsilon_{it}$$

where LD_{it} is the liberal democracy score for country i in year t , α_i are country fixed effects, and λ_t are year fixed effects. $\sum_{\tau \neq -1}$ is an indicator equal to 1 if country i is τ years away from a populist cabinet entry at time t with $\tau \in \{-3, -2, 0, 1, 2, 3\}$. I omit $\tau = -1$ as the reference category so each δ_{τ} captures the difference in liberal democracy score at time τ compared to the year before cabinet formation ($t = -1$). The country and year fixed effects capture the relevant confounding variables.

The DiD design relies on the parallel trends assumption: in the absence of populist entry, treated and control cabinets would have followed the same liberal democracy trend over time. If

the parallel trends assumption holds, pre-treatment coefficients ($t=-3, -2$) should be close to zero and statistically insignificant. While I cannot directly test for parallel trends, my results offer evidence for the assumption and demonstrate no difference in pre-treatment trends across my treated and controlled episodes.

To create the stacked event-study datasets to test H1a and H2, I follow the same procedure as above, assigning treatment and control to align with the specific hypotheses. For the opposition hypothesis (H1b) I classify cabinet formations as either 1) a treated event, if the new opposition includes at least one populist party and the previous cabinet formation contained no populists parties anywhere in the system 2) a control event, if neither the former nor current government or opposition includes any populist parties. While this classification is quite restrictive leading to a smaller number of observations, it is necessary to ensure that the effects found are only because of a populist party in the opposition and not because of a previous populist government. For the ideology hypothesis (H2), I classify cabinet formations as either 1) a treated event, if the new government includes at least one right-wing (left-wing) populist party and the previous cabinet formation contained no populists parties anywhere in the system or 2) a control event, if neither the former or current government includes a populist party.

In Table 1, I present a breakdown of each stacked dataset and the corresponding number of observations, treated cases, and control cases for each different model. Each treated and control case contributes a 7 year window (-3 to +3). I recognize that the stacked panels for the opposition and left-wing models have a small number of treated units, and in future iterations of this analysis, I intend to find other ways to leverage differences in opposition status and left-wing populist governance. However, I still discuss and present results from models using these stacked panels as I believe it is worth exploring the ways in which these concepts manifest.

Model	Country-Year Observations	Treated Units	Control Units
Populist in Government	1209	33	151
Populist in Opposition	301	7	38
Right-wing Populist in Government	1225	36	150
Left-wing Populist in Government	1086	12	153

Note: For all models, the treated and control units represent episodes of government change consisting of approximately 3 observations before and after, comprising 7 year event windows.

Table 1: Stacked DiD Data Descriptives

Descriptive Relationships

Before turning to the DiD results, I first present two timeseries plots that show the level of liberal democracy over time in Hungary and Poland, color coded based on whether there is a populist party in government.

Over the past few decades, right-wing populists have greatly increased their vote share and have come to dominate the government in both Hungary and Poland. Hungary’s previous prime minister, Viktor Orbán, from the Fidesz party, first came to power in 1998 and governed as a conventional center-right prime minister during this first term. Following his first term and a period in the opposition, Orbán radicalized, adopting populist rhetoric that now defines Fidesz, and returned to power in 2010. After his re-election, Orbán led with strong anti-immigrant sentiment, suppressed media freedom, and weakened the system’s checks and balances before leaving office in April 2026. In Figure 2, the sharp decline in 2010 corresponds with President Orbán’s return to power as a populist, signifying a correlation between populist entry into government and a decrease in the level of liberal democracy.

There has also been an increase in populist support and governance in Poland. The populist party Law and Justice (PiS) has grown significantly over the past two decades, almost quadrupling their vote share between 2001 and 2019. After governing briefly in coalition between 2005 and 2007, PiS won a parliamentary majority in 2015, enabling them to govern alone and implement

major institutional changes that drove Poland's democratic decline. The leader of PiS, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, has tried to put limits on the judiciary, has attempted to sway media outlets into being more pro-government, and like Orbán, has a distrust and dislike of immigrants. Similar to Hungary, the timeseries in Figure 3 displays a correlation between populists in government and decreased levels of liberal democracy in Poland.

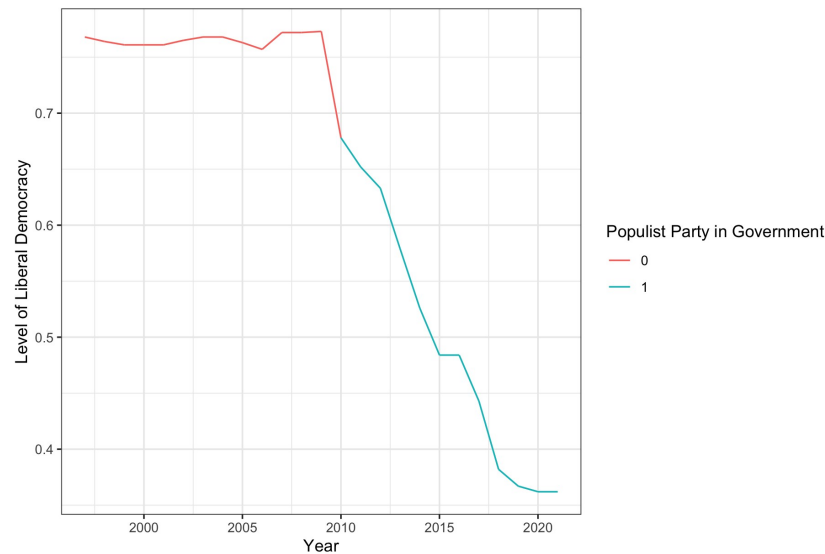


Figure 2: Level of Liberal Democracy in Hungary Over Time

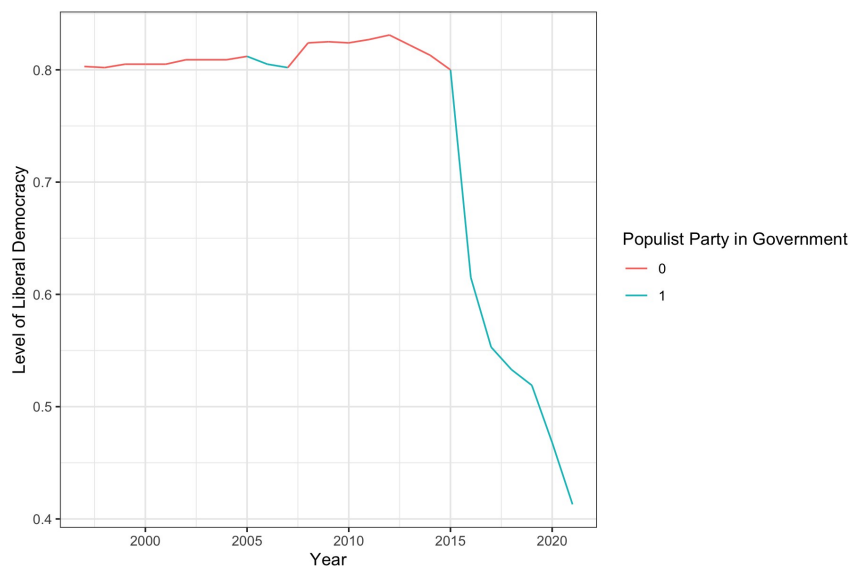


Figure 3: Level of Liberal Democracy in Poland Over Time

Difference-in-Differences Estimates

Figure 4 plots the effects of populist entry into government on liberal democracy, estimated using the stacked event-study Difference-in-Differences design. The coefficients represent changes in democracy scores in the years before and after cabinet formation, comparing populist and non-populist governments, with the year immediately prior to cabinet formation ($t = -1$) as the reference category. The error bars display 95% confidence intervals.

I find support for H1a: Countries that form governments including populist parties will experience a subsequent decline in liberal democratic quality, relative to countries that form governments without populist participation. The results suggest that the entry of populist parties into government is followed by a significant decline in liberal democracy. In the pre-treatment period ($t = -3, -2$) coefficients are close to 0 and statistically indistinguishable from one another, providing evidence of parallel trends before cabinet formation. This gives confidence that the estimated post-treatment effects can be attributed to populists' entry into government, and not to pre-existing trends. However, in the year of the populist entry into the cabinet ($t = 0$), the trajectory of liberal democracy between the control and treatment cabinets diverge. The coefficient at $t = 0$ is negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.009, p < 0.05$). This decline becomes more pronounced in the following years. One year after populist party entry into government ($t = 1$), liberal democracy scores decrease by roughly 0.020 points ($p < 0.01$) and the effects persist through year three ($\beta = -0.021, p < 0.05$) (See Appendix A.3. for full model tables).

Although these effects appear small, they represent meaningful declines given the range of the liberal democracy scale (0 to 1) and the slow moving process of institutional change. As previously mentioned, the European democracies included in this study generally experience small changes in their democracy scores over time. The 0.020 decrease in the first year after populist

entry into government is larger than the absolute average change in liberal democracy scores of countries across the entire 20 year period. Moreover, the estimated decline of 0.020 points in the first year following populist entry represents approximately 86% of one standard deviation in annual liberal democracy change across European countries ($SD = 0.023$), indicating that the effect is large relative to the typical fluctuation observed across the sample (see Appendix A.2 for all country liberal democracy averages).

In concrete terms, the estimated democratic decline of about 0.020 points in the first year after populist entry into government is comparable to Hungary's single year decline of 0.026 in 2011—the year Orban's Fidesz government enacted a new constitution that significantly weakened judicial independence and concentrated power in the executive. The similarities in magnitude between this major episode of democratic backsliding and the treatment effect I detect suggest that my effect represents a substantively meaningful decline in liberal democracy.

Importantly, the estimated decline in liberal democracy is not a temporary shock that dissipates after the year of populist entry. Liberal democracy scores remain persistently depressed, approximately 0.02 points below the pre-entry trajectory for each of the three post-treatment years. This pattern suggests that once a populist enters government, democratic institutions do not just bounce back in subsequent years.

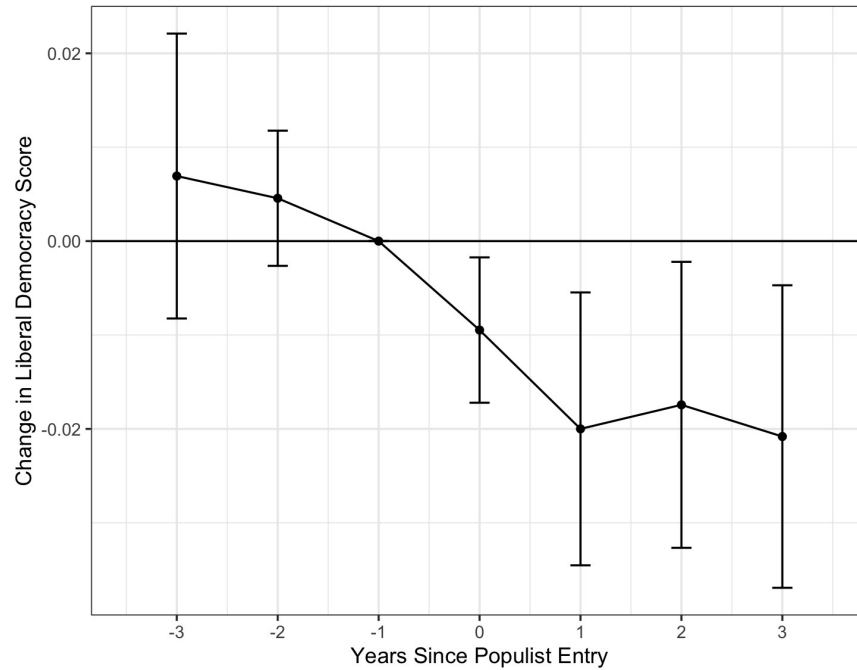


Figure 4: Effect of Populist Entry into Government on Liberal Democracy

The main results establish that populist entry into government leads to a significant and sustained decline in a country's liberal democracy score. However, this aggregate may hide important variation in the severity of democratic erosion depending on the governmental strength of the populist party. A populist party that controls a large share of parliamentary seats would be better positioned to enact institutional changes that would erode liberal democracy. To examine whether the declines in democracy are driven by seat share, I reestimate the main model broken down between populist governments that have either a high or low seat share. I divide treated units at the median populist seat share (28%) at the time of government entry, classifying governments above the median as high seat share and those below as low seat share. The control group remains the same as the previous model.

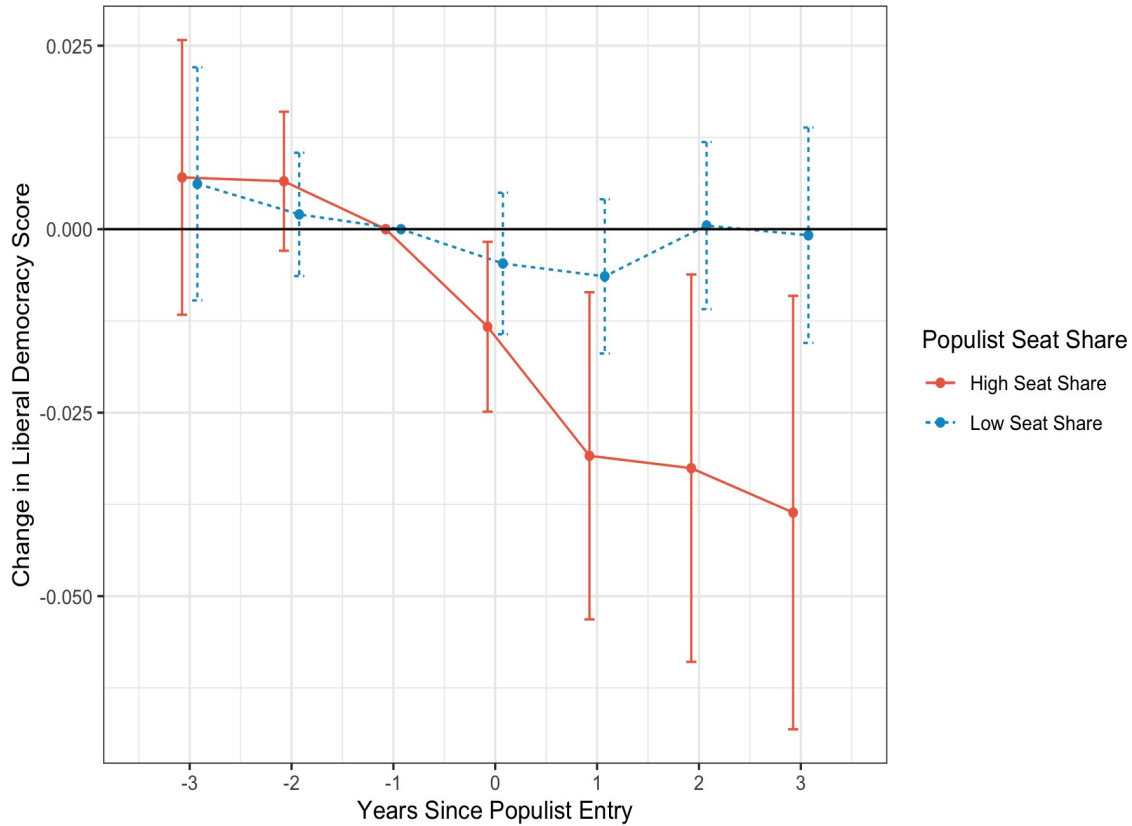


Figure 5: Effect of Populist Entry into Government on Liberal Democracy, Seat Share Model

Figure 5 plots the effect of populist entry into government broken down by seat share. The results suggest that the effect of populists in government on liberal democracy is concentrated among governments with above median legislative seat shares. Populist governments with high seat shares exhibit a sharp decline in liberal democracy in the years following entry, with estimates reaching about -0.04 by the third year. In contrast, populist governments that have a below median seat share show no discernible effect on liberal democracy throughout the post-treatment period. These findings suggest that legislative strength is a key mechanism through which populist parties can erode liberal democracy. With limited parliamentary power, the populists are unable to enact the kinds of institutional changes that drive democratic backsliding.

Figure 6 plots the effect of populist parties in the opposition on liberal democracy. I do not find evidence for H1b: having a populist present in the opposition compared to there being no populists in the party system has no detectable effect on a country's liberal democracy scores. While prior literature theoretically and observationally suggests a potentially positive effect on democracy when there a populist party is in opposition, I do not find evidence to support this claim. As shown in Figure 6, there is no distinguishable difference between the pre- and post-treatment periods. However, the relatively small number of opposition entry events limits statistical power and results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

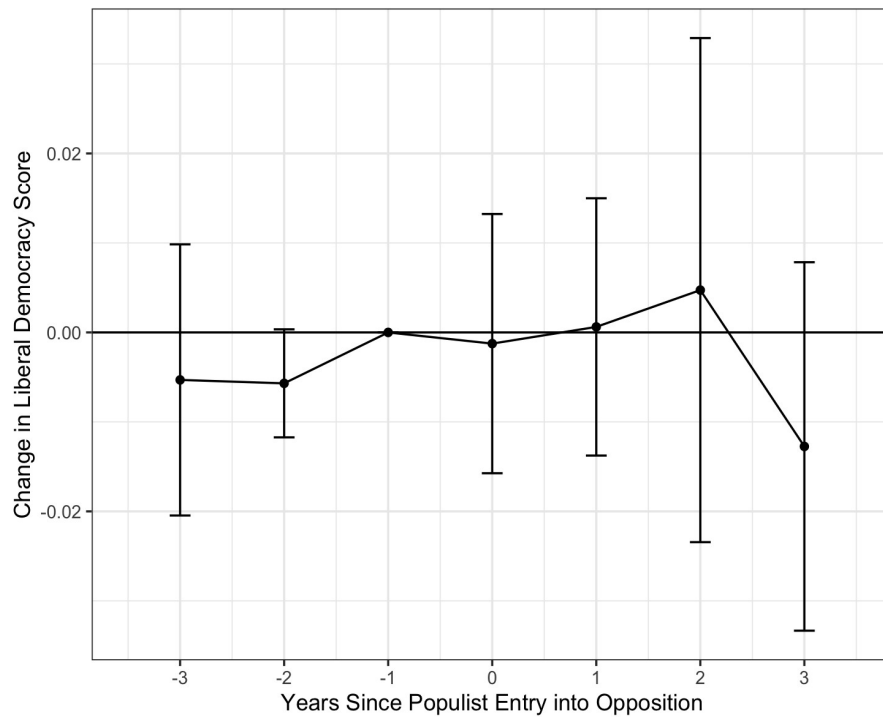


Figure 6: Effect of Populist in the Opposition on Liberal Democracy

Figures 7 and 8 plot the effects of right-wing and left-wing populist entry into government on liberal democracy, respectively (H2). The results provide evidence that the effect of populist participation in government on liberal democracy depends on the ideological orientation of the

populist party. The event-study coefficients are estimated relative to the year immediately preceding cabinet formation ($t=-1$), with 95% confidence intervals.

The estimates support H2, indicating that right-wing populist entry into government is associated with a statistically significant decline in liberal democracy. The estimates of the pre-treatment years ($t=-3$ and $t=-2$) are indistinguishable from 0, evidence of no existing pretrends between treated and control cabinets which supports the parallel trends assumption.

In the post treatment periods, the coefficients show a decline in liberal democracy following right-wing populist cabinet entry. In the year of cabinet formation ($t=0$), democracy scores decline by roughly 0.01 points relative to the baseline ($p < 0.01$). This democratic erosion intensifies in the following years: at $t=1$, the decline steepens to about -0.02 ($p < 0.01$), at $t=2$, the effect remains negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.015$, $p < 0.05$), and at $t=3$ the downward trajectory continues ($\beta = -0.015$, $p < 0.05$). Overall, once in government, right-wing populists contribute to liberal democratic backsliding.

In contrast, Figure 8 reports the estimated effects of left-wing populist entry into government, which are smaller in magnitude and statistically insignificant. This suggests that left-wing populists do not contribute to significant declines in liberal democracy when they enter government and that the pooled results in Figure 3 are driven by right-wing parties. However, there are not many treated cases for the left wing model, (as left-wing populists in government is less common in Europe during this period) and the estimates become less precise.

These results provide evidence for my hypothesis: right-wing populist participation in government is more destructive to liberal democracy than left-wing populist parties, which does not appear to affect the trajectory of liberal democracy. This pattern is consistent with the expectation that right-wing populists often challenge the liberal aspects of liberal democracy,

unlike left-wing parties, and pose a more immediate threat to democratic norms than their left-wing counterparts.

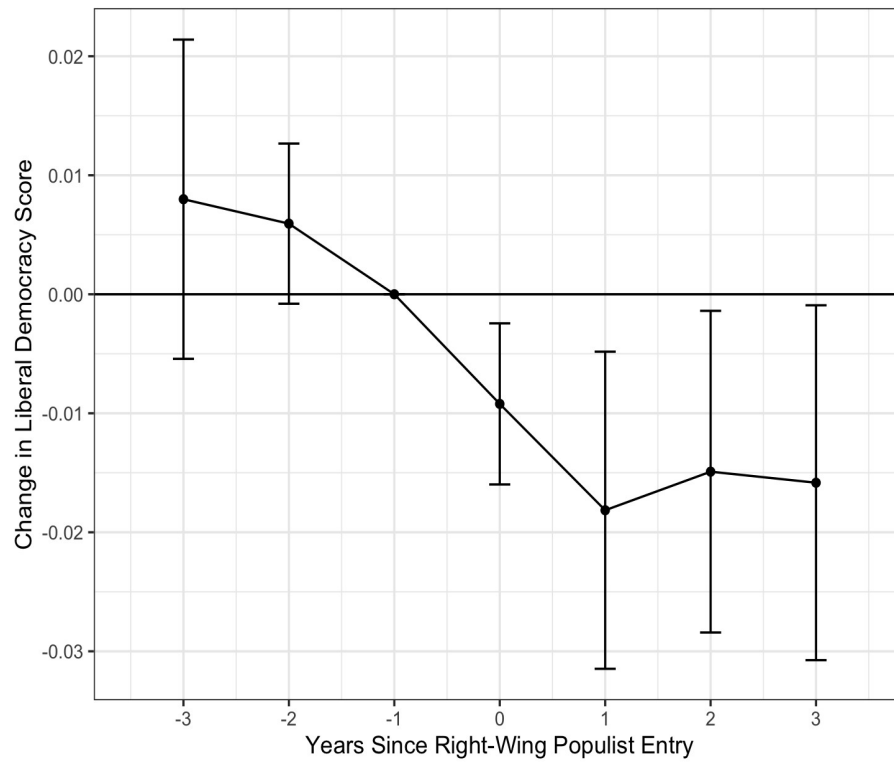


Figure 7: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry into Government on Liberal Democracy

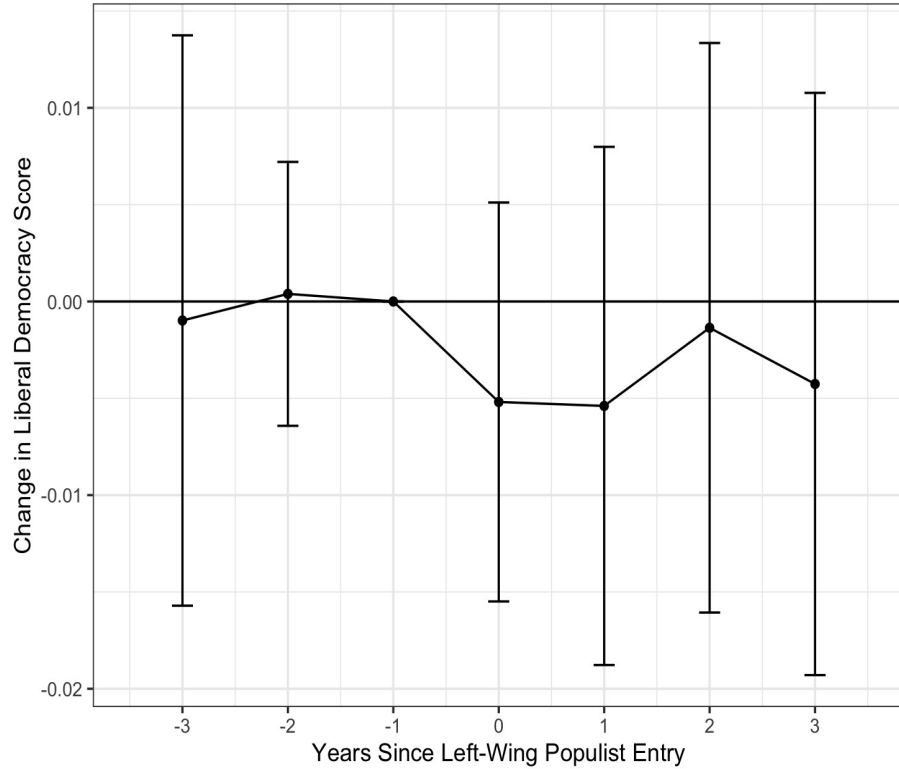


Figure 8: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry into Government on Liberal Democracy

Robustness Checks

To test the robustness of the main analyses, I conduct four additional analyses. First, I re-estimate the main model using the de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfoeuille estimator. Second, I re-estimate the right-wing populist model using the PopuList far-right indicator as an alternative operationalization of right-wing populism. Finally, I conduct a jack-knife analysis, leaving one country out at a time to assess whether the results are driven by any one case.

Alternative Estimation Strategy

First, I re-estimated the models using the DiD estimator recently introduced by de Chaisemartin and D’Haultfoeuille (2024). This approach differs from the stacked DiD design in

several aspects. First, the stacked DiD design allows countries to contribute multiple events (both treatment and control events), even if the windows around the events overlap. The Chaisemartin and D’Haultfoeuille approach on the other hand, treats populist entry as an absorbing treatment, focusing only on the first time a country switches from non-populist to a populist government. It then estimates country-year average treatment effects by comparing the outcomes in “switcher” units (those that change their treatment status during the period, i.e. have a populist party in the cabinet) to those units that have never switched (countries that never experienced a populist government) at the same time. The estimator also computes placebo estimators which can be used to test the parallel trends assumption and no anticipation assumptions under which the estimators are unbiased.

Because there are no overlapping or repeated entries and it only focuses on a countries first populist party entry into government, the number of observations falls to about 200, leading to less reliable and precise estimates than the stacked DiD approach. However, the results are substantively consistent in both direction and magnitude: the entry of a populist party into government leads to declines in liberal democracy (See Appendix B.1). The number of observations for the right-wing and left-wing models using this approach is too few to reliably estimate the results.

Alternative Treatment Coding

I re-estimate the main right-wing populist entry model using the PopuList far-right indicator as an alternative measure of right-wing populism. While the ParlGov left-right ideology measure used in the main analysis captures all populist parties with a right of center ideology, the far-right designation is a much stricter category and encompasses parties that are nativist and

authoritarian (Mudde 2007). Far-right parties may pose a more direct threat to liberal democracy given their hostile positions toward minority rights and institutional constraints.

While this alternative treatment coding captures seven fewer treated units, the results suggest that the effect of right-wing populism on liberal democracy is concentrated among and stronger for far-right populist parties—the estimated decline in liberal democracy is slightly larger than in the main right-wing model. Given that far-right populist parties make up the majority of right-wing populist treated units in my sample, this suggests that while right-wing populism is broadly associated with liberal democratic decline, it is especially pronounced among the most extreme right parties (See Appendix B.3).

Jack Knife Analysis

To assess whether the main results are driven by a single country, I re-estimate the main model dropping one treated country at a time, resulting in 20 separate models. Figure 16 plots the effects from each of the models (gray lines) alongside the full model (black line). The gray lines cluster around the main estimate across all post-treatment periods, indicating that no single country is driving the main results. This stability across estimates provides confidence that the main finding is not the result of any particular case, such as Hungary or Poland which are often cited as the most prominent examples of democratic backsliding in Europe (See Appendix B.4).

Conclusion

Populism has become a defining feature of European politics, raising concerns about the consequences it may have for democracy. This paper has examined a crucial part of this question: how does the entry of populist parties into government affect liberal democracy? Using a stacked

Difference-in-Differences design across 30 European countries from 2000-2022, I have provided new causal evidence that the democratic consequences of populism are conditional on both government status and host-ideology.

First, I find clear evidence that populist entry into government is associated with measurable and statistically significant declines in liberal democracy. In the years following a populist cabinet formation, liberal democracy scores fall roughly 0.02 points on the V-Dem liberal democracy index. This is a meaningful decline given that institutional changes take time and the already low variation within countries' democracies scores over time. Second, I find that right-wing populists in government consistently lead to democratic erosion, starting in the year of entry and intensifying in the subsequent years. In contrast, left-wing populist governments do not show any negative effects on liberal democracy scores. These findings support my argument that populism's threat to democracy is reliant on both the government status and ideology of the populists and underscores the importance for future work on populism's consequences to take into account these various features of populist parties.

Methodologically, this paper advances the study of populism and democratic backsliding by implementing a causal inference design in order to estimate the short-term effects of populist cabinet formation. To my knowledge, it is the first paper to analyze populism's effect on democracy using Differences-in-Differences techniques. Future work should continue to unpack the varying effects of populists in government and find ways to leverage causal inference tools.

The findings from this paper can be extended beyond Europe. As populism continues to shape politics around the globe, including the United States and Latin America, these results highlight that not all populists threaten democracy equally. The real threat to liberal democracies is from right-wing populists in positions of power where their exclusionary and anti-pluralist

positions can be translated into institutional change. This work suggests that scholars and those concerned with democratic resilience should focus their attention on not just populism at large, but on the contexts where right-wing populists are in government.

Chapter 2

The Heterogeneous Effects of Populism on Liberal Democracy

Abstract

This chapter extends the analyses from Chapter 1 with a closer examination of the dimensions of the liberal democracy index. I study which elements of liberal democracy are more vulnerable to populist government entry, and whether these effects exhibit ideological heterogeneity. Using a stacked Difference-in-Differences event-study design across 30 European countries between 2000-2022, I decompose the V-Dem liberal democracy index into its subcomponents—equality before the law and individual liberties, judicial constraints on the executive, and legislative constraints on the executive, and freedom of expression and alternative information. I find that populist government entry erodes civil liberties and freedom of expression. Disaggregating by host-ideology, I show that the effects found for the liberal democracy subcomponents are entirely driven by right-wing populists parties—left-wing populist parties in government produce no significant declines across any subdimension.

Introduction

The previous chapter established that populist entry into government is associated with measurable and sustained declines in liberal democracy across 30 European countries between 2000 and 2022. Using a stacked Difference-in-Differences event study design, I found that liberal democracy scores fall ~ 0.02 points in the years following a populist party cabinet formation, and that this effect persists across the three post-entry years. Importantly, these results were robust to an alternative estimation strategy, an alternative treatment coding, and were not driven by any particular country case. While the liberal democracy index used in Chapter 1 is a valid and well-established measure used in the democratic backsliding literature, it aggregates across multiple dimensions of democratic quality. Therefore, a decline in the overall liberal democracy score may be a result of the erosion of civil liberties, the weakening of judicial or legislative constraints, or all three. The effects discovered in Chapter 1 may conceal important variation across these democratic outcomes and among different ideological orientations. Understanding which specific aspects of democracy are under threat will better elucidate the dangers of populist governance.

This chapter studies the varying effects of populism through a series of heterogeneity analyses that extend and unpack the core findings from Chapter 1. First, I disaggregate the dependent variable into four subcomponents: equality before the law and individual liberties, judicial constraints on the executive, legislative constraints on the executive, and freedom of expression and alternative information. I estimate the effect of populist government entry on each of these subcomponents, allowing me to identify which specific dimensions of liberal democracy are the most affected. I find that populist entry into government erodes equality before the law and media freedom, produces a short-term decline in judicial independence, and has no detectable effect on legislative constraints.

Second, I disaggregate the subcomponent results by the ideological orientation of the populist party. Chapter 1 established that the decline in the overall liberal democracy index is driven by right-wing populist parties, while left-wing populists in government are not associated with overall democratic decline. I test whether this ideological difference holds consistently across each of the four democratic subcomponents. I show that the effects are entirely driven by right-wing parties—left-wing populists produce no significant declines across any subcomponent.

Overall, these findings paint a more precise and nuanced picture of how populism erodes democracy and provide compounding evidence that the detrimental effects of populism are a right-wing phenomenon.

Populism and Components of Liberal Democracy

As established in Chapter 1, liberal democracy can be characterized by the intrinsic importance of transparency, civil liberty, the rule of law, horizontal accountability, and minority rights (Coppedge et al. 2011, p. 253). The V-Dem liberal democracy index used in Chapter 1 is a composite index of two broader indices: the liberal component index and the electoral democracy index. Within these broader categories there are nine subcomponents that capture the different dimensions of democratic governance. The liberal component index—which consists of measures of equality before the law and individual freedom, judicial constraints on the executive, legislative constraints in the executive, and bicameralism—most directly captures the civil liberties and checks and balances elements of liberal democracy that are central to the theoretical foundation of the concept. This chapter focuses on the first three of these subcomponents, excluding bicameralism, as it captures the number of chambers in a legislature, a number that is stable over time and unlikely to change within the post-treatment three-year periods. In addition to these three subcomponents from

the liberal component index, I also include the freedom of expression and alternative information index, a subcomponent of the electoral democracy index. I include this index as the media is one of the main avenues through which populists can consolidate power (Kenny 2020). Together these four subcomponents capture the core dimensions of liberal democracy that may be threatened by populist parties in government. Identifying which of these components are most vulnerable to the populist threat helps us to understand how populist governance can translate into democratic backsliding.

Equality before the law and individual liberties is the subcomponent most directly threatened by populist governance. Populists frame society as divided between the good people and the corrupt elite, and argue that politics should reflect the general will of the people without restriction (Mudde 2004). Those that fall outside of populists' conception of "the people" (such as ethnic minorities, immigrants, or other marginalized groups) are viewed as undeserving of the same protections and rights given to the true people. This worldview is in direct conflict with the liberal democratic ideal that all citizens, regardless of their place in the populist division of society, deserve equal legal protections and civil liberties. I therefore expect populist entry into government to cause a sustained and meaningful decline in equality before the law and individual liberties.

Judicial and legislative constraints on the executive are two other important dimensions of liberal democracy under threat by populist governments. Populists frame judicial oversight as an illegitimate check on the will of the people and have a strong incentive to weaken judicial independence in order to remove any hurdles to their executive agenda—they can pack the courts, change appointments procedures, and/or publicly delegitimize the judiciary by framing judges as corrupt and out of touch elites. Populists also frame legislative constraints as barriers to the implementation of the will of the people and may try to change parliamentary rules and procedures,

change electoral rules to make it harder for the opposition parties to win seats, or use patronage to reward loyal legislators (Houle and Kenny 2018; Huber and Schimpf 2017). I therefore expect populist parties to cause erosion of both judicial and legislative constraints.

Finally, limiting freedom of expression and alternative information, while not a component of the liberal index, is central to how populists consolidate power and is therefore included in the analysis. First, populists depend on the media and control of the information environment for political survival. Instead of being able to rely on organizational networks and civil society linkages like mainstream parties, populist parties depend on direct communication with their supporters to maintain their base. This dependence leads then to wanting to suppress dissenting opinion and controlling the media rather than protecting it. Second, populists care more about their own survival than the long-term health and success of a party organization. They therefore have fewer constraints on their behavior compared to leaders of more institutionalized parties and are more likely to suppress the media (Kenny 2020). I expect populist entry into government to cause a sustained and meaningful decline in freedom of expression and alternative information.

These considerations lead to the following hypothesis:

H1: Countries that form governments including populist parties will experience a subsequent decline in equality before the law and individual liberties, judicial and legislative constraints on the executive, and freedom of expression and alternative information, relative to countries that form governments without populist participation.

As established in Chapter 1, there are substantial differences in the ways that right- and left-wing populists define “the people”, producing theoretically distinct expectations for their

effects on the liberal democratic subcomponents. Right-wing populists define the people in cultural or nativist terms, making them more likely to restrict minority rights and weaken liberal democratic protections for political inclusion (Mudde 2007). Left-wing populists, however, define “the people” in socio-economic terms and tend to be more supportive of minority rights and civil liberties than right-wing populists (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013). I therefore expect right-wing populists to produce significant and sustained declines in equality before the law and individual liberties, while left-wing parties should show weaker or no effects. When it comes to checks and balances, both left-wing and right-wing populists share an antagonism toward institutional constraints on executive power (Dahl 1971; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013). I expect then both right and left-wing parties to cause similar levels of erosion to judicial and legislative constraints. Finally, Kenny (2020) theorizes that left-wing parties will have a more negative impact on media freedom and freedom of expression compared to right-wing populists due to their support for state intervention in the private sector. However, I propose an alternative hypothesis, suggesting that it is right-wing populists that have more detrimental effects on media freedom due to their more exclusionary, nativist rhetoric and their desire to restrict the information environment to silence critics that challenge their view of societal divides (Schroeder 2019, Holtz-Bacha 2021).

These considerations lead to the following hypothesis:

H2: Right-wing populist parties in government will be more destructive to civil liberties and freedom of expression than left-wing populist parties in government.

Data and Methods:

The analyses in this chapter draw on the same country-year dataset constructed in Chapter 1, combining data from V-Dem, PopuList, and ParlGov. Similarly, I also estimate stacked event-study Difference-in-Differences models on cabinet formation events for 30 European countries between 2000 and 2022.

Outcome Variables:

Where Chapter 1 relied on the V-Dem liberal democracy index, this chapter disaggregates that index into its subcomponents to assess which specific dimensions of liberal democracy are most affected by populist government entry. I focus on the following four subcomponents:

Equality before the law and individual liberties

This variable captures the extent to which laws are transparently and rigorously enforced, public administration is impartial, and citizens enjoy a broad range of individual freedoms. This index aggregates expert ratings on rigorous and impartial public administration, transparent laws with predictable enforcement, property rights, freedom from torture, freedom from political killings, freedom from forced labor, freedom of religion, and freedom of movement. This variable is an interval from 0 to 1 where higher values indicate greater equality and protection of individual liberties.

Judicial constraints on the executive

This measure captures the extent to which the executive respects the constitution and complies with court rulings and the degree to which the judiciary is able to act independently. This index

aggregates expert ratings on executive respect for the constitution, compliance with high court decisions, high court independence, and lower court independence. This measure is an interval from 0 to 1 where higher values indicate a more independent judiciary that effectively constrains executive power through constitutional and legal mechanisms.

Legislative constraints on the executive

This measure captures the extent to which the legislature and government agencies (e.g. comptroller general, general prosecutor) are capable of questioning, investigating, and exercising oversight over the executive. The index aggregates expert ratings on whether the legislature questions officials in practice, the effectiveness of executive oversight, whether the legislature investigates executive action in practice, and the capacity of the opposition parties with the legislature to challenge the government. This measure is an interval from 0 to 1 where higher values indicate stronger legislative oversight and greater capacity to constrain executive power.

Freedom of expression and alternative information

This measure captures the extent to which the government respects press and media freedom, the freedom of ordinary people to discuss political matters in public and private, and the freedom of academic and cultural expression. This index aggregates expert ratings on media censorship efforts, harassment of journalists, media bias, media self-censorship, the degree to which print and broadcast media are critical of the government and represent a range of perspectives, freedom of discussion for men and women, and freedom of academic and cultural expression. This measure is an interval from 0 to 1 where higher values indicate a more open and pluralistic information and expression environment.

Explanatory Variables:

Populism and Government Status

Treatment and control classifications follow the same procedure as described in Chapter 1. Briefly, cabinet formation is classified as treated if the newly formed cabinet includes at least one populist party identified by PopuList where the previous cabinet did not, and as a control event if neither the former nor current government includes a populist party. More in-depth details can be found in Chapter 1.

GDP growth

To account for potential confounding economic conditions, I include GDP growth as a control variable in all models, consistent with Chapter 1. This variable is constructed as the percentage change in GDP per capita from the previous year using V-Dem's GDP per capita variable.

Methods

The analyses in this chapter employ the same stacked Difference-in-Differences event-study design introduced in Chapter 1. For each country I identify cabinet formation episodes and classify them as either treated or control as described above. Each cabinet formation episode contributes a seven-year event window spanning three years before and three years after entry, and all windows are pooled into a stacked panel that indexes country-years relative to the timing of the cabinet formation. I estimate a regression with country and year fixed effects, where each coefficient captures the difference in the outcome variable at time t relative to the year immediately preceding cabinet formation ($t = -1$). The DiD design relies on the parallel trends assumption: in the absence of populist entry, treated and control cabinets would have followed the same trajectory in the

outcome variable over time. Evidence for this assumption comes from the pre-treatment coefficients at time $t = -3$ and $t = -2$, which are close to 0 and statistically indistinguishable from one another. For a full description of the methods and design, refer to Chapter 1.

Difference-in-Difference Estimates

Populist Government Entry and Democratic Subcomponents

Figures 1-4 below plot the effects of populist entry into government on the subcomponents of the liberal democracy index, estimated using the stacked event-study Difference-in-Differences design. The coefficients represent changes in scores in the years before and after cabinet formation, comparing populist and non-populist governments, with the year immediately prior to cabinet formation ($t = -1$) as the reference category. The error bars display 95% confidence intervals.

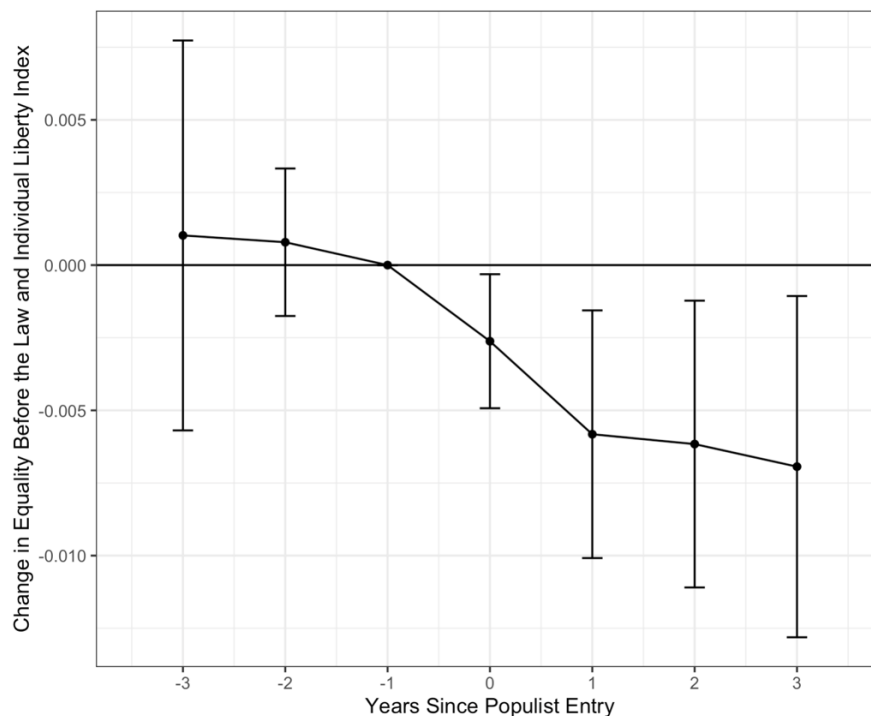


Figure 1: Effect of populist entry into government on equality before the law and individual liberties

Figure 1 plots the effects of populist entry into government on equality before the law and individual liberties. The pre-treatment coefficients at $t = -3$ and $t = -2$ are close to 0 and statistically indistinguishable from one another, providing evidence of parallel trends before cabinet formation. Following populist entry into government, the coefficients show sustained negative trajectory. The coefficient at $t = 0$ is negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.003$, $p < 0.05$). This decline becomes more pronounced in the following years. One year after populist party entry into government ($t = 1$), liberal democracy scores decrease by roughly 0.006 points ($p < 0.01$) and the effects persist through year three ($\beta = -0.007$, $p < 0.05$) (See Appendix 2 for full model tables). These results suggest that populist entry into government is associated with meaningful and sustained erosion of civil liberties and legal equality, consistent with the theoretical expectation that populists' deem only certain groups deserving of rights and protections. This is indirect tension with the liberal democratic ideal that all members of society deserve equal protection.

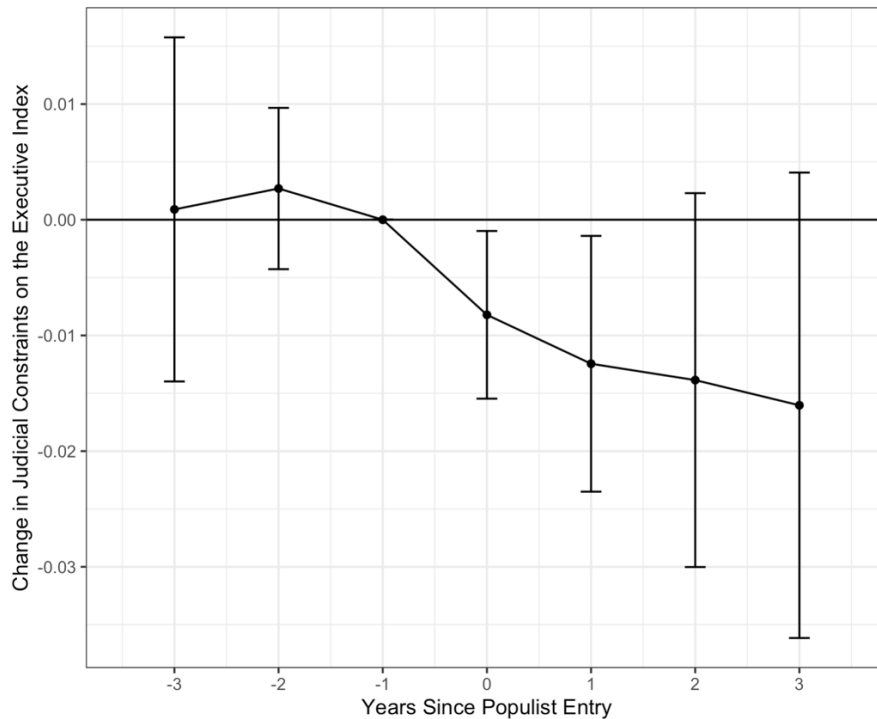


Figure 2: Effect of populist entry into government on judicial constraints on the executive

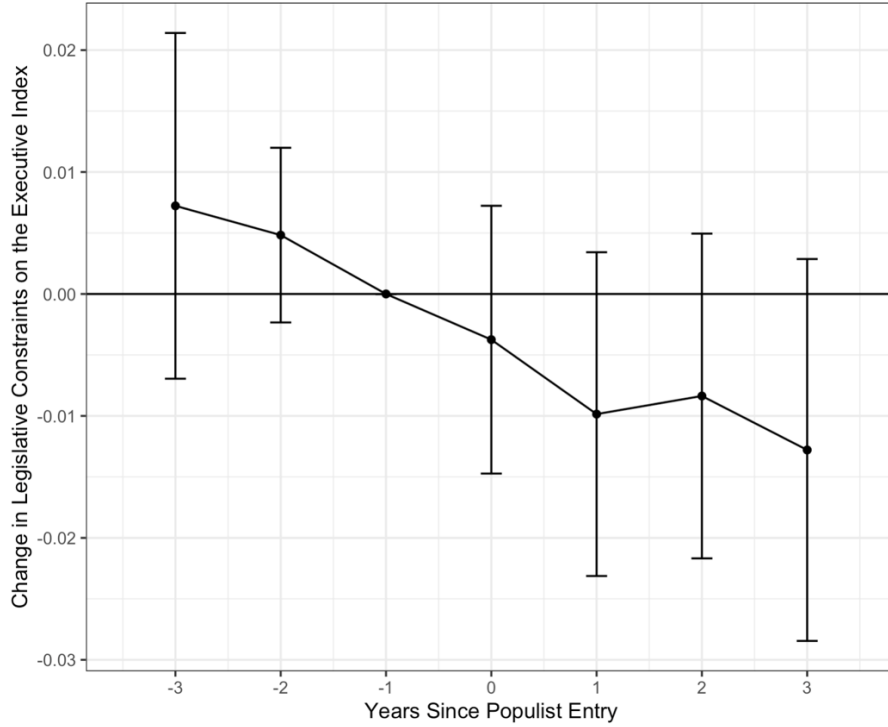


Figure 3: Effect of populist entry into government on legislative constraints on the executive

Figures 2 and 3 plot the effect of populist entry into government on judicial and legislative constraints on the executive. In both analyses, the pre-treatment coefficients at $t = -3$ and $t = -2$ are close to zero and statistically indistinguishable from one another, consistent with the parallel trends assumption. In the post-treatment period in Figure 2, the results reveal a negative and statistically significant effect of populist entry on judicial constraints in the year of cabinet formation ($\beta = -0.008, p < 0.05$) and the following year ($\beta = -0.012, p < 0.05$). However, this effect does not persist beyond the first post-entry year, with coefficients at $t=2$ and $t=3$ failing to reach conventional levels of statistical significance. Additionally, in Figure 3, I find no statistically significant effect of populist entry into government on legislative constraints. While the point estimates are in the expected negative direction, the confidence intervals overlap zero across the post-entry years indicating no detectable effect. The results from these two models suggest that while populists in

government may be hostile to institutional constraints on executive power, the erosion of horizontal accountability is not detected in a manner similar to the immediate declines we observed with civil liberties and of expression. The three-year post-entry window examined may be too short to see the longer-term erosion populists can achieve when they stay in power for many years.

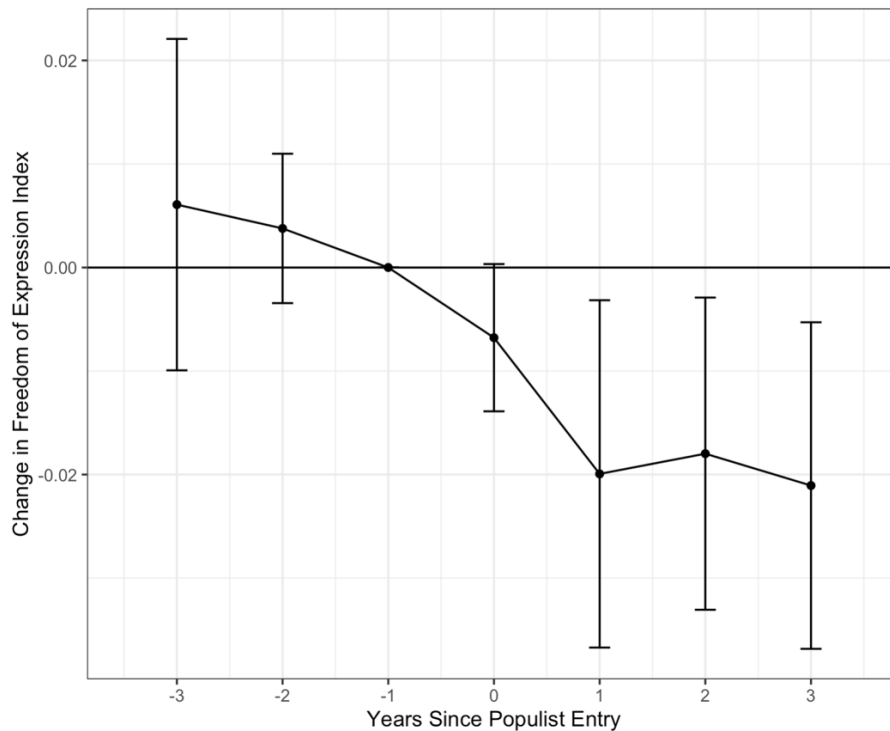


Figure 4: Effect of populist entry into government on freedom of expression and alternative information

Figure 4 plots the effect of populist entry into government on freedom of expression and alternative information. The pre-treatment coefficients at $t=-3$ and $t=-2$ are closer to 0 and statistically indistinguishable from one another, showing evidence of parallel trends. Following populist entry into government, there is a negative and statistically significant decline in media freedom across the post-treatment period ($\beta = -0.02, p < 0.05$). These findings are consistent with the expectation that populists in government have both the incentive and institutional capacity to

restrict the information environment. Of all the subcomponents examined in this chapter, the effect on freedom of expression is the largest in magnitude, suggesting that media freedom is an easier target for populist leaders to influence than more deeply entrenched institutions such as the judiciary and legislature.

Populist Host-Ideology and Liberal Democratic Subcomponents

The results from the pooled models in the previous section demonstrate that populist entry into government causes the erosion of civil liberties and freedom of expression, and a small short-term decrease in judicial constraints. This section breaks down these results to see whether the effects vary by the ideological orientation of the populist party. All plots and regression tables can be found in Appendix 2.

The ideology model results closely follow the patterns uncovered in the previous section. I find, however, that right-wing parties are entirely driving the various effects found. Right-wing populist entry into government is associated with significant and sustained declines in equality before the law and individual freedoms as well as freedom of expression and alternative information. Similarly to Figure 2, there is a short term significant decline in judicial constraints. The parallel trends assumption holds for all models.

Left-wing populist entry into government, however, produces no statistically significant results across any of the four subcomponents. While this may be due to a small number of left-wing treatment cases, these results provide further suggestive evidence that left-wing populists do not pose a substantial threat to European democracies, and that the detrimental effects of populist governance are relatively ideological in nature.

Conclusion

This chapter extended the analyses of Chapter 1, analyzing the various dimensions of liberal democracy to see which are most vulnerable to populist governance and whether these effects vary by the ideological orientation of the populist party. Using the same stacked Difference-in-Differences event study design across 30 European countries between 2000 and 2022, I find that populist entry into government is the most harmful to civil liberties and freedom of expression. While I find short term negative effects on judicial constraints, these results diminish quickly. This coupled with the null findings for legislative constraints suggests that it is much harder for populists to immediately erode more established and ingrained institutions. When disaggregating by host-ideology, I find that the effects are entirely driven by right-wing parties and left-wing parties do not produce any significant effects on the liberal democratic outcomes.

Moving forward, several limitations remain that future work should address. First, the V-Dem liberal democracy measures used in these two chapters are constructed from expert ratings rather than objective institutional measures. While V-Dem uses several validation measures and works to minimize any bias from individual experts, it is possible that the effects found here partly reflect expert perceptions of populist rather than directly observed institutional change or objective measures of liberal democracy (Little and Meng 2024). Future work should replicate these analyses using alternative outcome variables that more objectively capture the components of liberal democracy.

Second, the analyses from the stacked DiD event-study design only examines the short-term effects of populist entry into government on liberal democracy within a three-year post-treatment window. While this three-year period was chosen to minimize cabinet overlap and maintain clean the pre and post-treatment measurements, it may be too short of a time period to fully capture the cumulative institutional changes that populist parties can make when consolidating power. Future work should the effects of not just populist government entry, but also sustained populist governance over multiple terms to help us understand the potentially compounding nature of democratic erosion.

Finally, the number of treated units in the ideology analyses is relatively small, limiting precision of estimates and statistical power. As more V-Dem and ParlGov data becomes available for more recent years, it will be important to extend the sample period so as to capture more treated units.

Overall, these two chapters are important first steps in uncovering the causal relationship between populist governance and democratic backsliding and advances our understanding of when and how populism can pose a threat to liberal democracy. While populist rule in some cases may be waning, such as in Hungary, the damage that these parties have done to democracy may not be necessarily as easy to reverse.

Chapter 3

Who Attacks Whom? How Populism and Euroscepticism Drive Cross-National Conflict Between European Party Elites

Abstract

Populist and Eurosceptic parties' growing popular support has created a new transnational sociopolitical cleavage that challenges European integration. We hypothesize that disagreements over European integration drive cross-national conflict between party elites, and that party populism—which we show is less strongly related to Euroscepticism than is commonly believed—is an especially important contributor to cross-national elite conflict, independently of Euroscepticism or of the cultural issues debates that animate radical right parties' domestic agendas. We substantiate our arguments by analyzing machine codings of tens of thousands of news reports of cross-national, elite-level, inter-party cooperation, and conflict between parties in 13 European Union member states between 2001 and 2019.

Introduction

Although scholars have explored the predictors of inter-party conflict and cooperation within Europe's democracies (e.g. Gidron et al., 2023; Schäfer et al., 2021; Strom, 1989), we know little about the predictors of cross-national, inter-party conflict and cooperation between parties from different European Union (EU) member countries. Given ever deepening integration among EU member states, this is an important oversight. Since the Maastricht Treaty's signing in 1992, the scope and impact of EU domestic and international policy has increased dramatically, implying that cross-national interactions among EU members' party elites have become more frequent and impactful. A series of recent crises with EU-wide impact, including the 2009 Eurozone crisis, Brexit, the 2015 migrant crisis, and Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, have required coordination among member states well beyond the bounds of diplomacy (Hooghe et al., 2024). As in any federation, the constituent entities confront these challenges jointly. Leaders of member country parties debate in EU institutions such as the European Council and Parliament as well as through public statements directed at party elites of other member states. Such cross-national interactions affect the member countries' relationships along with the future of European integration.

Cross-national party elite conflict within the EU concerns the scope of European integration. Controversial decisions by European Union level institutions regarding reforms to the Eurozone, and asylum policies for refugees fleeing wars in the Middle East, have fueled rising popular support for Eurosceptic (De Vries, 2018) and populist parties (Vachudova, 2019) critical of the EU and opposed to non-European immigration (Kriesi, 2016; Noury and Roland, 2020). These parties' growing representation in member country parliaments and governments, and in EU institutions has intensified conflict between member states, creating a new "transnational"

sociopolitical cleavage that “has at its core a political reaction against European integration” (Hooghe and Marks, 2018, 109).

Most scholarship on the implications of increased public support for Eurosceptic and/ or populist parties focuses on EU member countries’ domestic politics (Hooghe and Marks, 2019; Kriesi et al., 2006; Sus and Hadeed, 2021). Few have considered the implications of Eurosceptic and populist parties for cross-national interparty interactions. Although examples of EU level conflict driven by populist governments’ leaders are well-known, such as that between Greece’s Syriza-led government and Germany’s Christian Democratic Union during the Eurozone crisis, we do not know if Eurosceptic and/or populist parties systematically engender cross-national conflict. There are reasons to suspect they do. Eurosceptic and populist parties’ views on integration directly confront those of mainstream parties that are the EU’s architects and its strongest proponents (Hodson and Puetter, 2019). Furthermore, as Eurosceptic and populist parties increase their presence in the European Parliament and on the European Council, their distrust of the European Union and its institutions become part of a cross-national, EU-wide conversation.

Table 1. Number of observations by country and list of major parties.

Country	Number of source interactions	Number of target interactions	Major parties (Over 20% of the source and target interactions in country)
Austria	379	356	OVP, SPO
Belgium	412	409	CD&V, Open VLD
Denmark	207	200	Venstre
Finland	260	264	Social Democrats, Centre, National Coalition
France	4113	4289	UMP/LR
Germany	4314	4166	CDU/CSU, SPD
Greece	1615	1534	SYRIZA, ND, PASOK
Ireland	1126	1035	Fianna Fail, Fine Gael
The Netherlands	395	429	CDA, PvdA, VVD
Portugal	663	614	PSD
Spain	1447	1422	PSOE, PP
Sweden	254	236	Social Democrats, Moderate
The UK	3949	4180	Labour, Conservative

We argue that European integration debates championed by Eurosceptic and populist parties significantly intensify cross-national conflict. Although many populist parties strongly oppose European integration, and may also be considered Eurosceptical, parties may be Eurosceptic but not populist, and vice versa. For example, Norway's Progress Party is populist but not Eurosceptic, and Britain's Conservative Party is Eurosceptic but not populist (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2024; Tables 1 and 2). Furthermore, because populism and Euroscepticism are ideologically distinct, parties' populist versus Eurosceptical stances may influence the tone of their interactions with other party elites in different ways, which we explore in our analyses. Populism is a political frame that glorifies the people, demonizes the elite, and describes politics as a Manichean struggle between the two (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018; Mudde, 2004). Scholars have shown that parties can be considered more or less populist on a continuous spectrum depending on how strongly they embrace populist discourse (Meijers and Zaslove, 2021). Euroscepticism, by contrast, is a specific set of policy positions that is often espoused by populist parties but can also be supported by nonpopulist parties such as the Communist Party of Greece or the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom (Szczerbiak and Taggart, 2024). Moreover, populism and its emphasis on the pure people's primacy over a corrupt and distant elite may intensify conflict independently of European integration disputes and of broad cultural debates over multiculturalism and LGBTQ rights. This argument is important because, as we document, parties' European integration stances are not as closely aligned with their populist orientations as is generally believed. The correlation between our measures of parties' degrees of populism and euroscepticism is 0.18 when using the Manifesto Project Data index and 0.47 when using the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) index (see Figure 2 in this article). We argue, moreover, that populist orientations structure not only cross-national interactions between mainstream parties

versus those of the populist radical left and right, but even between pairs of mainstream parties with only modestly different orientations toward populism.

We empirically evaluate our arguments by analyzing event data from the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) database. These data provide codings of media reports of parties' cross-national interactions among 13 West European EU member countries, which overwhelmingly concern EU policy, actions of EU member governments, or events with EU-wide significance. We analyze whether parties' tendencies to interact in a cooperative or conflictual manner with foreign parties are related to their differing degrees of populism and to their positions on European integration. We also control for parties' differences with respect to domestic cultural and economic policies, and their national governing status. Analyzing almost 20,000 coded media reports of cross-national party interactions between 2001 and 2019, we report the following conclusions.

Table 2. Incidence of cross-national party conflict as a function of differences over Euroscepticism, populism, and governing status ($N = 19,134$).

	Distance betw. parties is <i>below</i> median value (1)	Distance betw. parties is <i>at or</i> <i>above</i> median value (2)
(a) European integration and populism.		
<i>EU integration distance</i> <i>between parties i, j</i>	3.8%	5.8%
<i>Populism distance between</i> <i>parties i, j</i>	3.4%	6.1%
Both parties in national government (1)		One or both parties in opposition (2)
(b) Parties' governing status.		
3.8%	10.0%	

Note: The values are the percentages of party interactions that were coded as conflictual in the ICEWS data set, over the set of 19,134 coded conflictual and cooperative interactions. The analyses cover the period 2001–2019, and are on the codings for the 13 EU member countries listed in the text. The independent variables are defined in the text.

First, we find evidence that pairs of parties that disagree more sharply over European integration engage in higher proportions of conflictual cross-national interactions, when

controlling for differences in their populist orientations and their domestic cultural and economic issue positions. This observational relationship is consistent with our argument that the tone of parties' cross-national interactions are driven in part by debates over European integration.

Second, we find evidence that when controlling for differences over EU integration, domestic issue debates, and national governing status, parties' cross-national interactions are far more conflictual the more they differ in populist orientation. To the extent this relationship is causal, it suggests that populism fuels cross-national conflict even more strongly than do EU integration debates. Moreover, this relationship persists when we omit radical right and left populist parties from our analyses: even the populism differences between pairs of mainstream parties—some of which are strongly identified with the political establishment, others of which (such as the British Conservative Party) project an ambivalent orientation toward populism—predict more conflict.

Third, controlling for populism, Euroscepticism, and governing status, we estimate no significant relationship between cross-national conflict and parties' domestic economic and cultural issue differences. This nonfinding likely reflects a distinction between the dynamics of parties' domestic and cross-national interactions. For while it is well-documented that parties with similar ideologies within the same system tend to cooperate to form and maintain governing coalitions (or, in opposition, to cooperate in opposing the government), these domestic dynamics appear irrelevant to parties' cross-national interactions.

Although many scholars emphasize the new transnational cleavage's impact on member countries' domestic politics (e.g. Hooghe and Marks, 2018), we explore its relevance to cross-national, elite-level interactions. Since EU laws and policies are decided by qualified majority or unanimity, party elites' cross-national conflict affects the European Union's functioning.

Cross-national party conflict and cooperation within EU member states: Hypotheses

We study interactions among party elites within the European Union, which we classify as either cooperative or conflictual. In our data, based on media reports of cross-national inter-party communications, cooperation typically involves declarations of agreement, acknowledgement of shared goals, or pledges to cooperate. Conflictual interactions typically express demands, accusations, threats, or refusals to cooperate. We consider how parties' populist orientations and positions on European integration may drive cross-national conflict and cooperation between parties from different EU member states.

Cross-national party conflict and disagreements over European integration

Since passage of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the political relevance of “Euroscepticism”—a political stance involving some level of opposition to European integration—has increased significantly (Hooghe and Marks, 2008; Taggart, 1998; Usherwood and Startin, 2013), to the consternation of Europe's mainstream parties who long sought its depoliticization (Hutter and Kriesi, 2019). While “hard” Eurosceptic parties, such as the now defunct United Kingdom Independence Party or Greece's Communist Party, support exiting the EU, most current Eurosceptic parties advocate scaling back the EU's domestic political influence. For example, Hungary's FIDESZ wants to renegotiate the terms of EU membership, to “decouple E.U. membership from the values and the processes of liberal democracy” (Vachudova, 2019, 702). Both the French National Rally and the Alternative for Germany advocate rolling back the requirement that EU member states' national legislation must conform with the entirety of EU law, which constrains national governments' leeway to implement their preferred domestic policies

(Reungoat, 2015). Furthermore, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has re-ignited debates over deepening integration, while exposing disputes over EU responses relating to sanctions and energy pricing (Genschel et al., 2023).

Disputes over European integration play out formally within the institutions of the European Union, especially the European Council and European Parliament. Disputes over European integration also play out informally through direct interactions in which party elites publicly praise or oppose other member governments' and parties' stances.

European integration is one of the most contentious ongoing debates within the European Union, and we expect this to be reflected in cross-party interactions. Thus, the considerations outlined above motivate our first hypothesis:

H1 (The European integration hypothesis): Parties' cross-national interactions are more likely to be conflictual as their positions diverge on European integration, all else equal.

Populism and cross-national party conflict

We expect populism to provoke cross-party conflict, independently of parties' stances toward European integration or other policy debates. While strictly programmatic parties compete over policy positions and priorities, populist parties explicitly bifurcate society into the (good) people and the (corrupt) elite (Hawkins and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018; Mudde, 2004), while portraying mainstream parties as agents of a corrupt establishment working against ordinary peoples' interests (Bonikowski and Gidron, 2016). Populists claim to speak on behalf of their people whose sovereignty and national identity are threatened. In the cross-national context the "corrupt" elites who populists attack include the representatives of European institutions along with mainstream

party elites in other countries. For example, in October 2012, Alexis Tsipras, the leader of the opposition Greek Syriza Party, criticized German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her government's policies on debt relief for Greece, claiming that "She does not come to support Greece, which her policies have brought to the brink. She comes to save the corrupt, disgraced and servile political system." In response, "Chancellor Angela Merkel's allies and the leaders of her center-left coalition partners condemned Greece's leftist government, reflecting pent-up public frustration."¹ We expect populist parties' portrayals of mainstream party elites as corrupt insiders to provoke mutual anger, in ways that Euroscepticism by itself does not.

Research on Western politics identifies a populist-versus-technocratic cleavage that is distinct from the left-right dimension (Moffit, 2018; Stavrakakis et al., 2018), while studies on cross-party anger and hostility in mass publics support this expectation. Gidron et al. (2023) analyze 20 western publics, showing that mainstream parties' supporters dislike radical right populist parties much more intensely than can be explained by policy disagreements alone, and that radical right partisans in turn disproportionately dislike mainstream parties. And Davis et al. (2024) find that increased populist party support intensifies distrust and hostility among both populist parties' supporters and their opponents. These considerations prompt the following hypothesis, which we expect to apply in analyses that control for parties' differing stances toward European integration:

H2 (The populism differences hypothesis): The greater the difference between cross-national parties' degrees of populism, the more likely the interaction will be conflictual, all else equal.

¹ D. Kyriakidou and N. Berkin, "Merkel to face protests on first crisis visit to Greece." Reuters, October 7, 2012. <https://www.reuters.com/article/greece-germany-idINDEE89605620121007>. R Heath and M De la Baume, "V for Verhofstadt." Politico, July 10, 2015. <https://www.politico.eu/article/tsipras-verhofstadt-speech-grexit-greece/>

Additional Controls

Parties' governing status

Domestic political interactions between co-governing parties are generally cooperative, even given disagreements over policy (Weschle, 2018). Although there is no EU-level analog to a domestic governing coalition, member countries' governing parties interact frequently in EU policymaking institutions, forming working relationships with likeminded colleagues (Heisenberg, 2005; Warntjen, 2010). Just as members of the governing coalition in parliamentary systems share responsibility for policymaking and therefore seek to avoid public conflict, EU member countries' ministers and chief executives share collective responsibility for decisions that affect the pace and scope of European integration. Furthermore, government representatives face pressure to behave diplomatically on the international stage, which should promote cooperative cross-national interactions involving governing parties. Moreover, members of the European Council and Council of the European Union come from member countries' sitting governments and are responsive to their domestic audiences, signaling their national parliaments as they negotiate European Union level decisions (Hagemann et al., 2019). These considerations suggest that parties' governing status may affect their interactions with governing parties from other EU members; therefore, we control for parties' governing status in all our models.

Parties' positions on domestic issues

While leaders of member-country governing parties conduct highly visible cross-national debates and negotiations over the scope of European integration, it is less clear how issues that fall within the jurisdiction of domestic policymaking, such as taxation, government spending priorities,

healthcare provision, or educational standards, affect parties' crossnational interactions. This question is interesting because theoretical considerations point in conflicting directions. On the one hand, previous research documents that in domestic politics, parties interact more cooperatively when they share more similar positions on issues (Gidron et al., 2023; Weschle, 2018), and ideologically similar parties are more likely to co-govern (Golder et al., 2012). Furthermore, within the EU, ideologically similar parties organize into party groups within the European Parliament, and a leader of the largest such group is typically elected President of the Commission.

On the other hand, the Commission itself is not selected by the European Parliament; thus, the dynamic of government formation is absent at the EU level. Hence the coalition incentives which foster warmer cross-party relations between domestic parties with similar ideologies are irrelevant to parties' cross-national interactions. Moreover, when crossnational parties' divergent left-right positions prompt them to adopt different stances toward EU mandates pertaining to economic convergence, social convergence, immigration, and minority rights, any resulting conflict should manifest itself primarily in disagreements over the scope of these EU mandates—which are facets of the broader EU integration debate—not in direct conflict about domestic policy debates.

The above considerations suggest that the motivations that prompt cooperation between like-minded parties in domestic politics may be absent with respect to crossnational interactions. Given these conflicting considerations, we control for parties' cultural and economic domestic policy positions in our subsequent empirical analyses.

Data and measurement

To evaluate our hypotheses we analyze cross-national, elite-level, inter-party cooperation, and conflict as reported in news accounts, utilizing large-scale machine-coded event data that capture public cooperation and conflict between party elites from different countries. We analyze elites' interactions across 13 EU member states between 2001 and 2019: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.² Here we briefly describe these data and our variable construction.

Machine-coded news reports

The raw material for our cross-national, inter-party interactions measure comes from the ICEWS dataset, which contains machine-coded event data about interactions between political and other societal groups beginning in 2001. The US government collected these data as a tool to forecast international crises (O'Brien, 2013) and they are publicly available (see Boschee et al., 2015). The ICEWS source material are the news reports from *Factiva* and the *Open-Source Center*, the two largest existing media repositories, which collect all reports published in hundreds of newspapers, magazines, and newswires. A natural language analysis system (Ramshaw et al., 2011) extracts and identifies event classifications providing the event source, the target, and the event type, for example, as “criticize and denounce,” “praise,” etc. The data includes codings of news reports of interactions between actors within the same country, which we do not analyze here, and codings

² These are the only EU countries in the dataset we analyze (described below) for which we have party codings for both the sender and target of the cross-national interactions, as well as sufficient data across our time period.

of parties' reported cross-national interactions which are the topic of our study. We analyze direct interactions between parties, that is, those in which the elites from a given party i in country A are the "sender" and the elites from a party j in country B are the "target."

We further process the event information in two ways. First, all politicians from the same party are aggregated into a unified actor. Second, we simplify the event type coding into either cooperative or conflictual. For example, consider the following statement by British Prime Minister Tony Blair regarding French President Nicolas Sarkozy: "Nicolas is someone with whom I have worked on several occasions, who I admire and who I consider a friend" (Agence France-Presse, 2007). This public event enters the data as follows: the event source is the Labour in the UK (Blair's party), the target is President Sarkozy's Union for a Popular Movement in France, and the event type is coded as cooperative. By contrast the news report from 2012 referenced earlier, in which SYRIZA's leader, Alexis Tsipras, denounced Chancellor Angela Merkel, is coded as a conflictual interaction initiated by SYRIZA which targets the German CDU/CSU (Merkel's party). The Supplemental appendix discusses machine coding accuracy and data limitations, information on media sources, a list of event types coded as cooperative and conflictual, and it includes descriptive statistics.

Over time, many news reports appear that chronicle cooperative and conflictual party interactions. Some pairs of parties i, j in countries A, B may usually cooperate, whereby the elites from these parties publicly consult with each other, praise each other's competence, forge foreign policy agreements, and so on. Other party pairs may display more conflictual interactions in which they publicly disagree or disparage each other's leadership. Note that the tones of party elites' interactions need not be reciprocal, that is, the elites from party i in country A may at times publicly attack party j in country B, while party j 's leadership ignores the attack.

Thus, our data consist of interactions between pairs of party elites as reported in the media, which are coded as cooperative or conflictual based on the tone of the interactions. Figure 1 displays the number of interactions recorded in our data in each year (gray bars) as well as the proportion of these yearly interactions that were coded as conflictual (blue loess smoother line). Figure 1 shows that although the raw number of interactions between political parties recorded by ICEWS varies sharply over time, the yearly proportion of conflictual interactions has remained consistently low. This makes sense in the context of the generally constructive interactions between European Union member states. However we posit that where conflict does exist, it is most likely to appear between parties who differ on European integration and populism. Table 1 gives a breakdown of interactions by country, including a list of parties appearing in the lion's share of interactions for each country.

Comparing coded media reports of elites' cross-national interactions.

While we believe our measure represents the most comprehensive media-based estimate of cross-national, inter-party cooperation, and conflict devised to date, it cannot perfectly capture the true tenor of all cross-national party interactions, let alone these elites' sincere feelings toward each other. Weschle (2018) notes that the ICEWS codings of national media reports may disproportionately cover national party leaders' behavior, with more limited coverage of local politicians and backbench MPs. The counterpoint to this caveat is that interactions involving party leaders (and other high-ranking elites) are typically more consequential than those involving backbenchers or local politicians, especially at the international level. Furthermore, many important EU-level policy decisions are made by members of domestic governments, who by definition are party elites serving in EU level institutions. Deliberations about such decisions are

among the most consequential cross-national inter-party interactions within the EU and are examples of the types of interactions included in the ICEWS data. Finally, studies from multiple European countries report strong issue and frame convergence between parties' actual messaging and media coverage of these messages (e.g. Merz, 2017; Wirth et al., 2010).

A second concern is that different countries' media systems may vary in ways that generate different balances of reported cooperative versus conflictual party interactions. Elites also at times strategically engage in "performative" cross-national interactions that do not necessarily reflect their underlying attitudes. As discussed above we expect that diplomatic considerations sometimes prompt governing parties to performatively initiate cooperative cross-national interactions. However we see this as a feature of our study, not a bug: performative actions have consequences—which is why elites perform them!—and we seek to explain and predict how elites actually behave, regardless of their sincerity.

The above considerations suggest that we should not naively interpret the ratio of the ICEWS coded media reports of cooperative versus conflictual cross-national interactions as a reliable measure of the actual tones of all relevant elite interactions. Therefore, we include country fixed-effects for both the "sending" and "target" parties in our analyses, which should capture cross-national differences in media systems, including different systems' biases toward reporting political conflict as opposed to cooperation. Furthermore, by recognizing that we analyze the tenor of elite interactions, whether sincere or performative, we can address the question: When analyzing interactions between the party elites from countries A and B, what are the characteristics of those

party pairs which display higher versus lower proportions of reported cooperative interactions, relative to conflictual interactions? We proceed by examining this question empirically.³

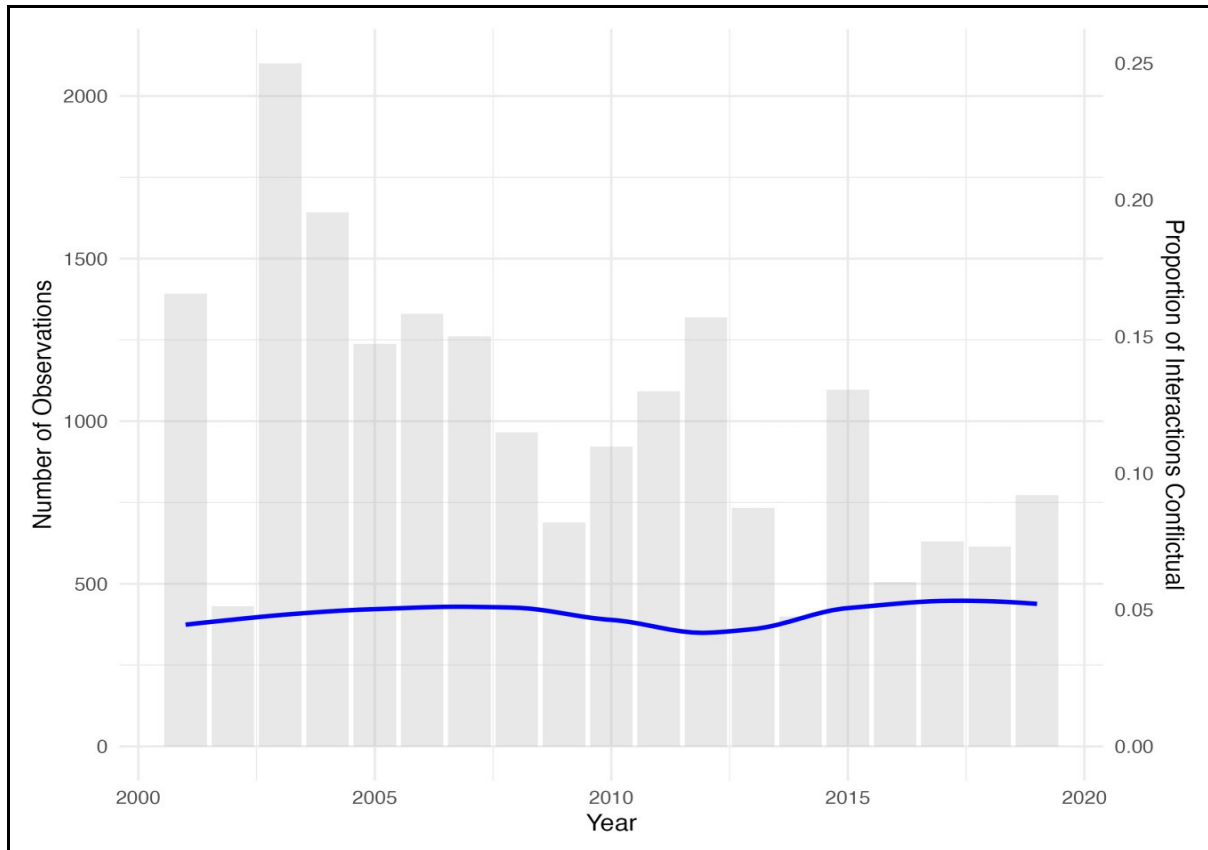


Figure 1. Average conflict and number of interactions over time.

Note: The blue line is a Loess smoother displaying the average level of cross-national conflict between political parties in each year (with values displayed on the right-hand axis). The gray bars display the number of observations included in our analysis for each year (with values displayed on the left-hand axis).

³ It is also important to acknowledge a plausible negativity bias in news media across the board. Outlets likely over-report conflict in order to drum up interest from readers. However, it is not immediately clear whether this negativity bias would influence our results. For example, why would news outlets over-report conflict between populist and nonpopulists but not report conflict between two nonpopulist parties? It seems more likely that news-outlets report more conflict across all types of party dyads.

Measuring the independent variables

It is common to refer to parties as “Eurosceptic” or “populist,” as we do when referring to Hungary’s Fidesz or France’s National Rally. However, parties not commonly identified as populist or Eurosceptic may employ populist rhetoric or advocate policies identified with populism or Euroscepticism. For these reasons, best practices suggest measuring the degree of Euroscepticism and populism for all parties along a continuum, which is what we do in our analyses.

To evaluate the European integration hypothesis (*HI*), that parties’ cross-national interactions are more likely conflictual as their European integration positions diverge, we measure parties’ European integration positions in two ways. In model 1 we use the Manifesto Project Dataset’s (MPD) party manifesto codings for European Parliament elections which are generated using the MPD’s manifesto coding method (Lehmann et al. 2023). Higher values denote a more pro-European integration position. Our MPD Euroscepticism distance variable is the absolute value of the difference between party *i* and *j*’s coded orientations toward European integration, labeled [*EU integration difference between parties i, j in countries A, B*]. In model 2 we use the CHES index party placements on European integration (Jolly et al., 2022).⁴ We construct our party Euroscepticism difference variables using parties’ most recently measured positions, so that for instance our Euromanifesto-based party difference measure in the 2010 calendar year is based on their manifesto codings from the 2009 European Parliament elections.⁵

⁴ The question we relied on from the CHES survey was “EU_POSITION=overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration in [CHES survey year]?”

⁵ The coded Euromanifestos we analyze are from 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019. The CHES expert-based party position measures from 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2019.

To evaluate the populism differences hypothesis (*H2*), that the greater the difference between cross-national parties' degrees of populism the more likely their interactions are conflictual, we measure populism using the Varieties of Democracy's V-Party database (Lührmann et al., 2020) which provides party populism scores stretching back decades, based on expert codings of parties' pro-people and anti-elite rhetoric. Higher values denote more populist parties. For each cross-national interaction in our dataset, we take the absolute value of the difference between party *i*'s and party *j*'s populism score to create our Populism Distance variable, [*Populism difference between parties i, j in countries A, B*].

While Eurosceptic parties are often populist and vice versa, these are distinct phenomena in that some populist parties are not Eurosceptic (such as SYRIZA in Greece) and some Eurosceptic parties are not populist (such as the Left Bloc in Portugal in its early days). Indeed, our party populism and Euroscepticism measures correlate only modestly (at about 0.3–0.4), across parties from the 13 countries in our dataset. Figure 2 displays this relationship, using the MPD codings to measure party Euroscepticism (Figure 2(a)), then using the CHES codings (Figure 2(b)). While these figures suggest there are two clusters of parties—a large group of lower-Euroscepticism and lower-populism parties and a much smaller cluster of high-Euroscepticism, high-populism parties—the figures reveal a great deal of variation. Furthermore the correlation between Euroscepticism and populism is only 0.18 when using the Manifesto Project Data and 0.47 when using the CHES index, reinforcing the idea that these are separate phenomena. Our models also include dummy variables to control for whether the party that was coded as initiating the cross-national interaction was currently in the national government, [*Sending party i is currently in government*], and for whether the target party was in the national government,

[*Target party j is currently in government*]. This data is taken from the PARLGOV database (Döring et al., 2022).

We include control variables to capture inter-party differences along two, crosscutting, dimensions of domestic policy debate, namely economic policy and cultural issue debates pertaining to minority rights, immigration, and national identity. A description of how we measure party differences along each dimension, using both the MPD national election manifesto codings of parties' and the CHES experts' party placements, is included in the Supplemental appendix. We control separately for the economic and cultural dimensions for two reasons, first because Gidron et al. (2020, 2023) find that citizens' hostility toward political opponents is more strongly related to cultural than to economic policy disputes, so that we separate these two dimensions when analyzing elite interactions. Second, parties with more conservative cultural positions also tend to be more populist, so that failure to control for cultural positions introduces omitted variable bias (the correlation between parties' cultural positions and their degree of populism is -0.275 when measuring cultural positions using the MPD codings and is -0.51 when using the CHES codings).

Finally, we control for country and year fixed effects to capture omitted variables including differences in each country's national media system along with temporal influences such as the global financial crisis that began in 2009 and the migration crisis that began in 2015.

Results

Table 2 presents simple cross-tabulations that bear on our hypotheses, on the 19,134 coded media reports of cross-national party cooperation and conflict in the ICEWS dataset from the 13 countries in our study between 2001 and 2019, for which we have measures of party populism levels and their positions with respect to Euroscepticism, cultural, and economic issues. The top row in Table

2a reports the share of party interactions that were coded as conflictual as a proportion of all conflictual or cooperative interactions, first for interactions between pairs of parties whose MPD-based Euroscepticism distance was below the median value in the dataset (column 1), and then for all party pairs with distances at or above the median (column 2).⁶ The proportion of conflictual interactions is below 10% for both sets of parties, that is, parties' interactions are mostly cooperative. However, the patterns support the European integration hypothesis (*H1*): the proportion of conflictual interactions for parties with larger measured Euroscepticism distances, 5.8%, is significantly greater ($p < .01$) than for pairs of parties with smaller differences, 3.8%.⁷ Row 2 in Table 2a reports the proportion of conflictual cross-national interactions for pairs of parties whose measured populism difference was at or above the median value in the dataset, 6.1%, and then for party pairs below the median populism distance, 3.4%. This difference is significant ($p < .01$) and supports the populism difference hypothesis (*H2*), that the greater the difference between parties' degrees of populism the more conflictual their interactions.

Table 2b reports proportions of conflictual interactions between pairs of parties who were both in government (column 1), and when one or both parties were in opposition (column 2). As expected, the proportion of conflictual interactions is higher when one or both parties was in opposition (10.0% vs. 3.8%, $p < .01$).

Multivariate analyses

⁶ A small proportion of parties' cross-national interactions in the ICEWS data (about 7%) were coded as "neutral." Subsection B.5 in the Supplemental appendix presents analyses that include these neutral cases, which support the same conclusions we report below.

⁷ The percentages are similar when measuring parties' European integration distances using CHES data: 4.4% of the interactions between parties at or above the median distance were coded as conflictual, while for party pairs below the median this proportion was 5.1%.

We next estimated multivariate logit models that accounted for all party characteristics simultaneously along with country and year fixed effects, where the outcome variable was a dummy variable that equaled 1 if the cross-national party interaction was coded as conflictual, and zero if it was coded as cooperative. We ran our analyses on the 19,134 coded cooperative and conflictual ICEWS cross-national party interactions, once using the Manifesto Project Dataset to measure Euroscepticism distance and the economic and cultural policy distance controls, and a second time using the CHES data. To account for likely heteroskedasticity we cluster standard errors at the party-dyad level. We also ran models using two-way clustered standard errors,

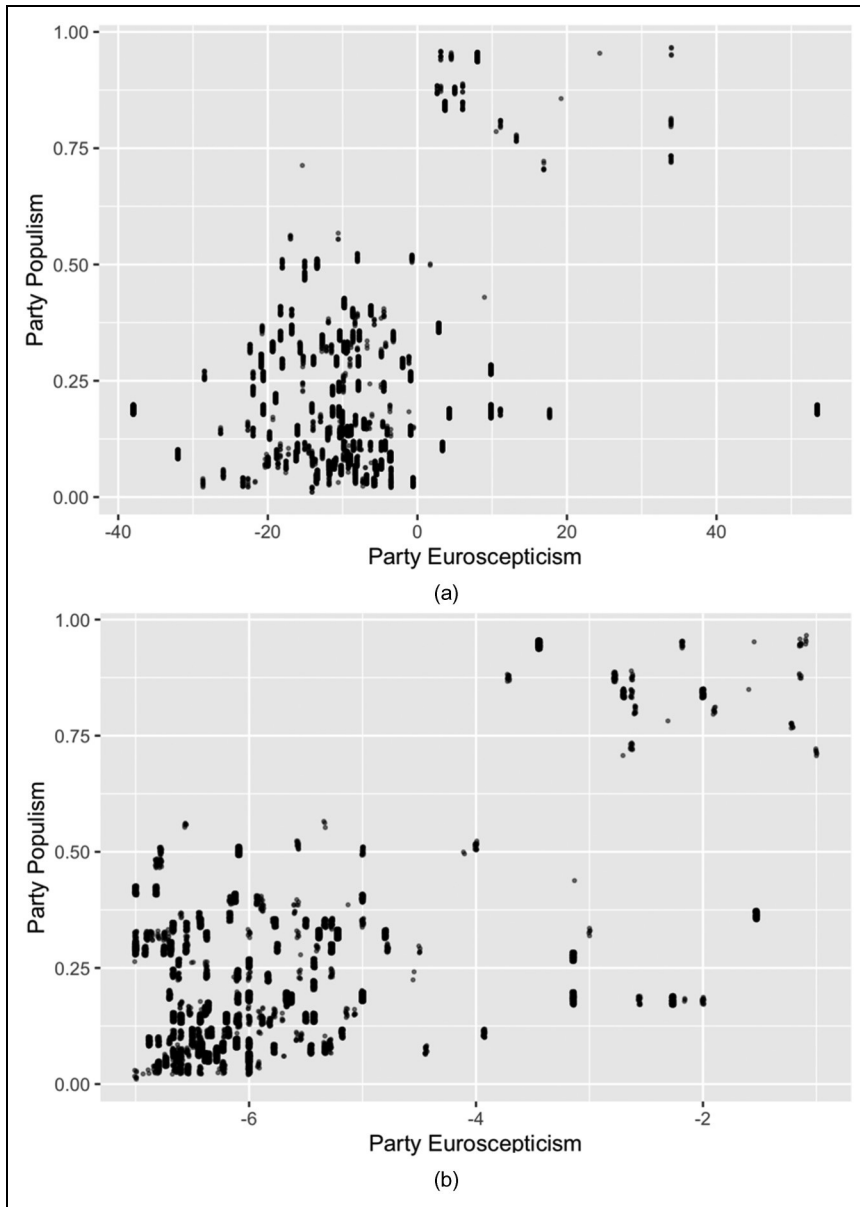


Figure 2. Parties' degrees of populism versus their Euroscepticism. (a) Party Euroscepticism measured using the Manifesto Project Database codings. (b) Party Euroscepticism measured using the CHES experts' party placements.

Note: The figures display parties' degrees of populism (the vertical axis) plotted against their degree of Euroscepticism (the horizontal axis). Party populism is measured using the Varieties of Democracy's V-Party database. Euroscepticism is measured via Euromanifesto codings in (a), and via the CHES party placements in (b). The figures include each party in the 13 European party systems included in our study, listed in the main text.

clustering for both source and target countries. The results are substantively identical to the results we report in the main text (see the Supplemental appendix).

Table 3 displays our results when using the the Manifesto Project Data measures of party positions (column 1) and the CHES measures (column 2). Note that all results are displayed as standardized coefficients. The results strongly support our hypothesis that cross-national, elite-level conflict is linked to party differences with respect to populism but provide mixed support for our hypothesized link to differences on European integration. With respect to populism, the estimates on the [*Populism distance between parties i, j*] variable, which are roughly +0.64 ($p < .001$) for both datasets, support our populism differences hypothesis (*H2*), implying that a 1 SD increase in parties' populism differences increases their probability of conflict by a factor of roughly 1.9, all else equal, that is, it nearly doubles the predicted conflict probability.⁸ Thus a party pair whose predicted conflict probability is 5% given their observed level of populism distance would see this predicted probability rise to roughly $((0.05/1-0.05) \times 1.9) = 10\%$ if their populism distance increased by one standard deviation, all else equal.

With respect to EU integration, the results using MPD data reported in column 1 support our European integration hypothesis (*H1*). The estimates on the [*EU integration distance between parties i, j*] variable are about +0.23 ($p < .01$), implying that a one standard deviation increase in parties' European integration distance increases their odds of conflict by a factor of roughly 1.2, when controlling for party populism differences, economic and cultural issue distances, governing status, and country-year fixed effects.⁹ This implies that a party pair whose predicted likelihood of

⁸ For the MPD data, the estimate on the [*Populism difference between parties i, j*] variable, +0.64 ($p < .01$), implies that a 1 SD increase in this variable level increases the odds of conflict by a factor of $\exp(0.64) = 1.90$, all else equal. For the CHES analyses the estimate +0.63 ($p < .01$) implies that a 1 SD increase raises the odds of conflict by a factor of $\exp(0.63) = 1.88$.

⁹ For the MPD-based estimates in column 1, the estimate on the [*EU integration distance between parties i, j*] variable, +0.23 ($p < .01$), implies that a 1 SD increase in this variable level increases the odds of conflict by a factor of

conflict is 5% given their observed level of Euroscepticism distance would see this predicted probability rise to roughly $((0.05/1-0.05)) \times 1.26 = 6.6\%$ if this distance increased by 1 SD, all else equal. However, these results are not fully replicated using the CHES data as reported in column 2. The coefficient for [*EU integration distance between parties i, j*], is positive, drops to roughly 0.15, falling out of statistical significance. While differences over European integration contribute to conflict in cross-national party interactions, parties' differences over populism contribute much more strongly. Indeed, our results suggest that populism is the primary driver of cross-national elite conflict within the European Union.

Our estimates on the populism distance and (somewhat weaker) European integration variables are important, first, because they imply that populism differences intensify cross-national party conflict independently of parties' European integration differences (and of their differences with respect to domestic economic and cultural policy debates). Second, our estimates imply that populism differences provoke *more* cross-national party conflict than do differences over European integration. Our standardized coefficient estimates imply that a 1 SD increase in the populism distance between parties nearly doubles the predicted probability of a conflictual interaction, while a 1 SD European integration distance increase raises this probability by a factor of only about 1.2 (and then only when using the MPD data). Moreover, recall that parties' measured degrees of populism correlate only moderately with their measured positions on European integration (see Figure 2 above). Simply put, parties' European integration positions are more weakly connected to their populist orientations than is commonly supposed, and it is party populism differences that

$\exp(0.23)=1.26$, all else equal. For the CHES-based analyses in column 2, the estimate on this variable, $+0.15$ ($p<.01$) implies that a 1 SD increase in this variable level increases the odds of conflict by a factor of $\exp(0.15)=1.16$.

are more strongly linked to the tenor of cross-national interactions. And as we discuss below, this strong populism effect is not primarily driven by interactions involving radical populist parties of

Table 3. Logit regression with standardized coefficients predicting conflictual cross-national interactions between parties, 2001–2019 ($N = 19,134$).

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual Interaction	
	MPD controls (1)	CHES controls (2)
EU integration distance between parties i,j	0.23* (0.10)	0.15 (0.10)
Populism distance between parties i,j	0.64*** (0.10)	0.62*** (0.12)
Initiating party i in government	−0.72*** (0.21)	−0.75*** (0.21)
Target party j in government	−0.66*** (0.19)	−0.67** (0.21)
Economic policy distance between parties i,j	−0.08 (0.09)	−0.03 (0.09)
Cultural policy distance between parties i,j	0.09 (0.09)	0.11 (0.09)
Constant	−0.56 (0.48)	−0.70 (0.48)
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Clustered SEs (dyad)	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,134	19,134
Log Likelihood	−3180.91	−3187.15
Akaike Inf. Crit.	6459.83	6472.30

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Note: Standard errors are clustered at the party-dyad level. The outcome variable is a dummy variable denoting whether the media report of the cross-national party interaction was coded as conflictual in the ICEWS dataset. The interactions are for the 13 EU member countries listed in the text. The standardized coefficient estimates denote the predicted effect of a 1 SD change in the level of the independent variable. The Supplemental appendix reports estimated country and year fixed effects. CHES: Chapel Hill Expert Survey; ICEWS: Integrated Crisis Early Warning System; MPD: Manifesto Project Dataset.

the right and left: the effect persists when we omit these parties from our analyses, that is, populism differences can drive conflict even between pairs of mainstream parties with moderately different populist orientations.

Figure 3 illustrates how varying party differences with respect to European integration and populism affect the predicted probability that a cross-national interaction is conflictual.¹⁰ In both panels, the vertical axis displays the predicted probability of a conflictual cross-national interaction, while the horizontal axis displays party differences with respect to European integration (Figure 2(a)) and populism (Figure 2(b)), with the levels varying from roughly 1 SDs below to 2 SDs above the median value in the dataset. We see that as parties' European integration differences increase across this range, the predicted conflict probability rises from about 20% to 30% (with all other variables held constant), while when parties' populism differences increase across this range the predicted conflict probability increases much more sharply, from about 15% to 50%.

With respect to governing status, a key control in our analysis, the estimates on the variables [*Initiating party i is currently in government*] and [*Target party j is currently in government*], which are in the range of -0.66 to -0.75 ($p < .01$) for both variables in both datasets, implying that a party switching from opposition to governing status decreases their odds of conflict by a factor of roughly 0.49, all else equal.

Finally, we detect no evidence that party differences with respect to domestic policy debates over economic issues are associated with higher incidence of conflict: the estimates on the [*Economic policy distance between parties i, j*] and [*Cultural policy distance between parties i, j*] variables are near zero and insignificant for both the MPD-based and the CHES-based data analyses.

¹⁰ The computations displayed in Figure 3 are based on the coefficient estimates using the MPD-based party position measures reported in column 1 of Table 3. The Supplemental appendix displays parallel computations using the CHES-based party positions reported in column 2.

Robustness checks

First, to assess whether our conclusions were driven by a single outlier country among the 13 countries in our study, we re-estimated our models while omitting one country at a time, first omitting all cases where a party from the focal country initiated the interaction, then omitting cases where a party from that country was the interaction target. These analyses, reported in the Supplemental appendix, continue to support our hypotheses although the estimate on the [*Euroscepticism distance between parties i, j*] variable falls out of significance in one of the MPD models and at times becomes significant in the CHES models.

Next, we analyzed whether the party populism effects we estimate are primarily driven by interactions involving the most populist parties in our dataset. To explore this issue, we re-estimated our models while omitting interactions involving any party that scored above 0.8 on the V-Dem populism index, thereby omitting all radical right and left parties in our dataset. These analyses, reported in the Supplemental appendix, continue to support the populism differences hypothesis (*H2*). These estimates suggest that even modest differences in the degrees of populism between two mainstream parties can drive cross-national conflict.

Next, to test whether a simpler, unidimensional measure of parties' positions on domestic issues yielded different results, we repeated the analysis using both MPD and CHES's measures of a parties' position on the left-right spectrum, or [*Left-right distance between parties i, j*].¹¹ In the Supplemental appendix we show that these results are substantively identical to the main results. The support for our two hypotheses is unchanged and domestic policy differences still have no measurable relationship with the level of conflict parties direct cross-nationally.

¹¹ As with our other difference measures, these measures were calculated by taking the difference between the sending and targeting parties left-right place according to the respective datasets.

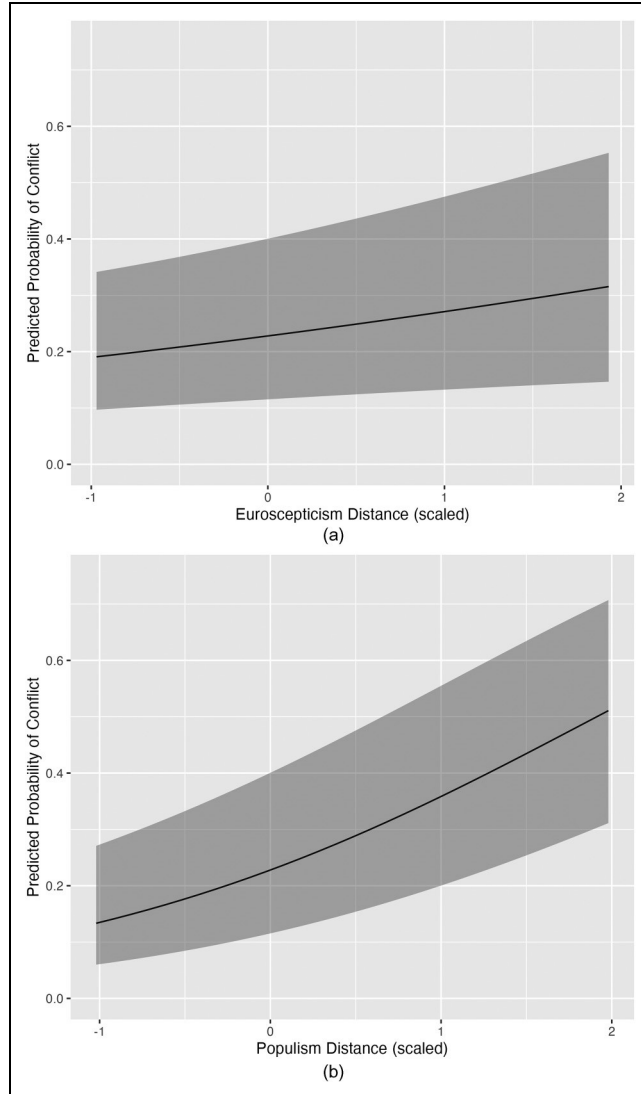


Figure 3. Predicted probabilities of a conflictual cross-national interaction as a function of party differences over European integration and populism. (a) European integration differences. (b) Populism differences.

Note: The panels display the effects of the *[EU integration distance between parties i, j]* variable (a) and the *[Populism difference between parties i, j]* variable (b) on the predicted probability that a cross-national interaction between parties i, j will be conflictual. In these figures, the simulated country pair is Germany (where a nongovernment party is the initiator of the interaction) and the United Kingdom (where a government party is the target of the interaction) in 2017, with all other variables held at their mean value. The shaded regions represent 95% confidence intervals (based on party-dyad clustered SEs). The computations are based on the coefficient estimates reported in column 1 of Table 2.

Finally, because the V-Dem party populism measures are based on experts' retrospective estimates of party populism rather than contemporaneous estimates, we re-estimated our models on the data from recent time periods (first from 2010 onwards, then from 2011 onwards), thereby omitting the earlier in our dataset for which the party populism estimates may be less reliable. These analyses, reported in the Supplemental appendix, continue to support all our substantive conclusions.

Discussion

Populist and Eurosceptic parties' growing popular support has created a new transnational cleavage challenging European integration. Analyzing nearly 20,000 coded news reports of cross-national party interactions in 13 EU member states between 2001 and 2019, we analyze how elite-level, cross-national party conflict and cooperation is related to parties' differing orientation toward European integration and, especially, populism. We argue and empirically show that parties' European integration disagreements are related to cross-national conflict, and also that parties' differing populist orientations—which are less strongly related to Euroscepticism than is commonly believed—are associated with elite conflict independently of Euroscepticism, and indeed to a greater degree. These relationships obtain even in analyses that exclude radical right and left populist parties. To the extent these are causal relationships they imply that it is differences over populism, and its Manichean premise that mainstream parties are agents of a corrupt establishment working against ordinary peoples' interests, which are key drivers of cross-national party conflict, over and above specific debates over European integration. We also estimate that governing parties display diminished incidences of crossnational conflict, possibly because of the

exigencies of international diplomacy, and we detect no evidence that conflict is related to party differences over domestic policy debates on economic or cultural issues.

Our arguments and empirics extend previous research on elite-level, interparty conflict from domestic politics (see, e.g. Weschle, 2018; Lucas and Sheffer, 2025) to the crossnational level. Our findings on the relationship between party populism differences and elite conflict also extend previous research on mass-level affective polarization, that links parties' differing populist orientations to their supporters' mutual dislike (e.g. Davis et al., 2024; Fuller et al., 2022).

We see several promising directions for future research. First, we could extend our analyses of the tones of parties' cross-national interactions to analyze the volume of such interactions, that is, what are the characteristics of pairs of parties that interact more or less frequently on the international stage? Second, we could explore the impact of additional structural factors that plausibly inflame the tones of parties' cross-national interactions. For instance, do parties initiate higher (lower) proportions of conflictual cross-national interactions around the times of national elections or elections to the European Parliament, or during domestic economic recessions? Are governing parties that are unpopular domestically inclined to provoke cross-national conflict, as scholars have speculated (Pickering and Kisangani, 2005; Haynes, 2017). And do parties' patterns of cross-national cooperation and conflict tend to change when they change their leaders?

Second, one could parse out the causal mechanisms driving the observational patterns we detect. While it seems problematic to experimentally manipulate party elites' incentives, we could qualitatively analyze their cross-national interactions, in an effort to unpack the substance of elites' cooperation and conflict. For instance, are cross-national conflicts between parties with differing populist orientations typically related to the core substance of populism, that is, the alleged corruption and unresponsiveness of political institutions, or are these sometimes "proxy" conflicts

where parties with differing populist orientations pick fights with each other over whatever issue comes to hand? Related, we could extend our analyses outside of the European Union member states, to determine how populism conditions cross-national interactions between party elites from other sets of countries.

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Appendix 1: Populism as a Threat to Liberal Democracy: Evidence from Europe

A.1. List of Countries

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom

Countries with populist entry:

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland

A.2. Country Average Liberal Democracy Scores

Country	Mean Liberal Democracy Score
Belarus	0.099
Kosovo	0.346
Montenegro	0.366
North Macedonia	0.379
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.412
Albania	0.417
Serbia	0.432
Romania	0.515
Bulgaria	0.587
Malta	0.608
Hungary	0.619
Croatia	0.660
Latvia	0.722
Poland	0.733
Slovakia	0.744
Slovenia	0.759
Lithuania	0.774
Italy	0.782
Greece	0.783
Luxembourg	0.785
Austria	0.789
Iceland	0.790
Czech Republic	0.791
United Kingdom	0.802
Spain	0.804
Ireland	0.811
France	0.815
Estonia	0.822
Netherlands	0.823
Belgium	0.825
Portugal	0.835
Finland	0.838
Switzerland	0.848
Germany	0.855
Norway	0.863
Sweden	0.887
Denmark	0.887

Table 2: Average Liberal Democracy Scores by Country, 2000–2022

A.3. Main Models: Tables

Changes in Liberal Democracy	
Time -3	-0.005 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 0	-0.002 (0.001)
Time 1	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.004 (0.003)
Time 3	-0.004 (0.003)
Treated	0.002 (0.005)
GDP Growth	-0.001 (0.002)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	0.007 (0.007)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.005 (0.004)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.009* (0.004)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.020** (0.007)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.017* (0.007)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.021* (0.008)
Num.Obs.	1209
R2	0.917
R2 Adj.	0.912
RMSE	0.03
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001	

Table 3: Effect of Populist Entry on Liberal Democracy

Changes in Liberal Democracy	
Time -3	-0.001 (0.002)
Time -2	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 0	0.002 (0.001)
Time 1	0.002 (0.002)
Time 2	0.003 (0.003)
Time 3	0.004 (0.004)
Treated	0.009 (0.009)
GDP Growth	-0.004 (0.002)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	-0.005 (0.007)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	-0.006+ (0.003)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.001 (0.006)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	0.001 (0.006)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	0.005 (0.012)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.013 (0.009)
Num.Obs.	301
R2	0.982
R2 Adj.	0.979
RMSE	0.01
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 4: Effect of Populist Opposition Entry on Liberal Democracy

Changes in Liberal Democracy	
Time -3	-0.004 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 0	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 1	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.004 (0.003)
Time 3	-0.004 (0.003)
Treated	0.000 (0.006)
GDP Growth	-0.002 (0.002)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	0.008 (0.007)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.006+ (0.003)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.009** (0.003)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.018** (0.007)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.015* (0.007)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.016* (0.007)
Num.Obs.	1225
R2	0.917
R2 Adj.	0.912
RMSE	0.03
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 5: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry on Liberal Democracy

Changes in Liberal Democracy	
Time -3	-0.003 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 0	-0.002 (0.001)
Time 1	-0.002 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.005+ (0.003)
Time 3	-0.005 (0.003)
Treated	0.001 (0.004)
GDP Growth	-0.001 (0.002)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	-0.001 (0.007)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.000 (0.003)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.005 (0.005)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.005 (0.007)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.001 (0.007)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.004 (0.007)
Num.Obs.	1086
R2	0.936
R2 Adj.	0.932
RMSE	0.03
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 6: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry on Liberal Democracy

Robustness Checks

B.1. Alternative Estimator: Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille

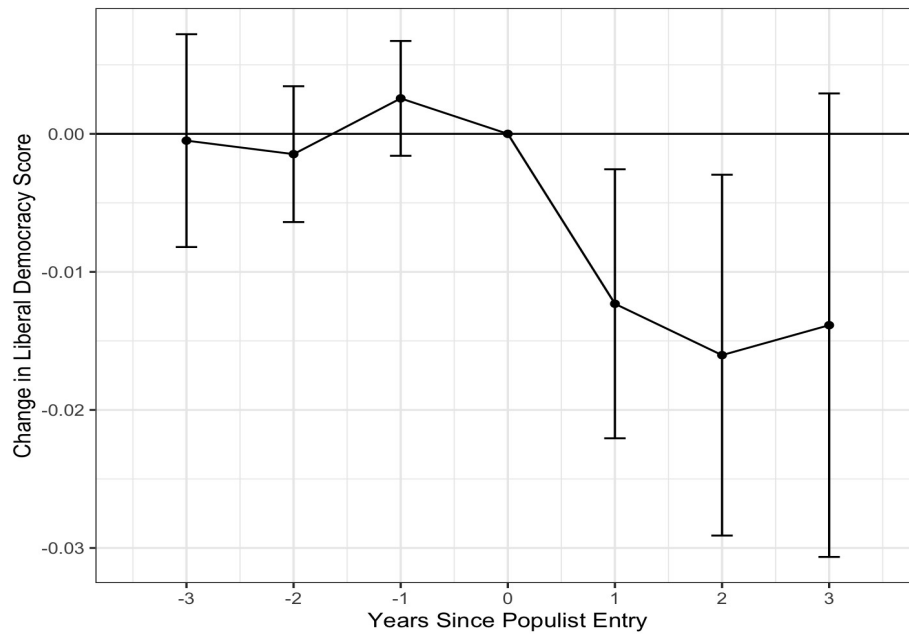


Figure 9: Effect of Populist Entry on Liberal Democracy

Changes in Liberal Democracy	
Time -3 (Placebo)	-0.0005 (0.0039)
Time -2 (Placebo)	-0.0015 (0.0025)
Time -1 (Placebo)	0.0026 (0.0021)
Time 1	-0.0123** (0.005)
Time 2	-0.016** (0.0067)
Time 3	-0.0139 (0.0086)

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table 7: Effect of Populist Entry on Liberal Democracy Score, Chaisemartin and D'Haultfoeuille Estimator

B.2. Alternative Treatment Coding

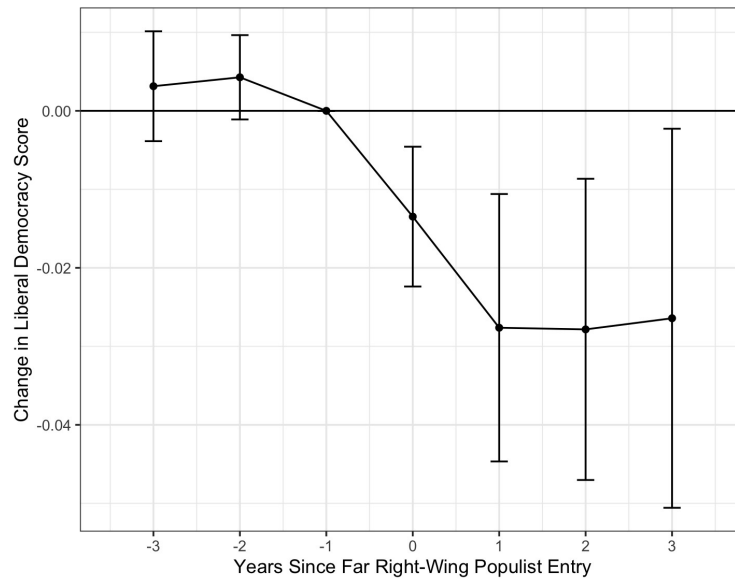


Figure 10: Effect of Far-right Populist Entry on Liberal Democracy

B.3. Jack Knife Analysis

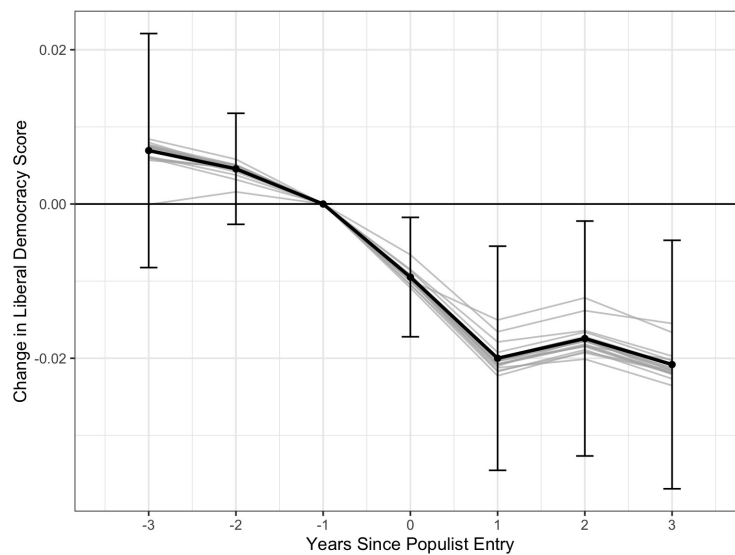


Figure 11: Effect of Populist Entry on Liberal Democracy, Leave-One-Out Analysis

Appendix 2: The Heterogeneous Effects of Populism on Liberal Democracy

A.1 Tables of pooled models

	Change in Civil Liberties
Time -3	-0.002 (0.002)
Time -2	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 0	0.000 (0.000)
Time 1	0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 3	-0.001 (0.001)
Treated	0.002 (0.002)
GDP Growth	0.000 (0.001)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	0.001 (0.003)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.001 (0.001)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.003* (0.001)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.006** (0.002)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.006* (0.002)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.007* (0.003)
Num.Obs.	1209
R2	0.906
R2 Adj.	0.901
RMSE	0.01
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 1: Effect of Populist Entry on Equality before the Law and Individual Liberties

Change in Judicial Constraints	
Time -3	-0.004 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.001 (0.002)
Time 0	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 1	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 3	-0.004 (0.003)
Treated	0.003 (0.005)
GDP Growth	0.000 (0.001)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	0.001 (0.007)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.003 (0.003)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.008* (0.004)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.012* (0.005)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.014+ (0.008)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.016 (0.010)
Num.Obs.	1209
R2	0.771
R2 Adj.	0.758
RMSE	0.04
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 2: Effect of Populist Entry on Judicial Constraints on the Executive

Change in Legislative Constraints	
Time -3	-0.004 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.002 (0.001)
Time 0	-0.003+ (0.002)
Time 1	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 2	-0.004 (0.002)
Time 3	-0.004 (0.003)
Treated	0.002 (0.006)
GDP Growth	-0.001 (0.001)
Time -3 × Treated	0.007 (0.007)
Time -2 × Treated	0.005 (0.004)
Time 0 × Treated	-0.004 (0.005)
Time 1 × Treated	-0.010 (0.006)
Time 2 × Treated	-0.008 (0.007)
Time 3 × Treated	-0.013 (0.008)
Num.Obs.	1209
R2	0.935
R2 Adj.	0.931
RMSE	0.03
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table 3: Effect of Populist Entry on Legislative Constraints on the Executive

Change in Freedom of Expression	
Time -3	-0.006 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.003 (0.002)
Time 0	-0.002 (0.001)
Time 1	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.003 (0.002)
Time 3	-0.004 (0.003)
Treated	0.003 (0.003)
GDP Growth	-0.001 (0.001)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	0.006 (0.008)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.004 (0.004)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.007+ (0.003)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.020* (0.008)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.018* (0.007)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.021* (0.008)
Num.Obs.	1209
R2	0.713
R2 Adj.	0.697
RMSE	0.03
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 4: Effect of Populist Entry on Freedom of Expression and Alternative Information

A.2 Tables and Plots, Ideological Breakdown

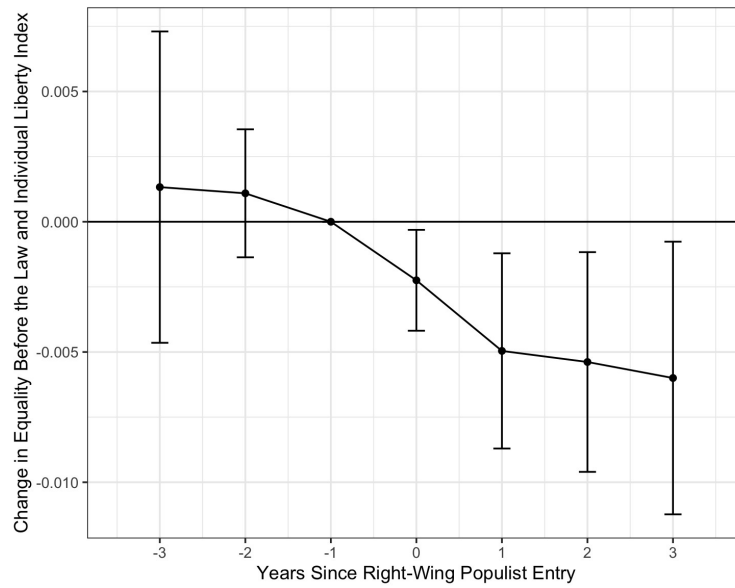


Figure 1: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry on Equality before the Law and Individual Liberties

Change in Civil Liberties	
Time -3	-0.001 (0.002)
Time -2	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 0	0.000 (0.000)
Time 1	0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 3	-0.001 (0.001)
Treated	0.002 (0.002)
GDP Growth	0.000 (0.001)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	0.001 (0.003)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.001 (0.001)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.002* (0.001)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.005* (0.002)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.005* (0.002)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.006* (0.003)
Num.Obs.	1225
R2	0.901
R2 Adj.	0.901
RMSE	0.01
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 5: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry on Equality before the Law and Individual Liberties

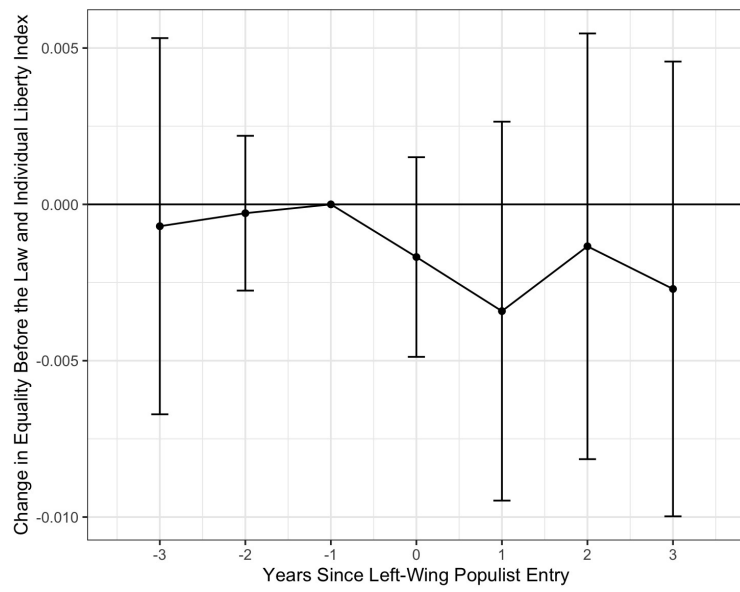


Figure 2: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry on Equality before the Law and Individual Liberties

	Change in Civil Liberties
Time -3	-0.001 (0.001)
Time -2	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 0	0.000 (0.000)
Time 1	0.000 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 3	-0.001 (0.001)
Treated	0.002 (0.003)
GDP Growth	-0.001 (0.001)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	-0.001 (0.003)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.000 (0.001)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.003 (0.003)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.001 (0.003)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.003 (0.004)
Num.Obs.	1086
R2	0.915
R2 Adj.	0.915
RMSE	0.01
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 6: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry on Equality before the Law and Individual Liberties

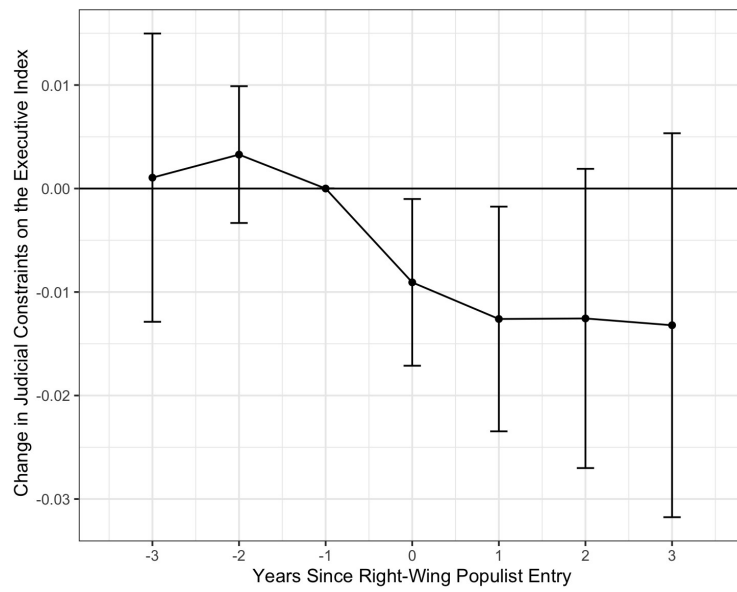


Figure 3: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry on Judicial Constraints on the Executive

Change in Judicial Constraints	
Time -3	-0.003 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.001 (0.002)
Time 0	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 1	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 3	-0.004 (0.003)
Treated	0.003 (0.006)
GDP Growth	-0.001 (0.001)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	0.001 (0.007)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.003 (0.003)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.009* (0.004)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.013* (0.005)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.013+ (0.007)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.013 (0.009)
Num.Obs.	1086
R2	0.758
R2 Adj.	0.758
RMSE	0.04
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 7: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry on Judicial Constraints on the Executive

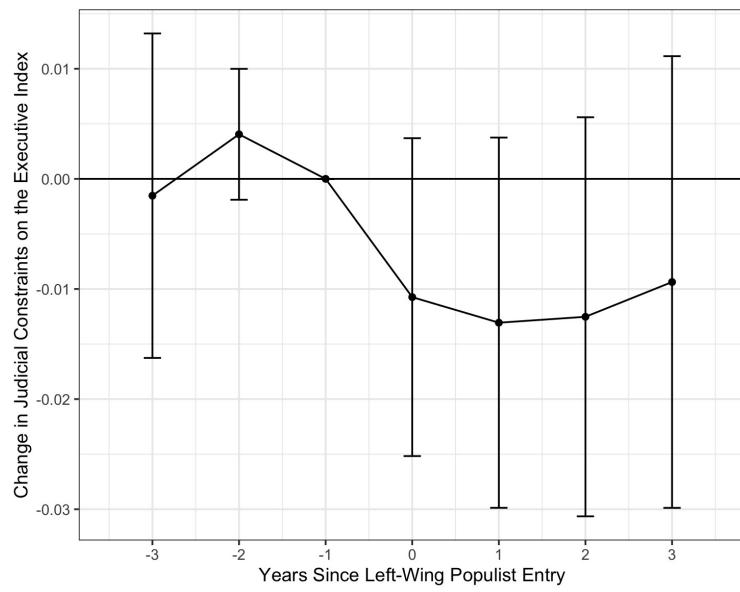


Figure 4: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry on Judicial Constraints on the Executive

	Change in Judicial Constraints
Time -3	-0.002 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.001 (0.002)
Time 0	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 1	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.003 (0.002)
Time 3	-0.004 (0.003)
Treated	0.007 (0.005)
GDP Growth	0.000 (0.001)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	-0.002 (0.007)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.004 (0.003)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.011 (0.007)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.013 (0.008)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	-0.013 (0.009)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.009 (0.010)
Num.Obs.	1086
R2	0.776
R2 Adj.	0.776
RMSE	0.04
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table 8: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry on Judicial Constraints on the Executive

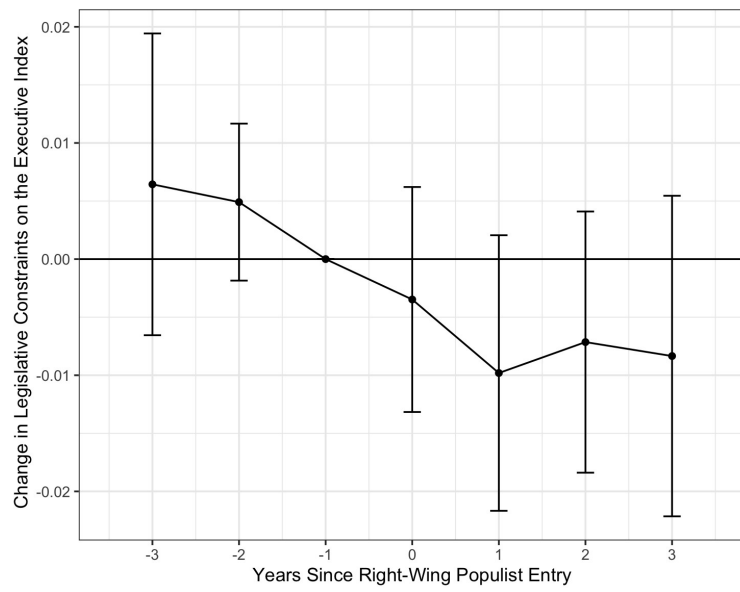


Figure 5: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry on Legislative Constraints on the Executive

	Change in Legislative Constraints
Time -3	−0.003 (0.004)
Time -2	−0.002 (0.001)
Time 0	−0.002 (0.001)
Time 1	−0.002 (0.002)
Time 2	−0.004 (0.002)
Time 3	−0.004 (0.003)
Treated	0.000 (0.006)
GDP Growth	−0.001 (0.001)
Time -3 × Treated	0.006 (0.006)
Time -2 × Treated	0.005 (0.003)
Time 0 × Treated	−0.003 (0.005)
Time 1 × Treated	−0.010 (0.006)
Time 2 × Treated	−0.007 (0.005)
Time 3 × Treated	−0.008 (0.007)
Num.Obs.	1225
R2	0.931
R2 Adj.	0.931
RMSE	0.03
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 9: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry on Legislative Constraints on the Executive

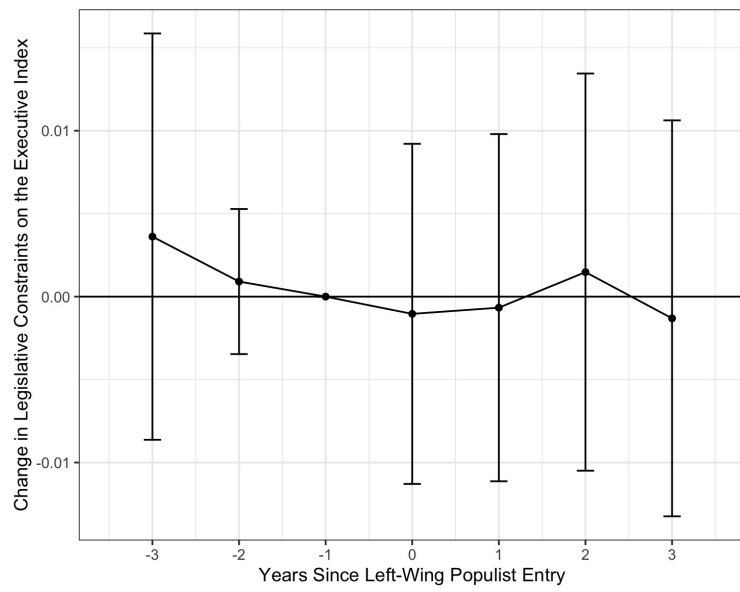


Figure 6: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry on Legislative Constraints on the Executive

Change in Legislative Constraints	
Time -3	-0.003 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.001 (0.002)
Time 0	-0.002 (0.001)
Time 1	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.003 (0.002)
Time 3	-0.003 (0.002)
Treated	0.000 (0.005)
GDP Growth	-0.001 (0.001)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	0.004 (0.006)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.001 (0.002)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.001 (0.005)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	-0.001 (0.005)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	0.001 (0.006)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	-0.001 (0.006)
Num.Obs.	1086
R2	0.948
R2 Adj.	0.948
RMSE	0.02
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 10: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry on Legislative Constraints on the Executive

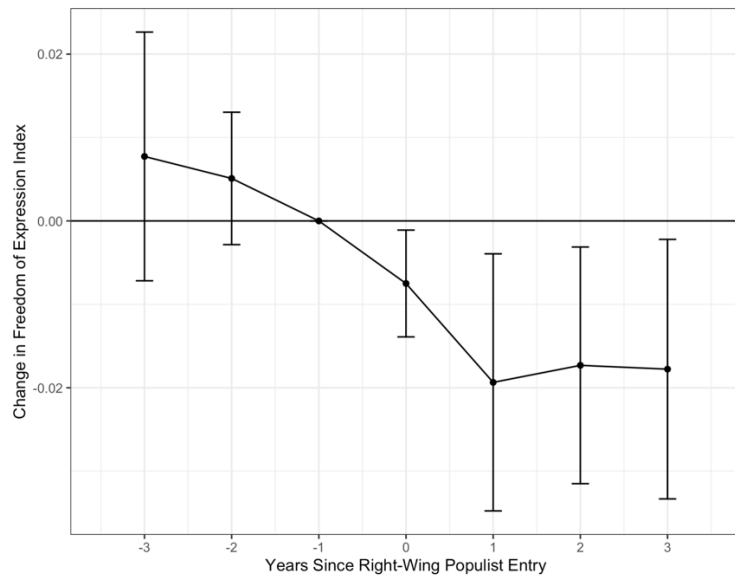


Figure 7: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry on Freedom of Expression and Alternative Information

Change in Freedom of Expression	
Time -3	−0.005 (0.004)
Time -2	−0.003 (0.002)
Time 0	−0.001 (0.001)
Time 1	−0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	−0.003 (0.002)
Time 3	−0.004 (0.003)
Treated	0.001 (0.004)
GDP Growth	−0.001 (0.001)
Time -3 × Treated	0.008 (0.007)
Time -2 × Treated	0.005 (0.004)
Time 0 × Treated	−0.007* (0.003)
Time 1 × Treated	−0.019* (0.008)
Time 2 × Treated	−0.017* (0.007)
Time 3 × Treated	−0.018* (0.008)
Num.Obs.	1225
R2	0.696
R2 Adj.	0.696
RMSE	0.03
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes
+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001	

Table 11: Effect of Right-Wing Populist Entry on Freedom of Expression and Alternative Information

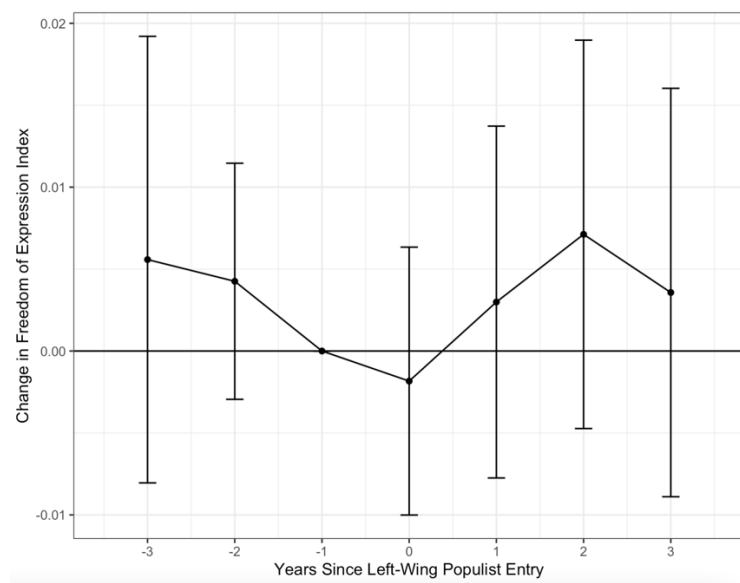


Figure 8: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry on Freedom of Expression and Alternative Information

Change in Freedom of Expression	
Time -3	-0.004 (0.004)
Time -2	-0.002 (0.002)
Time 0	-0.002 (0.001)
Time 1	-0.001 (0.001)
Time 2	-0.004+ (0.002)
Time 3	-0.005+ (0.003)
Treated	-0.007 (0.005)
GDP Growth	-0.001 (0.001)
Time -3 $\times$ Treated	0.006 (0.007)
Time -2 $\times$ Treated	0.004 (0.004)
Time 0 $\times$ Treated	-0.002 (0.004)
Time 1 $\times$ Treated	0.003 (0.005)
Time 2 $\times$ Treated	0.007 (0.006)
Time 3 $\times$ Treated	0.004 (0.006)
Num.Obs.	1086
R2	0.749
R2 Adj.	0.749
RMSE	0.02
Std.Errors	by: country_name
Country Year FE	Yes

+ p <0.1, * p <0.05, ** p <0.01, *** p <0.001

Table 12: Effect of Left-Wing Populist Entry on Freedom of Expression and Alternative Information

Appendix 3: Who Attacks Whom? How Populism and Euroscepticism Drive Cross-National Conflict Between European Party Elites

A Additional Information on Event Data

A.1. Discussion of Data Strengths and Limitations

Here we discuss the machine coding accuracy and possible limitations of the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) data set. One possible problem is that the event collection disproportionately covers reports of violence and war, given that the ICEWS project is designed to help predict domestic and international political crises. At the same time, the ICEWS also focuses on cross-national interactions – both conflictual and cooperative – which are largely non-violent, as evidenced by the fact that a large majority of the coded cross-national interactions in our statistical analyses (over 90%) are coded as cooperative. The project is designed to assemble an event collection that reflects the activities of countries' main sociopolitical actors as accurately as possible, based on analyses of a huge number of national and international news sources, listed below.

A number of contributions investigate the accuracy of the machine coding of the news reports. In a validation study, the BBN ACCENT algorithm developers report that the machine coding was judged correct in 68 to 75 percent of cases, using a sample of 500 event codings for each of three top-level CAMEO (Conflict and Mediation Event Observations) event codes (Boschee, Natarajan and Weischedel, 2013), and accuracy rates vary between 58 and 88 percent in an evaluation using all 20 top-level CAMEO event codes (Boschee et al., 2015). This compares well with human coding, a methodology subject to significant error rates (Mikhaylov, Laver and Benoit, 2012). For instance, King and Lowe (2003) evaluate event type coding done by trained undergraduates and report error rates of between 50 and 75 percent.

In the ICEWS data, events are classified according to the roughly 350 CAMEO categories, but for our empirical analyses we divide the events into cooperative and conflictual, which should significantly reduce coding errors. For instance, if an event reporting a government's announcement is classified as "Express intent to provide economic aid" when it would be more accurately classified as "Express intent to provide humanitarian aid," in our analyses it would still

be correctly classified as a cooperative interaction. Finally, any errors in the machine-codings of news reports should make it harder to detect statistical relationships between our independent variables (party differences with respect to populism, Euroscepticism, etc.).

A.2. Information on Media Sources

Our event data for the seven countries is drawn from media reports published in 242 different publications. They are:

AAP Bulletins, Ad Dustour, Agence Europe, Agence France-Presse, Agence Ivoirienne de Presse, Agencia Diarios y Noticias, Agencia EFE - Servicio em portugues, Agency Tunis Afrique Press (Arabic), AGERPRES, Akhbar Al Khaleej, AKIpress, Al Ahdath Al Maghribia, Al Arabiya, Al Dia, Al Gomhuriah, Al Ittihad, Al Jazeera English, Al Messa, Al Rai, Al Rayah, Al Sahwa, Al Shabiba, Al-Ahram Publishing House, Al-Bawaba News, Algerie-Focus, All Africa, Americas Review World of Information, Anadolu News Agency, ANSA - Spanish Service (BASP), ANSA- Servicio Economia en Latinoamerica, AP Spanish Worldstream, APANEWS, ARKA - News (Armenia), As Safir, Asharq Alawsat, Asia Pulse, Associated Press Newswires, Athens News Agency, Australian Associated Press, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) News, Baladna, Baltic Daily, Bangkok Post, BBC Monitoring, BBC Monitoring Africa, BBC Monitoring Americas, BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific, BBC Monitoring Caucasus, BBC Monitoring Central Asia, BBC Monitoring Central Europe and Balkans, BBC Monitoring European, BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union, BBC Monitoring Latin America, BBC Monitoring Media, BBC Monitoring Middle East, BBC Monitoring Newsfile, BBC Monitoring South Asia, BBC Monitoring Ukraine & Baltics, Black Sea Press, BNS Baltic Business News, Buenos Aires Herald, Bulgarian News Agency, Calgary Herald, Canada NewsWire, Cape Argus, Cape Times, Central News Agency English News, Channel NewsAsia, China Daily, CNN: Breaking News, Corporate Argentina, CTK Daily News, Daily Dispatch, Daily News, Daily Star, Daily Telegraph, Deutsche Welle, DJ em Portugues, Dow Jones Australia and New Zealand Report, Dow Jones Business News, Dow Jones

Emerging Markets Report, Dow Jones en Espanol, Dow Jones International News, Dow Jones News Service, EFE News Service, El Clarin, El Comercio, El Cronista, El Economista, El Mercurio, El Nacional, El Norte, El Nuevo Dia, El Pais, El Pais - English Edition, El Universal, El Watan, Electric Power Daily, eMarrakech, Esmerk Norwegian News, EurActiv.fr, Euronews, Europolitique, FARS News Agency, Folha de Sao Paulo, Gazeta do Povo, Guardian Unlimited, HINA, Hindustan Times, Horizons, Il Sole 24 Ore, India Today, Indo-Asian News Service, Inter Press Service, Interfax News Service, 2 Irish Times, ISI Emerging Markets Africawire, Israel Faxx, IT Market Statistics, ITAR Tass, Jeune Afrique.com, Jiji Press English News Service, Joins.com, Journal of Southern History, KBS World News - French Edition, Korea JoongAng Daily, Korea Times, Kuwait News Agency, Kyodo News, L' Orient-Le Jour, L'Essor, L'Expression, La Nacion, La Republica, Latin America News Digest, Latvian News Agency, Le Figaro, Le Journal de l'Ile de la Reunion, Le Monde, Le Progres Egyptien, Le Quotidien, Le Temps, Libya News Agency (LANA), Lithuanian News Agency - ELTA, London Evening Standard, Mainichi Daily News, Market Wire, Middle East and North Africa Today, Mist News, Mural, National Iraqi News Agency, New Straits Times, New Zealand Herald, New Zealand Press Association, Noticen: Central American & Caribbean Affairs, O Estado de Sao Paulo, O Globo, Oman News Agency, Organisation de la Presse Africaine, Organisation of Asia-Pacific News Agencies, Pacific Islands Broadcasting Association News Serv, PACNEWS, the Pacific News Agency Service, Palestinian News Network, Panorama Brasil - Portugues, PARI Daily, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PNA (Philippines News Agency), Polish News Bulletin, Prime-News (Georgia), Reforma, Resource News International, Reuters - Noticias Latinoamericanas, Reuters EU Highlights, Reuters News, RIA Novosti, RIA Vesti, Rompres, Rossiya Segodnya International Information Agency (Arabic), Russia & CIS General Newswire, SAINT (South Atlantic Islands News Team), SAPA (South African Press Association), Saudi Press Agency, SBS World News Headline Stories, SeeNews, Servicio Universal de Noticias, SITA Slovenska Tlacova Agentura, South China Morning Post, Spiegel Online International, Straits Times, Suddeutsche Zeitung, Syrian Arab News Agency, Taipei Times, TASR - Tlacova Agentura Slovenskej Republiky, Telecompaper Americas, Thai

News Service, The Asian Wall Street Journal, The Australian, The Christian Science Monitor, The Courier-Mail, The Economist, The Egyptian Gazette, The Hindu, The Jakarta Post, The Japan Times, The Jerusalem Post, The Korea Herald, The Mercury, The Moscow News, The Moscow Times, The Nation (Thailand), The New York Times, The News, The Oil Daily, The San Diego Union-Tribune, The Scotsman, The Sydney Morning Herald, The Times of India, The Toronto Star, The Tripoli Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Wall Street Journal Asia, The Wall Street Journal Europe, The Washington Post, The Yomiuri Shimbun (MCT), Trend News Agency (Azerbaijan), Turan Information Agency (Azerbaijan), Turkish Daily News, Ukrainian National News Agency, United News of Bangladesh Limited, Unknown, UPI Energy Resources, USA Today, UzReport.com, Valor Economico, Vietnam News Agency Bulletin, What The Papers Say, WPS: What the Papers Say, Xinhua News Agency, Yemen News Agency (Arabic), Yemen News Agency (SABA), Yogam Communications SARL, Yonhap English News.

A.3. Cooperative and Conflictual Event Types

Below is a list of types of events coded as either cooperative or conflictual.

Cooperative Event Codes:

- Make optimistic comment
- Engage in symbolic act
- Make empathetic comment
- Express accord
- Make an appeal or request, not specified below
- Appeal for material cooperation, not specified below
- Appeal for economic cooperation
- Appeal for military cooperation

- Appeal for judicial cooperation
- Appeal for intelligence
- Appeal for diplomatic cooperation (such as policy support)
- Appeal for aid, not specified below
- Appeal for economic aid
- Appeal for military aid
- Appeal for humanitarian aid
- Appeal for military protection or peacekeeping
- Appeal to others to meet or negotiate
- Appeal to others to settle dispute
- Appeal to engage in or accept mediation
- Express intent to cooperate, not specified below
- Express intent to engage in material cooperation, not specified below
- Express intent to cooperate economically
- Express intent to cooperate militarily
- Express intent to cooperate on judicial matters
- Express intent to cooperate on intelligence
- Express intent to engage in diplomatic cooperation (such as policy support)
- Express intent to provide material aid, not specified below
- Express intent to provide economic aid
- Express intent to provide military aid
- Express intent to provide humanitarian aid
- Express intent to provide military protection or peacekeeping
- Express intent to institute political reform, not specified below
- Express intent to change leadership
- Express intent to change policy
- Express intent to provide rights

- Express intent to change institutions, regime
- Express intent to yield, not specified below
- Express intent to ease administrative sanctions
- Express intent to ease popular dissent
- Express intent to release persons or property
- Express intent to ease economic sanctions, boycott, or embargo
- Express intent to allow international involvement (non-mediation)
- Express intent to de-escalate military engagement
- Express intent to meet or negotiate
- Express intent to settle dispute
- Express intent to accept mediation
- Express intent to mediate
- Consult, not specified below
- Discuss by telephone
- Make a visit
- Host a visit
- Meet at a “third” location
- Mediate
- Engage in negotiation
- Engage in diplomatic cooperation, not specified below
- Praise or endorse
- Defend verbally
- Rally support on behalf of
- Grant diplomatic recognition
- Apologize
- Forgive
- Sign formal agreement

- Engage in material cooperation, not specified below
- Cooperate economically
- Cooperate militarily
- Engage in judicial cooperation
- Share intelligence or information
- Provide aid, not specified below
- Provide economic aid
- Provide military aid
- Provide humanitarian aid
- Provide military protection or peacekeeping
- Grant asylum
- Yield, not specified below
- Ease administrative sanctions, not specified below
- Ease restrictions on political freedoms
- Ease ban on political parties or politicians
- Ease curfew
- Ease state of emergency or martial law
- Ease political dissent
- Accede to requests or demands for political reform, not specified below
- Accede to demands for change in leadership
- Accede to demands for change in policy
- Accede to demands for rights
- Accede to demands for change in institutions, regime
- Return, release, not specified below
- Return, release person(s)
- Return, release property
- Ease economic sanctions, boycott, embargo

- Allow international involvement, not specified below
- Receive deployment of peacekeepers
- Receive inspectors
- Allow humanitarian access
- De-escalate military engagement
- Declare truce, ceasefire
- Ease military blockade
- Demobilize armed forces
- Retreat or surrender militarily

Conflictual Event Codes:

- Decline comment
- Make pessimistic comment
- Deny responsibility
- Appeal for political reform, not specified below
- Appeal for change in leadership
- Appeal for policy change
- Appeal for rights
- Appeal for change in institutions, regime
- Appeal to yield, not specified below
- Appeal for easing of administrative sanctions
- Appeal for easing of political dissent
- Appeal for release of persons or property
- Appeal for easing of economic sanctions, boycott, or embargo
- Appeal for target to allow international involvement (non-mediation)
- Appeal for de-escalation of military engagement
- Investigate, not specified below

- Investigate crime, corruption
- Investigate human rights abuses
- Investigate military action
- Investigate war crimes
- Demand, not specified below
- Demand material cooperation, not specified below
- Demand economic cooperation
- Demand military cooperation
- Demand judicial cooperation
- Demand intelligence cooperation
- Demand diplomatic cooperation (such as policy support)
- Demand material aid, not specified below
- Demand economic aid
- Demand military aid
- Demand humanitarian aid
- Demand military protection or peacekeeping
- Demand political reform, not specified below
- Demand change in leadership
- Demand policy change
- Demand rights
- Demand change in institutions, regime
- Demand that target yields, not specified below
- Demand easing of administrative sanctions
- Demand easing of political dissent
- Demand release of persons or property
- Demand easing of economic sanctions, boycott, or embargo
- Demand that target allows international involvement (non-mediation)

- Demand de-escalation of military engagement
- Demand meeting, negotiation
- Demand settling of dispute
- Demand mediation
- Disapprove, not specified below
- Criticize or denounce
- Accuse, not specified below
- Accuse of crime, corruption
- Accuse of human rights abuses
- Accuse of aggression
- Accuse of war crimes
- Accuse of espionage, treason
- Rally opposition against
- Complain officially
- Bring lawsuit against
- Find guilty or liable (legally)
- Reject, not specified below
- Reject material cooperation
- Reject economic cooperation
- Reject military cooperation
- Reject request or demand for material aid, not specified below
- Reject request for economic aid
- Reject request for military aid
- Reject request for humanitarian aid
- Reject request for military protection or peacekeeping
- Reject request or demand for political reform, not specified below
- Reject request for change in leadership

- Reject request for policy change
- Reject request for rights
- Reject request for change in institutions, regime
- Refuse to yield, not specified below
- Refuse to ease administrative sanctions
- Refuse to ease popular dissent
- Refuse to release persons or property
- Refuse to ease economic sanctions, boycott, or embargo
- Refuse to allow international involvement (non mediation)
- Refuse to de-escalate military engagement
- Reject proposal to meet, discuss, or negotiate
- Reject mediation
- Reject plan, agreement to settle dispute
- Defy norms, law
- Veto
- Threaten, not specified below
- Threaten non-force, not specified below
- Threaten to reduce or stop aid
- Threaten with sanctions, boycott, embargo
- Threaten to reduce or break relations
- Threaten with administrative sanctions, not specified below
- Threaten with restrictions on political freedoms
- Threaten to ban political parties or politicians
- Threaten to impose curfew
- Threaten to impose state of emergency or martial law
- Threaten with political dissent, protest
- Threaten to halt negotiations

- Threaten to halt mediation
- Threaten to halt international involvement (non-mediation)
- Threaten with repression
- Threaten with military force, not specified below
- Threaten blockade
- Threaten occupation
- Threaten unconventional violence
- Threaten conventional attack
- Threaten attack with WMD
- Give ultimatum
- Engage in political dissent, not specified below
- Demonstrate or rally, not specified below
- Demonstrate for leadership change
- Demonstrate for policy change
- Demonstrate for rights
- Demonstrate for change in institutions, regime
- Conduct hunger strike, not specified below
- Conduct hunger strike for leadership change
- Conduct hunger strike for policy change
- Conduct hunger strike for rights
- Conduct hunger strike for change in institutions, regime
- Conduct strike or boycott, not specified below
- Conduct strike or boycott for leadership change
- Conduct strike or boycott for policy change
- Conduct strike or boycott for rights
- Conduct strike or boycott for change in institutions, regime
- Obstruct passage, block, not specified below

- Obstruct passage to demand leadership change
- Obstruct passage to demand policy change
- Obstruct passage to demand rights
- Obstruct passage to demand change in institutions, regime
- Protest violently, riot, not specified below
- Engage in violent protest for leadership change
- Engage in violent protest for policy change
- Engage in violent protest for rights
- Engage in violent protest for change in institutions, regime
- Demonstrate military or police power, not specified below
- Increase police alert status
- Increase military alert status
- Mobilize or increase police power
- Mobilize or increase armed forces
- Mobilize or increase cyber-forces
- Reduce relations, not specified below
- Reduce or break diplomatic relations
- Reduce or stop material aid, not specified below
- Reduce or stop economic assistance
- Reduce or stop military assistance
- Reduce or stop humanitarian assistance
- Impose embargo, boycott, or sanctions
- Halt negotiations
- Halt mediation
- Expel or withdraw, not specified below
- Expel or withdraw peacekeepers
- Expel or withdraw inspectors, observers

- Expel or withdraw aid agencies
- Coerce, not specified below
- Seize or damage property, not specified below
- Confiscate property
- Destroy property
- Impose administrative sanctions, not specified below
- Impose restrictions on political freedoms
- Ban political parties or politicians
- Impose curfew
- Impose state of emergency or martial law
- Arrest, detain, or charge with legal action
- Expel or deport individuals
- Use tactics of violent repression
- Attack cybernetically
- Use unconventional violence, not specified below
- Abduct, hijack, or take hostage
- Physically assault, not specified below
- Sexually assault
- Torture
- Kill by physical assault
- Conduct suicide, car, or other non-military bombing, not specified below
- Carry out suicide bombing
- Carry out vehicular bombing
- Carry out roadside bombing
- Carry out location bombing
- Use as human shield
- Attempt to assassinate

- Assassinate
- Use conventional military force, not specified below
- Impose blockade, restrict movement
- Occupy territory
- Fight with small arms and light weapons
- Fight with artillery and tanks
- Employ aerial weapons, not specified below
- Employ precision-guided aerial munitions
- Employ remotely piloted aerial munitions
- Violate ceasefire
- Use unconventional mass violence, not specified below
- Engage in mass expulsion
- Engage in mass killings
- Engage in ethnic cleansing
- Use weapons of mass destruction, not specified below
- Use chemical, biological, or radiological weapons
- Detonate nuclear weapons

B. Additional Analyses and Robustness Checks

B.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table B1: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Conflictual interaction	0.05	0.21	0.00	1.00
Populism distance between parties i,j	0.20	0.20	0.00	0.91
EU integration distance between parties i,j	14.07	14.65	0.00	82.15
MPD economic policy distance between parties i,j	10.95	8.70	0.01	61.84
MPD cultural policy distance between parties i,j	9.44	6.61	0.03	50.22
Initiating party i is currently in government	0.92	0.28	0.00	1.00
Target party j is currently in government	0.91	0.28	0.00	1.00
CHES EU integration distance between parties i,j	1.30	1.23	0.00	5.30
CHES economic policy distance between parties i,j	1.74	1.39	0.00	6.89
CHES cultural policy distance between parties i,j	1.85	1.43	0.00	7.07

B.2 Variable Codings

MPD coding of parties' economic and cultural policy positions

The economic left-right variable was created using the MPD coding scheme seen below. Each of the variables below are derived from the MPD codebook and take into account each party's stance on a free market economy, protectionism, economic growth, welfare state expansion, labour groups, and other economic issues.

Economy (State <-> Market):

(per401 + per402 + per407 + per410 + per414 + per505 + per507 + per702) - (per403 + per404 + per405 + per406 + per409 + per412 + per413 + per415 + per504 + per506 + per701)

The cultural left-right variable was created using the MPD coding scheme seen below. Each of the variables below are derived from the MPD codebook and take into account each party's stance on a national way of life, law and order, multiculturalism, freedom and human rights, equality, and other cultural issues.

Society (Progressive <-> Conservative):

$$(\text{per601} + \text{per603} + \text{per605} + \text{per608} + \text{per704}) - (\text{per201} + \text{per202} + \text{per503} + \text{per602} + \text{per604} + \text{per607})$$

CHES coding parties' economic and cultural policy positions

We use the LRECON measure which is the ideological stance of the party on economic issues. It is measured as follows:

LRECON = position of the party in YEAR in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues. Parties can be classified in terms of their stance on economic issues such as privatization, taxes, regulation, government spending, and the welfare state. Parties on the economic left want government to play an active role in the economy. Parties on the economic right want a reduced role for government.

0 = extreme left : 5 = center : 10 = extreme right

To measure the parties' cultural left-right positions we use the CHES GALTAN measure. It measures the ideological stance of the party on social and cultural issues. It is measured as follows:

GALTAN = position of the party in YEAR in terms of their views on social and cultural values. "Libertarian" or "postmaterialist" parties favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, abortion rights, divorce, and same-sex marriage. "Traditional" or "authoritarian" parties reject these ideas in favor of order, tradition, and stability, believing that the government should be a firm moral authority on social and cultural issues.

0 = Libertarian/Postmaterialist : 5 = center : 10 = Traditional/Authoritarian

B.3 Models Reporting Country and Year Fixed Effects Estimates

Table 2 in the main text reports the coefficient estimates on our key independent variables, for specifications that additionally included country and year fixed effects and clustered standard errors at the party-dyad level. Table B2 below reports these estimates

Table B2: Models with all Coefficients

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual	Interaction
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
EU integration distance between parties i,j	0.231* (0.100)	0.147 (0.102)
Populism distance between parties i,j	0.638*** (0.104)	0.620*** (0.115)
Initiating party i in government	−0.716*** (0.212)	−0.753*** (0.205)
Target party j in government	−0.660*** (0.194)	−0.668** (0.209)
Economic policy distance between parties i,j	−0.076 (0.087)	−0.033 (0.089)
Cultural policy distance between parties i,j	0.090 (0.094)	0.106 (0.091)
fyear2001	−0.826 (0.467)	−0.691 (0.456)
fyear2002	0.088 (0.567)	0.136 (0.556)
fyear2003	−1.321* (0.515)	−0.805 (0.461)
fyear2004	−0.740 (0.428)	−0.548 (0.396)
fyear2005	−0.415 (0.540)	−0.234 (0.467)
fyear2006	−0.602 (0.417)	−0.443 (0.394)
fyear2007	−0.913* (0.436)	−0.752 (0.409)
fyear2008	0.133 (0.437)	0.303 (0.425)
fyear2009	−0.325 (0.430)	−0.292 (0.437)

Continued on next page

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual Interaction	
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
fyear2010	−0.086 (0.406)	−0.085 (0.437)
fyear2011	−0.725* (0.357)	−0.721* (0.359)
fyear2012	−0.333 (0.473)	−0.431 (0.460)
fyear2013	−0.341 (0.418)	−0.473 (0.440)
fyear2014	−0.586 (0.435)	−0.560 (0.433)
fyear2015	−0.400 (0.452)	−0.361 (0.458)
fyear2016	−0.433 (0.439)	−0.422 (0.449)
fyear2018	−0.597 (0.465)	−0.592 (0.472)
fyear2019	−1.131* (0.474)	−1.316** (0.507)
fsourcecountryAustria	1.058** (0.322)	1.041** (0.348)
fsourcecountryBelgium	0.231 (0.333)	0.327 (0.335)
fsourcecountryDenmark	−0.521 (0.496)	−0.480 (0.497)
fsourcecountryFinland	−0.297 (0.668)	−0.272 (0.665)
fsourcecountryFrance	0.017 (0.251)	0.163 (0.277)
fsourcecountryGreece	−2.474*** (0.437)	−2.495*** (0.452)
fsourcecountryIreland	−0.203 (0.294)	−0.143 (0.282)

Continued on next page

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual Interaction	
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
fsourcecountryNetherlands	−0.171 (0.419)	−0.140 (0.410)
fsourcecountryPortugal	−0.399 (0.462)	−0.533 (0.484)
fsourcecountrySpain	−0.180 (0.234)	−0.329 (0.289)
fsourcecountrySweden	−0.273 (0.549)	−0.240 (0.536)
fsourcecountryUnited Kingdom	0.055 (0.245)	−0.016 (0.302)
ftargetcountryAustria	−0.848* (0.383)	−0.796* (0.406)
ftargetcountryBelgium	−1.134* (0.493)	−0.958 (0.521)
ftargetcountryDenmark	−0.886 (0.558)	−0.729 (0.544)
ftargetcountryFinland	−2.265* (1.016)	−2.211* (1.020)
ftargetcountryFrance	−0.576** (0.182)	−0.365 (0.217)
ftargetcountryGermany	−0.996*** (0.239)	−0.948** (0.300)
ftargetcountryGreece	−2.517*** (0.344)	−2.504*** (0.374)
ftargetcountryIreland	−0.915* (0.365)	−0.743 (0.437)
ftargetcountryNetherlands	−0.263 (0.493)	−0.194 (0.507)
ftargetcountryPortugal	−1.145* (0.504)	−1.203* (0.494)
ftargetcountrySpain	−0.946*** (0.239)	−1.017** (0.312)

Continued on next page

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual	Interaction
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
ftargetcountrySweden	−2.017** (0.757)	−1.997** (0.771)
Constant	−0.561 (0.484)	−0.699 (0.482)
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Clustered SEs (dyad)	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,134	19,134
Log Likelihood	−3,180.913	−3,187.152
Akaike Inf. Crit.	6,459.827	6,472.304
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

Notes. Standard errors are clustered at the party-dyad level. The outcome variable is a dummy variable denoting whether the media report of the cross-national party interaction was coded as conflictual in the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System data set. The interactions are for the thirteen EU member countries listed in the text. The standardized coefficient estimates denote the predicted effect of a 1 SD change in the level of the independent variable.

Table B3: Model with Two-Way Clustered SEs (both source and target country)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual	Interaction
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
EU integration distance between parties i,j	0.231* (0.102)	0.147 (0.088)
Populism distance between parties i,j	0.638*** (0.133)	0.620*** (0.139)
Initiating party i in government	−0.716*** (0.189)	−0.753*** (0.201)
Target party j in government	−0.660* (0.296)	−0.668* (0.283)
Economic policy distance between parties i,j	−0.076	−0.033 (0.069)
Cultural policy distance between parties i,j	0.090 (0.079)	0.106 (0.069)
Constant	−0.561 (0.608)	−0.699 (0.608)
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Two-way Clustered SEs (source and target country)	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,134	19,134
Log Likelihood	−3,180.913	−3,187.152
Akaike Inf. Crit.	6,459.827	6,472.304

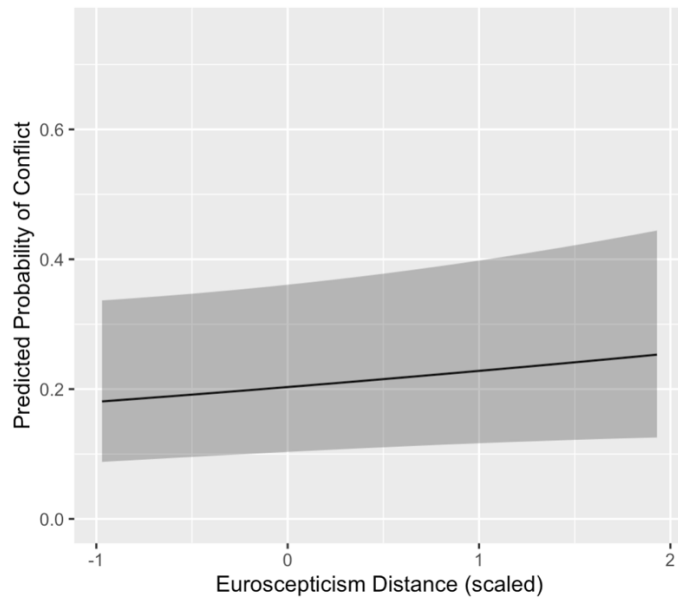
Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Notes. Models are run using two-way clustered standard errors, clustering for both the source and target country. The outcome variable is a dummy variable denoting whether the media report of the cross-national party interaction was coded as conflictual in the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System data set. The interactions are for the thirteen EU member countries listed in the text. The standardized coefficient estimates denote the predicted effect of a 1 SD change in the level of the independent variable.

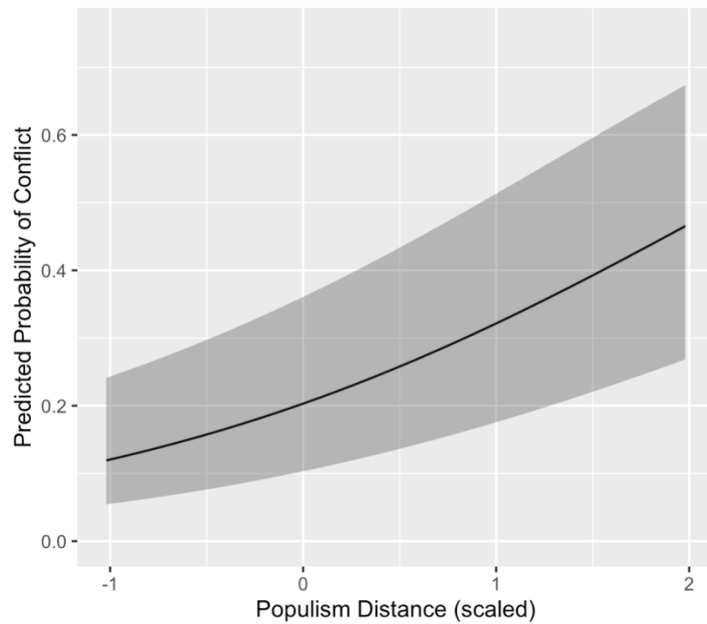
B.4. Predicted Conflict Probabilities Based on Analyses of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey Data

Figure 2 in the main text illustrates how varying party differences with respect to European integration and populism affect the predicted probability that a cross-national interaction is conflictual, based on the coefficient estimates using the MPD-based party position measures reported in column 1 of Table 2 in the main text. Figure B1 below reports parallel computations using the coefficient estimates based on the CHES data, reported in column 2 of Table 2 in the main text. In these figures, the simulated country-pair is Germany (where a non-government party is the initiator of the interaction) and the United Kingdom (where a government party is the target of the interaction) in 2017, with all other variables are held at their mean value. The patterns are extremely similar to those based on the MPD data: we see that as parties' European integration differences increase across the range from about 2 SDs below to 2 SDs above the mean value in the data set, the predicted conflict probability increases modestly (with all other variables held constant), while when parties' populism differences increase across this same range the predicted conflict probability increases much more sharply.

Figure B1: Predicted Probabilities (CHES Data)



Notes: The panels display the effects of the [*EU integration distance between parties i, j*] varia the predicted probability that a cross-national interaction between parties i, j will be conflictual. The shaded regions denote 95% confidence intervals. The computations are based on the coefficient reported in column 2 of Table 2 in the main paper, which use the CHES-based measures of party differences with respect to EU integration along with economic and cultural policies.



Notes: The panels display the effects of the [*Populism distance between parties i, j*] varia the predicted probability that a cross-national interaction between parties i, j will be conflictual. The shaded regions denote 95% confidence intervals. The computations are based on the coefficient reported in column 2 of Table 2 in the main paper, which use the CHES-based measures of party differences with respect to populism along with economic and cultural policies.

B.5 Robustness Checks

Analyses including events that were classified as neutral

In the main text of the paper we dichotomized the ICEWS event codings into cooperative and conflictual interactions, using the classifications listed in Section A.3 above. However a small proportion of the ICEWS codings of parties' cross-national interactions do not easily fit into this typology. These include events that were coded as “make statement”, “consider policy option”, or “acknowledge or claim responsibility”.

To explore the effects of including these neutral interactions in our analyses, we estimated multivariate regression models where cooperative interactions were scored at 0, neutral interactions were scored at 1, and conflictual interactions were scored at 2. There were 20,581 coded interactions in these analyses compared with 19,134 interactions in the analyses reported in the main text of the paper, i.e., there were 1,447 coded neutral events, constituting about 7% of the coded interactions. Table B4 reports the standardized coefficient estimates on regression analyses using a three-category dependent variable for the MPD data and the CHES data, which continue to support our substantive conclusions. We see that cross-national interactions become less cooperative as the parties diverge with respect to their orientations towards populism and that interactions tend to be less conflictual when the source and target parties in the interaction are in government.

Table B4: Three Category Dependent Variable with MPD and CHES Data

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Interactive Tone	
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
EU integration distance between parties i,j	0.068 (0.067)	0.106 (0.070)
Populism distance between parties i,j	0.275*** (0.069)	0.251*** (0.074)
Initiating party i in government	-0.553*** (0.142)	-0.548*** (0.138)
Target party j in government	-0.592*** (0.138)	-0.585*** (0.148)
Economic policy distance between parties i,j	-0.096 (0.051)	-0.0002 (0.061)
Cultural policy distance between parties i,j	0.039 (0.060)	0.035 (0.058)
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Clustered SEs (dyad)	Yes	Yes
Observations	20,581	20,581

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Notes. The outcome variable is a variable denoting the tone of the cross-national party interaction, where cooperative interactions were scored at 0, neutral interactions were scored at 1, and conflictual interactions were scored at 2. The codings were taken from the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System data set. The interactions are for the thirteen EU member countries listed in the main text. The standardized coefficient estimates denote the predicted effect of a 1 SD change in the level of the independent variable.

Country-wise jack-knife analyses

To assess whether our conclusions were driven by a single outlier country among the 13 countries in our study, we re-estimated our models while omitting one country at a time, first omitting all cases where a party from the focal country initiated the interaction, then omitting cases where a party from that country was the interaction target. Tables B5-B6 below summarize whether the coefficient estimates on any of our key independent variables lost statistical significance as the data from each country was omitted, for the model using the MPD data (column 1) and for the model using the CHES data (column 2). We see that with only one exception our hypotheses are supported at statistically significant levels. When we omit all observation where the source country is the United Kingdom our model using MPD variables reports no significant effect of Euroscepticism Difference and our model. Since the UK is one of our most well represented country it is unsurprising that omitting it alters our results slightly.

Table B5: Summary of Changes to Results from Omitting the Cases Involving the Parties from One Source Country at a Time

Country Omitted	Change to MPD Model	Change to CHES Model
Austria	No change	No change
Belgium	No change	No change
Denmark	No change	No change
Finland	No change	No change
France	No change	EU distance becomes significant
Germany	No change	No change
Greece	No change	No change
Ireland	No change	EU distance becomes significant
Netherlands	No change	No change

Portugal	No change	No change
Spain	No change	No change
Sweden	No change	No change
UK	EU distance loses significance	No change

Table B6: Summary of Changes to Results from Omitting the Cases Involving the Parties from One Target Country at a Time

Country Omitted	Change to MPD Model	Change to CHES Model
Austria	No change	No change
Belgium	No change	No change
Denmark	No change	No change
Finland	No change	No change
France	No change	No change
Germany	No change	No change
Greece	No change	No change
Ireland	No change	No change
Netherlands	No change	No change
Portugal	No change	No change
Spain	No change	No change
Sweden	No change	No change
UK	No change	EU distance becomes significant

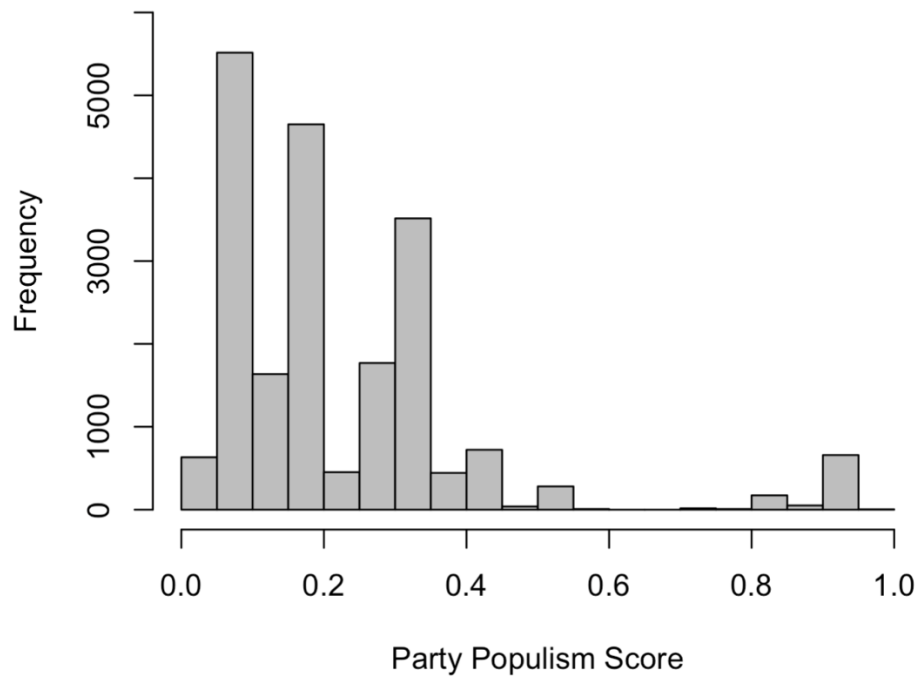
Notes. The tables report jack-knife analyses that explore how omitting the data from one country at a time affects the statistical significance of our key independent variables, namely [*EU integration distance between parties i, j*], [*Populism distance between parties i, j*], [*Target party j is*

currently in government], [*Initiating party i is currently in government*]. The variable definitions are given in the main paper text.

Analyses omitting highly populist parties

To assess whether the party populism effects we estimated were primarily driven by interactions involving the most populist parties in our data set, we re-estimated our models while omitting interactions involving any party that scored above 0.8 on the V-Dem populism index, thereby omitting all radical right and left parties in our data set. (Figure B2 below, which displays the distribution of the party populism scores in our data set, shows that there is a natural break at 0.8 on the 0-1 populism scale.) Omitting these cases dropped 1,579 observations from our data set, so that the number of cases we analyzed dropped from 19,134 to 17,555. These analyses, reported in Table B7 below, continue to support the populism differences hypothesis (H2), suggesting that our substantive conclusions about the conflictual effects of party differences with respect to populism are not primarily driven by interactions involving radical right and left populist parties, and that even moderate differences in attitudes towards populism among mainstream parties significantly increases the likelihood that interactions will be conflictual.

Figure B2: Distribution of Source Party Populism Scores



Notes. The figure displays the distribution of party populism scores in our dataset, which covers 13 EU member states that are listed in Tables B5-B6 above. The party populism scores are taken from the Varieties of Democracy's V-Party database which provides party populism scores stretching back decades, based on expert codings of parties' pro-people and anti-elite rhetoric. Higher values on this 0-1 scale denote more populist parties.

Table B7: Models Omitting Highly Populist Parties

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual	Interaction
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
EU integration distance between parties i,j	0.143 (0.111)	0.089 (0.111)
Populism distance between parties i,j	0.489** (0.183)	0.347* (0.175)
Initiating party i in government	−0.807*** (0.209)	−0.794*** (0.221)
Target party j in government	−0.493* (0.231)	−0.475* (0.233)
Economic policy distance between parties i,j	−0.096 (0.088)	−0.083 (0.085)
Cultural policy distance between parties i,j	0.095 (0.109)	0.161 (0.086)
Constant	−0.668 (0.587)	−0.741 (0.560)
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Clustered SEs (dyad)	Yes	Yes
Observations	17,555	17,555
Log Likelihood	−2,714.076	−2,714.535
Akaike Inf. Crit.	5,526.152	5,527.069

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Notes. The outcome variable is a dummy variable denoting whether the media report of the cross-national party interaction was coded as conflictual in the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) data set. The interactions are for the thirteen EU member countries listed in the main text of the paper. The standardized coefficient estimates denote the predicted effect of a 1 SD change in the level of the independent variable. These estimates omit all cross-national party interactions where one or both parties had a populism score of 0.8 or higher on the zero-to-one populism scale, where the scores are taken from the Varieties of Democracy's V-Party database.

Table B8: Models Using Party Left-Right Distance Variables

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual	Interaction
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
EU integration distance between parties i,j	0.222* (0.103)	0.147 (0.101)
Populism distance between parties i,j	0.638*** (0.100)	0.564*** (0.116)
Initiating party i in government	−0.737*** (0.200)	−0.726*** (0.208)
Target party j in government	−0.677*** (0.200)	−0.657** (0.210)
Left-right distance between parties i,j	0.046 (0.083)	0.115 (0.072)
Constant	−0.510 (0.489)	−0.717 (0.476)
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Clustered SEs (dyad)	Yes	Yes
Observations	19,134	19,134
Log Likelihood	−3,184.789	−3,186.151
Akaike Inf. Crit.	6,465.577	6,468.301

Note: *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Notes. The outcome variable is a dummy variable denoting whether the media report of the cross-national party interaction was coded as conflictual in the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) data set. The interactions are for the thirteen EU member countries listed in the main text of the paper. The standardized coefficient estimates denote the predicted effect of a 1 SD change in the level of the independent variable.

Analyses of more recent time periods

The V-Dem party populism measures that we rely on are based on experts' retrospective estimates of party populism rather than contemporaneous estimates, which raises the possibility that the party populism scores for earlier time periods are less reliable. Accordingly, we re-estimated our models on the data from more recent time periods, first estimating the model for the period 2010-2019 (columns 1-2 in Table B8), then on the period 2011-2019 (columns 3-4 in Tables B9). (Note that the data set begins in 2001, so that breaking the data at either 2010 or 2011 represents a natural 'break' in these analyses.) These parameter estimates continue to support all of our substantive conclusions.

Table B9: Models Using Only Data from 2010-2019

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual	Interaction
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
EU integration distance between parties i,j	0.594* (0.270)	0.205 (0.104)
Populism distance between parties i,j	0.597*** (0.109)	0.468** (0.156)
Initiating party i in government	-0.955*** (0.185)	-0.993*** (0.218)
Target party j in government	-0.400 (0.223)	-0.372 (0.216)
Economic policy distance between parties i,j	0.277* (0.110)	0.064 (0.093)
Cultural policy distance between parties i,j	0.086 (0.105)	0.260* (0.111)
Constant	-0.272 (0.402)	-0.639 (0.455)
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Clustered SEs (dyad)	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,084	8,084
Log Likelihood	-1,370.059	-1,371.118
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,820.118	2,822.236
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

Notes. The outcome variable is a dummy variable denoting whether the media report of the cross-national party interaction was coded as conflictual in the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) data set. The interactions are for the thirteen EU member countries listed in the main text of the paper. The standardized coefficient estimates denote the predicted effect of a 1 SD change in the level of the independent variable.

Table B10: Models Using Only Data from 2011-2019

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Conflictual	Interaction
	MPD Controls	CHES Controls
	(1)	(2)
EU integration distance between parties i,j	0.694** (0.267)	0.237* (0.108)
Populism distance between parties i,j	0.600*** (0.115)	0.406** (0.156)
Initiating party i in government	−0.907*** (0.185)	−0.999*** (0.218)
Target party j in government	−0.447 (0.257)	−0.424 (0.235)
Economic policy distance between parties i,j	0.274* (0.115)	0.042 (0.093)
Cultural policy distance between parties i,j	0.080 (0.110)	0.398** (0.123)
Constant	−0.281 (0.454)	−0.494 (0.471)
Country FE	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes
Clustered SEs (dyad)	Yes	Yes
Observations	7,162	7,162
Log Likelihood	−1,202.787	−1,194.765
Akaike Inf. Crit.	2,483.574	2,467.530
<i>Note:</i>	*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001	

Notes. The outcome variable is a dummy variable denoting whether the media report of the cross-national party interaction was coded as conflictual in the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) data set. The interactions are for the thirteen EU member countries listed in the main text

of the paper. The standardized coefficient estimates denote the predicted effect of a 1 SD change in the level of the independent variable.