

# **The Effect of Government Formation on Voters' Support for Radical Parties**

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## HOW DOES GOVERNMENT FORMATION IMPACT VOTES CAST TOWARD RADICAL PARTIES?

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### Abstract

Partisanship theory states that there is a relationship between election results and policy outcome; therefore, a government elected will represent its policy standings and act on its implementation during the mandate. By relying on assumptions from partisanship theory, I am testing how government formation impacts the votes cast toward radical parties by looking at data from many European countries. More particularly, this study will show how the position of a government on the left-right scale affects the emergence or the success of radical parties. The argument that the likelihood for the emergence or success of radical parties of the same color as the incumbent is lower has been tested in 15 European countries from 2002 to 2015. To test the argument, I used linear and logistic regression techniques, which showed that the likelihood for a far-right party to emerge or succeed when a right-leaning government formation is the incumbent decreases when the analysis is done over all countries under study as well when done individually in Denmark and in the region of Catalonia, while the likelihood for a far-left party to emerge or succeed under the same conditions, increases in only a few cases. The analysis shows mixed results on the impact of government formation on votes cast for radical parties.

## 1. Introduction

The increase in electoral shares of ideologically radical parties of either pole of the political spectrum has been observed as a common phenomenon in many European countries as of late. Far-right and far-left parties such as Le Front National in France, Alternative for Germany, the Freedom Party of Austria, Podemos in Spain, or Syriza in Greece have not only gained publicity but increased their electoral gains in national parliaments as well as local governments<sup>1</sup>.

According to consensus, far wing parties offer positions and policies that can be considered as either radical or extremist in their ideology, aiming to change existing political and economic systems. If radicalism aims to reform, extremism opposes directly democratic systems; yet, it is difficult to distinguish in practice between radicalism or extremism as far as these parties tend to hide their extremism in order to avoid legal consequences (Mudde, 2010). Radical parties oppose and blame the mainstream parties and governments for the disadvantageous political and economic situation. Moreover, they criticize the government's policies related to immigration, unemployment, or economic crises. Yet, it is unclear why far-left or far-right parties emerge and/or succeed in different countries and what is the role of the government at the time when these radical parties increased their support.

As is to be expected, the presence of far-right and far-left parties in the political landscape is a relevant issue especially close to electoral periods. For instance, in the 2016 election in Austria and the 2017 election in France, much debate came from the role and effect on the election's discourse that far-right parties had. Statistically speaking, from 1995 to 2012 more than 150 new political parties gained seats in the lower houses in 23 European countries, of which one fifth were either far-left or far-right leaning (Doležalová et al. 2016).

There are certainly many valid and practical reasons why studying the emerge and success of far-right and far-left parties is an important issue in general discourse and even more so in academic circles. Being labeled an anti-system party or movement invites researchers especially in political science departments to try and understand the reasons behind any group's support. Indeed, a large

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<sup>1</sup>In the Appendix 1 is the list of far right and far left parties that will be studied in this work.

body of recent literature has shown that the economic crisis, GDP, unemployment, immigration, loss of trust and confidence in traditional parties and governments are considered as key explanations on why voters are supporting far-right or far-left parties (Filindra & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2013; Lubbers & Scheepers 2000, Norris 2005, Lindvall 2014). The causes for the success of these parties has been attributed mainly to economic or social factors.

Throughout this work I'd like to address some of the questions raised by current literature and argue that government formation impacts and in some cases, might be a good explanation on votes cast toward polarizing parties. Moreover, by measuring the impact of government formation, the study will also show correlations between political performance perception, unemployment, immigration used as control variables, and votes for far-left or far-right parties.

Clearly, there is a difference on handling economic and social issues depending on the government's ideological stock and at the end of its mandate voters will decide to punish or reward the government for its performance. In most democratic systems when voters are not satisfied with the incumbents' performance they will vote for the opposite representative. But what happens when there are new entrances in the political landscape and these new entrances go a few steps further into the radical and extreme area, asking for support? Are people going to vote for a radical right party in a country where a left government is the incumbent, in order to show their indignation and disapproval and do the same polarizing dance with a right-wing government as an incumbent? Taking into account the disappointment with mainstream parties and their policies while in a certain government formation, it might be expected that a considerable number of voters will respond by voting for a radical party of different color from the incumbent.

In order to test if these arguments that I'm putting forth, hold, I'm using two quantitative techniques as applied to different European countries, where a radical party is present for the time period. Namely, logistic regression and linear regression were used in order to analyze data from 15 European countries. The first criteria used in the case selection takes into account the vote share of a far-right or far left-party in each European country and drops them if it has less than 1% of vote shares. Secondly, due to limitations on the data where the radical party in interest was not included as an option in the European Social Survey, such as Estonia, Ireland, Sweden, or Lithuania, I also didn't include them. Thirdly, in the case of Luxembourg and Slovakia there weren't any variations

in partisanship; therefore, I couldn't test the relationship between variables since it produced a multicollinearity problem.

In addition, two parallel analysis have been conducted, one at the national level while the other at the municipality level. Denmark and Catalonia are two case studies that have been analyzed at the municipality level whereas the rest of the countries are analyzed only at the national level.<sup>2</sup> Data is taken from the European Social Survey from 2002 until 2015, Statistic Denmark between 2009 to 2013, and Ministerio de Interior de Espana between 2003 to 2011.

It is to be noted that some of the results obtained from the analysis provided support for the main hypothesis. Partisanship affects the decision to cast a vote toward some radical parties. Yet, there are other cases that the data didn't support the hypothesis.

The contribution of this work is threefold. First, to the best of my knowledge there are no previous research papers that try to measure the relationship between partisanship and the emerge and/or success of far-right or far-left parties. Secondly, most of the studies on far right or far left parties are case study analysis focused only at the national level whereas, here we have an added value of analysis at the municipality level in the case of Denmark and Catalonia. Finally, this work will offer an extended analysis of 15 European countries at the same time.

The expectations based on the previous studies will be discussed in the next sections. Section 4 presents the research design including the database of the data and research techniques. Section 5 will present the results whereas in the section 6 will be summarized the conclusions and the limitations of the study.

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<sup>2</sup>Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Slovenia, ect.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The third wave of radical parties' success, which started in 1980s, is considered as the most successful (von Beyme, 1988). The influence of these parties in the political landscape has increased and it has led to increased interest among the political establishment, academia and the media. Before exploring the reasons why voters choose to cast their votes toward far-right and far-left parties', I would like to introduce the academical debate related to the concept's definition.

### 2.1 The Far-Right and the Far-Left Definitions

The analysis includes far-right and far-left parties from 15 EU countries<sup>3</sup>. There are several research papers which analyze and discuss far-right political parties whereas far-left parties only recently have begun to receive academic attention. Different concepts have been utilized in order to analyze far-right parties from a number of researchers but in general they have used the same parties to work on their definitions (Norris, 2005; Ignazi 2003, Golder, 2016). One of the main prominent researchers in the literature of the far-right parties is perhaps Mudde (2000, 2007, 2010). In his terminology, far right parties are called radical right parties and are identifiable from the following core ideological features: nativism, xenophobia, authoritarianism and welfare chauvinism. Nativism is used to differentiate between the nationalism of far-right parties from that of mainstream parties. Mudde has explained that nativism combines nationalism with xenophobia in which it is required for states to protect the native groups and to consider the non-native as fundamentally a threat for the monocultural nation-state (Mudde 2007, 19). Authoritarianism is put into practice through a law and order system where the state is tasked with preventing non-natives' criminal behavior. Whereas, welfare chauvinism requires the state to guarantee that jobs and other benefits to be exclusive for natives of the state. It is common for far-right parties to be considered as anti-immigrant; however, it is misleading to narrow them as single-issue such as being "anti-immigrant parties" (Ivarsflaten 2008).

Caiani et al. (2002) came to a similar definition by summarizing the meaning of far the right parties as a mix of anti-democracy, anti-constitutionalism, authoritarianism, xenophobic, ethnic nationalism and chauvinist elements.

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<sup>3</sup>There other 6 other countries that are not included in the analysis due to absence of necessary data from ESS.

On the other hand, the analysis of far-left parties only recently has emerged. The common agreement regarding far-left parties is based in the rejection of socio-economic structures, values and the practices of capitalism which produces artificial levels of inequality. According to Bale-Dunphy (2011) far left political parties aim to take power from the political and economic elite. March has also arrived to a similar conclusion (2011). According to the author, far left or radical left parties are those which reject, “contemporary capitalism and its values and practices. They advocate alternative economic and power structures involving a major redistribution of resources from existing political elites” (2011:8). The main concern of the far-left parties is economic inequality and they propose a higher income redistribution throughout society. Whereas for the far-right parties, inequality is the natural order and they do not seek state intervention in the issue (Mudde, 2007).

My working definition here of the far-right and far-left is based on Mudde (2007) and March (2011). The same definition’s usage can be found in Doležalová et al. (2016) from where the position in the far right and far left scale of European political parties has been taken.<sup>4</sup> It is likely that some of the parties under this study have been and/or are considered as right or left populist parties from the established literature. I would like to emphasize that populism is considered to be a crucial element to the ideological appeal of many far right or far left parties; however, not all parties share it and it can be found in the mainstream parties as well (Taggart 2000; Golder 2016). Therefore, this work will include as radical parties even those which are considered as left or right-wing populist parties from previous literature.

## **2.2 Where does the far-right or the far-left get their support?**

Political theories on democracy have always considered the election process as a mechanism through which citizens are able to reward or punish the parties/politicians for their performance. Each government formation color represents a standing on several economic and social issues, therefore when citizens vote, they do so generally according to their views and positions on several

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<sup>4</sup>The selection of the parties in the study is based in the aforementioned characteristics of extreme parties. The political position in the left right scale, for each party, it was based on expert evaluation from the respective countries combined with secondary sources. Secondly, a minimum of 1 % vote share was important in the moment of deciding which party will be part of the study and which will be excluded. In the Appendix 1, can be found a complete list of parties as part of the analysis (Doležalová et al. 2016).

policies they wish to be implemented from the government they hope will govern. However, when they don't feel represented enough by the mainstream parties, people seem to either vote for far-left or far-right parties or skip the ballot box.

The latest barometer survey of 2016 has shown that among Europeans, immigration is of primary concern, while the economic situation and unemployment are third and fifth, respectively. Not surprisingly, the current success of radical parties matches with the economic crisis of 2008, at a moment when the unemployment rate began to rise and when European countries were faced with several immigration crises. Moreover, a decades long cultural gap between those who support materialist values with those who see themselves more comfortably in post materialist values has added to the political discourse. During this period radical parties have embraced the main issues concerning voters, while blaming governments in power, and attempted to increase their vote maximization according to the spatial approach to party competition (Downs 1957).

Several studies have been undertaken in order to understand which social categories are casting their votes toward radical parties and to determine the reasons that pushes these groups to support these parties, as can be seen in the work of Della Posta, 2013; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2002, etc. The relative success experienced by the radical parties has mostly been attributed to their anti-immigrant position and claims.

Immigration is considered a dominant issue of far-right parties' platforms and researches have proven that in countries with larger immigrant communities the support for far-right parties is higher (Knigge 1998, Lubbers & Scheepers 2002, Golder 2003, Swank & Betz 2003, van der Brug et al. 2005, Carter 2005).

Coffé et al. (2007) studied the impact of immigration in a different perspective by taking under consideration the immigrants' origin as an independent variable. They used Belgium as a case study and identified the impact how the immigrants' origin influenced the votes for the far-right parties. According to the authors' conclusion, voters who were opposed to immigrants from Turkey or north African states were more likely to vote for the far-right parties. Meuleman & Billiet (2003) have shown that natives' preference toward immigrants' origin is present among Flemish people as well. The presence of South-Europeans was considered less problematic than the presence of immigrants from Muslim countries (as cited in Coffe et al. 2007).

However, different from the above cases Kitschelt (1995) didn't find any significant relationship between the presence of immigrants and the electoral success of radical parties in his analysis of the extreme right-wing success in European countries. Neither did Schain et al. (2002) who wrote that,

“it appears that even though attitudinal opposition to immigrants is related to support for the extreme right, the spatial variation of electoral support for the extreme right within countries and between countries is not simply correlated with the presence of immigrants (as cited in Coffe et al. 2007: 144 ).”

Other studies have looked into how the economic context, specifically unemployment, might affect the increase of vote shares for far-right or far left parties. Lindvall (2014) concludes that the economic crisis of 2008 created an electoral dissatisfaction with the governments' economic policies and consequently produced an increase of vote cast towards far-right parties. However, while this was a concentrated study for a specific time period and event and while it may sound convincing if generalized, Hernandez & Kriesi (2015) went the opposite way and showed empirically that the economic voting perspective does not determine where electoral support stands in the long run. Furthermore, Arzheimer & Carter had found that unemployment had little or no effect at all on votes cast towards far-right parties (2006).

Other researches have considered not only looking at unemployment as an isolated variable in relation to the support for the far-right, but also how it might affect support when coupled with immigration. Golder (2003) in his study analyzed the dependent variable unemployment interacting with immigration and found that people blame immigrants for higher unemployment when immigration is sufficiently high. Whereas those who believe that unemployment is high due to market labor rigidities, there is no evidence for votes cast toward the far-right parties. The impact of unemployment varies on to whom people address the fault for the situation they see.

Moreover, Dancygier (2010) shows that the relationship between the economic crisis and supporting the far right depends also on the type of immigrants, if these are economic or noneconomic immigrants, that the natives oppose and the type of the economy. In statist economies, where local authorities heavily control the social services, housing and employment, noneconomic immigrants

will put more stress on local economies. As a result, economic scarcity will increase the chances for the native population to support far right parties.

Yet, the same argument, which supports the idea that economic factors and unemployment rates are two reasons of success shared by the far-right parties, it can be applied to understanding the success of far-left parties as well. Dolezalova et al. (2016) found that economic performance is an important factor for the electoral success of the far-left parties. Moreover, they found that far-left parties' supporters were sensitive about changes in the GDP and the unemployment situation. The decline of any of these two factors was translated in more vote shares toward far-left parties.

On the other hand, March (2011) didn't find any significant relationship between economic growth and electoral results of the far left.

Researches have also looked at votes cast toward far-right parties under the cultural backlash thesis (Inglehart 1977, Norris & Inglehart 2016)<sup>5</sup>. Under this view, postmaterialist values which emphasize the expansion of individual freedom, multiculturalism, gender and racial equality, sexual freedom, open-mindedness toward immigrants and offer of greater humanitarian assistance, will produce a counter reaction. As a result, those who hold traditional values and retro norms will be easily attracted by far-right parties and will embrace language and policies which are tougher and intolerant towards immigrants, racial minorities, refugees. Shifting from "materialist" values to "post-materialist" values produces a "salient counter-revolution" (Ignazi 1992). Therefore, people that hold traditional values will be pushed at any moment toward any radical party which claims similar concerns with the aforementioned category of voters.

Radical parties are commonly considered as single-issue parties by most researchers and especially by the research presented above when considering immigration, unemployment and personal values. Ivarsflaten (2008) has considered this approach as a misleading one. The studies which attempt to explain why people vote for radical parties have also shown contradictory conclusions. While looking only through the lens of single issues, the contradictory conclusions do not seem to establish a stable theory why radical parties become successful and invite even more debate.

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<sup>5</sup> Norris & Ingleart 2016 explain this theory on the scope of populist parties yet, they have consider as left or right populist parties the same parties which under this study have been considered as far right and far left parties.

Green & Hobolt (2007) studied party strategies and vote choices for the British elections and found that voters perceive that there are issues owned by the parties. These issues are related with partisanship theory; therefore, a left government formation is expected to own issues related to education, health, economy, unemployment, and pensions whereas a right government formation will be expected to implement policies related to defense, crime, lower taxation, etc. This clear position leads to the situation where the lack of attention on issues that radical parties support will create an environment of greater discourse opportunities for the radical parties therefore increasing their audience. As a result, it might be expected that it would be difficult for a far-right party to emerge or gain success in a country where there is a right government formation. On the other hand, the likelihood for a far-right to be supported in a country with a left government formation is higher.

On the heels of this debate, this work aims to understand the electoral support of radical parties by analyzing the role of government formation and using it as the independent variable. As long as the government and the parties elected to lead are the responsible and visible actors in creating and implementing policies that effect the general population, it can be suggested that the reaction for the support towards radical parties is targeted against them.

### 3. THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS

There is a predictable relationship established in political and economical literature regarding partisanship to policy outcomes. Therefore, voters select candidates or cast votes for parties which represent ideologies close to their views and which they hope will be pursued once these candidates or parties are in office. This behavior is defined in what researches call partisanship theory, which claims that there is a tendency for policies to move according to election outcomes. The relationship between the left/right government formation is translated into policy changes as expressed in the equation below, widely used with the aim to measure partisan influence on government actions and policies (Imbeau et. al 2001):

**Policy outputs** =  $\int$  (left-right variation in the government formation, variation in controlling actors)

Researchers in general have attempted to identify issues and policies owned by left/right parties and their government formations when elected. In most of these studies, we can find that a left government formation generally prefers and implements policies that aim to decrease unemployment at the expense of increasing inflation, whereas right formations will prefer policies that decrease inflation at the expense of increasing unemployment (Hibbs 1977, 1987, as cited in Imbeut et. Al 2001). Several tests related to partisan impact on welfare policies usually postulate that *ceteris paribus* welfare state intervention is most likely related to a left government.

Even when policy choices are limited by economic conditions, ideology influences how governments pursue economic-growth.

“Left-wing or social democratic government primarily mobilize the public sector to shape the supply side of the economy – in order to reconcile growth and equality. Conservative governments believe instead in employing market mechanisms to optimize the saving and invest rates thus maximize economic growth. (Boix 1998, 16)”.

Moreover, leftist government formations tend to intervene more in macro-economic policy, adjust public debt as a percentage of GDP, and prefer progressive taxation (Imbeau et. Al 2001). The general partisanship view of the relationship between economic performance and electoral success claims that leftist parties have better record on reducing unemployment and as a result, the electorate might shift towards the left when unemployment is considered a major problem (Mueller 2003). Dassonneville and Lewis-Beck (2013) have examined the role of economic-oriented policies on voters, considering the relationship between unemployment and voting for left parties. According to their results, unemployment increased vote shares toward left parties only when the left parties were not governing, otherwise their votes decreased.

What left governments are also expected to include in their policies are implementations of inclusionary policies, such as an increase in social benefits and policies aimed to reduce inequality (Imbeau et. Al 2001). In addition, left government formations are more likely to embrace post-materialist values and implement policies in gender equality, more LGBTQ rights, human assistance etc.

On the opposite spectrum, a right-wing government formation is highly correlated to military spending and state involvement in military alliance. As a result, a considerable part of government's budget is designated towards military spending and equipment. Further, a right-wing government formation also puts policy emphasizes on law and order, justifying restrictions on greater social liberties in terms of citizens' safety. The right as a result is also known for embracing traditional values and remain critical of a great majority of post-materialist values. As Lakoff has made it clear in his analysis of the right, the right supports traditional values by emulating and embracing the father figure as the protector of the status quo, the knowledgeable entity of how things should be and which shouldn't be questioned.

In addition, the problem of immigration is considered closer to the agenda of right-wing governments rather than the left. In this light, some might argue that the right has a greater claim to own the issue of immigration (Bale et al. 2010) and is responsible for implementing restrictions in order to prevent illegal immigration. One of the main arguments that comes from the right in regard to immigration is that it increases unemployment. And, in its policy solutions to unemployment it has come to be expected that a cut in taxes and less state regulations will address

the issue. Furthermore, in order to alleviate the state's expenses, it tries to cut or decrease welfare policies.

I see as necessary that after summarizing policies pertaining to left or right government formations in economic and social policies, a summary on radical parties is needed. A radical party is a reaction to the perceived failure of the established political order and policies taken by it.

Regarding left radicalism there is a common agreement that it is based in the rejection of socio-economic structures, values and the practices of capitalism which produces artificial levels of inequality. Far-left parties aim to decrease the unemployment rate and to reduce inequality. As far as immigration goes, far-left parties are more inclusive towards immigrants. They maintain a pro-immigrant policy stance (Keith & McGowan 2014). Far-left parties also have shown acceptance of post-materialist values in their discourses.

Far-right parties offer solutions to economic problems related to unemployment in the context of nativist and chauvinist agendas (Rydgren 2005). Secondly, as it is shown above, there are several papers that consider the far-right's stance on immigration as one of the main issues which seems to attract the voters. One of the far-right's core features is related to their claim for a state intervention in protecting native population from any alien group. Far right parties have been seen to embrace more traditional values and strongly oppose post-materialist values.

But to what extent could a far-right party become successful in a country where a right government is governing? And what about the case of a far-left party?

We saw from partisanship theory that policy outcomes depend from election results. Moreover, from issue ownership theory we know that specific policies are attributed to a party based on its ideological scale. At the same time, the issues owned by radical parties are on most cases exaggerated (at times simplistic) solutions in comparison to mainstream parties and the general discourse. As a consequence, radical parties are expected to attract more attention and be heard when the government formation is of the opposite color.

In this light, I would like to test the impact a particular government formation (color) has on vote shares for radical parties while the government color moves from left to right. Therefore, in a scale

from 1 to 5 where 1 represent a left-wing government and a 5 represents a right-wing government  
I hypothesize that.

**Hypothesis:** The more to the right an incumbent moves...

**1** ...*the lower is the likelihood for a far-right party to emerge or increase support.*

**2** ...*the higher the likelihood for a far-left party to emerge or increase support.*

#### **4. RESEARCH DESIGN**

Identifying the causal impact of government formation toward voting for radical parties requires comparing the votes toward particular radical parties when a left and/or right-wing party is governing.

With primary data taken from European Social Survey from 2002 until 2015; Statistic Denmark between 2009 to 2013 and; Ministerio Interior de Espana between 2003 to 2011, I will be able to test if there is any relationship between partisanship and voting for extreme parties. This relationship it is tested at two levels: the municipality level with electoral data and at the national level using survey data.

Two cases were chosen in order to test the hypothesis at the municipality level. The first case is Plataforma per Catalunya (PxC), a far-right party emerged in the independence-seeking region of Catalonia. While Spain has been considered as one of the few countries where there no political party with anti-immigration sentiments and opposition to the establishment hasn't emerged until PxC. The focus will be on PxC, which emerged in 2002 and gained a considerable support in some of the Catalan municipalities ranking as the primary party. In the autonomous Catalan election of 2010 PxC gained 75,000 votes, an unexpected number of votes (Hernandez-Carr 2011). Their unexpected success where a far-right party obtained a considerable support, makes Catalonia a good case to test the role of government formation on the votes obtained by Plaforma per Catalunya.

Also, Denmark is studied at the municipality level. The case of Denmark represents one of the best cases where a far-left and far-right party has been part of the political spectrum for many years. Through this case I can measure the changes of votes toward the far-right party and the far-left parties in the country due to which government has been in power.

To see if there is any pattern repeated from the national level in comparison to the municipality level an extended analyzes is applied to 15 European countries where a far-left and/or far-right party is present. All ESS rounds, from 2002 to 2015 are part of this analysis. The bibliography has links which show how the surveys were conducted for each country from ESS.

#### 4.1 Variables

**The dependent variable** is the vote cast toward a radical party. The dependent variable is measured by the percentage of votes that PxC, in Catalonia; Danish People's Party, Socialist People's Party and Red-Green Alliance have obtained in their respective municipal elections.

In the case of ESS analysis including 15 European countries, two dummy variables are generated, *vote far left = 1* and *vote far right = 1* represents votes cast toward each far-right or far-left parties, for each country in each round of ESS and =0 the rest of the parties.

**The independent variable:** government formation is measured in a scale from 1 to 5, where:

1 = left government

2 = center left government

3 = centrist government

4 = center right

5 = right-wing government.

In order to measure the government color variable data are taken from national/general elections results in the 15 countries in this study, in the time period between 1995 to 2015. The respective government position in the political spectrum was determined by previous evaluation by scholars from respective countries, secondary sources and by the Manifesto Project Dataset version.

#### 4.2 Control Variables

**Unemployment rate** and **being unemployed** are two control variables that are used in the case of Denmark and ESS respectively. There are several contradicting conclusions about the impact of unemployment in votes cast toward radical parties. On one hand, Jackman & Volpert (1996) revealed that far-right parties grow when unemployment is high, whereas March (2011) showed that high unemployment was a factor that helped far-left parties to pass the electoral threshold. In our case, unemployment will be used as a control variable for both, for the far-right and for the far-left. In the case of Denmark unemployment rate is measured:

$$\text{Unemployment rate} = (\text{Number of the employment}) / (\text{Labor force})$$

In case of the ESS, unemployment is measured by the following question:

Your job situation, unemployed looking for a job?

No= 0; Yes= 1.

**Immigration** has been widely tested as an important factor for increase of support toward the far-right. Lubbers and Scheepers (2000: 66) argue that “in circumstances of scarcity an extreme right-wing party may become a more attractive voting option.” Native born population perceive immigrants as a threat to their well-being; therefore, these perceptions coincide with the far-right rhetoric. It is expected that in cases where the immigration rate or a negative perception of immigrants is presents, the likelihood to vote for a far-right party will increase.

In case of Denmark immigration rate is measured:

$$N = (I - E)/M * 100$$

N = Immigration rate

I = Number of immigrants entering the area

E = Number of immigrants leaving the area

M = Mid-year population

In the case of ESS immigration is measured by a direct question:

Immigration good or bad for country economy?

In a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 is bad and 10 represents good.

**Education** is another control variables used in my study. Previous work have shown that the education of the electorate might be another determinant in the decision to vote for the far-right or the far-left parties (Dümer & Klein 2005; Arzheimer & Carter 2006, Darizlova 2016). It is expected that people with higher education are better informed and that are able to easily find a new job. Therefore, the higher the level of education of the respondent, the lower is the expected likelihood to vote for radical parties.

Education is a control variable used only in the analysis with the data taken from ESS and not in the municipality cases. Responders are asked to indicate their level of education from none = 0 to bachelor = 5.

**Sexual freedom rights** as a variable has been placed in the group of post-materialist values and is historically embraced more from left wing supporters. This variable is measured from ESS, where respondents are asked:

Are gays and lesbians free to live their life as they wish?

The respondents had to choose on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 represents strongly agree whereas 5 reflects strongly disagree answers.

**Government satisfaction** is another control variable included in the analysis with data obtained from ESS. In order to control if votes toward radical parties were protest votes, the government satisfaction variable is included as well, in a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied.

### **4.3 Linear Regression**

Linear regression is going to be used to measure the relationship between government formation and the percentage of votes gained from a radical party at the municipality level in the case of Catalonia and Denmark and also at the national level in the case of the other 15 European countries. Through this technique, I will be able to estimate the size of the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. Therefore, this technique will report the amount of change on the dependent variable that is associated with one-unit change in the independent variable (from 1 to 5). Moreover, variables such as the unemployment rate or situation, immigration rate or immigration perception, level of education, satisfaction with the government and sexual freedom rights will be used as control variables in order to see the change on votes toward radical party influenced by government formation color controlling for the aforementioned control variables.

### **4.4 Logistic regression**

Logistic regression is used to analyze the relationship between a single predictor, or several predictors, and an outcome that is dichotomous in nature (such as the presence or absence of an event) and this condition is fulfilled with the dependent variable: voting for radical parties. With

logistic regression applied at the municipality and national level, I will measure how significant is the direction of the relationship between government formation and voting for radical parties. In addition, the results of the predicted probabilities on voting for radical parties, due to the impact of government formation are provided. Taking into account that there might be other variables that affect the relationship between government formation and voting for radical parties, the aforementioned control variables are used.

## 5. RESULTS

In discussing the results obtained, I begin by analyzing the first two cases studied at the municipality level. Therefore, linear regression results are first featured to show whether or not government formation affects vote shares for radical parties. Moreover, through a logistic regression I have measured if there is a pattern on the success of radical parties from the impact of government formation in the 15 European countries in study. In order to measure the effect for each country I have used country fixed effects in this second part of the analysis.

### 5.1 Linear regression: Denmark and Catalunya

Columns 1 to 4, in table 1 report the results of vote shares for the far-right and the far-left parties, for a one-unit change moving to the right of the incumbent. A linear regression is used, in which the outcome is the reported percentage of vote shares for the Danish People's Party on the far-right and the Socialist People's Party, Red-Green Alliance on the far-left. Through this technique I can identify the changes to the vote share for the radical parties for a one-unit change of government formation moving from the left to the right scale.

Finally, the immigration rate and the unemployment rate are used as control variable in Denmark, whereas, in the case of Catalonia I wasn't able to create and introduce these two variables due to data limitation.

Table 1: Partisanship and Vote for Radical Parties, Denmark

|         | MODEL 1             |                     | MODEL 2              |                     |
|---------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
|         | (1)<br>faright      | (2)<br>farleft      | (1)<br>faright       | (2)<br>farleft      |
| govcol  | -3.381**<br>(1.219) | -3.728**<br>(1.232) | -3.192**<br>(1.195)  | -1.367**<br>(0.562) |
| immrate |                     |                     | 0.00321<br>(0.00367) |                     |
| unrate  |                     |                     |                      | 378.8<br>(202.5)    |
| _cons   | 23.51***<br>(4.535) | 27.67***<br>(4.610) | 22.31***<br>(4.428)  | 14.47***<br>(2.589) |
| N       | 195                 | 195                 | 195                  | 195                 |

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 1, model 1, shows the relationship between government formation color and votes cast toward radical parties in Denmark. The regression coefficient which measures the relationship between government formation color and voting for the far-right indicates the average change in percentage of votes toward the far-right party in Denmark for a one-unit change of the incumbent on the left-right scale. Therefore, there will be an average of 3.3% of decrease in vote shares for the Danish People's party for a one-unit change of the government formation color moving to the right. P-value is lower than 0.05; therefore, I can suggest that there is a significant relationship between government formation color and voting for the far-right party, in the case of Denmark.

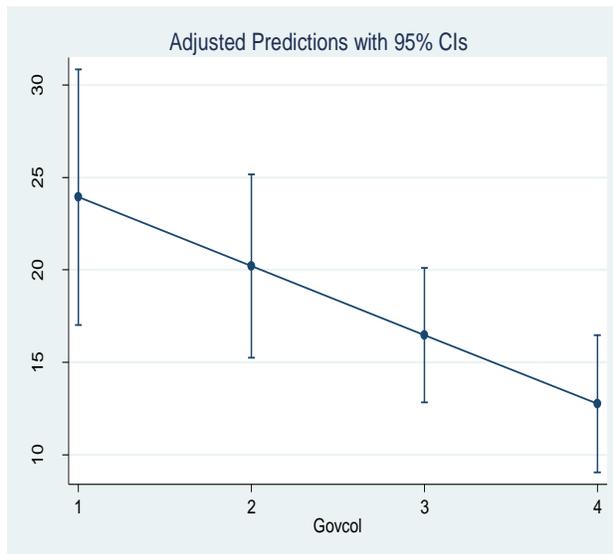
A similar significant relationship is found in the second model where the immigration rate is introduced as a control variable. In addition, the average of vote decrease for the Danish People's

Party for a one-unit change of the incumbent toward the right is 3.1%. The more to the right an incumbent is, the more would the vote decrease for the far-right party. Further, since the value of  $p < 0.05$ , the data provide strong evidence that government formation color is a significant predictor of the vote shares for the far-right party in Denmark.

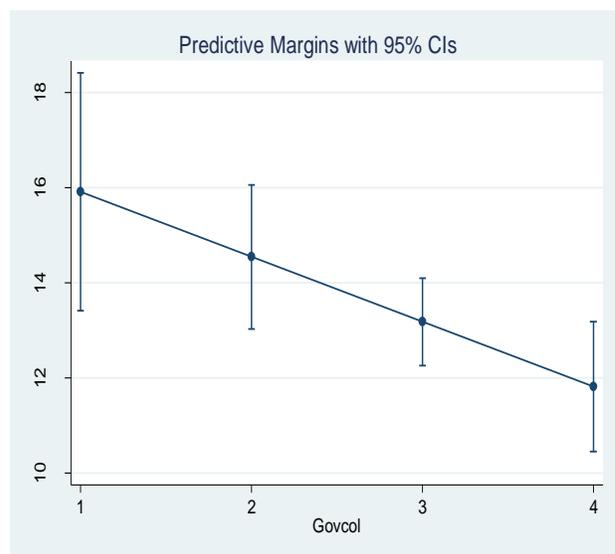
On the other hand, the relationship between partisanship and voting for far-left parties in Denmark, is statistically significant but the relationship is not in the expected direction. Therefore, for a one-unit change of the incumbent toward the right the average percentage of vote shares for the far-left parties decrease with 3.7%. While introducing unemployment rate as a control variable the average of the percentage of votes obtained by the far-left decreases slightly. Therefore, for a one-unit change to the right there is a 1.3 % decrease on votes cast for the far-left parties. Thus, we can say that the data do not support the second hypothesis.

### The Predicted Probabilities of vote casting toward far-left parties, Denmark

**Graph 1**



**Graph 2**

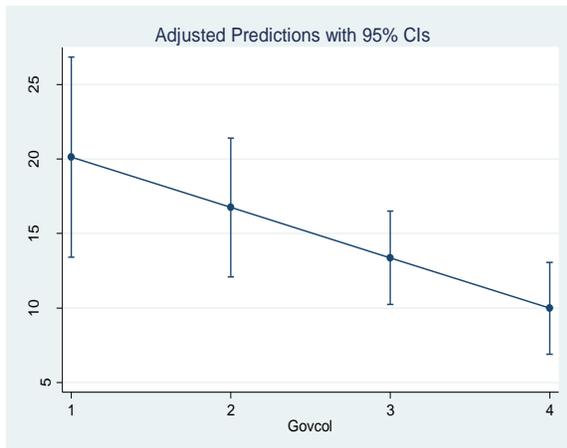


Graph 1 shows the predicted probabilities of casting votes for the far-left parties in Denmark, due to the influence of government formation color; whereas, graph 2 shows the same relationship after including unemployment as a control variable. In the both graphs, there is a clear tendency on votes decreasing for the far-left party, the more to the right the incumbent is. Therefore, the predicted probabilities of voting the radical-left parties will decrease the more right leaning a

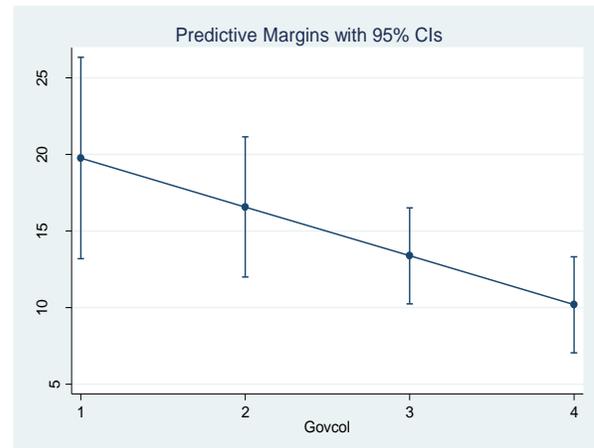
government is. This tendency is presented even in the second graph, after controlling for unemployment rate. The confidence intervals do not overlap; therefore, the relationship is statistically significant. Yet, the data do not support the second hypothesis which suggest that the more to the right leans a government the likelihood to vote the far-left parties will increase.

### The Predicted Probabilities of vote casting toward far-right party, Denmark

**Graph 3**



**Graph 4**



Graph 3 and graph 4 shows the predicted probabilities of voting for the Danish People's Party due to the influence of government formation color without and with control variable, respectively. In both cases the average percentage of votes for the far-right party in Denmark decreases the more to the right the government leans. The confidence intervals do not overlap, in none of the graphs, therefore the relationship is statistically significant. Furthermore, it could be suggested that the more to the right a government moves the lower is the probability for the Danish People's party to be voted, supporting my first hypothesis.

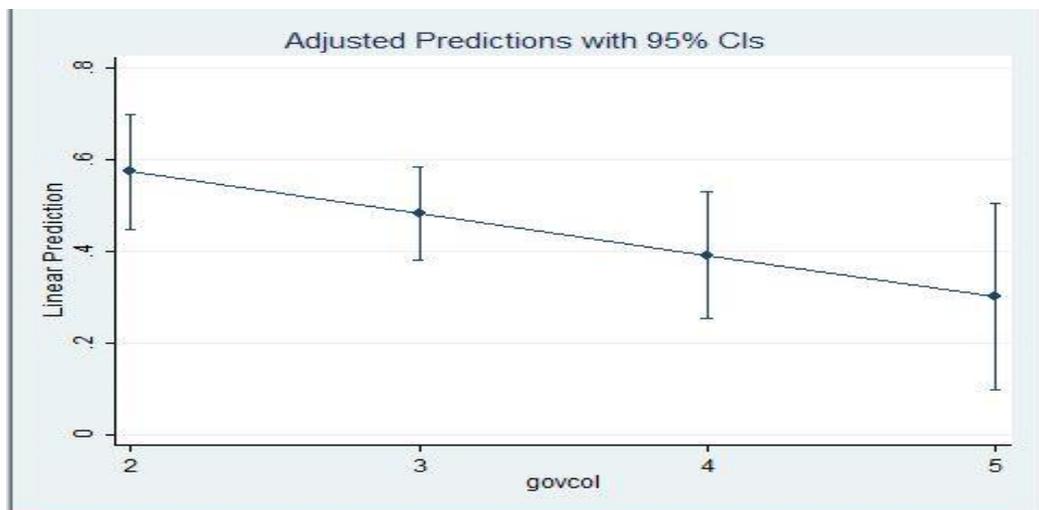
**Table 2: Partisanship and Vote for PxC, Catalunya**

|               | Vote Right           |
|---------------|----------------------|
| <b>Govcol</b> | -0.0909*<br>(0.0427) |
| <b>_cons</b>  | 0.754***<br>(0.138)  |
| <b>N</b>      | 1689                 |

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 2 shows the estimated effect of government formation color on voting for the far-right party (PxC) in Catalunya. According to the regression coefficient we could suggest that a one-unit change of the incumbent to the right, the average percentage of votes for PxC would decrease with 0.09%. Furthermore, since the value of  $p < 0.05$  we could conclude that the data provides convincing evidence that government formation color is a significant predictor of the percentages of votes obtained by PxC. Therefore, we could say that the results obtained in the case of Catalunya support the first hypothesis.

**The Predicted Probabilities of vote casting toward PxC party, Catalunya - Graph 5**

In graph 5 we can see the predicted probabilities of voting for the far-right party in Catalonia in relation to the impact of government formation color. As graph 5 shows, the predicted probabilities of voting for PxC decrease as the incumbent moves further to the right in the left-right scale. As far as the confidence intervals do not overlap we can conclude that the relationship between government formation color and voting for PxC is statistically significant and the data support the first hypothesis.

## **5.2. Logistic Regression, Results from European Countries**

By applying logistic regression, I have been able to investigate further the following:

- 1) relationship significance between voting for radical parties and government formation color and as well as using control variables,
- 2) the direction of the relationship between the variables, and
- 3) what are the predicted probabilities that radical parties will be voted due to government formation color. Moreover, the changes on the predicted probabilities on voting radical parties, after introducing control variables.

Table 3: Logistic regression, European Countries

|         | MODEL 1                |                        | MODEL 2                 |                        |
|---------|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
|         | (1)                    | (2)                    | (1)                     | (2)                    |
|         | faright                | farleft                | faright                 | farleft                |
| govcol  | -0.0976***<br>(0.0221) | -0.0863***<br>(0.0148) | -0.0655**<br>(0.0230)   | 0.0175<br>(0.0156)     |
| imbgeco |                        |                        | -0.218***<br>(0.00871)  |                        |
| gndr    |                        |                        | -0.488***<br>(0.0388)   | -0.208***<br>(0.0312)  |
| freehms |                        |                        | 0.0652***<br>(0.0172)   | -0.213***<br>(0.0162)  |
| Stfgov  |                        |                        | -0.0863***<br>(0.00871) | -0.178***<br>(0.00724) |
| Edulvla |                        |                        | -0.0288*<br>(0.0124)    | 0.0275***<br>(0.00549) |
| Uempl   |                        |                        |                         | 0.0802<br>(0.0674)     |
| _cons   | -3.521***<br>(0.0930)  | -12.66<br>(695.8)      | -1.827***<br>(0.136)    | -11.62<br>(471.0)      |
| N       | 126634                 | 143102                 | 115912                  | 133544                 |

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 3 shows the relationship between government formation color and voting for radical parties in 15 European countries. The first model represents the logit coefficients from the impact that

government formation color has on voting far-right and far-left parties as well as with the inclusion of the control variables, shown in model 2.

The results show that in the model 1, there is a significantly negative relationship between government formation color and voting for far-right parties in European countries. I have used fixed effect on countries in order to identify the impact of each country in the model. The negative sign in the logit coefficients shows that the more on the right an incumbent leans, the lower would be the percentage of votes cast toward far-right parties, as it is stated in hypothesis 1. Additionally, the value of  $p < 0.05$  indicates that the relationship between the variables is statistically significant and the data support hypothesis 1.

Furthermore, the results of the same model show that the logit coefficient of government formation color and far-left parties is negative suggesting that the more the incumbent leans to the right, the fewer is the percentage of votes obtained by far-left parties. This relationship has a p value lower than 0.05 showing that the relationship between the variables is statistically significant. Due to the negative sign of the logit coefficient we could say that the relationship between variables don't goes in the expected direction, as it is stated in hypothesis 2. As the incumbent leans to the right, the percentages of votes for the far-left parties decreases, contradicting hypothesis 2.

The second model represents the relationship between government formation color and voting for radical parties while including control variables such as: immigration perception, gender, education level, unemployment, age, LGBT rights, and the satisfaction with the government. As we can observe the relationship between partisanship and voting for far-right parties remains significant with a negative direction. The logit coefficient for the partisanship variable is lower in the second model suggesting that control variables have a slight effect on vote cast toward far-right parties. Moreover, as the perception of immigrants' impact on the economy improves, the likelihood to vote the far-right parties decreases suggestion that the far-right supporters do see immigration as a menace for the economy.

It is worth noting a gender gap, showing that women are less likely to vote for the radical right parties. Not surprisingly, the relationship between votes cast toward the far-right parties and sexual freedom goes in the same direction suggesting that the more respondents disagree with the right of LGB the higher the vote shares for the far-right parties. In addition, an increase in education

levels shows a decrease in votes cast for radical right parties.

On the other hand, the direction sign of the relationship between government formation color and voting far-left parties has changed compared to the first model. However, this relationship is not statistically significant as far the p value is higher than 0.05.

### Logistic Regression- Result for each Country, ESS

Table 4: Countries and the support of the hypothesis

| H1 supported, H2 supported                     | H1 not- supported – or Missing, H2 supported  |
|--|---|
| <b>France</b><br><b>Netherland</b>             | <b>Germany</b><br><b>Hungary</b><br><b>Portugal</b>   |
| H1 supported, H2 not- supported or Missing     | H1, H2 not- supported or Missing  |
| <b>Belgium (H2- Missing)</b><br><b>Austria</b> | <b>Czech Republic (H1 missing)</b><br><b>Finland (H1 missing)</b><br><b>Greece (H2 missing)</b><br><b>Italy</b><br><b>Spain (H2 missing)</b><br><b>Slovenia (H2 missing)</b><br><b>Poland</b> |

Table 4 shows countries where the hypotheses were supported or weren't. After using a logistic regression for all 15 countries together, another analysis was conducted for each country separately.

As we can observe, only in the case of France and the Netherlands the two hypotheses were supported by the data. According to the coefficient results, which are in Appendix 2, the relationship between partisanship and voting for the radical parties is statistically significant and in the expected direction. Therefore, as an incumbent moves more to the right, the votes cast toward the far-right parties are lower; whereas, the votes cast toward far-left parties are higher.

In the cases of Italy and Poland, the results of both models were statistically significant but the relationship was in the opposite direction. Therefore, in case of Italy and Poland we can say that government formation color is not a good predictor for vote shares toward radical parties.

The results obtained in the case of Germany and Hungary have shown that there is a strong evidence that government formation color can be a good predictor on the votes cast toward far-left parties. However, the relationship between government formation color and voting the far-right parties wasn't statistically significant.

Whereas, in the case of Portugal, the relationship between government formation color and voting for far-left parties is statistically significant. Moreover, the more to the right a government is, the higher is the likelihood for a far-left party to be voted. On the other hand, there was not a far-right party included in the case of Portugal therefore we cannot say if the independent variable would have had a similar effect even on the votes for the far-right parties.

In the cases of Austria and Belgium, the data supported the first hypothesis. In both cases the relationship between government formation color and votes cast for far-right parties was statistically significant. On the other hand, in case of Austria the relationship between government formation color and voting for far-left parties was statistically significant but it was in the opposite direction suggesting that the more to the right a government moves the lower are the votes obtained from the radical left parties. In the case of Belgium we cannot say if the second hypothesis is supported or not by the data since we do not have a far-left party included in the study.

## 6. Conclusion

The data under study in this work brings me to the conclusion that the emergence of success of radical parties can be attributed to government formation color in many cases. The position of the incumbent on the left-right scale can be a good predictor for the potential emergence or success of radical parties.

The results showed that the more to the right an incumbent is, the lesser would be the vote shares for far-right parties as was found in the case of Denmark and Catalunya and in all the 15 European countries when taken together. On the other hand, the second hypothesis stated that the more to the right the incumbent is, the higher are the vote shares for far-left parties which was not supported in the case of Denmark and in the European countries when taken together.

However, different conclusions were derived when studying each of the 15 European countries separately. There were countries such as France and the Netherlands where both hypothesis were supported by the data and as it is to be expected with such a variety of data the cases of the Czech Republic, Italy, Spain, Finland, Greece, Slovenia and Poland neither of the hypothesis were supported.

In relation to the control variables, the study produced some interesting results. Again, to be noted, it was found that there is a lack of support from women toward radical parties. A similar result was found in the case of women and votes for the far-left. Therefore, we might suggest that women are less likely to vote for radical parties.

The variety in the results can lead us to the conclusion that more particular attention is needed on the conditions under which the arguments hold. One reason on the varied results can be attributed to the nature that a left, center or right incumbent is different across European countries, despite the general need to see a left, center or right government in monolithic representations. In other words, the implementation of left policies in Denmark are not the same on what left policies might be seen in Austria.

Another takeaway could be that voters of countries such as Austria, are more commonly comfortable to the right of the left-right scale therefore voting for the right is relatively more normal than say Spain or Italy, and as a result a far-right party in Austria might be positioned further to the right

than a far-right party in Spain or Italy.

It is shown, at least, that far-right parties will have a lesser chance to emerge or succeed in an election environment where the incumbent is closer to the right, while less support was found for the chances that a far-left party can emerge or success under the same conditions.

## 7. Limitations

One of the main limitations of the study is the time period of the ESS survey. The latest round of surveys was conducted in 2015; therefore, the success of many radical parties such as Front National in France, Freedom Party of Austria, Podemos in Spain, etc. which have seen greater success post 2015 were not including in the study.

Secondly, due to data type limitations I only studied the relationship between government formation color and votes cast toward radical parties with survey data which does not reflect the real success of the radical parties in election results. Therefore, an analysis with real election data would be an interesting and more conclusive in order to capture the real impact of government formation color in the decision to vote for radical parties.

Moreover, some of the radical parties in the study were not a possible answer in the ESS questions related to which party did you vote last year. Therefore, I wasn't able to see the success of all the radical parties in each country. Last, but not least, an expanded time period would be necessary in order to have variations in government formation.

**APPENDIX 1***Table A1. List of parties included in the work*

| Country               | Far-right parties   | Far- left parties  |
|-----------------------|---|--|
| <b>Austria</b>        | Freedom Party of Austria<br><br>Alliance for the Future of Austria        | Communist Party of Austria   |
| <b>Belgium</b>        | Flemish Block<br>National Front<br>Popular Party                          |  |
| <b>Czech Republic</b> | Association for Republic - Republican<br>Party of Czechoslovakia          | Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia<br><br>Left Bloc                  |
| <b>Denmark</b>        | Danish People's Party   | Socialist People's Party<br>Red-Green Alliance                           |
| <b>Finland</b>        | True Finns  | Left Wing Alliance   |
| <b>France</b>         | National Front<br>National Republican Movement                            | Worker's Struggle<br>French Communist Party<br>Left Front                |
| <b>Germany</b>        | National Democratic Party of Germany<br>Republicans                       | Party of Democratic Socialism  |
| <b>Greece</b>         | Golden Dawn<br>Independent Greeks<br>Popular Orthodox Rally               | Communist Party of Greece<br>Coalition of Radical Left<br>Left Coalition |
| <b>Hungary</b>        | Hungarian Truth(/Justice) and Life Party<br>Movement for a Better Hungary | Hungarian Workers' Party   |

|                         |   |  |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Italy</b>            | The Right-Flame Tricolor<br>North League  | Communist Refoundation Party<br>Party of Italian Communists  |
| <b>Netherlands</b>      | Party for Freedom - Group Wilders         | Socialist Party  |
| <b>Poland</b>           | League of Polish Families                 | Self-Defence of the Polish Republic  |
| <b>Portugal</b>         |   | Left Bloc<br>Portuguese Workers' Communist<br>Democratic Unity Coalition - Portuguese<br>Communist Party - Ecologist<br>Party "The Greens" |
| <b>Slovenia</b>         | Slovene National Party<br>Party Lime Tree |  |
| <b>Spain</b>            |   | Left United<br>Galician Nationalist Bloc<br>Republican Left of Catalonia<br>Amaiur   |
| <b>Catalunya/ Spain</b> | Plataforma per Catalunya                  |  |

## APPENDIX 2

Table A2.1 Partisanship on Votes for Radical Parties, European Countries

|        | faright<br>Austria    | faleft<br>Austria  | faright<br>Belgium    | faleft<br>Cezh Rep    | faleft<br>Finland    | faright<br>France     | faleft<br>France     |
|--------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| govcol | -0.599***<br>(0.0603) | -0.926*<br>(0.439) | -0.693***<br>(0.0912) | -0.986***<br>(0.0612) | 0.0657<br>(0.0496)   | -0.539***<br>(0.0718) | 0.207***<br>(0.0521) |
| _cons  | -0.508*<br>(0.244)    | -1.998<br>(1.485)  | -0.624*<br>(0.302)    | -0.315<br>(0.176)     | -3.319***<br>(0.151) | -2.478***<br>(0.204)  | -4.027***<br>(0.182) |
| N      | 8713                  | 4200               | 12577                 | 12947                 | 14275                | 12981                 | 12981                |

Standard errors in parentheses

\* p&lt;0.05, \*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\*\* p&lt;0.001

Table A2.2 Partisanship on Votes for Radical Parties, European Countries

|        | faright<br>Germany   | faleft<br>Germany     | faright<br>Greece    | faright<br>Hungary   | faleft<br>Hungary    | faright<br>Italy     | faleft<br>Italy      |
|--------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| govcol | 0.478***<br>(0.0812) | 0.106**<br>(0.0315)   | 0.224*<br>(0.0921)   | 0.723***<br>(0.192)  | 0.549***<br>(0.0660) | 0.327*<br>(0.156)    | 0.182<br>(0.0961)    |
| _cons  | -6.254***<br>(0.282) | -3.183***<br>(0.0974) | -4.618***<br>(0.270) | -8.049***<br>(0.694) | -5.432***<br>(0.230) | -5.173***<br>(0.575) | -3.639***<br>(0.328) |
| N      | 20490                | 20490                 | 7193                 | 11518                | 11518                | 3696                 | 2736                 |

Standard errors in parentheses

\* p&lt;0.05, \*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\*\* p&lt;0.001

*Table A2.3 Partisanship on Votes for Radical Parties, European Countries*


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|        | faright               | faleft               | faright              | faleft                | faleft               | faright              | faleft                |
|--------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
|        | Netherland            | Netherland           | Poland               | Poland                | Portugal             | Slovenia             | Spain                 |
| govcol | -0.136***<br>(0.0395) | 0.164***<br>(0.0389) | -0.138<br>(0.0739)   | -0.378***<br>(0.0503) | 0.114***<br>(0.0284) | 0.506***<br>(0.149)  | -0.0735**<br>(0.0273) |
| _cons  | -2.314***<br>(0.129)  | -3.117***<br>(0.134) | -3.571***<br>(0.295) | -1.993***<br>(0.188)  | -3.444***<br>(0.101) | -4.976***<br>(0.370) | -2.683***<br>(0.0913) |
| N      | 13505                 | 13505                | 8917                 | 8917                  | 13718                | 8383                 | 13543                 |

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Standard errors in parentheses

\* p&lt;0.05, \*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\*\* p&lt;0.001

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