

## **The support base of radical right parties in the enlarged European Union**

By

Wouter van der Brug  
Universiteit van Amsterdam/ASCoR/IMES  
&  
Meindert Fennema  
Universiteit van Amsterdam/IMES

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Corresponding author:

Wouter van der Brug  
Universiteit van Amsterdam / ASCoR  
Kloveniersburgwal 48  
1012 CX Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
Phone: + 31(0)20 5252765; Fax: +31 (0)20 5253681  
E-mail: [W.vanderbrug@uva.nl](mailto:W.vanderbrug@uva.nl)

## **Introduction**

In the last two decades of the twentieth century many western democracies have seen the rise of parties that have been labelled extreme-right (Ignazi, 1992; Hainsworth 2000), New Radical Right (Kitschelt 1995), Radical Right (Norris 2005), right-wing populist (Van der Brug and Mughan 2007) or anti-immigration parties (Fennema 1997). In this paper we study the motives of citizens to support these parties.

These parties are ideologically a mixed bag. Some of them are inspired directly by fascist intellectuals from the 1930s and speak of the fall of Western civilization (see e.g., Fennema and Pollman, 1998)<sup>1</sup>, whereas other such parties have no sympathy at all for the fascist past, and have even criticized the lack of forms of direct democracy in parliamentary democracies. Some have a program that promotes a free market economy, whereas other such parties have objected against free market arrangements, particularly when it comes to international trade. When Fennema (1997) studied the ideologies of the Western European parties that belong to this group, he concluded that the main thing these parties have in common is their fierce opposition against immigration, reason why he proposed to call them anti-immigrant parties, and more recently anti-immigration parties. This term is well suited to describe West-European parties of the radical right. However, if we include parties from central of Eastern Europe, or from Latin America, the term ‘anti-immigration’ does not capture what these parties are about. Since immigration into these countries is very limited (apart from former East Germany), these parties have not mobilized against immigrants. Rather, they have promoted strong right wing nationalism and as such they have mobilized anti-EU sentiments, as well as anti-Semitism (in particular the Polish Self Defence and the Hungarian Life and Justice) and hate against other ethnic groups, in particular the Roma. So, when looking beyond the context of Western Europe –as we do in this paper– the term radical right is to be preferred (see also Norris 2005).

Until the late 1990s, socio-structural models inspired most research on the radical right. According to this perspective, the rise of radical right parties should be seen as a backlash response to modernization. The crux of these explanations is the suggestion that support for radical right parties comes from citizens who feel threatened by rapid changes in postindustrial societies. Manual workers with low

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<sup>1</sup> Some even used 1930s jargon, such as the “fall of the Occident”.

education tend to lose their jobs as a result of changes in modes of production. Moreover, they are competing with immigrant groups for scarce resources such as jobs and houses. These "losers of modernity" (Betz 1998) feel threatened by rapid social change and tend to support radical right-wing parties out of general discontent.

More recent contributions have challenged this perspective that was dominant until the late 1990s. Van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie (2000) showed that socio-structural characteristics of voters explain less of the variance in support for radical right parties than in support for the more established parties. This means that radical right parties attract their support, more than established parties, across various social boundaries. Moreover, they showed that support for radical right parties is motivated by the same kind of ideological and pragmatic considerations as support for established parties. These analyses were based on 1994 data for 7 electoral systems in the EU. A replicating study of 1999 data in 8 political systems gave a different picture. For the large and successful radical right parties, such as the FPÖ, Vlaams Blok and Alleanza Nazionale these conclusions were still valid. However, support for small and unsuccessful radical right parties such as the Wallonian Front National, the German Republikaner and the Dutch Centrumdemocraten, this was not the case. So, they concluded that two groups of radical right parties have developed in 1999. One group of parties that is evaluated by their potential supporters on the basis of the same kind of substantive considerations that also motivate support for other parties. We could thus say that citizens treat them as 'normal' parties. The other group of parties is apparently not evaluated on the basis of ideological and pragmatic considerations.

The purpose of the current paper is to replicate the analyses of 1994 and 1999 with data from the EES 2004. This will enable us to assess whether the situation has changed compared to 1999. Moreover, these data enable us to assess the determinants of the vote for three radical right parties that were not included in previous studies: Laos (from Greece), the LPF (from the Netherlands) and the Hungarian Justice and Life Party. In addition to that, the EES 2004 allows us to replicate the findings for 6 parties that were also included in 1999: the Austrian FPÖ, the Danish Folkepartit, the

German Republikaner, the Italian Alleanza Nazionale and Lega Nord, and the French Front Nationale.<sup>2</sup>

### **What motivates voting for radical right parties?**

Different kinds of theoretical approaches exist to explain support for radical right parties, as well as differences in aggregate support for such parties. These approaches have looked at the demand side as well as supply side factors. In this paper we focus on the motivations of individual voters to support radical right parties, which is why our focus is mainly on the demand side: voters and their grievances and preferences. Different explanations have been brought forward.

The first one sees in the resurgence of the market forces, in massive unemployment and in the atomisation of risk society the main cause of the electoral growth of radical right parties. According to this explanation, radical right voting can partially be explained by social isolation. Arendt (1951) was the first to propose this explanation, and others have later found supporting evidence. For instance, Mayer and Moreau (1995) found among the Front National voters and among the voters for the German Republikaner a higher level of social isolation, measured by weak trade union ties and low religious affiliation. Others have, however argued that community leaders, rather than isolated individuals, decide the fate of the traditional parties and lead the voters to new parties (Hamilton 1982; Martin 1997). It may well be that feelings of social isolation do not stem from social atomisation, but rather from a disruption of the traditional relations between local communities and the political power structure. Martin (1997) has stressed the fact that Le Pen voters are found in traditional communities that have lost their lines of communication with the political elites.

In addition to the social isolation thesis, the ethnic competition thesis has been proposed. According to this explanation, support for radical right parties comes from those citizens who feel threatened by rapid changes in post-industrial societies. Blue-

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<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, we cannot include Vlaams Blok from Flanders, Front Nationale from Wallonia, New Democracy from Sweden, the British National Party from Britain and the National Party from Poland, because the relevant variables are missing.

collar workers with low education feel insecure because of globalisation and immigration. They compete with immigrant groups for scarce resources such as jobs and houses. These "losers of modernity" (Betz 1998) feel threatened by rapid social change and tend to support radical right-wing parties out of resentment against immigrants and against politicians in general, who are held responsible for their uncertainty.

Research has shown that voters who fit Betz' profile —the so called "angry white men"— are more likely than other citizens to support radical right parties (e.g., Lubbers 2001; Lubbers et al. 2002). However, socio-structural models tend to have very limited power to explain support of radical right parties (e.g., Mayer 1998; Riedlsperger 1998; Van der Brug et al. 2000; Van der Brug and Fennema 2003). Quite the contrary: more than is the case for the established parties, successful radical right parties such as the Austrian FPÖ in 2000, and the Dutch LPF in 2002 drew their support from all social strata (Van der Brug et al. 2000). Recently, Betz (2002) dropped his claims about the "losers of modernity".

Another popular explanation of support for radical right parties is the *protest vote* model (Mayer & Perrineau 1992; Martin 1996; Mudde & Van Holsteyn 2000; Betz 1994; Derks & Deschouwer 1998; Swyngedouw 2001; Belanger & Aarts 2006). Unfortunately, however, little conceptual clarity exists about what we mean by the term *protest vote*. Van der Brug et al. (2000) conceptualized protest voting as a rational, goal directed activity. They define protest votes by the motives underlying them. The prime motive behind a protest vote is to show discontent with "the" political elite. Since radical right parties are treated as outcasts by a large part of the elites in their countries, votes for these parties frighten of shock these elites, which is exactly what the protest voter wants to accomplish (see also: Van der Eijk et al. 1996).

In the literature the concept of the "protest vote" consists of two elements. The first element that distinguishes a protest vote from other types of votes is that discontent with politics (reflected in political cynicism, or lack of political trust) should have a strong effect on support for a radical right party (e.g., Van der Brug 2003; Aarts 2006). The second element is, in the words of Lubbers & Scheepers (2000:69) that "political attitudes ... are expected to be of minor importance". The main motivation behind a protest vote is, after all, *not* to affect public policies, but to

express discontent (see also: Kitschelt 1996; Mayer & Perrineau 1992; Kitschelt 1995; Mudde & Van Holsteyn 2000).

In previous studies Van der Brug et al. (2000) and Van der Brug and Fennema (2003) rejected the protest vote hypothesis for most of the radical right parties they studied. These studies were criticized for not having a direct operationalization of discontent (e.g., Norris 2006), and basing their conclusions instead on indicators of the extent of policy voting for radical right parties. We do not think this critique is warranted. Indeed the studies did not yield the possibility to demonstrate protest voting if it *had indeed occurred*. However, these studies did show that votes for most radical right parties could not be considered protest votes, because the second element of protest voting (a weak effect of policy preferences) did not apply to them.<sup>3</sup>

Another objection to the conclusions of Van der Brug et al. (2000) is that many voters who support radical right parties may combine anti-establishment feelings with substantive policy considerations (e.g., Swyngedouw 2001; Eatwell 2003). While this is certainly true, we are hesitant to use the term *protest vote* for votes that are to a large extent driven by substantive policy considerations. If we follow this line of reasoning, we could call votes for any opposition parties protest votes, if these votes are cast by citizens who are relatively discontented. Yet, scholars tend to reserve the term ‘protest vote’ for those who support radical parties (of the far left or the far right). As a case in point, Belanger and Aarts (2006) studied the effect of discontent on the vote in the Dutch elections of 2002. It turned out that discontent exerted an almost equally weak (and statistically insignificant) effect on the vote for the radical right LPF as on the Christian democratic party, which was the largest opposition party. They interpret this effect—even though it is not significant—as evidence in support of the protest vote hypothesis. Yet they did not answer the question whether Christian democratic voters should be considered protest voters as well.

We therefore propose to make a qualitative distinction between protest voting and policy voting. In this conceptualization, voters who support a party because they agree with this party on important policy considerations will be called policy voters. Surely, if these policies are very different from the policies pursued by the

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<sup>3</sup> For some smaller radical right parties, such as the Dutch Centrumdemocraten, these studies found only very weak effects of policy preferences. This could mean that the supporters of such parties were indeed protest voters, but in the absence of indicators of discontent, this cannot be established.

government these voters will be discontented. But as long as their vote is driven by these policy considerations, they are policy voters in our definition, no matter how discontented they are. Protest voters on the other hand are voters who support a party out of discontent, but for whom policy considerations are relatively unimportant.

Models of *policy - and ideological voting* have not been popular among scholars who study the support for radical right parties, because many researchers find it difficult to believe that voters would vote rationally for what they consider a racist or neo-fascist party. Policy voting models consider voters as rational consumers of policy programs and political parties as providers of such programs. In elections several parties provide their policy programs and voters choose from these alternatives. Of course voters do not know the content of all these programs. To be able to choose with restricted information on these programs, voters rely on other indications of the party programs. They tend to rely on general information and images that refer to the ideological profile of the parties. The policy voting model predicts therefore that even with limited information the voters' decisions in the ballot box are based on the content of the party programs (i.e., on issues and ideological positions). Electoral research has shown that votes for many radical right parties — particularly the more successful ones— are predominantly based on policy orientations, which are expressed in left/right positions and attitudes towards immigrants and immigration (Kitschelt 1995; Van der Brug c.s. 2000; Lubbers c.s. 2002; Van der Brug en Fennema 2003; Mughan en Paxton 2003). We will now assess to what extent this is still the case in 2004, and whether it is true for the nine radical right parties that we included in this study.

### **Data and method**

In order to assess whether policy considerations exert a strong or a weak effect on the electoral attractiveness of radical right parties, we must compare the motivations for voting for radical right parties with motivations to vote for other parties. Data from the European Elections Studies provide an excellent opportunity to make this comparison, because the data sets contain comparable information about a large number of parties from all sorts of ideological denominations. For this study we will use data from the European Election Studies 2004, which was conducted immediately following elections to the European Parliament. It consists of cross-sectional surveys

using random samples from the electorates of most of the member states of the European Union. In this study we use the surveys from eight countries with one or more parties of the radical right. In Austria 1,010 respondents were interviewed, in Denmark this was 1317, in France 1406, in Germany 596, In Greece 500, in Hungary 1200, in Italy 1553 and in the Netherlands 1586. The total sample in these countries thus consists of 9,162 respondents, about 1145 on average per country.

To compare the motives to support a radical right party with the motives the support other parties we employ a method that was proposed by Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996). In each country voters were asked, for each party in their political system,<sup>4</sup> how likely it was (on a scale of 1 to 10) that they would *ever* vote for it. These questions have been carefully designed to yield measures that can be interpreted as the propensity to vote for each of the parties (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996; van der Eijk 2002; Van der Eijk et al. 2006). These measures can be regarded for ease of exposition as preferences, but we know that voters make their choice in each election for the party they most prefer.<sup>5</sup>

Having measures of vote propensities serves many purposes, but in this paper the most important function is to provide us with a dependent variable that is comparable across parties (from the same party system, as well as from different party systems): the propensity to vote for a party. When the data matrix is stacked so that each voter appears as many times as there are parties for which her utility has been measured (and other variables have been appropriately transformed as explained below), the question can be posed "what is it that makes a vote for a party attractive to voters?" We already know that voters virtually always choose to vote for the party to which they give highest propensity to vote (see note 5). So an answer to the question "what is it that makes a vote for a party attractive to voters?" is also an answer to the question "what determines which parties are voted for?" The use of this measure to analyze the determinants of party choice has been validated elsewhere (Tillie 1995; Van der Eijk et al. 2006). There are three conceptual and methodological reasons for using the 'propensity to support' questions as a dependent variable to answer our research questions.

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4 In practice the parties asked about included only those with representation in the national parliament or those widely expected to obtain representation in the European Parliament.

5 In practice this occurs about 93% of the time in established EU member states.

The first reason is that the 'propensity to support' items allow for a research design that is truly comparative (see below). Were we to use party choice as our dependent variable, we would have to conduct separate analyses for each of the countries. Now we can analyse party preference in one single analysis in which all parties from all countries are included. Alternatively, one could do a comparative analysis with a research design proposed by Lubbers, Gijsberts & Scheepers (2002). They estimated a logistic regression model in which the dependent variable has two values: whether the respondent voted for a radical right party (1) or not (0). This design is not suitable to answer our research question, because it does not allow one to assess whether voters use different criteria to evaluate radical right parties than to evaluate other parties.<sup>6</sup>

Secondly, some of the radical-right wing parties that we are interested in attract so few votes that estimates of the effects of different variables on decisions to vote for any of these parties are highly unreliable. Since the 'propensity to support' items are asked of all respondents, the parameter estimates are more robust. Finally, if we want to understand the choice process, we cannot afford to look only at the result of that process (the party or candidate voted for), i.e., use party choice as the dependent variable. This is because we lack important information that we need to model this choice process, such as the (differences among) preferences for parties not voted for as well as the preference for the party one did vote for. This information is essential because we know that most voters in Western European countries find more than one party attractive. So, in order to model the motivations underlying the support for radical right parties, we need information about the attractiveness of all parties to all respondents. Since this is what the 'propensity to support' items actually measure, we can analyse the choice process by using these questions as our dependent variable (this argument has been elaborated in more detail elsewhere. See, Van der Eijk 2002; Van der Eijk et al. 2006; Van der Brug et al. forthcoming).

The EES 2004 asked this question for 9 radical right parties, all mentioned in the introduction, from eight European countries: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and the Netherlands. To assess whether voters evaluate these 9 parties by the same criteria as other parties, our study concentrates on the electoral attractiveness of all parties (58 in total) in the eight political systems included in this

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<sup>6</sup> Moreover, a dependent variable that distinguishes only between radical right and other parties does not realistically reflect the electoral process.

study. A valid way to analyse individual and inter-party level variations in party preferences simultaneously can be realised by arranging the data in the so-called 'stacked' (or 'pooled') form that was first proposed by Stimson (1985) and after that applied frequently in electoral research (e.g., MacDonald, Listhaug and Rabinowitz, 1991; van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Westholm, 1997). In this stacked data matrix each respondent is represented by as many 'cases' as there are parties for which (s)he was asked to indicate the vote propensity. This matrix allows us to apply multiple regression to explain parties' electoral attractiveness. By adding characteristics of the political systems and the parties as variables in the stacked data matrix, such characteristics can be included as variables in these regression analyses. In order to assess whether voting for radical right parties involves a different kind of decision than voting for other parties, we will estimate interaction terms for a radical right party on the one hand, and a set of independent variables on the other. Before getting into this, let us discuss which independent variables are in the equation for predicting parties' electoral attractiveness, and how these are treated in the stacked matrix.

The first predictor of party preference is the subjectively perceived distance between a voter and the respective party in the data matrix on a left-right continuum. Policy voting implies that the closer a party is to someone's own position in terms of policy positions, the more attractive this party will be for the person in question. The questionnaire contained a battery of items in which respondents were asked to indicate their own position as well as that of each political party on a 10-point scale of which the extremes were labelled left and right. These positions are indicative of very general policy preferences. From these responses perceived left-right distances were computed. The stronger the effect of perceived left-right distance on electoral attractiveness, the stronger the extent of ideological voting.

The likelihood of someone voting for radical right parties will also increase when (s)he agrees with its stance on some concrete issues (e.g., Billiet & De Witte, 1995). The European Elections Study 2004 contains just one position issue for which respondents' positions and their perceptions of party positions were measured: European integration. This item yields one more predictor of party preference, i.e., the perceived distance on this scale between each respondent and the respective party in the data matrix.

Other predictors of party preference are three attitude scales: approval of the current national government, approval of the European Union and satisfaction with

the way democracy works. The latter is not regularly included in models of party choice, but since the paper investigates radical right parties that are sometimes critical of parliamentary democracies, we included this measure. The survey also contained the question “what is the most important problem facing the country?” The responses were coded in categories, and we created dummy variables, one for each of the categories. These were used to assess the influence of political priorities on party preferences.

In addition to these attitude scales, we included a number of socio-structural and demographic variables in the model: social class, education, gender, religion and age. Class is measured with a variable asking for the respondent’s subjective idea of his/her social class. Religion is a composite variable of religious denomination and church attendance.

Creating the stacked data matrix produces a dependent variable, “party preference”, that is generic in the sense of having no party-specific meaning. The problem here, though, is that the relationship between dependent and independent variables are usually directionally specific. For example, church attendance can be expected to have a negative effect on support for a liberal party and a positive one on that for a Christian democratic party. In the case of the effect of left/right ideology, this directionality problem could be easily overcome when computing the ideological distance between each party and each respondent. This was not the case for the socio-structural and the attitude scales, however, since the surveys do not contain matching party characteristics for them. In order, therefore, to create generic independent variables that can be “stacked on top of each other”, we adopted a procedure that involves the linear transformation of the original socio-structural and issue variables (see e.g., Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Van der Brug, 2004). One outcome of this transformation of some of the predictor variables is that their influence will *always be positive*.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, we included a variable at the party level, *party size*, which represents a strategic consideration that voters may take into account: when two parties are about equally attractive on all relevant accounts, voters tend to vote for the largest one because it stands a better chance of achieving its policy goals. We called this type of

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<sup>7</sup> Except for odd cases where statistically insignificant effects can become negative in multivariate models.

voting 'pragmatic'. Party size is measured by each parties' proportion of seats in parliament.

In a number of subsequent steps we will assess to what extent support of radical right parties is determined by particular considerations that exert less (or no) effect on support of other parties. These party specific considerations are detected in the following way. First, we will start with an estimation of the regression model on the stacked matrix that includes all 58 parties. Also, we will do the same for the subgroup of 9 radical right parties, and for the 49 other parties. These analyses will allow only for an *ad oculum* comparison of differences in the effect parameters. As a final step we will therefore explore whether significant interaction effects exist between each of the radical right parties on the one hand and various predictors of party preference on the other. This will be done for the model that was estimated for the total of 58 parties. Such interaction effects, were they to exist, would indicate that support of radical right parties is determined by *party specific* factors. If we cannot find such interaction effects, or if they turn out to be very small, then we will have to conclude that voters treat radical right parties just like any other party.

## **Results**

Table 1 presents the results of three regression analyses. In the first one the model is estimated for all 58 parties, in the second one only the 9 radical right parties are included, and the third analysis includes the 49 other parties. In the analyses of all 58 parties a (dummy) variable was included that distinguishes the 9 radical right parties from the 49 others. The regression coefficient for this variable tells us whether any differences exist between the electoral attractiveness of radical right parties on the one hand and 'mainstream' parties on the other, after controlling for the effects of the other independent variables. In other words, the coefficient tells us whether - after we take the effects of social characteristics, policy preferences, etceteras into account - radical right parties are considered more or less attractive than other parties. Here the findings are somewhat different from those in 1994 and 1999 (see Van der Brug et al. 2000; Van der Brug and Fennema 2003). In those years the dummy variable that distinguishes radical right parties from mainstream parties turned out to yield the only parameter in the equation that did not deviate significantly from zero. However, in 2004 and for the selection of parties included here, the dummy variable for radical

right parties is negative and significant. This means that, after all factors that affect preferences for parties have been taken into account, preferences for radical right parties are still on average lower than preferences for other parties (0.65 units on a 10-point scale).

<INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE>

Because different issues are included in the European Elections Studies of 1994, 1999 and 2004, the results presented in Table 1 are not fully comparable to those in previous studies. However, a few general remarks can be made about the model that we tested for 58 parties. Judging by the magnitude of the standardized coefficients, in all three years the left/right distance between parties and voters is the strongest determinant of electoral preferences. The significance of the left/right dimension for structuring the behaviour of voters has been observed by many scholars (e.g., Fuchs and Klingemann, 1990; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996; Hix, 1999; Schmitt, 2001).

Another stable finding is that *party size* is the variable with the second strongest effect on party preference. The positive effect of party size shows that, after controlling for policy positions and social characteristics, voters consider a larger party more attractive than a smaller one. Voters who wish to influence policy making take into account the strategic consideration that a large party has a better chance than a smaller one to realise its policy goals. So, electoral preferences are determined by a combination of *ideological* and *pragmatic* considerations.

The magnitude of the effects of socio-structural variables, issue priorities and attitudes towards the EU, is also remarkably stable. In comparison to the other years, there is only one major difference. Government approval has a substantively stronger effect in 2004 than it had in the other election years. In 1999, the standardized effect of government approval was 0.09, whereas in 2004 it is 0.22. Compared to the other years, voters tend to base their electoral preferences more than in previous years on their evaluation of the performance of parties in government. Since this is beyond the scope of this paper, we will not explore this matter further here.

How does this general model compare to the model for the 9 radical right parties? The most important conclusion of Table 1 is that most of the effects are quite similar in magnitude. Note that as a result of the linear transformations of most of the

independent variables, those parameters are necessarily positive, so that no conclusions can be drawn about the direction of the effects. Socio-structural and demographic characteristics —gender, age, religion, social class and education— have almost the same weak effect on electoral preferences for radical right parties as on electoral preferences for other parties. Also, the effect of left/right distance on electoral preferences is very similar for the two groups of parties.

Judging by the standardized coefficients, two variables exert weaker effects. The first one is party size, but this difference may be caused by the fact that the variation in party size is substantially smaller among the radical right parties than among the other parties. Note also that the unstandardized coefficient is higher, so that we have to be particularly careful when comparing these effects across different equations. The other effect that is substantially weaker among radical right parties than among other parties is approval of the government. The most likely explanation for this weaker effect is that there are relatively few government parties among the radical right parties, and that this variable has a particularly strong effect on electoral preferences for government parties. We may conclude, however, that support of radical right parties is not determined strongly by dissatisfaction with the government.

In contrast to what one might expect *a priori* on the basis of the nationalist ideologies of parties of the radical right, differences on the issue of European integration exert an effect on preferences for radical right-wing parties that is very similar to the effect it has on preferences for other parties. The same goes for citizens' satisfaction with the EU and satisfaction with the way democracy functions. Despite the anti-parliamentarian rhetoric of these parties, dissatisfaction with democracy is not an important motivation for citizens to support these types of parties.

In 1989 and 1994 negative attitudes towards immigrants turned out to be a strong determinant of the vote for radical right parties. The EES of 2004 does not contain measures of attitudes towards immigrants, so that the effect of this issue cannot be tested. In many countries this issue will be incorporated in the left/right dimension, so to some extent the strong effect of left/right distances reflects the effect attitudes towards immigrants, but the explained variance of the model would certainly have been higher if these attitudes would have been measured.

A final important observation is that socio-structural and demographic variables exert only very weak effects on electoral preferences for radical right and for the other parties. Various scholars have observed that cleavage politics is

declining in most countries and that this decline is largely compensated for by an increase in policy voting (Franklin, 1992:400). Instead of relying on social positions as a 'cue' to decide which party to vote for, the increasingly autonomous citizens vote largely on the basis of their policy preferences (e.g., Rose and McAllister, 1986; Dalton, 1996). Our results show that this is just as true of supporters of radical right parties as it is of voters for other parties. Radical right parties do not attract the 'losers of modernity' as Betz used to call them, but they attract their supporters across all social strata.

The comparisons between electoral preferences for various radical right parties and other parties have so far been made for all 9 parties of the radical right together, and on an *ad oculum* basis. The design of our analyses, with a stacked data matrix in which electoral preferences are studied for all parties simultaneously, provides the opportunity to systematically study differences among the radical right-wing parties, and, also between radical right-wing parties and other parties. If a variable has a different effect for one party than for all other parties, the regression model should contain an interaction term between the respective party on the one hand and this variable on the other.

To estimate these interactions, we estimated two models. The first model is the model in Table 1 estimated for all 58 parties with three interactions added to the model: interactions between on the one hand a dummy variable that separates the 9 radical right parties from the other 49, and on the other hand party size, left/right distance and distance on the issue of European unification.<sup>8</sup> Model 1 in Table 2 presents the parameter estimates of these interaction terms as well as the main effects of party size, left/right distance and distance on European unification. The models also included the effects of the other independent variables presented in Table 1, but these are not presented, because to assess whether the determinants of support for radical right parties is different from the determinants of support for other parties, we are only interested in the interaction effects.

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<sup>8</sup> The method does not allow us to estimate interaction effects for the other variables in the model. The reason is that their effects were originally estimated with a procedure that involves a linear transformation of the original variables. This procedure provides a valid way to estimate the strength of each of the independent variables, but at the same time rules out the possibility to estimate interaction effects. As the topic of this paper focuses primarily on the effect of party size and left-right distance (two variables that were not transformed) we do not consider this to be a problem here.

<INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE>

The analysis with one dummy variable for the 9 radical right parties together, yields significant positive interaction effects for left/right distance and for party size. To interpret these interaction effects they have to be compared to the main effects. The main effect from left-right distance on electoral attractiveness (for all parties) is -.401. This negative effect is as expected: the larger the ideological distance the less attractive a party is. The positive interaction effect of left/right distance shows that the negative effect of left-right distance is somewhat weaker for radical right-wing parties than for the other parties: the unstandardized effect for radical right parties is -.252 ( $-.401 + .148$ ). The positive interaction effect of party size in Table 2 shows that radical right-wing parties gain more by becoming larger than other parties. We should, however, take into account that the radical right parties in our sample tend to be relatively small parties. So, the larger effect could be indicative of certain threshold effects for small parties, as a result of which small parties may benefit more from becoming larger than large parties. The third interaction term, the one for European unification, turns out not to be statistically significant. So, this issue has the same weak effect on preferences for radical right parties as on preferences for other parties. In other words, anti-EU feelings contribute hardly to support for the radical right.

In the second model we look at all 9 radical right parties separately. So, instead of a dummy variable for the 9 radical right parties, we added 9 dummies for each one of them. And we added the interactions between these dummy variables and distances on left/right and on European unification. The relevant results of this model (Model 2) are presented in the lower half of Table 2.

Our findings for 2004 have so far largely confirmed the findings of 1999. However, when we inspect the differences among the various parties of the radical right, we must conclude that things are quite different in 2004 than they were back in 1999 and much more different than they were in 1994. In 1994 there was only one single party – the Dutch Centrumdemocraten – for which we found weaker effects of left/right ideology. In 1999 there were more parties for which this was the case: the effect of left/right distance was significantly weaker for the Centrumdemocraten, the Wallonian Front National, the German Republikaner, the Lega Nord, the French Front national and the Danish Fremskridtpartiet. In that year there were four exceptions,

which were the four most successful radical right parties: the FPÖ, Alleanza Nazionale, Vlaams Blok and Dansk Folkeparti. Their support was at least as heavily determined by ideology as votes for other parties. Even though a comparison over time is hindered by the different selections of parties, the results of 2004 suggest that the trend seems to have continued. The effect of left/right distance is significantly weaker for 7 radical right parties (the German Republikaner, the Italian Lega Nord, the French Front national, the Dutch LPF, the Greek Laos, the Hungarian party for Justice and Life, and the Dutch LPF) than it is for other parties. Only for two parties, the Danish FP and the Italian AN, are the effects of the same magnitude. So, it appears that the effect of left/right distances on electoral support for radical right parties has overall declined since 1994.

## **Conclusion and discussion**

In terms of how they attract votes, are radical right parties different from other parties? In the analyses we focused on the differences, and indeed we found some important differences between radical right parties and other parties. The most important difference is that the effect of left/right tends to be weaker. However, when focusing on these differences we tend to overlook the large similarities.

A first similarity between the processes that generate support for radical right wing parties and processes generating support for other parties is that the effects of socio structural variables are weak. This means that radical right wing parties, like most other parties, attract their support from across all different strata in society. Secondly, left/right distance is the strongest predictor of support for radical right parties as well as other parties, even though the effect is weaker for the former than the latter. Thirdly, the effect of party size is at least as important for radical right parties as it is for other parties, so that we may conclude that the pragmatic consideration that a larger party is more attractive than a smaller one because it is in a better position to affect public policies, is just as important to voters when judging a radical right party as it is when judging other parties. Finally, neither dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy, nor dissatisfaction with European unification, nor dissatisfaction with the government exerts a strong effect on support for radical right parties. Because of all these similarities, we should be careful not to think of

supporters of radical right parties as the ‘losers of modernity’ as Betz (1994) used to call them, who support these parties to express general feelings of discontent.

On the other hand, our analyses have revealed large changes since Van der Brug, Fennema and Tillie (2000) concluded on the basis of the 1994 EES data that there were hardly any differences between the determinants of support for radical right parties and the determinants of votes for other parties. The main difference is nowadays that the effect of left/right is weaker. So, why do voters no longer evaluate these parties as much by their left/right position as they used to?

A possible explanation could be that many of these parties that were once evaluated in left/right terms, such as the FPÖ, the Republikaner, and Front National, have lost whatever credibility they used to have as a result of poor performance as government parties (FPÖ), and internal party conflicts (all of these three). In addition, mainstream right leaning parties in many countries have to some extent co-opted the anti-immigration positions of the radical right. It is conceivable that the single issue character of these parties became more evident and more problematic when their prime issues were co-opted. We expect the effect of left/right to be weaker for single issue parties than for parties with a broader ideological profile, because left/right is a generic ideological dimension. Moreover, when these parties have to some extent lost their ‘unique selling proposition’ because the mainstream right co-opts their core issues, the protest character of these parties may also become more visible.

The parties that resist this trend, the Dansk Folkepartit and Alleanza Nazionale, have managed to build up a good functioning party organization. They have either been members of a coalition government (AN) or have passively supported a government (DFP), without creating internal party struggles. As such they have been able to promote the further restriction of immigration,<sup>9</sup> but they are still evaluated in generic terms, not only in connection to the issue of immigration. This may be the key to their sustained electoral success.

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<sup>9</sup> The position of Alleanza Nazionale on this issue is diffuse. AN’s leader Fini was as a minister responsible for the Bossi-Fini law to restrict immigration, but he also supported a proposal to grant the right to vote in municipal elections to legal immigrants in Italy. Apparently, AN is an anti-immigration party, but not an anti-immigrant party.

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## APPENDIX

The stacked matrix, combining party preferences for the 58 parties from 8 political systems has a total of 56.080 units of analysis, after deletion of missing cases in the dependent variable. To estimate the parameters of the regression models, units of analyses are weighted in two steps. As a result of the weight factor applied in the first step respondents in each system are weighted in such a way that their party choice in the European Elections 2004 reflect exactly the actual election results. In the second step this weight variable is multiplied by a (different) constant for each system, so that the eight systems in the stacked matrix contain the same number of cases. This weight variable was used for the analyses in which all parties from the 8 different political systems are analysed simultaneously. Each time groups of parties are selected, the variable generated in the first stage is multiplied by yet different constants for each system, so that in all regressions presented in Table 1 the eight systems in the stacked matrix contain the same number of units of analysis each.

Because we stacked the data, the unit of analysis is no longer the individual respondent, but the respondent/party combination. Since these are not independent observations, we computed panel corrected standard errors, and reported significance on the basis of these tests. To be precise, we did these analyses in STATA, using the robust estimate of variance (known as the Huber/White/Sandwich estimate of variance) and the “cluster” option to adjust for the dependency among observations pertaining to the same respondent (Rogers, 1993; Williams, 2000). Each of the 7.470 respondents was defined as a separate cluster.

TABLES

**Table 1: regressions of full models for the explanation of part support in 8 countries**

	All 58 parties			9 radical right parties			49 established parties		
	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta	b	SE	Beta
Social class	.558	.037	.075**	.681	.126	.077**	.544	.039	.076**
Religion	.625	.034	.115**	.813	.104	.111**	.607	.033	.117**
Gender	.675	.120	.035**	.951	.182	.060**	.645	.133	.033**
Education	.509	.051	.056**	.456	.117	.047**	.516	.055	.059**
Age	.414	.058	.041**	.956	.330	.028*	.397	.059	.043**
Importance of issues	.619	.045	.076**	.696	.090	.111**	.608	.050	.074**
EU approval	.503	.045	.065**	.676	.095	.102**	.472	.049	.061**
Government approval	.655	.019	.223**	.597	.047	.141**	.649	.020	.232**
Satisfaction with democracy	.335	.040	.045**	.574	.086	.077**	.311	.044	.043**
Perceived distance European unification	-.060	.009	-.044**	-.062	.013	-.064**	-.060	.010	-.042**
Perceived distance on left-right	-.373	.009	-.286**	-.255	.013	-.262**	-.402	.010	-.296**
Radical right party (dummy variable)	-.651	.037	-.015**						
Party size	4.353	.089	.221**	6.133	.528	.134**	4.301	.089	.248**
R <sup>2</sup> -adjusted	.365			.255			.353		
Number of clusters (respondents)	7,470			7,274			7,461		
Number of units of analysis	56,080			8,358			47,722		

\*: significant at  $p < .01$ ; \*\*: significant at  $p < .001$ .

Table 2: Interactions with radical right parties

		Ideological distance (Left-right)	Distance European Unification	Party size
Model 1	Main effects	-.401**	-.059**	4.309**
	9 radical right parties	.148**	-.011	1.510*
Model 2	Main effects	-.401**	-.059**	4.309**
	FPÖ	.149**	-.035	-
	Dansk Folkeparti	.068	-.135**	-
	FN (French)	.120**	-.020	-
	Republikaner	.253**	.027	-
	LAOS	.190**	.014	-
	Alleanza Nazionale	-.065	.032	-
	Lega Nord	.148**	-.055	-
	LPF	.073*	-.016	-
	Justice and Life	.193**	.025	-

Source: European Elections Study 2004

\* significant at  $p < .01$ ; \*\*: significant at  $p < .001$