Do voters polarize when extreme parties enter parliament?

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Abstract

When an extreme party gets into parliament for the first time, the ideological polarization of voters is likely to increase as a result. This is because voters on both sides of the political center will take up more extreme positions when faced with a newly empowered and legitimized competitor at the margins of the party system. Supporters of the extreme party and its views feel that radical stances have become more socially acceptable (legitimization effect)*, while voters on the opposing side of the political spectrum will react to the breaking of norms by taking an even stronger stance as well* (backlash effect)*. To test our arguments we rely on two different empirical strategies. First, using a two-wave panel study carried out during the 2002 Dutch election, we examine whether voters polarized immediately after the entrance of the Lijst Pim Fortuyn, which became the most extreme party in parliament after the election. Pre-post comparisons and several placebo tests show support for our theoretical expectations and mechanisms. Second, we test the long-term impact of extreme party entry using Eurobarometer data from 14 countries (1973–2016). Two-way fixed effects and generalized synthetic control models again find evidence for a polarization effect after extreme party entry. Using similar empirical strategies, we find no evidence of polarization after parties enter on the left, possibly because these parties' views break social norms less. Our results have implications for understanding the consequences of parliamentary representation of new parties and of elite polarization on voter attitudes.*

1 Introduction

THE history of democracies is littered with examples of the rise of extreme parties. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were marked by the growing success of Socialist and Communist parties, and the 1920s and 1930s saw increasing support for National Socialism in Weimar Germany, the rise of Benito Mussolini's National Fascist Party in the Kingdom of Italy and similar parties in other countries. More recently, (left-wing) Green parties rose to prominence in the 1980s, while many party systems have recently experienced the entry of radical-right parties into parliament. In 2017, for example, the Alternative für Deutschland entered the German Bundestag, ending that country's long spell as one of the only Western European countries without an established radical-right party.

When parties and candidates that are more extreme than their competitors become relevant in democratic societies, observers regularly raise concerns about the consequences for public discourse and for societal norms more generally. For instance, Donald Trump's campaign and election led to such fears in 2016. In June 2016 Mitt Romney, the 2012 Republican nominee for president, suggested that Trump's election could provide legitimacy to radical views through 'trickle-down racism, trickle-down bigotry, trickle-down misogyny'.[1] The increased usage of racist/fascist symbols[2], the ensuing counter mobilization[3], and violent clashes between Trump supporters and other groups[4] all suggest that his election spurred both public mobilization by his supporters and a backlash against their extreme positions.[5]

The theory implicit in these observations is that voters become more ideologically polarized when extreme views are publicly and broadly expressed by parties and candidates that are endowed with some level of political legitimacy. We define an extreme actor in this context as a new party or candidate that takes up more ideologically radical positions than current parties and politicians, so what counts as extreme depends on the current political climate. Ultimately, the institutional presence and relevance of such new, more radical competitors is thought to increase ideological divisions between citizens. This polarization is also believed

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[1]CNN: Mitt Romney says Donald Trump will change America with 'trickle-down racism'.
[2]Brad Lander (NYC City Council): Swastikas in Adam Yauch Park.
[3]NPR: Swastikas Are Painted At Adam Yauch Park In NYC – But Kids Win The Day.
[4]LA Times: Violence by far-left protesters in Berkeley sparks alarm.
[5]New Yorker: How Norms Change.

to affect both sides: those who sympathize with the new party and those who oppose it.

This paper tests this implicit theory by examining whether the institutional legitimization of parties located at the ideological extremes increases ideological polarization among voters. To study institutional legitimization, we focus on a specific, clearly identifiable type of event: extreme party entry into parliament. In elections in multiparty systems, new parties regularly manage to enter parliament for the first time (Bolleyer 2014; Tavits 2008), and often these new competitors are at the left or right extremes of the party system. The main examples we consider in this paper are radical right parties, but we also examine whether ideological polarization occurs when parties enter on the left.

We argue that the initial institutional recognition and legitimation of radical parties has both short- and long-term effects on voter polarization. Immediately as a result of a party's successful entry into parliament, voters who sympathize with the party and its stances will see their own views as more socially acceptable (Tankard and Paluck 2016) and will therefore be more likely to openly declare their ideological stance (*legitimization effect*). Voters on the opposite side of the political spectrum will react negatively to the perceived breaking of social norms and feel the need to distance themselves from the new competitors (*backlash effect*) (Bishin et al. 2016). In the longer term, the presence of radical parties in parliament will shape political debate in the country in parliament and the media (Bischof and Foos 2017; Dinas, Riera, and Roussias 2015). Based on previous research, this increased elite-level polarization should lead to further voter polarization, for instance through persuasion (Lenz 2009), cuing (Brader, Tucker, and Duell 2012; Nicholson 2012; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013), and issue entrepreneurship (Hobolt and de Vries 2012; De Vries and Hobolt 2012).

We test the expectation of short- and long-term voter polarization after extreme party entry in three ways. In Study 1, we look at voter polarization after the first entry into parliament in 2002 of the radical-right Lijst Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands. Here, we take advantage of a pre-post panel study to compare voter polarization before and after the election.[6] We use placebo tests to provide further evidence that the election itself appears to have caused the increase in voter polarization. Second, we examine the patterns of left-right polarization

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[6](Dinas, Hartman, and van Spanje 2016) recently used the same election study to test the effect of Fortuyn's murder before the election on projection bias.

after radical right party entry in 14 countries from 1973 to 2016 based on Eurobarometer data. Using two-way fixed effects regression (Study 2) and synthetic control models (Study 3) we again find evidence that the public polarizes after extreme party entrance.

Throughout our three studies we find the same pattern: radical right party entry leads to voter polarization on both sides of the political spectrum. This is the case both in the short and the long term. Relying on the the same strategies we also test if similar patterns emerge after extreme parties enter on the left. Yet, we do not find evidence that voter polarization increases after party entrance on the radical left.

Our results have implications for the broader literature on the links between elite and voter ideologies (Hetherington 2009; Down and Wilson 2010; Adams, Ezrow, and Somer-Topcu 2011; Adams, De Vries, and Leiter 2012; Adams, Green, and Milazzo 2012*a*). We show how radical views can increase through single, highly newsworthy events that place extreme stances at the centre of the political debate and provide legitimacy to them. Moreover, we provide proof that the presence of extreme voices in parliament has long-lasting effects on how voters think ideologically. However, we also show that the effect of extreme party entry is likely to be conditional on the existence of a taboo concerning a party's views and an ostracization of the party itself (Van Spanje and Van Der Brug 2007). Finally, our results address a common issue in studies of elite influence, namely the causal direction of ideological position-taking (Gabel and Scheve 2007). By using a specific instance of elite polarization, extreme party entry, we are able to better assess the mechanisms driving voter polarization.

2 Short-term effects of extreme party entry: Legitimization and backlash

The election of a new radical party into parliament is likely to be an important, attention-grabbing and sometimes even shocking development for established political parties, the media and many citizens. In addition to shaping the headlines, this event also provides voters with important information about the distribution of ideological preferences among voters and about the social and political acceptibility of these views (Tankard and Paluck 2016). Research in social psychology shows that individuals learn about social norms over time, in a dynamic fashion (Paluck, Shepherd, and Aronow 2016; Tankard and Paluck 2016). As noted by

Tankard and Paluck (2016: p.184), 'summary information about group opinions and behavior (indicated by the group's voting tallies, or other announcements about the group) ...update[s] our impressions of what the group typically does or what the group values.' Signal events such as Supreme Court decisions in the United States can thus lead individuals to update their perceptions of social norms (Bartels and Mutz 2009: 249; Hoekstra and Segal 1996; Tankard and Paluck 2017: 1334). Similarly, the electoral success of a party that is more extreme than its competitors provides voters with summary information about the distribution of preferences and norms among the population (Tankard and Paluck 2016).[7] The election of the extreme party thus tells voters that the views of the new extreme party are no longer as socially frowned upon as before, and that many people support these views. Because of this, the entry of extreme parties into parliament is likely to increase polarization among voters on both sides of the political debate.

First, extreme party entry will have a legitimization effect: people identifying with the new extreme party will express more extreme views. This is not because of persuasion, as voters are probably unlikely to change their ideological stances because a new, extreme party is elected. Instead, we believe that voters with extreme views will feel freer to declare and admit their pre-existing radical positions.

One reason for this is that perceptions of social norms will shift due to this event. In most cases, the ideological positions held by extreme parties were previously at least somewhat taboo. The entry of the extreme party from outside the political mainstream will lead supporters and sympathizers to feel that their views have greater legitimacy and social acceptance, even if these parties are still 'ostracized' by their mainstream competitors (van Spanje and Weber 2017; Van Spanje and Van Der Brug 2007; van Spanje 2010). The success of a party with radical views signals that the range of views that are voiced and deemed acceptable has changed. In the term used by Rabinowitz and Macdonald (1989), the event may thus change the 'region of acceptability' in the party system. This type of effect is akin to that posited by 'licensing'

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[7]Of course, not all types of extreme party entry will contain the same type and amount of information for voters. In some countries, extreme party entry will be foreshadowed well by high poll ratings or by election into regional legislatures, weakening the additional informational content of entry into national parliament. Yet, we argue that even if there was prior success, the signalling effect of an electoral entry into national parliament adds substantially to comparable information from surveys or other elections.

theory, which states that public information on norms has a greater impact on those who are already in favour of those norms. As Tankard and Paluck (2016: p.198) state, awareness of public support for certain views 'may license supporters to act on their views in public'.

An additional reason to expect a legitimization effect is because the party's success signals popular support for certain views. Before the extreme party entered parliament, people identifying with the party may have felt unsure about how many people also hold their extreme views. The success of the new party may tell these voters that there is more popular support for their views than they previously thought, further encouraging them to state their views openly.

Overall, we therefore expect:

- **Legitimization hypothesis**: After an extreme party enters parliament for the first time, people identifying with that party and its views will move further to the ideological extremes.

In addition to legitimizing radical views among party identifiers, the entry of an extreme party will lead other individuals to strengthen their opposition to these views. People identifying with parties on the opposite side of the political spectrum will feel the need to act against the legitimization of radical positions. Focusing events may thus lead to a backlash among voters who fear changes to the status quo (Bishin et al. 2016; Flores and Barclay 2015). For example, some voters – such as minorities – are likely to feel threatened by the normalization of positions that threaten their rights. Even voters who are not likely to be directly affected by the normalization of radical views will want to actively speak out against radical positions they disapprove of. In reaction to the shifting norms, opposing voters may take even stronger stances towards the other side of the political spectrum (Bishin et al. 2016; Bustikova 2014). Hence, we expect:

- **Backlash hypothesis**: After an extreme party enters parliament for the first time, people identifying with opposing parties will move further to the ideological extremes.

In sum, the entry of radical parties into parliament may have short-term effects on voter positions simply by legitimizing extreme views and by creating a backlash among opposing voters.

3 Long-term effects of extreme party entry: Persuasion, cueing and issue evolution

There may also be longer-term effects of extreme party entry on voter polarization, as discussed in previous research. This is because getting into parliament can provide these parties with a significant increase in various resources (Dinas, Riera, and Roussias 2015). In addition to financial support, they are also given a parliamentary platform that they can use to present their views and gain attention for their positions. Simply being represented in parliament is also likely to be taken as a signal by other parties that this new party is a significant threat. As a result, other parties will also address the issues and positions of their new competitor, thereby raising the party's prominence. For example, they may attack the new competitor more and take its positions into account when formulating campaign strategies (Bischof and Foos 2017). Moreover, the ability to win seats may go hand in hand with increased media coverage (Dunn and Singh 2011). Parties with parliamentary representation are often provided with more and better access to the media, in particular by state broadcasters. As a result, parliamentary representation can be a boon for parties' long-term chances of survival, amplifying the effect generated by their initial success in getting into parliament (Dinas, Riera, and Roussias 2015).

The increased resources and attention afforded to parties that manage to enter in parliament will affect how voters perceive political debates and may thereby shift voter positions. Research has consistently shown that mass-level ideological polarization results from elite-level polarization (Gabel and Scheve 2007; Hetherington 2009; Down and Wilson 2010).[8] In Europe, the effect of elite polarization has been considered in particular with regard to populist radical-right parties (PRRPs) (Mudde 2013; Sprague-Jones 2011; Castanho Silva 2017). Specifically, Semyonov, Raijman, and Gorodzeisky (2006) suggest that there is more anti-foreigner sentiment in countries where there is strong support for PRRPs.

There are three mechanisms through which elite polarization created by extreme party

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[8]As Adams et al. (2012*b*; 2012; 2012*a*) show, using Dutch and UK survey data, this also applies to depolarization: voters move closer together if elite positions converge.

entry may affect voters. First, if radical views are increasingly prominent on both sides, this may shape voter positions through persuasion (Lenz 2009), perhaps strengthened by motivated reasoning (Taber and Lodge 2006). Analogous to our short term mechanisms outlined above, this will include perceptions of the types of views that are socially acceptable (Tankard and Paluck 2016; Hogg 2010). Second, elite polarization may lead voters to rely more on party positions as cues (Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Brader, Tucker, and Duell 2012), whereby voters simply decide to adopt the positions held by the parties they support (Zaller 1992; Bartels 2002; Steenbergen, Edwards, and de Vries 2007). Research has shown that greater elite polarization means that motivated reasoning and cue-taking increases (Slothuus and de Vreese 2010; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; Brader, Tucker, and Duell 2012; Ray 2003; Steenbergen, Edwards, and de Vries 2007). Finally, extreme party entry may change the content of political debates and thus lead to issue evolution (Carmines and Stimson 1986, 1989; Carmines and Wagner 2006; Stevens 2013), changing the issue content of the left-right dimension. Polarization will then increase if partisan positions on the new issues are clearer and more distinct (Arndt 2016). With their increased presence in parliamentary debates and the media, extreme parties may be important 'issue entrepreneurs' (Hobolt and de Vries 2012; De Vries and Hobolt 2012) that introduce or emphasize innovative and divisive issues that have the potential to reshape party competition.

As in the short term, the long-term effects may occur on both sides of the political divide. A party's own voters and those sympathetic to its views will be easily persuaded by its arguments. They will also be likely to engage in motivated reasoning and use party cues. Hence, voters on the same side of the political spectrum as the new parliamentary party should be likely to polarize. However, the messages sent by radical politicians have an impact across the political spectrum. Nicholson (2012) shows that the cues sent out by politicians primarily decrease support among opposing partisans rather than increasing support among the party faithful. Such a backlash may occur in particular when individuals feel threatened by change, particularly if they already hold negative views about the relevant group (Bishin et al. 2016). Since extreme parties tend to have clear policy positions that challenge existing arrangements, it is likely that they will have significant potential to affect views across the political spectrum.

These long-term effects will occur in addition to short-term effects hypothesized above. They can be thought of as accompanying the legitmization/backlash effect, strengthening the divisions between the two groups even further.

In summary, our final hypothesis is:

- **Long-term polarization hypothesis**: Voter-level ideological polarization will increase after an extreme party enters parliament for the first time.

4 Research Design

We rely on two studies employing two different data sources to test how voters polarize in the short and long term after extreme party entry. The first study makes use of an individual panel study conducted during the 2002 Dutch national parliamentary elections. This study allows us to carefully evaluate the short-term legitimization/backlash mechanisms by exploiting the survey's panel design. The second study then extrapolates these findings to a longer-term, macro-level perspective. Based on Eurobarometer data we test if the entry of an extreme party led to polarization particularly in countries employing an electoral threshold, a methodologicl decision we elaborate on below.

To test our theoretical argument we rely on respondents' general left-right self-placement. We believe that this survey measure constitutes an optimal source of information to assess public polarization. First, general questions about left-right allow respondents to interpret for themselves what they understand as being left or right. This means that our study gets at the underlying ideological divisions between voters. For many studies, the shifting meaning of left and right is a disadvantage, but for our purposes – capturing summary ideological divisions between citizens – it is important to take into account how the policy content of debates shifts (De Vries, Hakhverdian, and Lancee 2013; Lachat 2017), e.g. due to the efforts of "issue entrepreneurs" (Hobolt and de Vries 2012). Hence, in our view polarization also increases if voter views on individual issues stay the same, but politics changes to revolve around more divisive issues. This should be captured by the left-right measure and means that using such a measure is in fact an advantage for our purposes. Second, in contrast to issue-specific questions, respondents' left-right placement is available across several countries and

time periods. This allows us to test our argument on a large sample of countries and compare these findings to our findings based on the election panel study.[9]

5 Results

5.1 Study 1: Election panel study in the Netherlands (2002)

To investigate the *short-term* mechanisms behind our theoretical argument we use the 2002 Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (DPES) to better understand within-subject movement in public attitudes. The three-wave DPES election panel is well-suited to illuminating the mechanisms underlying our theoretical argument. Indeed, we are not aware of any other two-wave panel study that (a) was conducted before and after the first election of a radical-right party to parliament and (b) includes repeated measures of left-right ideological self-placement.[10]

The Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) entered parliament at the 2002 election. Named after its founder, the party was a typical new populist radical right party, focusing on issues of migration and cultural heritage (Akkerman 2005; Dinas, Hartman, and van Spanje 2016; Koopmans and Muis 2009). The party gained prominence under the guidance of its charismatic leader, who left the teh centrist Leefbaar Nederland party about three months before the election and founded his new party. As such, the election of LPF is an ideal case to study our hypothesis. First, the party's late founding and registration gave its leader little time to build up its reputation and influence the media before getting into parliament. This means that the long-term mechanisms outlined in our theory are unlikely explanations for a short-term polarization effect immediately after an election. Second, the party's electoral success was fairly unexpected in its strength and form (Van Holsteyn and Irwin 2003: 42). Third, as van Holsteyn, Irwin, and Den Ridder (2003) note, previous research shows that the success of the LPF was not preceded by a public shift to the right prior to election day. Thus, to a certain extent this reduces the possibility of the reversed causation that would arise if public polarization was a cause for,

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[9]Issue-specific questions are rarely available in comparable fashion across countries and time. Even in the case of the Dutch election study, issue-specific question vary prior to and after the election. For instance, the Dutch election panel asked respondents about their position on asylum seekers prior to the election, only to ask them about their position on migration after the election.

[10]Surprisingly and much to our disadvantage most election panel studies change the sample of questions asked to respondent after the election. E.g. in most instances respondents' left-right placement is asked prior to election, but not thereafter.

rather than the consequence of, the electoral success of a radical right party.

Respondents in the Netherlands were asked to place themselves on a general left-right scale running from 1 (extreme left) to 11 (extreme right). In the case of the Dutch election study 2002, this question was asked to the same set of respondents before and after the election. We estimate each respondent's squared distance to the mode prior to the election and after the election.[11] The findings are robust to using the squared distance to the mean (rather than modal) voter's position as well as to the center point of the scale (6). In addition to measuring ideological distance, we also use individual movement on the left-right scale. Thus, we directly investigate how each voter moved and whether voters increase their ideological distance from each other after the entrance of an extreme party.

The pre-election wave of the Dutch election study started to interview citizens 31 days prior to election day. The first post-election wave interviewed the same set of respondents up until 42 days after the election.[12] The DPES reports data for 1,904 panel respondents. Thus, the study allows us to compare the same respondents prior to and after experiencing the entrance of an extreme party. This design enables us to draw on the rare occasion of within-person comparisons, meaning that any time-invariant subject-specific covariate such as gender, education or even income can be controlled away by using subject-specific fixed effects. In addition, our design allows us to rely on covariates observed prior to the election to explain voter shifts on the general left-right scale after LPF had entered parliament, so we can eliminate the alternative explanation that the shift in voters' general left-right placement resulted from the fact that voters shifted their party identification after the successful election of the LPF into parliament. Since we measure party support and identity before the election, it cannot be affected by the entrance of LPF into parliament.

Figure 1 plots the polarization of all panel respondents before (blue) and after (red) the election using local linear regressions along with confidence intervals. Polarization increased after the election to a substantial degree, and this trend seems to be fairly stable across the

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[11]We could also use the daily mode. Note, however, that both election studies are not perfect rolling cross-sections. Thus, estimating a daily mode is subject to bias towards the respective subgroup interviewed at a given day.

[12]Unfortunately we cannot sensibly make use of the post-post-election interviews since the scale of the left-right self-placement question changed from a 11 to 10 points.

Figure 1: Descriptives: Did polarization increase after the LPF entrance (Netherlands 2003)? Yes.
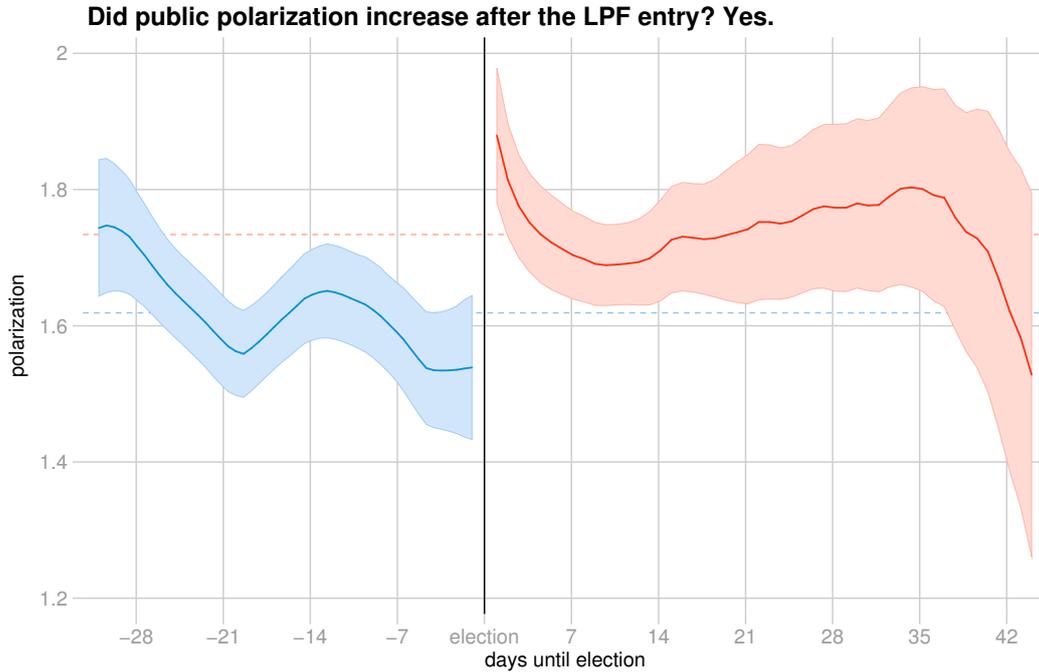
Source: Authors' own.
Note: Comparison of polarization in pre- and post election panel (within person comparison). The Figure presents local polynomial regression plots, surrounded by 83.4 % confidence intervals; kernel=epanechnikov; degree of smooth=0. Horizontal lines reported μ pre- (in blue) and post-election (in red) polarization.

time period covered by the election panel. The dip in polarization towards the end of the post-election panel is likely to be driven by the fact that fewer respondents were interviewed towards the end of the panel. Furthermore, consistent with arguments made by Gerber and Huber (2010: 157), the most crucial difference in polarization due to the election is close to the appearance of the treatment, i.e. the election.

To substantiate this descriptive finding we use OLS regression and estimate the average treatment effect by comparing each respondent with her-/himself. Table 1 reports the findings from these regressions. We find a significant increase in public polarization of almost one standard deviation (σ=1.26; β=1.20) between the two waves. Notice that this increase remains similar in size across all models we estimated, also when controlling only for the interview date (model 1) or when using individual fixed effects (model 3).

A potential criticism of this analysis is that concerns of confounded treatment linger because the party's leader, Pim Fortuyn, was murdered seven days before the election took place

Table 1: Regression estimates: Did polarization increase after the LPF entrance (Netherlands 2003)? Yes.

	(1) Pre/post	(2) Pre/post	(3) Pre/post	(4) Placebo: Fortuyn	(5) Placebo: Fortuyn	(6) DE	(7) DE	(8) DE
before/after	0.120	0.124	0.121	-.112	-0.011	0.0150	0.0158	0.0346
	(0.0315)	(0.0322)	(0.0314)	(0.0755)	(0.1020)	(0.0434)	(0.0435)	(0.0431)
Constant	1.628	2.154	1.616	1.644		1.075	0.574	1.646
	(0.0851)	(0.215)	(0.0150)	(0.0357)		(0.403)	(0.485)	(0.0200)
R^2	0.00228	0.0187	0.0105	0.00142		0.00146	0.0264	0.000656
N	2839	2765	2972	1551	1508	1994	1994	2169
Interview date	✓	✓				✓	✓	
Individual FE			✓					✓
Controls		✓			✓		✓	
Matching					✓			

all models use clustered standard errors by panel id (only model (5) not);
Model (5) propensity score matching, 1-match per respondent before Fortuyn murder;
controls (age, gender, urban vs. rural, social class, voting preference, political knowledge, religiosity) omitted from table;
P-values and stars omitted from table.

(Dinas, Hartman, and van Spanje 2016). Clearly, the killing of a prominent populist radical right party leader is a most likely case to observe public polarization: LPF voters might have felt threatened in their ideology and identity by the sudden assassination of their party's leader. Such a threat to their group could have spilled over into a strengthening of their ideology. From this point of view Fortuyn's killing might be the major cause why the public polarized and not the entrance of the LPF into parliament.

To address this potential confounding event, we conduct a placebo test that estimates the influence of Fortuyn's killing on public polarization. More specifically, we rely on the pre-election wave only and compare all respondents interviewed prior to Pim Fortuyn's assassination (77 %) with the respondents interviewed thereafter but before the election itself (22 %). Respondents interviewed prior to the election cannot plausibly be affected by the election outcome as they have not yet observed the election. However, the 22 % respondents interviewed after Fortuyn's death have experienced his killing. Any effect on public polarization stemming from his murder should then be observable in this subsample of respondents. We compare the sample of respondents interviewed after Fortuyn's killing (here our treatment group) with the respondents interviewed beforehand (here our control group). Model (4) in Table 1 draws a simple OLS comparison between the two pre-election groups and does not find a statistically significant polarization effect after Fortuyn's murder. While we do not observe

the same respondents before and after Fortuyn's murder, we try to compare persons with similar characteristics (e.g. income, gender, party ID). To do so, in model (5) we use propensity score matching to compare each respondent after the assassination to a most similar respondent before his assassination (for a similar approach see Dinas, Hartman, and van Spanje 2016). This analysis does not shows an increase of polarization due to Pim Fortuyn's assassination either. Moreover, the size of the coefficient is much smaller than that in the pre-post-election comparisons. Thus, the placebo tests provide further support for our theoretical argument. In the Dutch case, the ideological polarization present after the election does not appear to have been due to Fortuyn's murder, but rather stemmed from the result of the election itself.

Legitimization & backlash effects in the 2002 Dutch election   Next, we investigate the legitimization and backlash mechanisms in the Dutch case. In order to test these mechanisms, we first split the respondents into groups based on their reported party identification *prior* to the 2002 Dutch election. Note that our findings remain similar if we use respondents' reported voting decision; we do not use these information due to post-treatment bias.

We argued that voters' reactions to the entrance of an extreme party should depend on how their general political identity relates to the party entering parliament. In this case, voters identifying with right-wing parties should be subject to a legitimization effect and left-wing party identifiers to a backlash effect. To test our theoretical arguments, we rely on voters' party identity prior to the election. Then, we examine which voters move their general left-right self placement after the election. To do so, we use as our dependent variable in an OLS regression the difference in voters' left-right self-placement after the election compared to their placement before the election.

Figure 2 reports the findings of analyses of ideological shifts conditional on party support. In the upper panel of Figure 2 we split the respondents into respondents identifying with left- and right-leaning parties.[13] The legitimization and backlash effects are clearly visible: voters identifying with a right-leaning party *ceteris paribus* moved further to the right, while those identifying with a left-leaning party moved to the left.

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[13]We omitted very small parties with few identifiers from this analysis (Leefbaar Nederland; Duurzaam Nederland; Partij voor de Dieren; Partij van de Toekomst; Alliantie Vernieuwing).
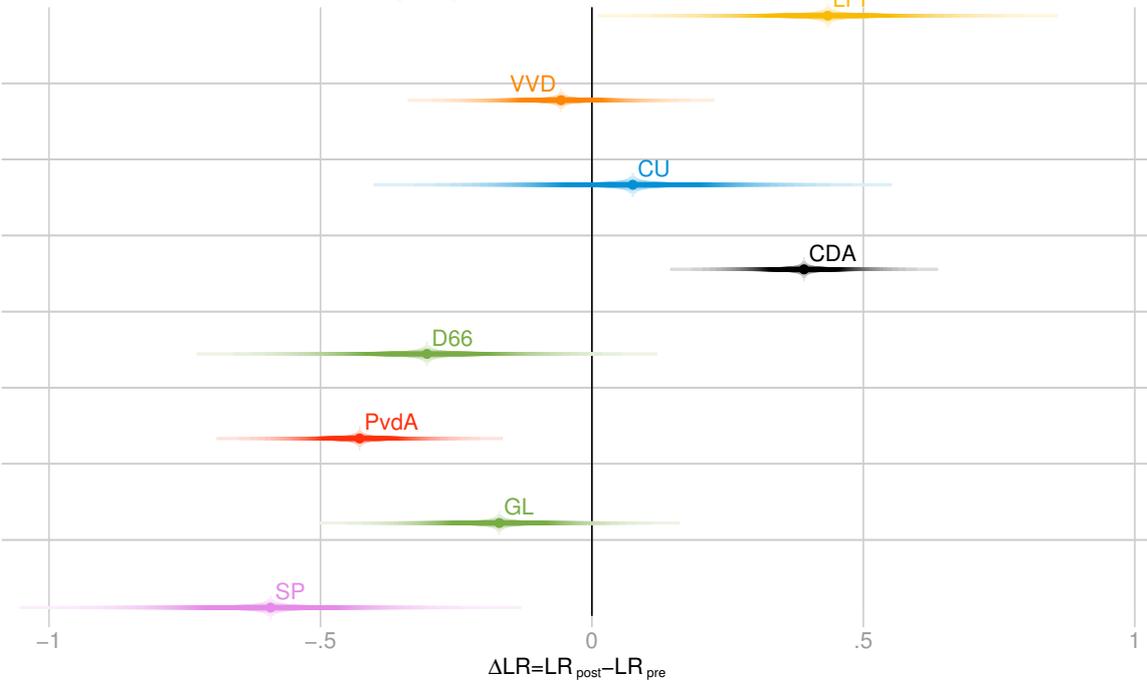
Figure 2: Testing the legitimization & backlash mechanisms

Who shifted? Left vs. right party–ID

right–ID

left–ID

ΔLR=LR$_{post}$–LR$_{pre}$
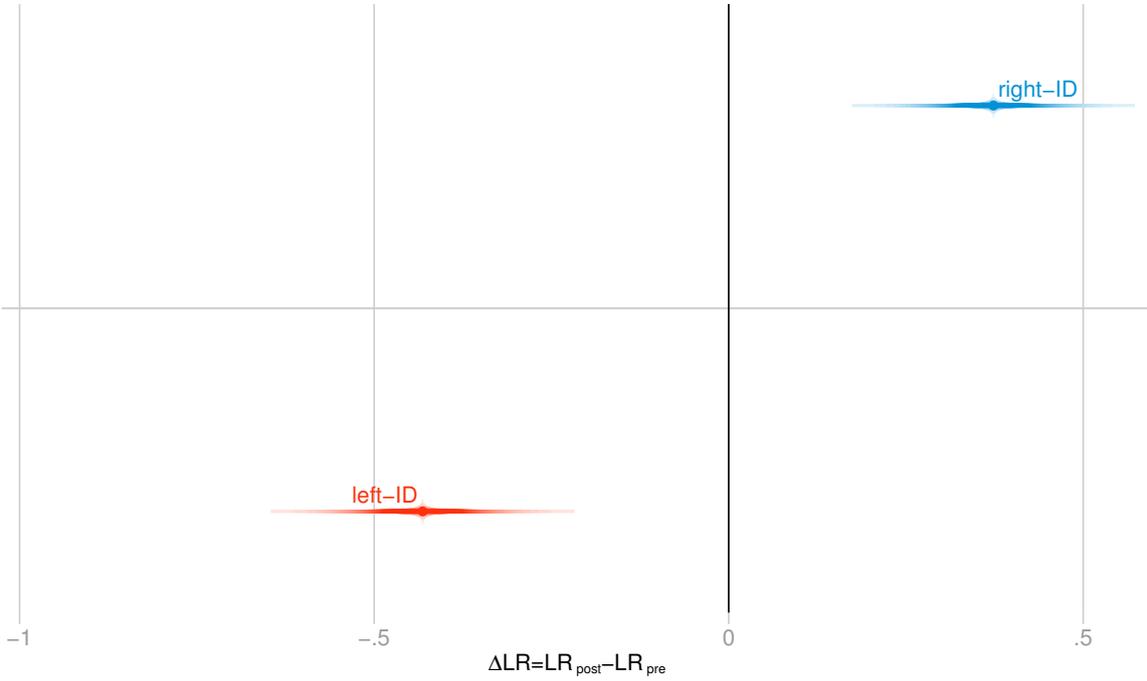
(based on pre–election party–ID)

Who shifted? Shifts for each party–ID

LPF

VVD

CU

CDA

D66

PvdA

GL

SP

ΔLR=LR$_{post}$–LR$_{pre}$

(based on pre–election party–ID)

Source: Authors' own.
Note: OLS estimates surrounded by whiskers reporting 95 % confidence intervals. Full model specification with covariates reported in table A.1 on page 35 in the appendix.

The bottom panel of Figure 2 reports the more fine-grained results for each group of party supporters. The parties are sorted in descending order based on their left-right placement in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, starting with the most right-leaning party (LPF) (Bakker et al. 2015). The models again use an OLS estimation with the difference between respondents post and pre left-right self placements as a dependent variable.

We expect right-wing party identifiers (LPF, VVD, CU and CDA) to move to the right and left-wing party identifiers (D66, PvdA, GL and SP) to move to the left. In general, the estimates are in line with our theoretical expectations. All but one party-ID group (VVD) adapted their ideology as we would have expected. Furthermore, these movements are statistically significant for LPF, CDA, PvdA and SP identifiers. Thus, we find strong movements of left-right placement particularly on the extremes of the ideological scales. These movements are strong evidence that our mechanisms works as expected. Our argument would assume the strongest effect at the extremes of the ideological scale. Yet, the strong and positive effect for relatively centrist CDA and D66 voters indicates that the entrance of the LPF instead led to a crowding-out of the center in the Netherlands. This test of our mechanism further strengthens the conclusion that the ideological movement of voters after the entrance of the LPF is structured and occurred in similar ways on both sides of the ideological spectrum.

5.2 Study 2: global time-series-cross-sectional findings

Our first study showed that the public polarized after the entrance of the radical right LPF. But do these findings hold in the longer term, and do they generalize across contexts? Is it the case that voters polarize after radical right party entrance if we consider different countries and time periods?

In our second study, the unit of analysis is country-years. Here, we rely on the data collection efforts of the Eurobarometer, which has collected data since 1973 in member states of the European Union. We gathered all Eurobarometer studies which asked respondents to place themselves on a general left-right scale running from 1 (extreme left) to 10 (extreme right). In total this gives us left-right self-placements for 1,717,808 respondents across the 17 European countries (see Table 2). On average, 1,083 respondents are asked to place themselves in each

study and country. To measure public polarization we use the standard deviation of left-right self-placements in each country-year (μ=2.09; σ=0.22).[14] Note that we conducted robustness tests for this study by re-estimating our models using the agreement measure proposed by Van Der Eijk (2001).[15] As we report in the appendix our measure is highly correlated with his agreement measure (see figure B.2 in the appendix), and we arrive again at similar conclusions when using his measure for our analysis (see table B.2 in the appendix).

Table 2 reports the countries and time periods investigated in our study. It also reports the radical-right party entries we analyze. We identified radical-right parties based on standard party family accounts.[16] We see radical-right parties as holding comparatively "extreme" ideological positions at the time of their entry into parliament.[17] In general, we included countries for which we either observe no entrance of an extreme right party into parliament for the entire period included in our studies (e.g. Germany) or countries for which we observe the entry of an extreme right party (e.g. the Netherlands).[18] Throughout our analyses we predominantly focus on countries employing electoral thresholds (kept in italics in table 2). The major reason for doing so is a theoretical one. As highlighted in our theory we have good reason to assume that the moment of entry into parliament is a crucial, shock-like event with far-reaching consequences for voters, parties and the media. Furthermore, after entering parliament extreme parties are granted access to the resources provided by having seats in the national parliament, acquire access to state funding in most countries and face increased media attention. Furthermore, previous studies have shown that the moment of entry into parliament is crucial

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[14]We also collected the fieldwork dates for all Eurobarometer studies to ensure that the fieldwork was conducted and completed before the date of the respective election.

[15]To ease interpretation we rescaled van der Eijk's measure to reflect *dis*agreement.

[16]A more valid approach might be to use the actual ideological positions of radical-right parties as measured e.g. through manifestos or expert assessments. Yet, such ideological positions are not available for most cases we intend to study here.

[17]We do not include "old" Radical Right parties with a fascist background for two reasons. First, almost all entries of these parties lie outside the time periods we observe in our study and represent a direct succession of fascists regimes in power before first elections took place in the respective countries (Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italy 1946)). Second, due to programmatic differences the expected effect of these parties on public opinion might be different. Therefore, it is difficult to compare the effect of these parties on public opinion to radical right entries. Yet, the conclusions we draw from the following analysis remain equal if we exclude Italy (Movimento Sociale Italiano 1946) and the Netherlands (Centre Party 1982) from our first two studies (Appendix B.3 table B.3 on page 39 & C.8 on page 46).

[18]This means that we excluded countries from our analysis which experienced the entry of an extreme party but the entrance is not covered in the data (Austria (FPÖ 1986), Czech Republic (Nezávislí 2004), Estonia (Eesti Kodanik 1992), Latvia (Nacionālā apvienība / Tēvzemei un Brīvībai / LNNK 1998), Lithuania (Jaunoji Lietuva 1992), Hungary (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja 1998), Slovakia (Slovenská národná strana 1990)).

5 Results

Table 2: Countries & party entries included in the study

country	years	Radical right party entry
Belgium	1973-2016	Vlaams Blok (1978)
Bulgaria	2004-2016	ATAKA (2005)
Denmark	1973-2016	Dansk Folkeparti (1998)
Finland	1992-2016	
France*	1973-2016	Front National (1986)
Germany	1973-2016	
Greece	1980-2016	Laïkós Orthódoxos Synagermós (2007)
Italy	1973-2016	Lega Nord (1992)
Luxembourg	1973-2016	
Netherlands	1973-2016	List Pim Fortuyn (2002)
Poland	2004-2016	Kukiz (2015)
Portugal	1985-2016	
Romania	2004-2016	
Slovenia	2004-2016	
Spain	1985-2016	
Sweden	1994-2016	Sverigedemokraterna (2010)
United Kingdom	1973-2016	

Source: Authors' own.
Notice: Countries kept in italics employ an electoral threshold.
* France employed an electoral threshold in the 1986 election which helped the FN to enter in this election.

for new party survival (Dinas, Riera, and Roussias 2014).

Moreover, focusing on entry into parliament constitutes the best possible test in a time-series-cross-sectional setting to disentangle the complex causal relationship between voters and political parties. The literature on representation posits that parties follow voters in the positions they take, so that elite polarization should also be the consequence of voter polarization. Thus, this literature focuses on how parties have incentives to follow voters, be it all voters or just their own supporters (Adams et al. 2006; Ezrow et al. 2010). However, our discussion above highlighted that parties may also shape what voters think. Untangling the causal association between these two phenomena is thus crucial to avoid problems of endogeneity (Gabel and Scheve 2007; Down and Wilson 2010). Our research designs helps us to assess the causal impact of elite polarization.

Figure 2 shows key descriptives based on the Eurobarometer data. The upper row gives an overview of the cases and extreme party entries we analyze. The bottom row then reports first descriptive findings by comparing the countries which have experienced the entrance of an extreme party (*"treated"*) with the countries which either never experienced (*"control"*) or had not yet experienced the entry of an extreme party at the respective year drawn on the

x-axis (*"untreated"*). While not providing a final test of our hypothesis, it appears that public opinion is more polarized in countries which experienced the entry of an extreme party.

To get a better and more coherent understanding of the polarization patterns across countries and time, we estimate two-way fixed effects models. Causal claims are difficult to achieve with TSCS data. In the best-case scenario we would compare the entrance of an extreme party in a country with the absence of such a party entrance in the same country at the same point in time. Obviously, we can never observe both of these outcomes.[19] The best we can do is to rely on a fixed-effects regression model to control for country effects and time-varying effects (Bechtel, Hangartner, and Schmid 2016; Fowler and Hall 2015). Such a model effectively compares countries having experienced the entrance of a radical-right party with countries that had not experienced the same event in the same decade.[20] Thus, we estimate the following model:

$$\text{polarization}_{c,t} = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{radical right party entry}_{c,t} + \Gamma \mathbf{Z}_{c,t} + \zeta_c + \delta_t + \epsilon_{c,t} \tag{1}$$

where $_c$, $_t$ index countries and years respectively; β_1 reports the effect of extreme party entrance; $\mathbf{Z}_{c,t}$ a set of controls outlined below; ζ_c country fixed effects; δ_t decade fixed effects and $\epsilon_{c,t}$ the error term. Due to contemporaneous correlation we cluster the standard errors by the treatment appearance (country/election cycle) (Abadie et al. 2017). The variable extreme party entry is '1' for the time periods after which an extreme party has entered parliament and '0' otherwise.[21] In our models we control for the effective number of parliamentary parties, party system polarization, GDP growth and unemployment, as these are all factors which should affect voter-level ideological polarization.

Table 3 reports the OLS estimates from these model specifications. Radical right parties'

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[19]A regression discontinuity design could allow a comparison between situations in which extreme parties barely entered parliament with situations they barely did not enter. Using such a RD design is unfortunately not possible in our case due to the small number of suitable observations.

[20]We also estimated the models using five-year fixed effects. The findings reported here remain substantially the same.

[21]We could introduce a lagged dependent variable (LDV) into our models to control for autocorrelation, but introducing a LDV into our two-way fixed effects model leads to a nickel bias. More crucial it is likely to lead to post-treatment bias. Thus, we decided not to use a LDV in the main models. Yet, as a robustness test we report a LDV model in the appendix as well as a model using panel-corrected standard errors (Table B.3 on page 39). Notice, that these modeling decisions do not affect the interpretations presented here.

Figure 2: Descriptive insights: Cases, cross time development & the effect of extreme party entrance on public polarization
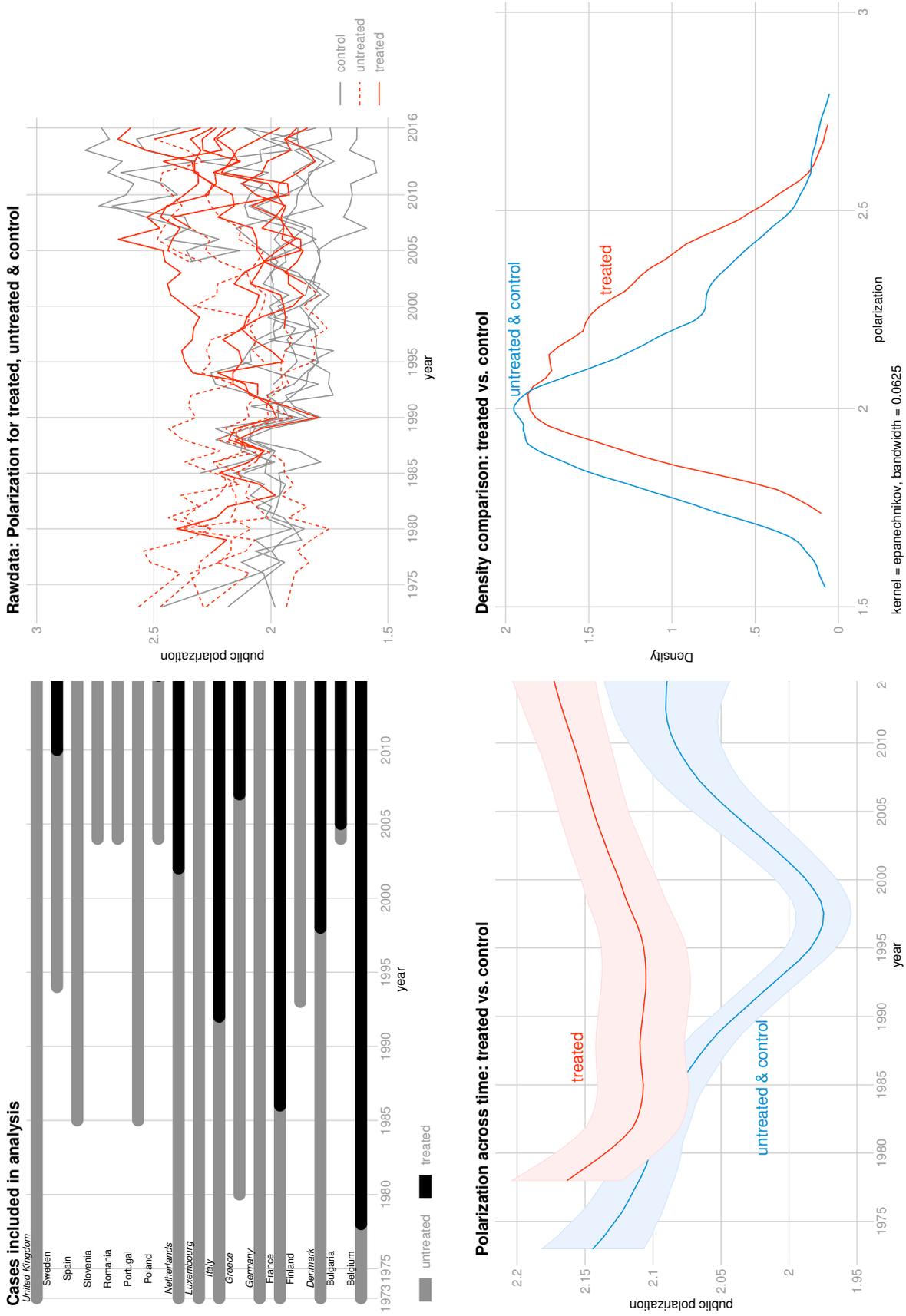
Table 3: Does polarization increase after entries of extreme parties? Yes.

	entire sample			countries with threshold		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
radical right enter	**0.0893**	**0.112**	**0.122**	**0.128**	**0.160**	**0.172**
	(0.0350)	**(0.0360)**	**(0.0364)**	**(0.0544)**	**(0.0484)**	**(0.0495)**
GDP growth			-0.00617			-0.00690
			(0.00323)			(0.00465)
unemployment$_{t-1}$			0.00118			-0.00146
			(0.00327)			(0.00410)
party polarization$_{t-1}$			-0.00847			-0.0298
			(0.0225)			(0.0373)
party system fragmentation$_{t-1}$			-0.0177			-0.0191
			(0.0129)			(0.0188)
Constant	2.048	2.122	2.223	2.081	2.465	2.583
	(0.0196)	(0.0506)	(0.102)	(0.0321)	(0.0782)	(0.101)
R^2	0.0371	0.656	0.679	0.0652	0.641	0.665
$N_{clusters}$	152	152	141	77	77	72
N	466	466	450	224	224	217
Country FEs		✓	✓		✓	✓
Decade FEs		✓	✓		✓	✓

Clustered standard errors by country/election;
country fixed effect & decade fixed effects omitted from table

entrance into parliament (radical right enter) has clear consequences for voter polarization. These effects remain remarkably stable across models. We estimate models without fixed effects (models (1)), as well as with fixed effects (remaining models). We estimated our models for the entire sample outlined above (Models 1 to 3), as well as only for countries which employ an electoral threshold (Models 4 to 6).

Radical right party entrance has a positive and significant effect in all models. For each specification the coefficient of radical right party entrance remains comparable in size as well as statistical significance. Notice that the effect of radical right party entrance is also substantively large: radical right party entrance leads to an increase in polarization (μ=2.11; σ=0.23) of almost one standard deviation (β=0.17 in model (3)).

These findings are robust across a set of different model specifications (Table B.3 in the appendix on page 39). First, we excluded the two countries which experienced significant success of "old" radical right parties (Italy: Alleanza Nazionale & the Netherlands: Centre Party).

Second, to estimate more flexible time trends we re-estimated our models using decades[3].[22] On a similar note, we tested if there appears to be a general trend towards public polarization after elections. However, using electoral cycle splines we do not find such an effect (figure B.3 in the appendix). Third, as discussed earlier, we do not use a lagged dependent variable in our estimation to control for autocorrelation. Our set of robustness tests reports such models. The conclusions we derived above remain robust to all of these model specifications. Fourth, using van der Eijk's agreement measure instead of our polarization measure results in the same findings as discussed here (Table B.2 in the appendix on page 38). Finally, we conducted randomization tests to check if our findings are model dependent (Hsiang and Jina 2014: 23-26). We replaced the entry of radical right parties 10000 times and then re-estimated equation 1 each time. We re-sampled our data in three ways, reported in detail in section B.3 in the appendix on page 42. The coefficient estimates are again re-assuring as our findings are confirmed.

While we cannot provide the same detailed individual-level analysis as in our Study 1, we can address the question of whether the polarization effect is already visible immediately after the election. To address the temporal development of our estimate, we re-estimated our models, this time counting the legislative periods after the entrance of the extreme party instead of using a simple dummy measure. Figure 3 reports the estimates from these models across the first four legislative periods after an extreme party entry. We find some support for an immediate effect in the first legislative period after the entrance of the extreme party (honeymoon) and then remains robust afterwards.

5.3 Study 3: Synthetic control estimates

Causal claims are difficult to test with typical TSCS designs. Using two-way fixed effects model as reported above provides the most elegant and conservative test for such data. Yet, this identification strategy rests particularly on one crucial assumption, namely that we can observe parallel trends between the countries which have experienced the entrance of a radical

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[22]Unfortunately we cannot use year fixed effects due to the limited amount of degrees of freedom. However, we report a year fixed effects model in the appendix (Table B.3 on page 39) based on Model 1, which included enough observations to estimate year fixed effects. The findings remain robust to this specification.

Figure 3: Does the polarization effect of extreme parties disappear across time? No.

How the effect of radical right entrance varies across legislative periods
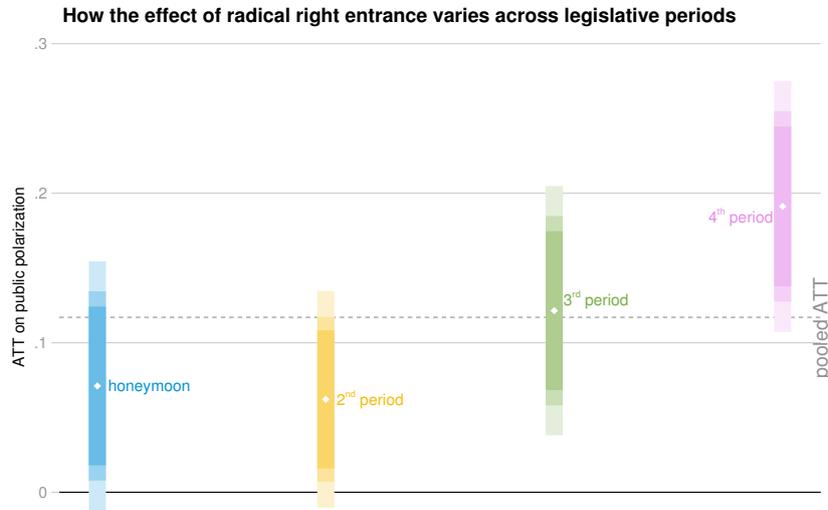
Source: Authors' own.
Note: OLS estimates surrounded by whiskers reporting 99 %, 95 % & 90 % confidence intervals. Reference category is radical right entrance=0.

right party and countries without such an entrance prior to the entrance of the extreme party. Yet, given the small number of countries and entrances in our dataset, this parallel trends assumption is likely to be violated.

To address this issue we rely below on generalized synthetic control models (GSCM) (Xu 2015; Abadie and Gardeazabal 2003; Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2010, 2015). Synthetic Control Models rest on a similar idea as the better known differences-in-differences (DID) estimator (Keele 2015: 322-323). GSCM allows researchers to estimate the effect of a non-random intervention (here the entrance of a radical right party) on an outcome of interest (here public polarization) in the treated unit (*Average Treatment Effect on the Treated*) (Strezhnev 2017: 1-2). First, researchers systematically choose the comparative units (*donor pool*) for the unit which experienced the intervention (Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2015). Second, based on a set of predictor variables chosen by the researcher the SCM algorithm approximates the temporal trend of the outcome of interest *prior to* the intervention of interest. Thus, the algorithm assigns different weights to each donor within the pool in order to minimize the distance between the trend of the treated unit and the control units. The major advantage

lies in the approximation of the pre-treatment trends. Thereby the method is well suited to approximating pre-treatment trends even if the analysis rests on a small set of countries as it is the case here (Abadie, Diamond, and Hainmueller 2015: 496-497). However, note that below we estimate the generalized form of the SCM (Xu 2015). Instead of imputing a counterfactual for a single case, the Generalized Synthetic Control Method (GSCM) generates a counterfactual for each treated unit based on the untreated units by estimating a linear interactive two-way fixed effect model.

In Figure 4 we report our findings for radical right party entries. Notice that below we can only include countries from the analysis above for which we observe enough pre-treatment time periods for the GSCM to converge.[23] We rely on the same set of covariates used for the GSCM estimation as in the TSCS models reported in Table 3.[24]

The upper panel in Figure 4 reports the Average Treatment Effect across time based on our GSCM estimates.[25] We find further support for our previous findings. We observe a clear and strong treatment effect of radical right entry on voter polarization. Directly after the election of a radical right party into parliament, the factual and counterfactual scenarios diverge dramatically. The lower panel of Figure 4 reports these factual and counterfactual scenarios separately. Here, it is especially noteworthy that in contrast to a simple TSCS model the estimated model fits the pre-treatment trends of the treated units very well. Immediately after the first radical right party enters parliament (Lega Nord 1992), the trajectories of the two scenarios begin to diverge. Finally, approximately 15 years after the treatment takes place, public opinion appears to de-polarize again. Yet, given the temporal distance between the treatment and this decrease in polarization, this particular finding should be read with caution. It is more than likely that this decrease is due to other factors, such as the potential normalization of politics and radical positions.
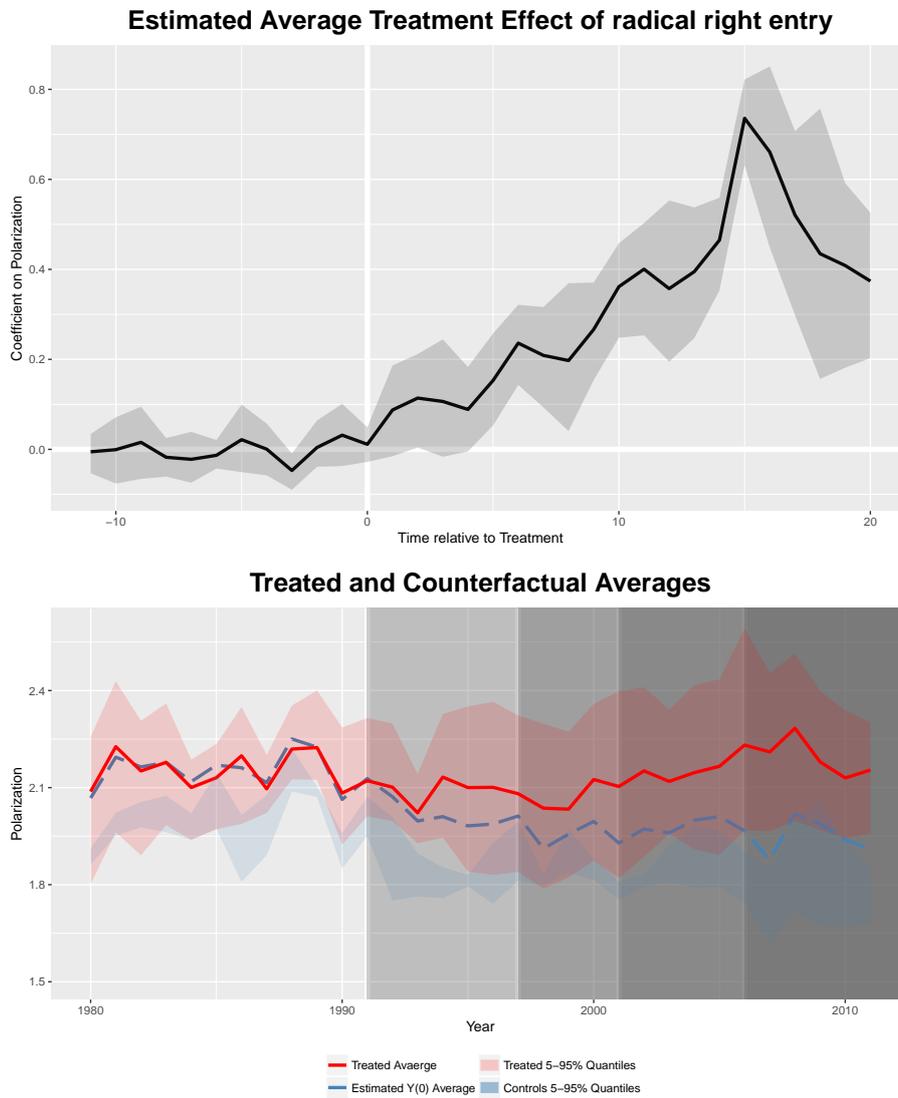
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[23]Countries included are kept in italics in figure 2 (Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom). Note that the GSCM needs panels to be balanced across units to estimate the counterfactuals. Thus, here we can only rely on countries which experienced the treatment a minimum of ten years before our panel data start. To maximize the countries included in our analysis before the treatments, we decided to use countries for which the Eurobaromer provides data since 1980, giving us enough pre-treatment periods before the first entrance of a radical right occurs in our dataset (Italy, 1992, Lega Nord).

[24]We had to linearly interpolate party polarization and the effective number of parties. Yet, the results reported here are robust to the exclusion of these variables and years. (Appendix: Figure C.7 on page 45).

[25]The difference between the factual and the estimated counterfactual development of polarization across our sample (surrounded by parametric bootstrapped standard errors).

Figure 4: GSCM results for radical right entry

Estimated Average Treatment Effect of radical right entry

Treated and Counterfactual Averages

Source: Authors' own.
Note: Countries included: Denmark (Y_{treat}: 1998), Germany (no treat), Greece (Y_{treat}: 2007), Italy (Y_{treat}: 1992), Luxembourg (no treat), Netherlands (Y_{treat}: 2002) & United Kingdom (no treat).
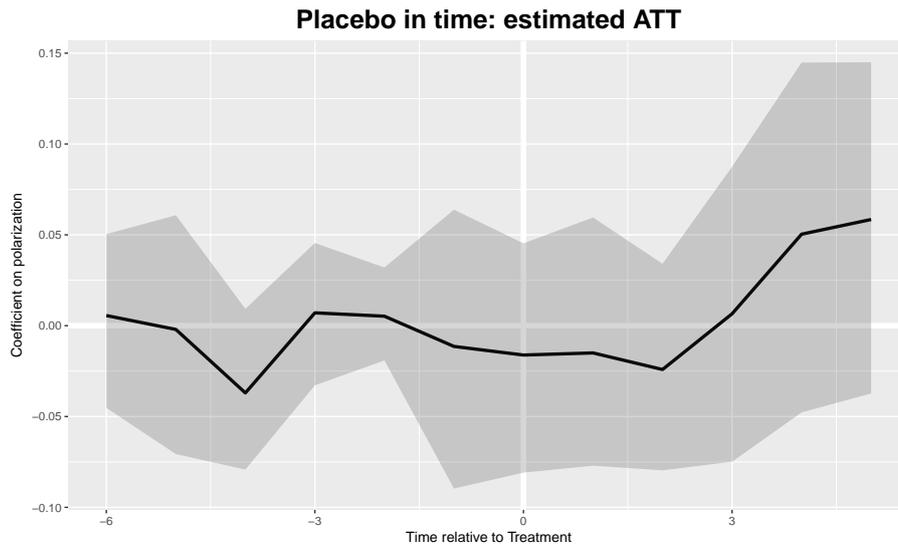Years included: 1980-2016.
ATT=0.2527; SE=0.04138; CI_l=0.176; CI_u=0.3396.

Again, we conducted several robustness tests. First, a key concern in relation to our GSCM models is that in some countries extreme parties might have entered regional or local parliamentary chambers prior to entering the national parliament. As a result, voters might have polarized prior to extreme parties entering the national parliament. To address this concern, we moved the treatment in each country one electoral cycle ahead of the actual occurrence (Figure 5). For this placebo test in time we do not find a significant effect of radical right party

entry. Second, to estimate the models for the entire time series we had to linearly interpolate a few data points. For robustness we removed these years from the analysis (Figure C.7 on 45 in the appendix). Third, as in Study 2 we removed Italy and the Netherlands from our analysis (Figure C.8 on 46 in the appendix); the findings remain similar in significance and substance.[26]

Figure 5: Placebo in time: no effect

Source: Authors' own.
Note: Countries included: Denmark (Y_{treat}: 1994), Germany (no treat), Greece (Y_{treat}: 2004), Italy (Y_{treat}: 1987), Luxembourg (no treat), Netherlands (Y_{treat}: 1998) & United Kingdom (no treat).
Years included: 1980-2016.

6 Radical party entry on the left

So far, we have only examined extreme party entry on the right. However, party entry on the left may also lead to voter polarization. Communist, radical left and Green parties may legitimize left-wing views previously thought socially unaccepted, while opponents may react to these parties' success by moving further right. To test this, we repeat our two studies above for entry on the left of the party system.

First, we analyze a multi-wave election panel in Germany (1983). The German Green party entered the parliament after the 1983 elections for the first time and was perceived as an ideological extreme challenger party. Focusing on environmental concerns along with strong

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[26]For comparability and robustness we conducted another synthetic control method on the entrance of a radical right party into parliament (Appendix on page 46).

anti-nuclear stance the party challenged not only mainstream right parties, but also the Social Democratic party (SPD). We use data from the second wave of the three-wave panel (11 to 23 February 1983) and the third wave (16 to 28 March 1983); the election itself was on 6 March 1983. Using similar covariates as in the Dutch case, we again run models estimating whether the public polarized after the election (Models 6-8, Table 1). However, we do not find an increase of polarization after the entrance of the Green party in Germany.

While we do not have sufficient pre-treatment information across our sample to employ the GSCM for radical left party entrance, we can also use the entrance of the Green party in Germany in 1983 to estimate the long-term effect of radical left party entrance. This case is well-suited for a SCM estimation since it is one of the earliest entries of radical left/Green parties within our sample. This is especially important because the entrance of the Green party in Germany is spatially correlated with other entries, which occurred after the entry of the Greens in Germany for our sample. Figure 6 reports the findings for the entrance of the Green party in Germany. The findings correspond to the previous results. The entrance of the Green party in Germany did not affect public polarization in a meaningful way.[27]

Figure 6: Germany & synthetic Germany
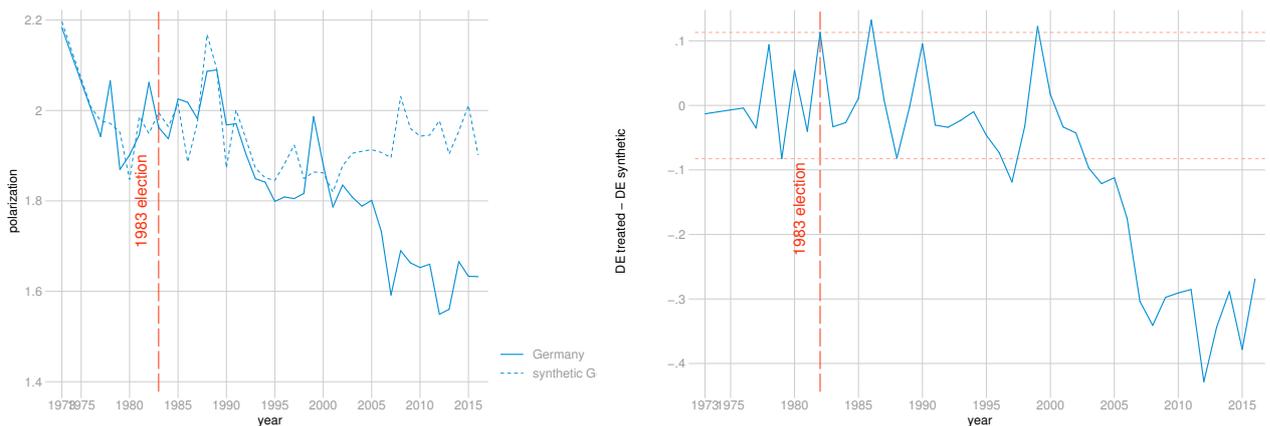
Source: Authors' own.
Note: Comparison of Polarization in Germany & synthetic Germany. Root Mean Square Percentage Error=0.06.

Overall, our expectation that voters polarize after extreme party entry finds support for

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[27]The left panel suggests that in the early 2000s public polarization decreased. Yet, this effect occurs approximately two decades after the treatment occurred, so it seems unlikely that this decrease can be causally linked to the entrance of the Greens in 1983.

the radical right, but not for parties that enter on the left of the party system.

7 Discussion and conclusion

Voters polarize ideologically when parties that are more right-wing than their competitors enter parliament. A panel study in the Netherlands in 2002 provides within-individual evidence of increased short-term polarization on both sides of the political spectrum. Voters supporting right-wing parties moved further to the right when the radical-right party won its first seats, and voters supporting left-wing parties moved further left. We termed these short-term changes legitimization and backlash. Next, evidence from TSCS and GSCM models using Eurobarometer data showed that there are long-term effects of radical-right party entry.

Using the same empirical approaches, no equivalent effect was found when parties that are more left-wing than their competitors enter parliament. What might explain this difference? First, the positions of the radical parties on the right may "suffer" from a greater societal 'taboo' than the positions of the radical parties on the left. This means that radical-right positions are more likely to break social norms and hence experience legitimization by entering parliament. This explains why short-term effects may be greater on the right. Second, long-term polarization effects may be greater after radical right party entry because these parties have arguably done more to shift issue concerns among European voters. Specifically, the rise of the radical right may have shifted the left-right dimension towards cultural concerns centered on immigration. When strong radical-right populist parties manage to place these issues on the policy agenda, this may change how voters place themselves in more general terms as well. Thus, there is evidence from the Netherlands that cultural issues are used more for left-right self-placement today than 30 years ago (De Vries, Hakhverdian, and Lancee 2013). This could be a way in which party strength, and especially party entry, on the radical right influences self-placement in the longer term.

Overall, our findings are important for research into the impact of extreme parties and candidates on politics. Party systems in Europe have recently been marked by the rise of new competitors, often on the fringes of the party system. Often, these competitors have significant success after entering parliament, as in the case of Syriza and Podemos in Greece and Spain or

of the Sweden Democrats and the PVV in Sweden and the Netherlands. In the United States, the election of Donald Trump signified a radical change in presidential discourse and positions. It is important that these events have an impact not just on how voters experience politics, but on how they place *themselves* on ideological scales. Extreme right party entry therefore has a radicalising effect that goes beyond elite discourse and media debates.

Hence, our findings provide stong evidence that elite polarization affects voter polarization. Extreme party entry is arguably a relatively clear-cut form of elite polarization. The simple entrance of such a new party affects the range of party positions represented in parliament. This binary change on its own appears to have an effect on voters. Ideally, this finding will help us identify key mechanisms more precisely. Given that the rise of radical competitors is such a regular occurrence in democratic political competition, it is important to study the effects of these changes and to use careful methodological approaches to do so.

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A Appendix: study 1

The first two models below in table A.1 use respondents' left-right self placement after the election as a dependent variable and control for the pre-election left-right self placement (LR_{pre}). The third and fourth model are reported in the paper (in table 2 on page 15). They move respondents left-right self placement on the left side of the regression equation. Thus, here the difference between respondents' placement after the election and respondents' placement before the election are used as a dependent variable.

Table A.1: Is there a backlash & legitimization effect? Yes.

|	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Pre/post comparison	Pre/post comparison + controls	Postlr$-Prelr$	Postlr$-Prelr$ + controls
LPF ID	0.716	0.711	0.293	0.392
	(0.155)	(0.163)	(0.171)	(0.184)
VVD ID	0.387	0.478	-0.172	-0.0768
	(0.112)	(0.117)	(0.120)	(0.130)
CU ID	0.321	0.219	-0.0776	-0.113
	(0.171)	(0.190)	(0.189)	(0.215)
CDA ID	0.460	0.435	0.213	0.168
	(0.0967)	(0.104)	(0.107)	(0.118)
D66 ID	-0.520	-0.377	-0.372	-0.337
	(0.153)	(0.157)	(0.170)	(0.178)
PvdA ID	-0.901	-0.809	-0.458	-0.484
	(0.104)	(0.108)	(0.113)	(0.121)
GL ID	-0.881	-0.701	-0.209	-0.217
	(0.127)	(0.133)	(0.135)	(0.148)
SP ID	-1.377	-1.182	-0.661	-0.669
	(0.171)	(0.177)	(0.186)	(0.199)
LR$_{pre}$	0.626	0.564		
	(0.0203)	(0.0221)		
asylum		0.116		0.0169
		(0.0283)		(0.0316)
crime		0.0293		-0.0471
		(0.0320)		(0.0361)
euthanasia		-0.0497		-0.00465
		(0.0224)		(0.0253)
inequality		-0.0637		0.0312
		(0.0267)		(0.0298)
female		0.0323		0.0825
		(0.0723)		(0.0822)
age		-0.000488		0.000134
		(0.00233)		(0.00265)
social class		0.00659		0.0231
		(0.0404)		(0.0459)
political knowledge		-0.0225		0.000277
		(0.0115)		(0.0131)
rural		0.0239		0.00522
		(0.0272)		(0.0309)
religion		0.182		0.128
		(0.0815)		(0.0927)
Constant	2.612	2.745	0.346	0.118
	(0.139)	(0.348)	(0.0732)	(0.365)
R^2	0.647	0.655	0.0366	0.0431
N	1404	1339	1404	1339

Standard errors in parentheses

A.1 Voter identity movement in Dutch panel waves

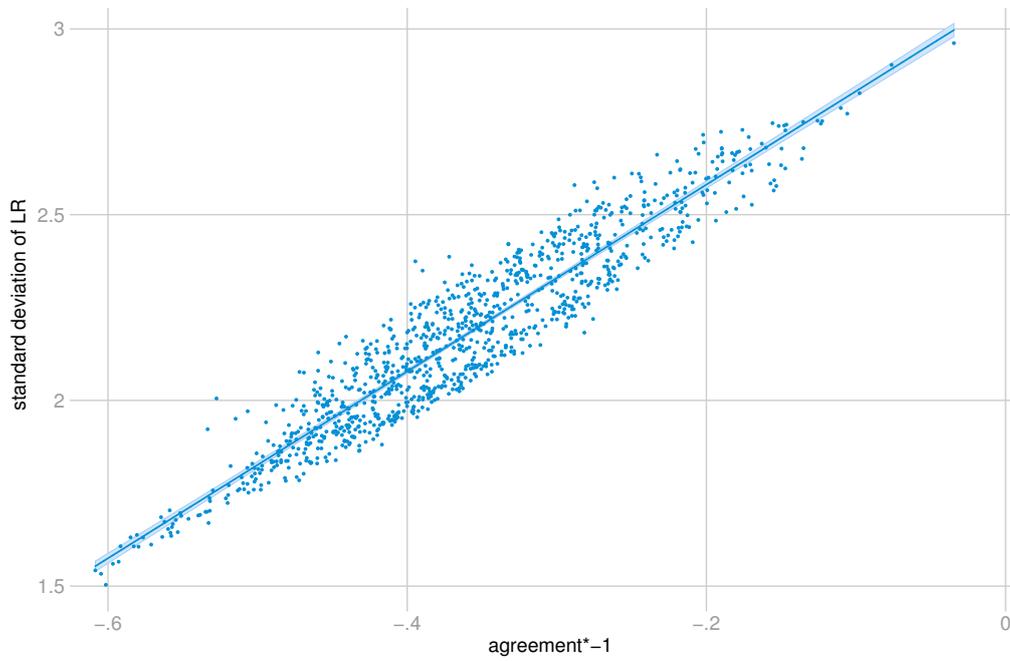**(a)** Shifting Voter ID from pre to post I election panel
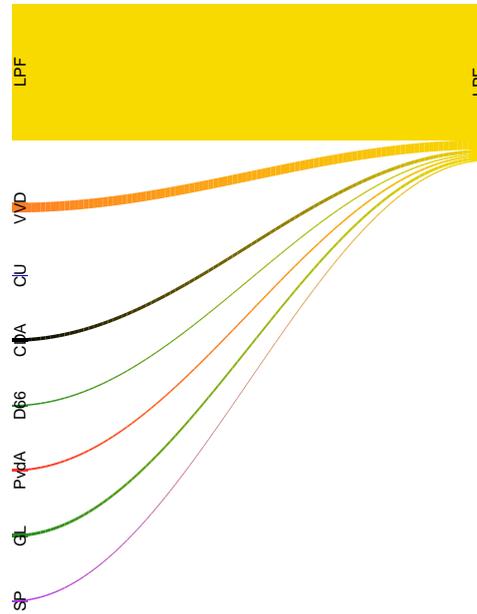
(b) Shifting Voter ID from pre to post II election panel
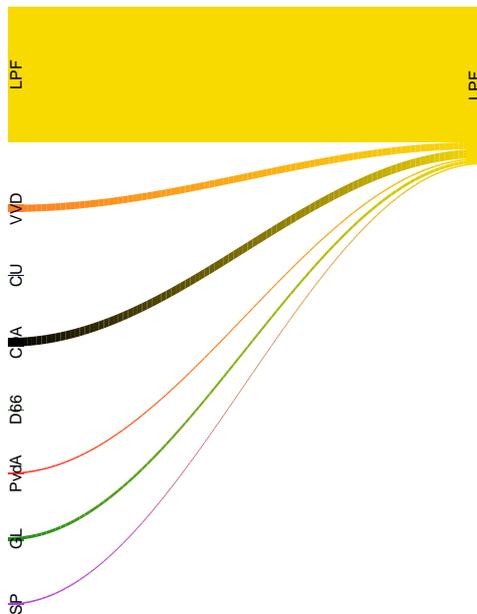
B Appendix: study 2

B.1 Using van der Eijk measure of agreement

Figure B.2: Scatterplot of van der Eijk's agreement & standard deviation of LR scale

Source: Authors' own.

Table B.2: Robustness: van der Eijk's agreement measure

	entire sample			countries with threshold		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
	disagreement	disagreement	disagreement	disagreement	disagreement	disagreement
radical right enter	**0.0448**	**0.0643**	**0.0668**	**0.0572**	**0.0871**	**0.0909**
	(0.0142)	**(0.0164)**	**(0.0168)**	**(0.0205)**	**(0.0223)**	**(0.0230)**
GDP growth			-0.00299			-0.00296
			(0.00126)			(0.00189)
unemployment$_{t-1}$			-0.0000149			-0.00112
			(0.00136)			(0.00177)
party polarization$_{t-1}$			-0.00385			-0.0125
			(0.00943)			(0.0156)
party system fragmentation$_{t-1}$			-0.00277			-0.00747
			(0.00608)			(0.00889)
Constant	-0.413	-0.394	-0.380	-0.389	-0.289	-0.239
	(0.00790)	(0.0224)	(0.0467)	(0.0121)	(0.0343)	(0.0447)
R^2	0.0577	0.606	0.635	0.0871	0.528	0.559
$N_{clusters}$	152	152	141	77	77	72
N	466	466	450	224	224	217
Country FEs		✓	✓		✓	✓
Decade FEs		✓	✓		✓	✓

Clustered standard errors by country/election;
country fixed effect & decade fixed effects omitted from table

**Table B.3:** Robustness: Does polarization increase after entrance of invasive party? Yes.

	(1) year FE	(2) without IT + NT	(3) Decade³	(4) LDV	(5) LDV+controls	(6) PCSE+LDV	(7) PCSE+LDV+controls
radical right enter	**0.113**	**0.147**	**0.176**	**0.0676**	**0.0682**	**0.0541**	**0.0609**
	(0.0383)	**(0.0527)**	**(0.0504)**	**(0.0252)**	**(0.0258)**	**(0.0182)**	**(0.0212)**
GDP growth			-0.00701		-0.00182		-0.00207
			(0.00473)		(0.00383)		(0.00271)
unemployment$_{t-1}$			-0.00252		-0.000625		-0.000797
			(0.00398)		(0.00206)		(0.00263)
party polarization$_{t-1}$			-0.0274		-0.00434		-0.00977
			(0.0369)		(0.0185)		(0.0147)
party system fragmentation$_{t-1}$			-0.0212		-0.00191		0.00442
			(0.0191)		(0.0108)		(0.00864)
polarization$_{t-1}$				0.744	0.735	0.819	0.781
				(0.0475)	(0.0559)	(0.0368)	(0.0429)
Constant	2.249	2.378	2.612	0.585	0.634	0.433	0.530
	(0.0881)	(0.0655)	(0.0991)	(0.109)	(0.151)	(0.0995)	(0.122)
R^2	0.686	0.745	0.660	0.849	0.849	0.966	0.954
$N_{clusters}$	152	52	72	70	70		
N	466	147	217	212	212	241	219
Country FEs	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Decade FEs		✓	✓		✓	✓	
Year FEs	✓						

Models (6) & (7) use panel-corrected standard errors (panel-specific AR1 + panel-level heteroskedastic errors);

clustered standard errors by country/election;

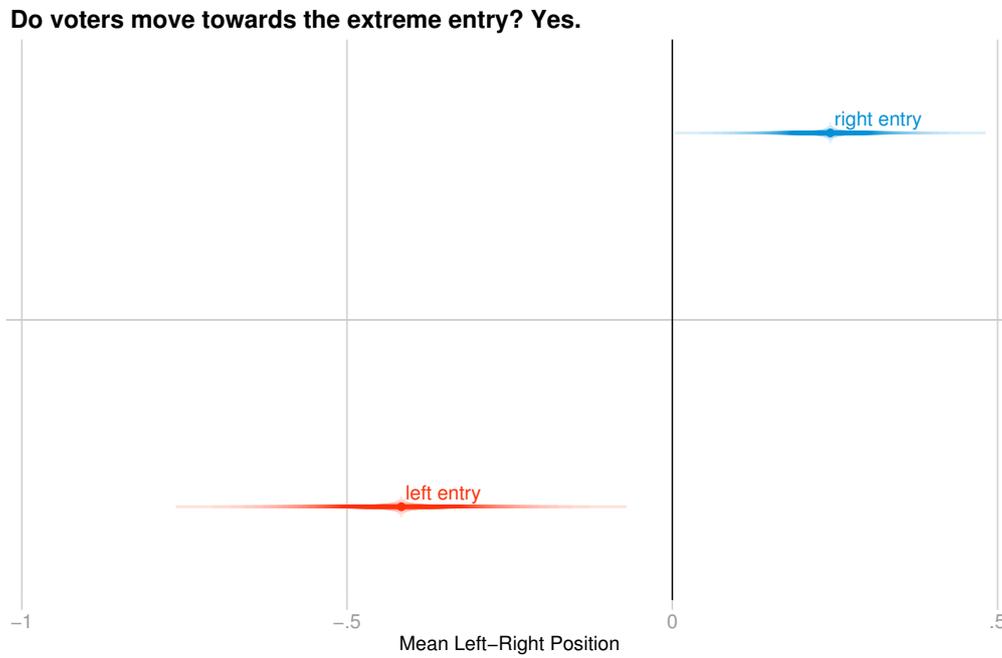country fixed effect & decade fixed effects omitted from table

Figure B.3: Is there a general trend towards more polarization after elections? No.
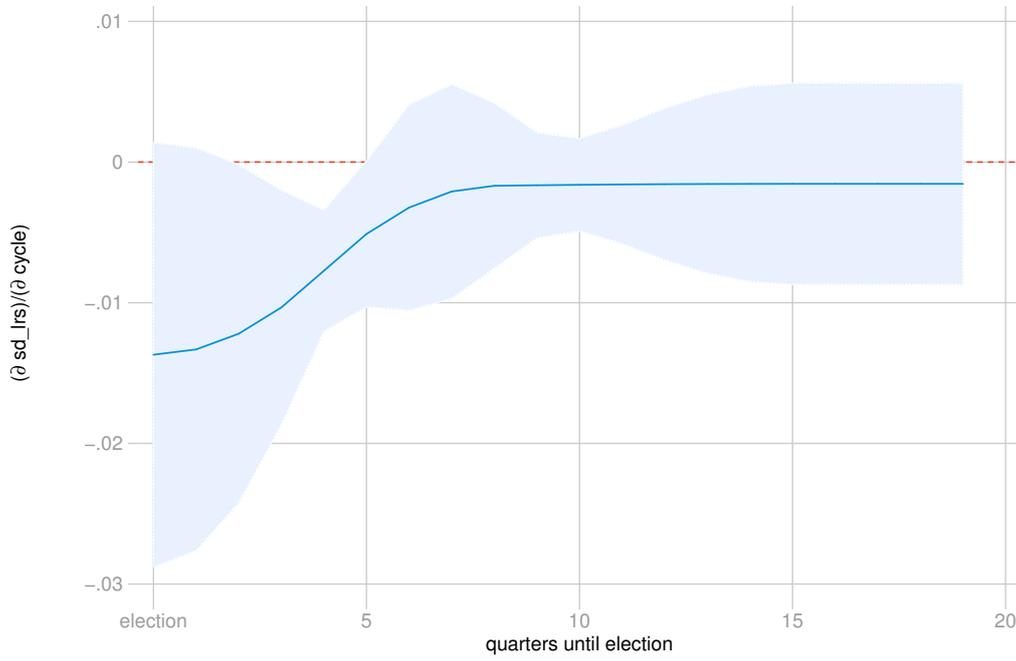
Source: Authors' own.

B.2 Voter movement after extreme entry

Figure B.4: How do voters move after extreme entry?

**Do voters move towards the extreme entry? Yes.**

Source: Authors' own.
Note: OLS estimates surrounded by whiskers reporting 95 % confidence intervals. Estimates use two-way fixed effects models as outlined in equation 1.

B.3 Placebo tests: simulating random data

We conducted randomization tests to check if our finding is model dependent, a spurious correlation (for a more detailed discussion please consult: Hsiang and Jina 2014: 23-26). To do so we randomize our entire sample and create a false new data set. We then re-estimate equation 1. We replaced the entry of radical right parties 10000 times, each time re-estimating equation 1. We re-sampled our data in three ways:

- *entire sample* – Randomly re-assigning each radical right entry.

- *between countries* – Randomly re-assigning each country's history of radial right entry to another country while preserving the order of years. Thereby we can test if global trends in our data (contemporaneous correlation) drive our findings.

- *within countries* – Randomly re-ordering the appearance of radial right entry in each country. Thereby we can test if invariant cross-sectional patterns drive our findings.

Figure B.5: Randomizing the entry of extreme right parties
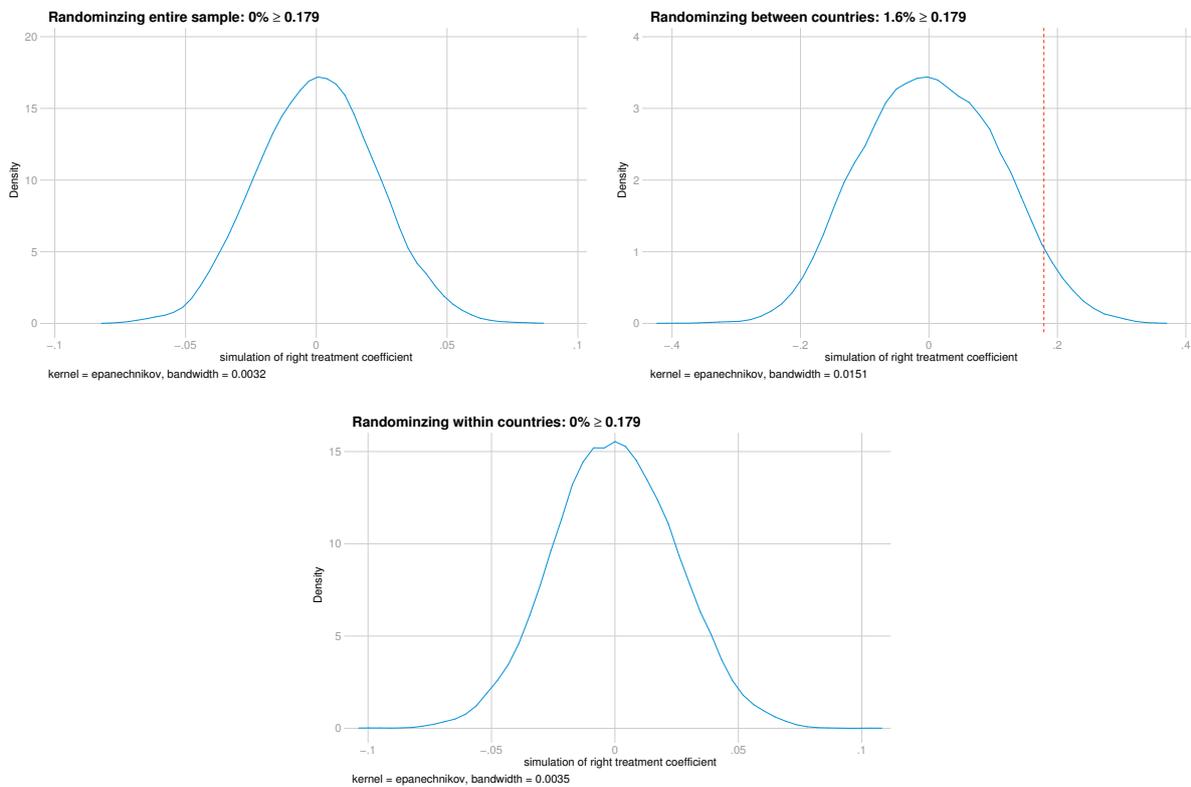
B Appendix: study 2

Figure B.5 reports the findings from these three simulations. It becomes visible that both for the entire sample and the within sample simulations we cannot randomly find the same coefficient as our analysis. Also in case of the between simulation we randomly find our coefficient only in 1.6 % of our simulations. Thus, the simulations are re-assuring for our findings. These appear to be truly not spurious and based on our modeling decisions.

Figure B.6: Randomizing the entry of extreme right parties
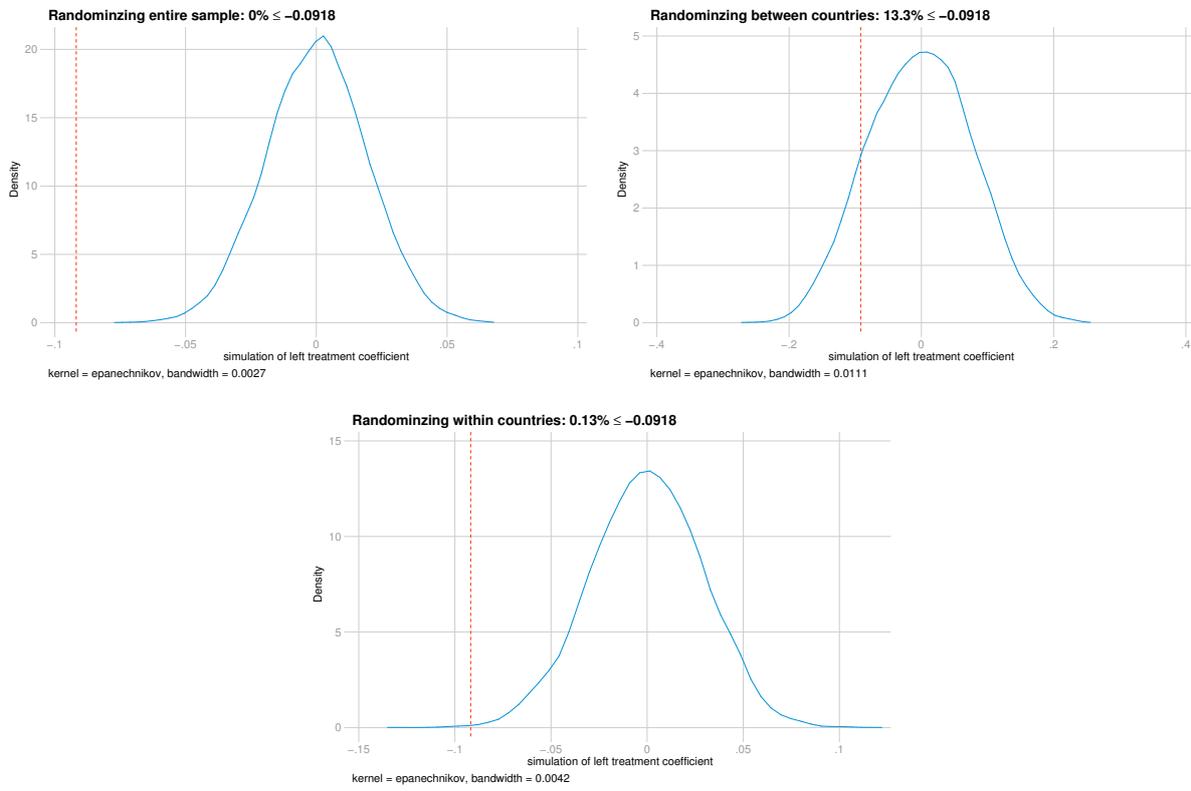
Figure B.6 reports the same tests for the extreme left entry. Again, the simulations are re-assuring. In case of the between simulation we find a stronger *de*-polarizing effect in 13.3 % of the cases. Thus, the simulations are supporting our findings that if anything the entry of a radical left party leads to public *de*-polarization.

C Appendix Study 3

C.1 Robustness: GSCM without linearly interpolated variables

Figure C.7: Robustness: GSCM without interpolated variables
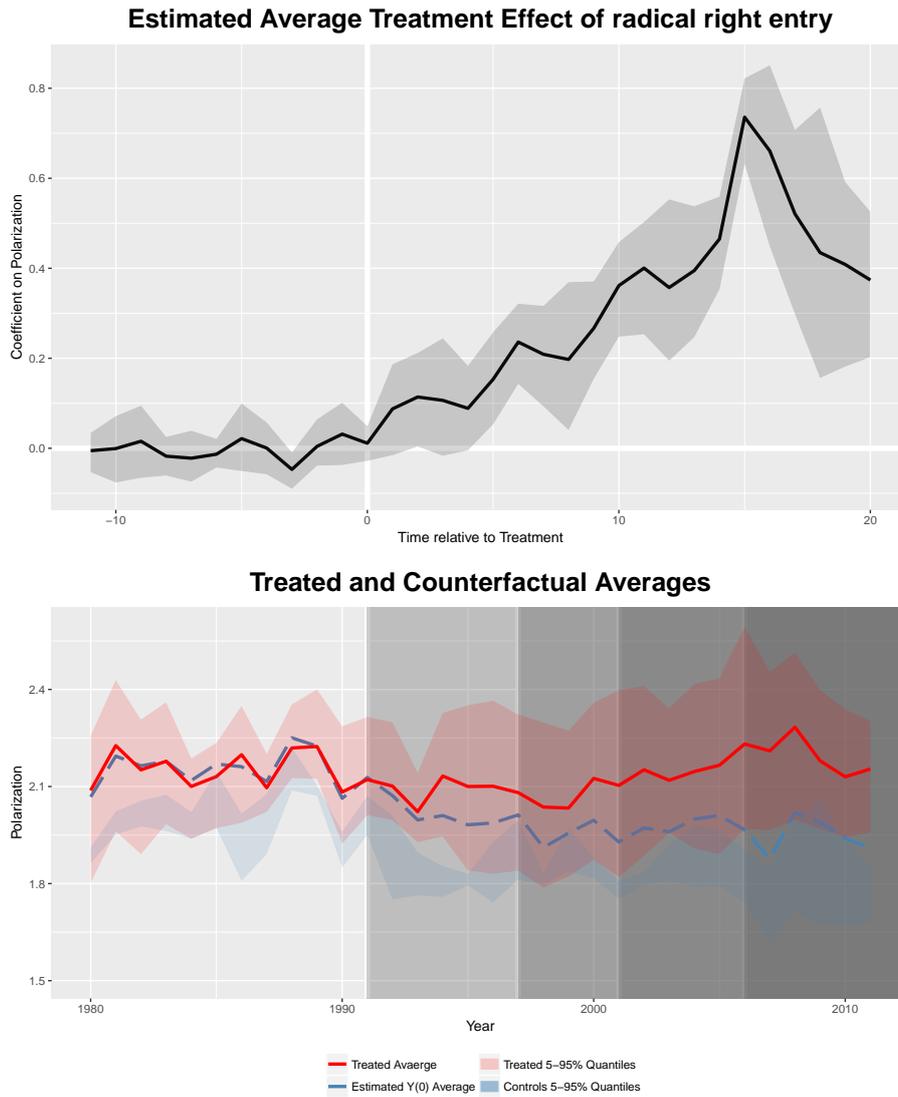
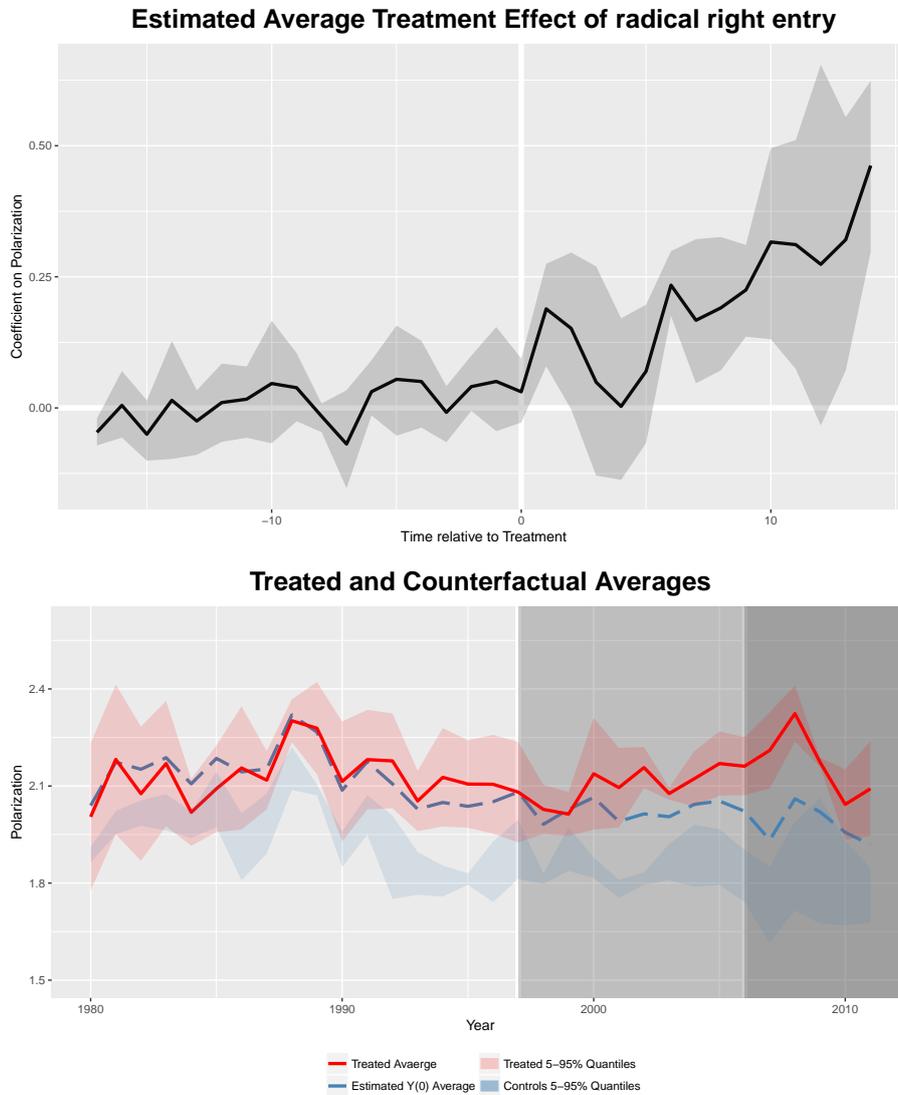*Source:* Authors' own.
Note: Countries included: Denmark (Y_{treat}: 1998), Germany (no treat), Greece (Y_{treat}: 2007), Italy (Y_{treat}: 1992), Luxembourg (no treat), Netherlands (Y_{treat}: 2002) & United Kingdom (no treat).
Years included: 1980-2016.

C.2 Robustness: GSCM without Italy & Netherlands

Figure C.8: Robustness: GSCM without Italy & Netherlands

Note: Countries included: Denmark (Y_{treat}: 1998), Germany (no treat), Greece (Y_{treat}: 2007), Luxembourg (no treat) & United Kingdom (no treat).
Years included: 1980-2016.

C.3 SCM with Denmark

Below we report our findings for the entrance of the Dansk Folkeparti (DF) in Denmark. The general elections in Denmark in 1998 experienced the entrance of the DF. The platform of the DF promised to protect the cultural heritage of the Danish people against foreigners, to work against the idea of a multicultural Denmark along with strict enforcement of law and order. The party has been classified

as populist radical right and as such this is the first such party to enter parliament in Denmark. They entered the parliament by achieving 7.5 % of the popular vote after several politicians split from the Fremskridtspartiet. Subsequently DF held 13 out of 179 seats in the Folketing. Since then the DF has always been represented in the Folketing and has frequently influenced and supported governmental legislation in Denmark (Mudde 2007: 43; de Lange 2009). All of this suggests that the DF should have had a substantial influence on how public opinion and polarization has developed in Denmark since 1998.

Table C.4: Synthetic weights for Denmark

country	weight
Germany	0
Greece	0.094
Luxembourg	0.096
Netherlands	0
United Kingdom	0.81

Table C.5: Polarization predictor means before Entrance of DF

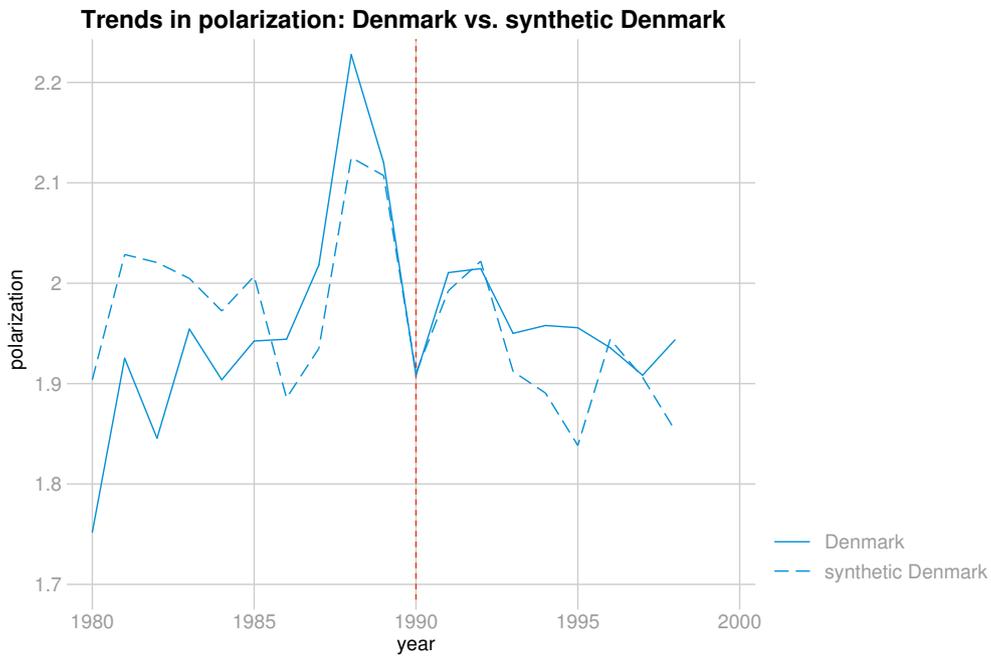|	factual Denmark	synthetic Denmark
Public polarization *(1980 & 1988 & 1998)*	1.97	1.96
Public polarization	1.94	2.00
GDP growth	2.31	2.69
unemployment	7.83	8.62
ENP	5.01	2.21
Party polarization	2.55	1.88

Figure C.9: Denmark & synthetic Denmark
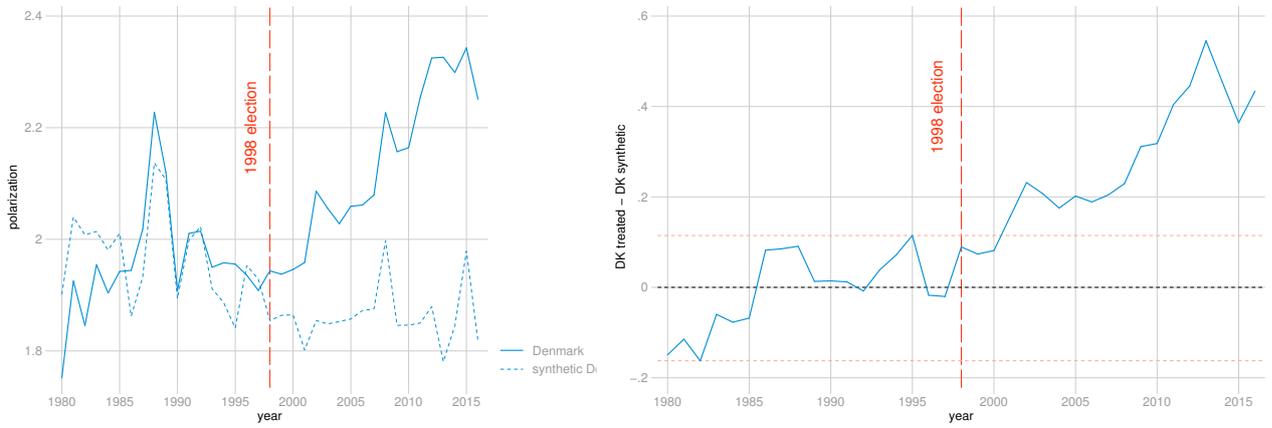
Source: Authors' own.
Note: Comparison of Polarization in Denmark & synthetic Denmark. Root Mean Square Percentage Error=0.082.
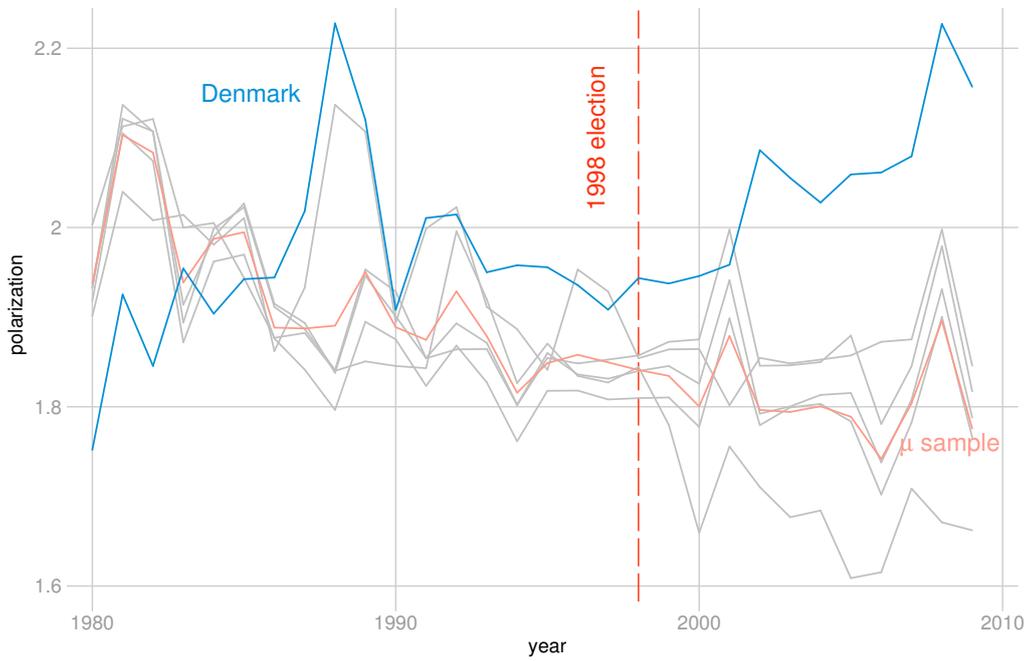
Figure C.11: Placebo in time: would we observe a comparable effect if the intervention happened one election earlier? No.

Source: Authors' own.
Note: RMSPE=0.081.

Figure C.12: Jackknife-1 deletion: are the differences driven by a specific donor? No.

Source: Authors' own.
Note: Reported are the synthetic Denmarks dropping each donor and re-estimating our models.