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Far Right Parties in Europe

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Abstract

The far right party family is the fastest-growing party family in Europe. In addition to describing the ideological makeup of the far right party family, this review examines demand-side and supply-side explanations for its electoral success. Demand-side explanations focus on the grievances that create the “demand” for far right parties, whereas supply-side explanations focus on how the choices that far right parties make and the political opportunity structure in which they act influence their success. The review finishes by suggesting that far right scholars must recognize the interaction between demand-side and supply-side factors in their empirical analyses in order to draw valid inferences and that it would be productive to pay more attention to the political geography of far right support and the different stages of far right success.

INTRODUCTION

Far right success in postwar Europe has come in waves (von Beyme 1988, p. 6). The third wave, which began in the 1980s, has been the most successful. Far right parties have participated in coalition governments in Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, and Switzerland, and they have supported minority governments in Bulgaria, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway (de Lange 2012, Bustikova 2014). Although they have yet to enter national government, these parties have also proven to be influential in a variety of other countries, notably France, Belgium (Flanders), and Hungary. The reemergence of the far right has caused alarm among segments of the political establishment, media, and academia. Despite these highly visible successes and the widespread unease they have provoked, far right parties remain a marginal electoral force in most European countries (Mudde 2007).

In this review, I examine demand-side and supply-side explanations for the variable electoral success of far right parties. Demand-side explanations focus on the grievances that create the “demand” for far right parties, whereas supply-side explanations focus on how the choices that far right parties make and the political opportunity structure in which they act influence their success. In addition, I propose some new avenues for future research. I argue that far right scholars must recognize the interaction between demand-side and supply-side factors in their empirical analyses in order to draw valid inferences. I also suggest that it would be productive to pay more attention to the political geography of far right support and to differentiate between different stages of far right success. Before doing this, I describe the ideological makeup of far right parties and discuss the extent to which they represent a single party family.

IDEOLOGY

Party families have traditionally been identified on the basis of their historical origins, transnational links, party name, or ideology (Mair & Mudde 1998). Far right scholars have usually focused on ideology. Unfortunately, the literature lacks a clear consensus as to what constitutes the core ideology of the far right. Indeed, Mudde (1996) identifies 58 different ideological characteristics that have been linked with far right parties. This lack of consensus helps to explain the plethora of different names used to describe these parties and why some scholars emphasize the need to distinguish between different variants of the far right party family. Over the last few years, scholars have increasingly classified far right parties on the basis of their radicalism/extremism, populism, and nationalism.

Radical Right or Extreme Right?

Far right parties are either radical or extremist in their ideology (Mudde 2010). Radicalism calls for “root and branch” reform of the political and economic system but does not explicitly seek the elimination of all forms of democracy. In contrast, extremism is directly opposed to democracy. Since 1973, the German state has recognized this distinction between “extremist” parties that are antidemocratic (*verfassungswidrig*, unconstitutional) and should be banned, and “radical” parties that merely question key aspects of the constitutional order (*verfassungsfeindlich*, anticonstitutional) and should be tolerated (Eatwell 2000, Mudde 2000). Radicalism is not a moderate form of extremism. The dividing line between them, though, can be difficult to discern in practice, as parties often have incentives to hide their extremism to avoid legal repercussions. Radical parties are inherently “anti-system,” and their radicalism must be understood with respect to the system in which they exist. In Europe, this system is typically liberal democracy and capitalism.

Radicalism and extremism occur on the left and right. Left-wing variants are opposed to the capitalist system on the grounds that it produces artificial levels of inequality. They seek a major redistribution of power to alleviate inequality, espouse collective economic and social rights, and adopt an egalitarian, universalist, and often internationalist agenda (March 2011). In contrast, right-wing variants view inequality as part of the natural order and not something that should be subject to state intervention (Mudde 2007). This has led some parties, such as the Danish and Norwegian Progress parties, to embrace neoliberal economic policies that favor market allocation over the political redistribution of economic resources. Neoliberal economic policies are not a defining characteristic of far right parties, though. Indeed, since the 1990s, these parties have increasingly adopted traditionally leftist economic policies that favor state intervention (Minkenberg 2000, de Lange 2007). Instead, what far right parties have in common is a desire to create an authoritarian system that is strictly ordered according to the “natural” differences that exist in society, as well as a law-and-order system that severely punishes deviant behavior (Mudde 2007).

Populism

Populism is central to the ideological appeal of many far right parties (Betz 1994; Betz & Immerfall 1998; Taggart 1995, 2000). Populism views society as divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite,” and argues that politics should reflect the general will of the people (Mudde 2004, p. 543). Populism is opposed to elitism and pluralism (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2013). Unlike elitism, populism considers the people to be the morally superior group. Pluralism considers society to be composed of multiple groups whose differing interests must be reconciled through a process of bargaining. In contrast, populism rejects the notion that there are meaningful divisions within “the people” and hence denies the need to compromise. A corollary is that populism tends to simplify political issues, dichotomizing them into black and white and calling for yes or no answers (Eatwell 2004).

According to populism, the elite is a parasitical class that enriches itself and systematically ignores the people’s grievances (Betz & Johnson 2004). The immoral values of this elite stand in stark contrast to the wisdom and common sense of the people. Populism desires that power be placed in the unfettered hands of the people, and calls for the increased use of referenda, popular initiatives, and direct executive elections. Populism’s optimistic view of majority rule puts it at odds with liberal democracy, which requires the will of the majority to be constrained by constitutional checks and balances that protect minorities and individual rights. Although populism promotes a distinctly illiberal version of democracy, its proponents see themselves as the defenders of true democracy.

Because populism involves activating the people’s resentment toward the existing power structure and the dominant values in society (Betz 1994), the precise content of the populist message is context dependent (Canovan 1999). In Europe, the elite typically includes the established political parties, intellectuals, the economic upper class, and the media. These groups are targeted for promoting liberal values related to individualism, multiculturalism, and internationalism, and for colluding to keep the people away from power. These groups are considered responsible for all of society’s ills.

In populism, “the people” are not real but imagined (Anderson 1991). Populism can be inclusionary or exclusionary when it comes to imagining the people (Mudde & Kaltwasser 2013). Inclusionary populism, which is common among contemporary left-wing parties in Latin America, calls for material benefits and political rights to be extended to historically disadvantaged and excluded groups. In contrast, exclusionary populism seeks to exclude certain groups from “the people” and thus limit their access to these same benefits and rights. Exclusionary populism

is the dominant form in Europe and is primarily associated with right-wing parties.¹ The criteria for exclusion are almost always cultural, religious, or ethnic.

Nationalism

Nationalism is a common ideological feature on the far right. Nationalism demands congruence between state and nation (Mudde 2007). There are different varieties of nationalism. According to civic nationalism, the state is the primary unit of human organization, and individuals “choose” to be members of the civic nation by accepting a common set of cultural values and practices. The nation is culturally homogeneous, but not necessarily ethnically homogeneous. Civic nationalism emphasizes both assimilation and repatriation as methods for achieving a monocultural state. According to ethnic nationalism, the ethnic nation is the primary unit of human organization, and it is only through one’s membership in the nation that one gains citizenship in the state. Membership in the nation is hereditary and often includes a shared language or religion. Ethnic nationalism focuses on repatriation as the principal means of obtaining a monocultural state. Whereas civic nationalism is inclusionary, ethnic nationalism is exclusionary. Some far right parties promote civic nationalism, whereas others promote ethnic nationalism (Mudde 2000, p. 170).

The term nativism is often used to distinguish the nationalism of far right parties from that of mainstream parties. Nativism combines nationalism with xenophobia in that it calls for states to comprise only members of the native group and considers non-native elements to be fundamentally threatening to the monocultural nation-state (Mudde 2007, p. 19).² Like “the people” in populism, the “native” population is imagined. Non-native elements are identified on the basis of cultural traits such as race, ethnicity, or religion, and can include minorities from within the native ethnic group, such as homosexuals, as well as sections of the international community.

The nativism of some far right parties is biologically or culturally racist, implying a natural hierarchy among groups. However, most far right parties, at least in public, have adopted an ethnopluralist form of nativism that is more palatable to voters (Rydgren 2005). Ethnopluralism considers different cultures to be equal, but distinct and thus incompatible. Proponents of ethnopluralism claim to celebrate cultural differences and argue that these differences must be protected from things like mass migration, cultural imperialism, and one-worldism. The cultural mixing that occurs in multicultural societies is considered a form of national genocide (Griffin 2000). The goal is to establish an ethnic democracy, an ethnocracy, where priority is given to protecting one’s own people. Ethnopluralism envisions a culturally diverse world composed of monocultural nation-states.

Far right parties that espouse nativism use it as the basis for all of their policies. Welfare chauvinism and policies of national preference requiring states to intervene to guarantee that jobs, housing, and other benefits are preserved for the native population are a natural outgrowth of the nativist desire to put “our own people first.” It is in this sense that economic policy is a secondary concern for most far right parties. Similarly, a strong law-and-order system is demanded to crack down on the alleged criminal behavior of non-native elements in society. That nativism affects policy across the board indicates that far right parties are not single-issue parties (Mudde 1999) and that it is misleading to refer to them narrowly as “anti-immigrant” parties (Fennema 1997, van der Brug et al. 2005, Ivarsflaten 2008).

¹The recent economic crisis saw the rise of inclusive populist parties on the left such as Syriza (Greece) and Podemos (Spain).

²Mainstream parties typically espouse a nonxenophobic form of nationalism that is compatible with liberal values of tolerance, equality, and individual rights.

Fascism

It is common for far right parties to be conflated with fascist parties. However, only a small subset of far right parties are ideologically fascist. Traditionally, fascism was viewed as a purely negative phenomenon, a kind of “anti-ideology”—anticommunist, anticapitalist, and antiliberal (Nolte 1965). A consensus has now emerged, though, that fascism’s core ideology is a “palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism” (Griffin 1993, p. 26). In effect, fascism combines extremism, populism, and nationalism. It calls for a national rebirth and the revolutionary overthrow of the liberal democratic order, which is seen as decadent, corrupt, and against the common man. The goal of the national rebirth is to produce “a new type of political system, a new élite, a new type of human being” (Griffin 2000, p. 165).

Contemporary fascist parties tend to be weak (Ignazi 1992, 2006; Golder 2003; Carter 2005). The existence of electorally successful fascist parties that engage in “spectacular politics” and have paramilitary wings, charismatic leaders, and youth movements is closely tied to the unique conditions of the interwar period—the presence of revolutionary communism, the nationalization of the masses during World War I, the acute systematic crisis that affected both liberal and conservative regimes, and the economic collapse of capitalism (Prowe 1994, Griffin 2004). Conditions in the postwar period have been different. Liberal democracy is widely accepted, capitalism has produced unprecedented levels of prosperity, militarism and imperialism have been discredited, and revolutionary nationalism is associated with war, destruction, and genocide. These changes have meant that the mass support needed to maintain a successful party-political form of fascism is no longer present in most European countries.

Fascism has adapted to this hostile environment in two ways (Griffin 2003). One has been to vacate the electoral arena and abandon the goal of being a mass movement in favor of establishing a myriad of tiny cadre organizations, the “groupuscular right,” composed of militant activists who continue to promote various forms of revolutionary nationalism. The size of these groupuscules, as well as the amorphous and ephemeral nature of the network connecting them, make them resistant to state suppression. The second way fascism has adapted has been to retain its party form but shed its revolutionary goals in the search for votes. Parties that have adopted this tactic are on the radical, not the extreme, right. Unlike fascist parties that seek to establish a new political system through national rebirth, most radical right parties are reactionary in that they desire a “return” to a mythical and idealized version of the past where states were ethnically homogeneous (Minkenberg 2000, Betz & Johnson 2004, Rydgren 2004). Greece’s Golden Dawn and Hungary’s Jobbik, with their youth movements and paramilitary organizations, have recently rekindled concerns with electoral forms of fascism. However, the primary vehicle for postwar fascism is not the electoral party but the groupuscular right.

A Far Right Party Family?

Figure 1 provides a visualization of the core ideological traits on the far right. Far right parties are either radical or extremist. Populism and nationalism are not shared by all far right parties and can also be found among mainstream parties. The areas of overlap indicate that far right parties are not necessarily espousing a radically different ideology than many mainstream parties, just a more radical (or extreme) version of it (Mudde 2010). Far right parties can move within the ideological space over time. For example, the French National Front and the Belgian Vlaams Blok began as radical nationalist parties in the 1970s before adding a populist element in the 1980s. The Norwegian Progress Party began as a radical populist party in the 1970s before adding a nationalist component. The Austrian Freedom Party was a right-wing nationalist party that added radicalism and populism after Jörg Haider took over in 1986. **Figure 1** indicates that there are clear

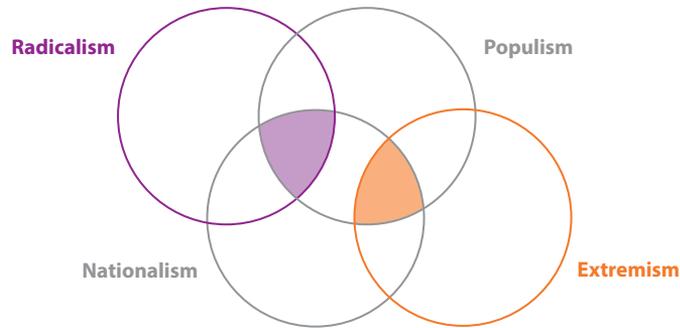


Figure 1

The circles represent the core ideological traits of the far right. The populism and nationalism circles are in gray to show that these traits are not shared by all far right parties and can also be found among mainstream parties. The purple area shows the combination of traits—radicalism, populism, and nationalism—that is increasingly dominant on the contemporary far right. The orange region indicates the location of fascism.

variants within the far right party family. Since the 1990s, though, the ideology of many parties has converged on the combination of traits—radicalism, populism, and nationalism—shown in the purple region. This combination of traits has been referred to as the new “master frame” (Rydgren 2004, 2005); fascism, which is located in the orange region, is quite distinct.

Scholars have primarily relied on qualitative analyses of party documents to identify far right parties on the basis of their ideology. Some have also used voter surveys, expert surveys, and the Comparative Manifesto Project to identify far right parties. They have yet to exploit recent developments in data mining, particularly with respect to cluster analysis (Hastie et al. 2009). Cluster analysis is relevant because its goal is to group a set of objects (parties) so that objects in the same cluster (family) are more similar to each other than those in other clusters. Cluster analysis can help identify party families and ascertain the factors that best discriminate between families. By assigning objects to a cluster in a probabilistic manner, “fuzzy clustering” could provide a useful method for dealing with the borderline cases that plague existing classifications of far right parties (Tan et al. 2005). “Evolutionary clustering” could allow one to examine how the number, distinctiveness, and membership of party families evolve over time (Chakrabarti et al. 2006). In the only application of cluster analysis to far right parties, Enns (2012) challenges the conventional wisdom that the far right party family is more ideologically heterogeneous than other party families (Eatwell 2000, Norris 2005).

EXPLANATIONS

Explanations for the electoral success of far right parties focus on demand-side and supply-side factors.

Demand-Side Explanations

Demand-side arguments emphasize the grievances that make far right parties appealing. I focus on modernization grievances, economic grievances, and cultural grievances.

Modernization grievances. Several studies link far right success to the grievances that arise during the modernization process. The underlying premise in these studies is that there is a small amount of latent support for far right values in all industrial societies. Although this support

remains latent under normal conditions, it can be politicized and mobilized during moments of extreme crisis that are related to the modernization process. The typical story is a social-psychological one in which individuals who are unable to cope with rapid and fundamental societal change—the modernization losers—turn to the far right.

Although there is a common theme in these modernization grievance studies, scholars address different aspects of the modernization process and its consequences. Betz (1994) focuses on the workers and lower-level managers who are adversely affected by the shift to a globalized and postindustrial economy. These individuals, who were the basis for the industrial postwar economic model, lack the human capital to obtain the same standard of living they would have enjoyed in the past. This causes resentment, which, along with frustration at the perceived inability of mainstream parties to offer solutions, leaves them open to the simplistic and nativist appeals of the far right. Minkenberg (2000) highlights how the modernization process causes traditional political and social attachments to dissolve, leading to increased individual autonomy, the functional differentiation of society, and the de-emphasis of authority. Individuals who feel anxious, angry, and isolated by these changes are mobilized by far right parties who “promise an elimination of pressures and a simpler, better society” (Minkenberg 2000, p. 175). Scholars who study Eastern Europe tend to focus on the insecurity generated by the emergence of democracy, the transition from a socialist to a capitalist economy, and the importation of postmaterialist values from Western Europe (Minkenberg 2002).

Inglehart (1977) argues that the transition to a postmodern society produces a “silent revolution,” a fundamental shift from “materialist” values to “post-materialist” values. In contrast to the bread-and-butter issues of the past, postmaterialist values prioritize the expansion of individual freedom and emphasize things such as multiculturalism, gender and racial equality, and sexual freedom. This value shift was originally linked to the emergence of left-libertarian parties (Kitschelt 1988). Ignazi (1992), though, argues that it also produces a reactionary backlash among those who continue to hold traditional moral values, a “silent counter-revolution” that helps the far right. Whereas Ignazi (1992) focuses on Western Europe, Bustikova (2014) suggests that a similar process is at work in Eastern Europe. She finds that far right success can be traced to a backlash against ethno-liberal minority parties that have managed to extract policy concessions.

Exactly who the modernization losers are in these accounts is often left vague. Minkenberg (2000, p. 187) argues that they are not necessarily people from the bottom of the social ladder; instead, they are the “second-to-last fifth of postmodern society, a stratum which is rather secure but objectively can still lose something.” Some evidence exists that far right support does come from the more marginalized sections of society. The typical far right voter is a young male, with a low level of education, who is either unemployed, self-employed, or a manual worker (Lubbers & Scheepers 2002, Givens 2004, Evans 2005, Arzheimer & Carter 2006, Arzheimer 2009, Lucassen & Lubbers 2012). However, this does not necessarily indicate that these groups support the far right *because* they are modernization losers. In fact, several studies find that far right voters are instrumentally motivated and guided by the same types of ideological and pragmatic considerations as voters of other parties (van der Brug et al. 2000, 2005).

Economic grievances. Scholars who link economic grievances to far right success typically do so in the context of realistic conflict theory (Campbell 1965). In times of economic scarcity, social groups with conflicting material interests compete over limited resources. Under these conditions, members of the ingroup are apt to blame the outgroup for economic problems, engendering prejudice and discrimination. Far right parties can exploit these economic grievances by linking immigrants and minorities to economic hardship through slogans such as “Eliminate Unemployment: Stop Immigration” (Golder 2003, p. 438).

There is considerable evidence in support of the economic grievance story at the individual level. The characteristics of the typical far right voter, as noted above, describe an individual who is likely to find himself competing with immigrants in the economic sphere. Such individuals are also associated with holding stronger anti-immigrant attitudes (Scheve & Slaughter 2001). Similarly, individual perceptions of economic threat have been linked with stronger anti-immigrant attitudes (Sniderman et al. 2004, Mayda 2006, Sides & Citrin 2007). Anti-immigrant attitudes have, in turn, been strongly linked with far right support (Lubbers & Scheepers 2002, Norris 2005, Ivarsflaten 2008, Rydgren 2008).

The evidence linking far right support to the economic context in which individuals form their preferences is more mixed. Most studies operationalize ethnic competition in terms of unemployment. Although some find that unemployment helps far right parties (Jackman & Volpert 1996), most find that it either has no effect (Lubbers & Scheepers 2002) or hurts them (Knigge 1998, Arzheimer & Carter 2006). It is important, though, to consider why unemployment might lead voters to support the far right. Golder (2003) argues that if voters believe unemployment is high owing to labor market rigidities, then there is little reason to support the far right. However, if they believe it is high owing to immigration, then it makes more sense to support the far right. Because voters are more likely to believe that immigration causes unemployment when there are many immigrants present, Golder (2003) posits a positive interaction between unemployment and immigration. In line with this reasoning, he finds that unemployment increases far right support but only when immigration is sufficiently high. Subsequent research has only partially corroborated this finding.

To a large extent, the impact of economic contextual factors on far right success has been undertheorized, and empirical models that examine it are almost certainly underspecified. Dancygier (2010) offers a more theoretically nuanced account of ethnic competition than appears in most studies. She argues that the interaction of economic scarcity and immigrant electoral power explains both immigrant–native and immigrant–state conflict. Without economic scarcity, there is no conflict. When there is economic scarcity and immigrants have electoral power, incumbents have incentives to direct material benefits toward immigrants and away from the native population. This causes the natives to turn against the immigrant community, producing immigrant–native conflict, one aspect of which is increased far right support. When there is economic scarcity but immigrants lack electoral power, incumbents have no incentive to provide benefits to immigrants. Although this keeps the native population satisfied, it produces immigrant–state conflict in which immigrants seek to alter incumbent behavior by imposing costs on them.

Note that in this account it is not the level of immigration that matters for far right support, but whether immigrants enjoy electoral power. Immigrants enjoy electoral power when they are pivotal actors in deciding the outcome of local elections. A necessary condition for electoral power is that the immigrant group is politically mobilized, and mobilization varies across different groups. Whether mobilized immigrant groups are locally pivotal depends on their degree of geographic concentration, the electoral rules, the competitiveness of elections, and the ease with which noncitizen immigrants can acquire citizenship or become eligible to vote. Consistent with Dancygier’s argument, Bustikova (2014) finds that the far right does better in Eastern Europe when politically mobilized minorities achieve electoral success.

In Dancygier’s (2010) story, the connection between economic scarcity and far right success depends not only on the electoral power of immigrants but also on the type of immigrants and the nature of the economy. Noneconomic migrants, who arrive on the basis of political asylum or family reunification, are much more likely to put stress on local economies than economic migrants. Economic scarcity creates greater incentives for the native population to support far right parties in statist economies where local authorities have control over the allocation of social

services, housing, and employment than in market economies. This is because state actors are more sensitive to electoral pressure than market actors.

This theoretical framework highlights that economic grievances do not automatically translate into far right support. Instead, much depends on the context in which those grievances are experienced. It is incumbent on scholars testing the economic grievance story to incorporate these contextual factors into their empirical analyses. Dancygier's account also highlights that the economic grievance story is primarily a local one and that ethnic competition does not solely concern labor market outcomes.

Cultural grievances. Scholars who link cultural grievances to far right success typically do so in the context of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1979). At its core, social identity theory assumes that individuals have a natural tendency to associate with similar individuals, and that an inherent desire for self-esteem causes people to perceive their ingroup as superior to outgroups. Far right parties are able to exploit and encourage these natural tendencies by highlighting the (alleged) incompatibility of immigrant behavioral norms and cultural values with those of the native population. Some scholars argue that no far right party has been “successful without mobilizing grievances over immigration” (Ivarsflaten 2008, p. 3).

There is strong support for the cultural grievance story at the individual level. Multiple studies have shown that anti-immigrant attitudes are positively related to far right support (Lubbers & Scheepers 2002, van der Brug et al. 2005, Norris 2005, Ivarsflaten 2008, Rydgren 2008). This in itself should not be read as support for the cultural grievance story, as anti-immigrant attitudes may be the result of economic, as opposed to cultural, concerns with immigration. Attempts to distinguish between these two possibilities, however, indicate that economic *and* cultural concerns matter for anti-immigrant attitudes (Sniderman et al. 2004, Mayda 2006, Sides & Citrin 2007).

It is important to recognize, though, that anti-immigrant attitudes do not automatically translate into anti-immigrant behavior. Surveys consistently show that many Europeans hold anti-immigrant attitudes, and yet relatively few vote for far right parties. Blinder et al. (2013) suggest that this is due to a widespread norm against prejudice and discrimination. In effect, individual motivation and normative context interact to determine whether antiprejudice values or anti-immigrant attitudes guide an individual's vote choice. This norm is likely to vary across countries and, indeed, within countries depending on an individual's local environment. Importantly, if social norms against anti-immigrant attitudes and far right parties exist, then individuals will have incentives not to reveal them publicly. Much of the far right literature uses voter surveys. Numerous studies indicate that respondents do not always answer truthfully when confronted with questions on sensitive topics. Although techniques such as randomized responses, list experiments, and endorsement experiments have been specifically developed to address this problem (Blair 2015), they have yet to be widely adopted in the far right literature.

The evidence linking far right support to the cultural context in which individuals form their preferences is somewhat mixed. Whereas some studies find that larger immigrant communities increase far right support (Knigge 1998, Lubbers & Scheepers 2002, Golder 2003, Swank & Betz 2004, van der Brug et al. 2005), others find that the size of the immigrant community has no effect (Norris 2005, Arzheimer & Carter 2006, Rydgren 2008, Lucassen & Lubbers 2012). In the context of Eastern Europe, Bustikova (2014) finds that far right parties actually do better when the minority group is small. The evidence to support the causal chain linking immigration to far right support is also weak. Some scholars find that perceived immigrant threat increases with the size of the immigrant community (Schneider 2008), but others find that immigration levels have no effect on anti-immigrant attitudes (Sides & Citrin 2007).

Supply-Side Explanations

Although most of the early literature on far right party success focused on demand-side explanations, the last decade has seen increased attention being paid to supply-side factors. Although sufficient demand is a necessary condition for far right success, many scholars claim that there is not enough variation in demand to explain cross-national and subnational differences in far right support (Eatwell 2000; Carter 2005; Givens 2005; Norris 2005; van der Brug et al. 2005; Mudde 2007, 2010; Art 2011; Bustikova 2014). Supply-side arguments emphasize the importance of having a favorable political opportunity structure, a strong party organization, and a winning ideology.

Political opportunity structure. A political opportunity structure is something exogenous that determines the extent to which a political system is open to a political entrepreneur (Arzheimer & Carter 2006). A country's political opportunity structure is shaped by its electoral rules, the nature of party competition, the media, and its political cleavage structure.

Electoral rules. Electoral rules are the primary institutional factor shaping the political opportunity structure confronting far right parties. According to Duverger (1954), small parties find it difficult to emerge and succeed when the electoral system is nonpermissive. Disproportional systems mechanically translate votes into seats in a way that penalizes small parties. This mechanical effect further hurts small parties by creating incentives for voters and elites to engage in strategic behavior. Supporters of small parties who do not wish to waste their vote have incentives to vote strategically for larger parties. Similarly, political entrepreneurs whose policy preferences are not represented by existing parties or who are associated with small parties have strong incentives to work within existing large parties. In these ways, disproportional systems discourage both the formation and electoral success of small parties.

Many scholars have applied this framework to examine whether variation in far right success is related to electoral system permissiveness. Although there is strong evidence that far right parties win fewer seats in disproportional systems due to the mechanical way that votes are translated into seats (Givens 2005, Norris 2005), there is only mixed support for the claim that far right parties receive fewer votes. Some studies find that permissive electoral systems help far right parties (Jackman & Volpert 1996, Golder 2003, Swank & Betz 2004, Veugelers & Magnan 2005), whereas others find that they either have no effect or that they can even hurt them (Carter 2005, van der Brug et al. 2005, Arzheimer & Carter 2006, Arzheimer 2009, Bustikova 2014).

There are several potential explanations for these mixed results, all of which relate to the assumptions underpinning Duverger's theory. First, many far right parties are no longer small and often play a role in the government formation process. Consequently, many people do not consider them a wasted vote. Second, electoral rules are less likely to have an effect in places like Eastern Europe, where electoral volatility inhibits the ability of voters and elites to act strategically. Third, far right voters may differ in the extent to which they are instrumentally motivated and thus likely to vote strategically (Golder 2003). Fourth, strategic voting only places an upper bound on the equilibrium number of parties in a system (Cox 1990). If far right demand falls below this upper bound, we will not observe electoral institutions influence far right support.

Party competition. Several studies link far right success to the nature of party competition. One claim is that far right parties face a favorable environment when mainstream parties converge in the policy space (Kitschelt 1997). Under these circumstances, voters turn to populist parties, including those on the far right, that criticize mainstream parties for colluding rather than competing for power. Because convergence depoliticizes the primary (economic) policy dimension, voters also

turn to parties that compete on alternative policy dimensions. A second claim is that far right parties fare better when mainstream right parties adopt centrist positions. This is because the far right has more political space to exploit. The evidence for both of these claims is mixed. Although some studies find that the convergence of mainstream parties helps far right parties (Abedi 2002, Carter 2005, Spies & Franzmann 2011), others find that it either has no effect (Norris 2005, Bustikova 2014) or that it actually hurts them (Arzheimer & Carter 2006). Similarly, some studies find that far right parties do better when the mainstream right adopts a centrist, as opposed to a rightist, position (Carter 2005, van der Brug et al. 2005), whereas others suggest the opposite (Arzheimer & Carter 2006, Spies & Franzmann 2011).

Rather than evaluate party competition in purely spatial terms, scholars have recently argued that it is also necessary to examine it in terms of issue salience and issue ownership. Ideological proximity matters for vote choice only when the underlying policy dimension is salient. Issue ownership is important because voters take account of whether a party is the most credible proponent of a particular issue when casting their ballot (Budge & Farlie 1983, Petrocik 1996). Far right parties are expected to do well when they are seen to own the issues they promote and when these issues are salient.

Issue salience and issue ownership can be manipulated. According to Meguid (2007), mainstream parties can adopt three strategies toward the far right: dismissive, accommodative, or adversarial. A dismissive strategy involves ignoring the issues raised by far right parties so as to convince voters that they are not salient. An accommodative strategy involves adopting a similar position to that of far right parties. Although this increases the salience of the issues raised by far right parties, the ownership of these issues is contested. An adversarial strategy involves adopting a policy position that conflicts with that of far right parties. This increases the salience of the issues raised by far right parties and emphasizes far right ownership of them. Whereas the first two strategies are designed to weaken far right support, the third is designed to strengthen it. Mainstream parties adopt a dismissive strategy when the far right does not present a threat. When the far right does present a threat, the party that is most threatened has an incentive to adopt an accommodative strategy to try to weaken the far right, while its competitor mainstream party has an incentive to adopt an adversarial strategy to strengthen it. This framework shows how mainstream party competition can affect far right party success and provides an explanation for why some mainstream parties employ an accommodative strategy toward the far right while others employ an adversarial one.

There are reasons to believe that accommodative strategies only weaken the far right when they happen quickly. The goal of these strategies is to contest issue ownership. If far right parties have already established issue ownership, then accommodative strategies that come too late may actually strengthen these parties by emphasizing the salience and legitimacy of “their” issues. This temporal conditionality provides a potential explanation for why accommodative strategies, such as mainstream right parties moving to the right or forming alliances with far right parties, are sometimes observed to strengthen the far right.

The media. The extent to which parties can communicate their issue positions to the public depends on the nature of the “discursive opportunity structure” created by the media (Koopmans & Statham 1999, p. 228). The media can adopt three strategies toward far right parties. One is to ignore them and try to limit the salience of the issues they raise. The other strategies involve covering the far right and framing it in either a positive or negative light. Both of these latter two strategies increase the salience of the issues raised by the far right.

There is little systematic research on why the media adopts the strategies that it does. Some argue that the media’s coverage of the far right has increased over time because of the proliferation

of media outlets that compete for advertising revenue (Ellinas 2010). Commercial pressure to obtain larger audiences creates incentives for the media to adopt a sensationalist black-and-white style and to focus its attention on the more extreme and scandalous aspects of politics that are central to the far right's populist appeal. This media populism is observed both among the tabloid press and the quality press, even though the latter often has close ties to the political establishment (Mazzoleni et al. 2003). Others argue that the increased personalization of politics encourages the media to give greater coverage to leader-oriented parties like those on the far right (Eatwell 2003, 2005). These incentives to give greater media coverage to the far right are counterbalanced in some countries by journalistic norms that limit this coverage (Ellinas 2010).

Media attention is particularly helpful to far right parties early in their development because it allows them to disseminate their message to a wider audience than their typically limited organizational and financial resources might allow (Ellinas 2010). Positive media coverage can benefit far right parties by signaling their political viability and legitimizing their policy agenda. The most beneficial aspect of media coverage, though, comes from how it increases the salience of far right issues. Walgrave & de Swert (2004), for example, find that the Belgian media has helped the Vlaams Blok, not by giving it increased visibility, which would violate their journalistic norms, but simply by covering the immigration and crime issues with which the Vlaams Blok is associated. Similarly, Boomgaarden & Vliegthart (2007) find that the prominence of immigration issues in Dutch national newspapers increases far right support. At present, there is limited research on whether it matters if the media adopts a negative or positive frame in its coverage.

Political cleavage structure. A country's political cleavage structure also influences the opportunity structure that parties face (Kriesi et al. 1995). If a country's political cleavage structure is stable, there is little room for new parties to enter the system. If the political cleavage structure changes, though, either because new cleavages emerge or because the relative salience of existing cleavages changes, then this creates niches that new parties can exploit.

Historically, European party systems have been dominated by the economic (class) cleavage. Societal change, in particular the transition to a postindustrial society, has reduced the salience of the economic cleavage relative to the cultural one in some countries (Inglehart 1977, Ignazi 1992). When existing parties were slow to adapt to this, a niche emerged that new parties on the far left (Kitschelt 1988) and far right (Kitschelt 1997) were able to exploit (Rydgren 2005). This accounts for far right party success to a realignment in Europe's political cleavage structure (Cole 2005).

Dealignment processes have also helped far right parties in many countries. Globalization and postindustrialization have led to a decline in class voting and partisan identification, increased political alienation among certain segments of the population, and reduced trust in the political elite (Betz 1994, Dalton & Wattenberg 2000). These changes present the far right with expanded political opportunities by increasing electoral volatility and creating a pool of floating voters who make their electoral choices on the basis of their ideological and issue preferences rather than traditional partisan loyalties.

All of this suggests that the claim, often made by the media, that economic crises benefit the far right is incorrect. Economic crises increase the relative salience of the economic dimension. This hurts far right parties, as they have little credible expertise on this dimension and do not place much emphasis on it. The increased salience of the economic dimension also threatens the cross-class coalition that underpins the far right's support (Ivarsflaten 2005). Far right parties receive support from a coalition of small-business owners and white-collar workers on the right and blue-collar workers and the unemployed on the left (Evans 2005). This cross-class coalition is based on shared cultural values, not economic values, and, as a result, is threatened whenever the economic dimension becomes more salient.

Party organization. Most of the supply-side literature focuses on political opportunity structures. However, the ability of far right parties to exploit these structures depends on how well they are organized. Because party organizations can be built, far right parties can exert agency in shaping their own electoral fortunes and are not simply at the mercy of social and institutional conditions. Although a strong party organization may not be necessary for a party's electoral breakthrough, it is almost certainly necessary for its electoral persistence. That many far right parties, such as Sweden's New Democracy and the Dutch List Pim Fortuyn, have disappeared shortly after making electoral inroads is often attributed to their lack of a strong party organization (Art 2011).

A party's organizational strength depends on the size of its membership and activist cadre, its organizational extensiveness as captured by its network of local branches, and the professionalization of its central organization (Tavits 2012a,b). Parties with many activists are more effective at mobilizing voters through grass-roots campaigns. A network of local branches helps parties become involved in local politics, allowing them to gain experience and test campaign tactics that might be useful in national settings. It also enhances visibility and helps build partisan attachments by convincing voters that a party is a stable actor in the system. A professional and permanent staff helps portray the party as competent, reliable, accountable, and predictable. Parties with strong organizations also exhibit greater unity as the value of aligning with the party leadership is higher in these parties (Tavits 2012b). Several studies provide evidence that strong party organizations help far right parties (Lubbers & Scheepers 2002, Carter 2005, Art 2011).³

Few studies explain the organizational strength of far right parties. In the most prominent study, Art (2011) examines why some parties are able to recruit large numbers of high-quality activists whereas others can only attract a handful of poorly educated individuals with little political experience. He explains this variation in terms of historical legacies and the extent to which far right activity is socially and politically stigmatized. Countries with a strong nationalist subculture that extends beyond the confines of those nostalgic for fascism provide a reservoir of activists from which far right parties can draw. The ability of far right parties to attract activists beyond this initial pool is limited, though, if mainstream parties erect a *cordon sanitaire* around them and if social sanctions are imposed on far right activity. If the political and social costs of far right activity are high, then only extremists and those with nothing to lose are willing to become far right party members. This results in a poorly organized party with an extremist ideology that does not appeal beyond the party's core constituency. In contrast, if the political and social costs of far right activity are low, then far right parties will be attractive to moderates and opportunists. This results in a well-organized party with a more moderate ideology that appeals to a broader set of voters.

A winning ideology? Far right parties are sometimes viewed as protest parties that receive their support from those who wish to indicate their discontent with the political elite by voting for an outcast party (Betz 1994, Fennema 1997). If this view were accurate, then the ideology of far right parties would have only a minimal impact on their electoral success. There is considerable evidence, though, that far right parties are not simply protest parties and that their supporters are

³One problem with these studies is that they do not operationalize organizational strength with systematic data on the internal structure of parties. Instead, they rely on information from expert surveys (Lubbers & Scheepers 2002, Norris 2005) or qualitative case studies (Carter 2005, Art 2011). A second problem is that the measures of organizational strength often include nonorganizational factors such as the presence of a charismatic leader (Lubbers & Scheepers 2002, Carter 2005), making it impossible to distinguish leadership effects from organizational ones. A third problem is that it is difficult to know whether organizational strength produces electoral success or whether electoral success enables parties to build organizational capacity.

largely motivated by the same ideological and pragmatic considerations as those of other parties (van der Brug et al. 2000, 2005). This means that far right parties have the ability to influence their electoral fortunes through the ideology they espouse.

As **Figure 1** indicates, there are different ideological variants within the far right party family. Numerous studies show that far right parties that retain an extremist (antidemocratic) ideology are almost always electorally weak (Ignazi 1992, Taggart 1995, Golder 2003, Cole 2005, Carter 2005). These parties are not considered a legitimate or effective option in most countries (Bos & van der Brug 2010). As already indicated, one explanation for why some far right parties retain an extremist ideology despite its weak electoral appeal has to do with the type of activists these parties are able to attract (Art 2011). It could also be that extremist parties are expressively, rather than instrumentally, motivated (Golder 2003).

Kitschelt (1997) argues that the winning formula for far right parties involves combining a pro-market position on the economic dimension with an authoritarian position on the cultural dimension. If neoliberal economics was ever part of a winning formula (Betz 1994), most scholars reject that this is the case today. Since the 1990s, many successful far right parties have adopted centrist or even leftist economic policies that promote protectionism and the welfare state (de Lange 2007, Mudde 2007). Contemporary far right parties espouse policies that run across the economic dimension. In many cases, these parties blur their actual economic position in an attempt to maintain a cross-class coalition of support (Rovny 2013).

Rydgren (2004, 2005) has argued that the new winning formula on the far right has little specific economic content. Instead, it combines ethnonationalism and populist antiestablishment rhetoric, without being overtly racist or antidemocratic. This winning ideology, which was pioneered by the French National Front in the 1980s, is shown in the purple region in **Figure 1**. To the extent that far right parties do discuss economics, it is usually in the context of their nativist agenda.

NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

In this section, I discuss three new avenues for future research.

Interaction between Supply and Demand

The literature has come to recognize that the electoral success of the far right is jointly determined by demand-side and supply-side factors. Unfortunately, scholars have yet to realize the full implications of this for their empirical analyses. Most studies continue to focus on either demand-side or supply-side factors as if they can be examined in isolation from each other. Although some analyses include both supply-side and demand-side factors (Lubbers & Scheepers 2002, van der Brug et al. 2005), they do so only in an additive manner, ignoring the inherent interaction between supply and demand. The result is that many of the literature's findings must be treated as tentative.

The inherent interaction between supply and demand is illustrated in **Figure 2**. Grievances create the demand for far right parties, while characteristics of the supply side, such as the political opportunity structure, determine the extent to which demand is translated into far right success. When the supply side is open, high demand translates into far right success. When the supply side is closed, high demand does not produce far right success. And when demand is low, there is no far right success irrespective of whether the supply side is open or closed. In effect, high demand and open supply are both necessary for successful far right parties. This theoretical account, implicitly recognized by much of the literature, is clearly conditional and so should be tested with interaction models (Brambor et al. 2006, Berry et al. 2012). Employing an additive model in this context is

		SUPPLY	
		Closed	Open
DEMAND	High	Failure	Success
	Low	Failure	Failure

Figure 2

Variation in extreme right party success. When the supply side is open, high demand translates into far right success. When the supply side is closed, high demand does not produce far right success. When demand is low, there is no far right success irrespective of whether the supply side is open or closed. High demand and open supply are both necessary for successful far right parties.

likely to produce misleading inferences.⁴ This may provide a potential explanation for at least some of the conflicting results in the literature.

Political Geography of Far Right Support

Much can be learned from the political geography of far right support. **Figure 3** shows the distribution of far right support across France in 2012, the United Kingdom in 2015, and Germany in 2013.

Most studies of far right support focus on the national level. It is clear from **Figure 3**, though, that national-level support for the far right hides significant subnational variation. Across constituencies, far right support ranges from 4.97% to 31.50% in France, 0% to 44% in the United Kingdom, and 0.30% to 5.08% in Germany. Similar or higher levels of variation are seen within constituencies. The randomly selected constituencies indicate that far right support ranges from 0.07% to 32.12% in Kettering, 0% to 50% in the third constituency of Aude, and 1% to 3.5% in Odenwald-Tauber. This variation is incredibly local. The median area of a commune in France is just 4.14 square miles, and there are communes in our chosen constituency with 0% far right support bordering communes with more than 25% far right support. This localized variation raises questions about what is being captured by national measures of far right support and about the usefulness of theories that focus solely on national-level, or even regional-level, characteristics.

Although demand is seen as necessary for far right success, recent work downplays its significance for explaining variation in far right success. Mudde (2010, p. 1,168), for example, suggests that demand-side factors “fail to account for significant differences between and within countries.” Supply-side factors, though, cannot fully explain the variation in far right support shown in **Figure 3**. Although supply-side arguments have typically been conceptualized with respect to

⁴Many readers will notice the parallels with the party system size literature. Scholars originally sought to explain party system size in terms of social cleavages (demand) or electoral institutions (supply). They later included both factors in their models but in an additive manner. Recognizing the inherent interaction between supply and demand in their theories, they eventually began to use interaction models to narrow the gap between theory and empirics (Ordeshook & Shvetsova 1994, Clark & Golder 2006).

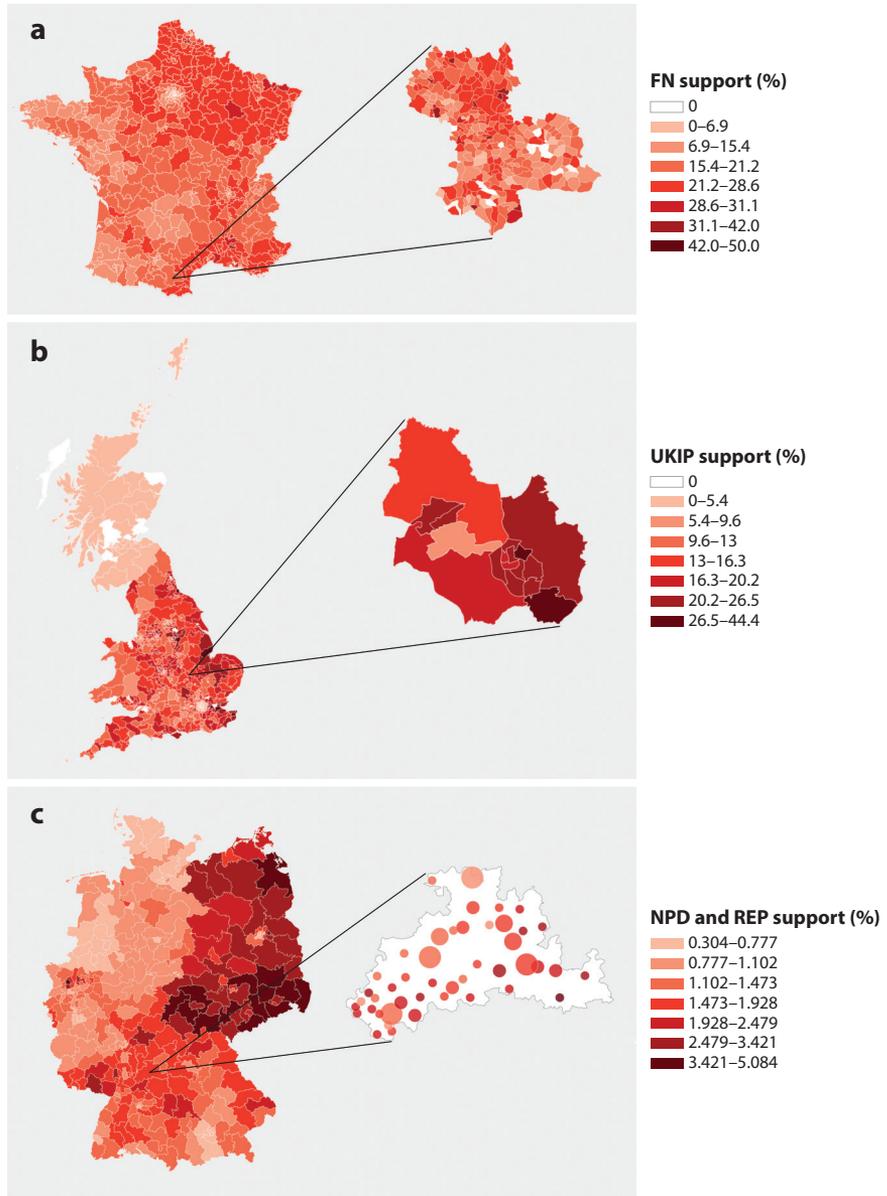


Figure 3

Political geography of far right support in France, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Panel (a) shows how the National Front's (FN) vote share was distributed across constituencies (left) and across communes within the third constituency of Aude (right) during the 2012 presidential elections. Panel (b) shows how the UK Independence Party's (UKIP) vote share was distributed across constituencies (left) and across wards within the Kettering constituency (right) during the 2015 legislative and local elections. Panel (c) shows how the combined vote share for the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Republikaner (REP) was distributed across constituencies (left) and across municipalities within the Odenwald-Tauber constituency during the 2013 legislative elections; the circles representing the municipalities are drawn in proportion to the size of the voting population in each municipality. Darker reds are associated with higher levels of far right support. For more information on this figure, follow the **Supplemental Material** link from the Annual Reviews home page at <http://www.annualreviews.org>.

Supplemental Material

the national level, they extend easily to the subnational level. There are local differences in the subnational political opportunity structure, as well as candidate quality and party organizational strength (Thijssen & de Lange 2005, Kestilä & Söderlund 2007, Arzheimer & Carter 2009). However, these factors cannot explain the variation we observe, say, in far right support in France. The French panel in **Figure 3a** is for presidential elections, and so electoral rules, candidate quality and ideology, and party competition are all held constant. Although there may be differences in local media coverage and the strength of local party branches, this is unlikely to vary within a given constituency and so cannot explain the significant variation we observe across communes in the third district of Aude. Much of the spatial variation we observe in **Figure 3a** has to be driven by differences in demand.

Stages of Success

Several scholars suggest that different factors affect different stages of far right success. Most distinguish between the period of electoral breakthrough and the period of electoral consolidation (Carter 2005, Ellinas 2007). Some claim that mainstream party strategies, such as those that involve imposing a *cordon sanitaire* or accommodating far right policies, are only effective in the initial phases of far right party development and can backfire if they are employed later (Meguid 2007, Art 2011). Others suggest that the importance of the media for far right party success is also greater in the initial phases of far right party development (Mazzoleni et al. 2003, Ellinas 2010). In contrast, others argue that the organizational strength of far right parties is important for electoral consolidation but not necessarily electoral breakthrough (Carter 2005, Norris 2005, Art 2011). Despite these claims, few, if any, studies systematically distinguish between different stages of far right success. This provides another potential explanation for some of the conflicting results in the literature.

Scholars could adopt a number of empirical strategies to examine the temporal aspect of far right success. One place to start would be with the methods employed in the literature on democratic emergence and democratic consolidation. Scholars in this area are often interested in distinguishing between those democracies that might suffer an authoritarian reversal and those that are consolidated. This is similar to the distinction in the far right literature between “flash” parties and those that have become permanent fixtures in the party system. Svobik (2008) employs a split-population duration model to examine democratic emergence and consolidation, and a similar method could be applied to examine far right success. A second strategy would be to employ a Heckman selection model in which the selection stage models electoral relevance and the outcome stage models ongoing electoral success. Selection models, in the form of tobit models, have already been employed in the far right literature (Jackman & Volpert 1996, Golder 2003). However, the tobit model is a highly restricted type of selection model in that it assumes that the same factors influence both the selection stage and the outcome stage. Both of these suggested strategies would allow scholars to jointly model electoral breakthrough and electoral consolidation.

CONCLUSION

In 1988, von Beyme (1988, p. 14) wrote that “there is virtually no comparative literature on the topic” of far right parties. As this review demonstrates, there has been quite a remarkable turnaround in a short time. Arguably, the far right party family is now the most studied of all the party families. Scholars have made significant progress in identifying the ideological makeup of the far right party family and in understanding the demand-side and supply-side factors that influence its electoral success. More progress can be made by recognizing the inherent interaction

between supply-side and demand-side factors, by paying more attention to the political geography of far right support, and by distinguishing between different stages of far right success.

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