A European Culture War?

Understanding Anti-Establishment Politics as Opposition to Cultural Elitism

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Abstract

Anti-establishment politics, that is, little support for political institutions and having affinity with far-right parties, is noticeable across European democracies. The rationalist approach has been most dominant for explaining political trust, arguing that differences in political competence and countries' democratic performance underlie educational disparities in political trust. Yet, many accounts point to the importance of anti-elitism for understanding anti-establishment politics. In this study, I theorize and test a cultural approach. This approach underlines that the political establishment's culturally progressive attitudes permeate the institution it represents and that the public, and among it particularly those who have least affinity with these culturally progressive values, perceives this as cultural superiority signaling by the political elite. They will, in turn, mock and ridicule the political elite for its perceived claims of cultural superiority. As a result, support for anti-establishment politics in Europe can be understood as a deeply-rooted cultural conflict, a European culture war, where the politicians' cultural progressiveness is perceived as cultural superiority signaling which the lesser-deemed 'cultural inferiors' resist. My study fulfills three goals. 1) Most importantly, I introduce and empirically test a novel cultural approach to support for anti-establishment politics. 2) At the same time I systematically test the rationalist approach against this novel framework 3) as well as empirically assess its scope by applying it not only to political trust, but far-right affinity as well. To this end I perform multilevel linear and logistic regression analyses using the European Social Survey, enriched with country-level data and expert survey data (Chapel Hill Expert Survey, Eurostat, the World Bank Group, and the Corruption Perceptions Index). The results of my analyses suggest that reasonable evidence for a European culture war exists. My study finds more far-right affinity in countries where cultural elitism in party politics is more pertinent as well as little support for political institutions among those with least affinity with the culturally progressive attitude of the elite, especially in countries where party politics is characterized by cultural elitism more strongly. The rationalist approach's hypotheses are largely corroborated for support for political institutions, while this approach fails to predict far-right affinity. I conclude with recommendations for future studies that should explicate the limitations found for both approaches as well as the extent in which political competence constitutes a mark of elitism itself.

Keywords

Support for political institutions, far-right politics, elite-public linkage, cultural elitism, corruption.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Across Europe, scholars and the political establishment are alarmed by high levels of support for anti-establishment politics. Many citizens display affinity with far-right parties at the cost of support for the political establishment (Bustikova & Kitschelt, 2009; Lubbers, Gijsberts, & Scheepers, 2002), while others report generally low levels of trust in and satisfaction with political institutions (McLaren, 2017; Mishler & Rose, 1997; Van der Meer, 2010).[1] Many scholars are particularly puzzled by the persistent education gap found in support for anti-establishment politics (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Lubbers et al., 2002, p. 362; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017). The rationalist approach has offered the most dominant theory for the education gap in political trust, being one indicator of support for anti-establishment politics, which it explains in terms of differences in political sophistication and countries' political functioning. Studies following this approach stress how the more educated, who have more political competence, negatively evaluate corrupt political institutions and are normatively troubled by them, while they are more trustful of politics in contexts lacking corruption (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017).

While the rationalist approach offers a valuable framework for understanding institutional trust, many studies hint at anti-elitism underlying anti-establishment politics (Barr, 2009, p. 31; Bergh, 2004; Bergmann, 2015; Canovan, 1999; Schedler, 1996; Učeň, 2007). The political establishment is often sharply mocked, taunted, and insulted (Aalberts, 2012; De Gruijter, Smits, & Boutellier, 2010; Engesser, Ernst, Esser, & Büchel, 2017; Kazin, 1998). There are, moreover, many empirical suggestions that stress the attitudinal mismatch between the public and political establishment for understanding anti-establishment support. In the last decade, scholars increasingly highlight the importance of ideological congruence between attitudes of the public and political establishment for political satisfaction and grant more attention to the attitudinal and cultural underpinnings of supporting anti-establishment politics (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Arzheimer, 2009; Gidron & Hall, 2017; Lubbers et al.,

[1] Throughout this study, I refer to having more affinity with a far-right party than any other party, which is the used measurement in my analyses, in different ways. Having affinity with far-right parties, more affinity with a far-right party and far-right affinity are used interchangeably to refer to the same concept of having more affinity with a far-right party than any other party.

2002; McLaren, 2017; Rovny, 2013; Savelkoul & Scheepers, 2017; Spruyt, Keppens, & Van Droogenbroeck, 2016).

In this study I posit a cultural approach that builds on these insights. More specifically, I illustrate and empirically test how anti-establishment politics can be interpreted as opposition to cultural elitism. I argue that the cultural progressiveness of the political establishment is perceived as cultural superiority signaling by a more culturally conservative public, particularly by those who have least affinity with these culturally progressive values. Cultural progressiveness, then, permeates the political institution the establishment represents and pits the establishment, perceived as the 'culturally superior' political elite, against the subsequently denoted 'culturally inferiors'. The latter will resist, mock, and ridicule the perceived claims of cultural superiority and will, as a result, support anti-establishment politics. This makes that anti-establishment politics becomes part of what I posit a European culture war between the public and political elite. I ask: *Can support for anti-establishment politics in Europe be understood as opposition to cultural elitism?*

I perform this study in times when anti-elite resentment is argued to threaten the legitimacy of political arenas and mainstream politics across Europe (Aaldering, 2017, p. 13; Gidron & Hall, 2017, p. S57; Oliver & Rahn, 2016; Raines et al., 2017, pp. 6-8, p. 24). This not only makes that the present study is valuable to policy makers and political actors who wish to counter anti-elitism, but also that it answers to recurring debates on political representation, political legitimacy, and the gap between the public and political establishment (Raines et al., 2017). My study has additional merit within the academic debate on support for anti-establishment politics. First, I theorize a novel explanation where the role played by opposition to cultural elitism in anti-establishment politics takes prominence. Even authors that do include measures of attitudes of elitism, like Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove (2013), differ from this study in that their conceptualization of elitism refers to style of governance, not to elitism as a cultural attitude perceived to signal cultural superiority. Second, as I put the rationalist approach to a critical test against an additional framework, I answer calls for analyses in sociological research where different frameworks are connected and tested against each other (Gidron & Hall, 2017; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). Last, since I conceptualize anti-establishment politics as little support for political institutions and far-right affinity, I

assess the empirical scope of the rationalist approach, which has primarily been tested for institutional trust.

I use multilevel linear and logistic regression analyses, following pleads for the use of multilevel analysis in comparative political research (Anderson & Singer, 2008, p. 565; Bernauer & Vatter, 2012, p. 436). I use data from rounds 3 (2006), 5 (2010), and 7 (2014) of the European Social Survey (ESS), enriched with country-level data derived from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017), Eurostat (n.d. a, n.d. b), the World Bank Group (2017a, 2017b, 2017c), and the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) (Transparency International, 2017). My sample of 67,654 observations over 20 both Western and Eastern European countries is notable among other studies of anti-establishment politics as studies often pay disproportionate attention to affluent democracies at the cost of post-communist and post-Soviet European countries (Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017; Učeň, 2007).

In what follows, I first discuss and state hypotheses for the prevailing rationalist approach, as well as for its interpretation of educational disparities in anti-establishment support. Then, I will analyze the manifestation of opposition to cultural elitism in European politics and formulate hypotheses for the cultural approach by way of applying cultural sociological insights to the political sociological phenomenon of anti-establishment politics. After turning to my data and operationalization, I present my findings. The discussion of my findings, conclusion, and implications for further research are presented afterwards.

Toward a Cultural Understanding of Support for Anti-Establishment Politics

A Twofold Understanding of Support for Anti-Establishment Politics

I discriminate between two analytically distinct yet conceptually connected manifestations of support for anti-establishment politics. On the one hand, with levels of trust in and satisfaction with national democracy, parliament, and politics varying across Western and Eastern European democracies, having little support for political institutions ventilates political discontent (Armingeon & Guthmann, 2014; McLaren, 2017; Mishler & Rose, 1997; Učeň, 2007; Van der Meer, 2010; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). On the other hand, having affinity with far-right parties hints at political discontent as well (Arter, 2010; Bélanger & Aarts, 2006; Bergh, 2004; Ignazi, 2006, p. 200; Mudde, 2004; Swyngedouw & Ivaldi, 2002;

Učeň, 2007, p. 51). The concept of European far-right parties is an umbrella term for right-wing populist, right-wing radical, or, extreme-right parties that openly counter the political establishment (Bergh, 2004; Minkenberg, 2002, p. 337; Minkenberg & Perrineau, 2007, p. 31; Swyngedouw & Ivaldi, 2002, p. 12; Vasilopoulou, 2018). Each constitute a different, yet connected, form of a right-wing party. The populist right-wing's exclusionary rhetoric antagonizes the 'ordinary and decent' people against the 'corrupt and evil' establishment, positioning the party as an alternative to unresponsive established parties by claiming to stay faithful to the interests of the people (Akkerman et al., 2013; Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016; Canovan, 1999; Clarke, Whiteley, Borger, Sanders, & Stewart, 2016; Mudde, 2007; Oliver & Rahn, 2016). Such a negative perception of political opposites becomes more aggressive for radical right parties (Arzheimer, 2015; Mudde, 2007). Additionally, extreme-right parties are commonly interpreted as anti-democratic parties (Mudde, 2007).

Corruption and Competence: The Rationalist Approach

The rationalist approach's main argument is that a weak democratic functioning results in lower levels of institutional trust (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). This is most clearly seen in contexts of corruption (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012, p. 747; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017, p. 93). Simply put, faith in institutions is lost when those institutions abuse their power. In this study I apply the rationalist approach to having support for political institutions. Moreover, I apply insights from the rationalist approach to having affinity with the far right. If corruption decreases political support, we could also expect corruption to erode support for established political parties, increasing support for far-right parties that combat the establishment. As for the other hypotheses, I expect hypothesized effects to hold while accounting for the competing approach, here the cultural one.

> *Hypothesis 1.1: People (a) have less support for political institutions and (b) have more affinity with a far-right political party in countries that are more corrupt.*

Prior research also points to disparities in support for anti-establishment politics within the public itself along the line of education. It is well established that the less educated

are overrepresented among those who have affinity with the far right (Arzheimer, 2009; Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Lubbers et al., 2002; Oesch, 2008; Rooduijn, 2017; Savelkoul & Scheepers, 2017; Spruyt et al., 2016) and those who show political dissatisfaction or have lower levels of trust in the political and public sector (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Armingeon & Guthmann, 2014; Bernauer & Vatter, 2012; Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Kuhn, Van Elsas, Hakhverdian, & Van der Brug, 2014; McLaren, 2017; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). The rationalist approach implies that the more educated acquired higher levels of political competence and can accurately formulate opinions on democratic functioning (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017). The less educated, in contrast, have a hard time comprehending the "complicated procedures, secret treaties, and technicalities that only experts can understand" (Canovan, 1999, p. 6) and instead of fully grasping the abstract processes behind political outcomes they attribute their frustration over such outcomes to the politicians representing the institution (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017; Popkin & Dimock, 1999). If we apply this line of reasoning to far-right affinity, the less educated will be more likely to share affinity with far-right parties as these parties prioritize "common sense" (Mudde, 2004, p. 547).

Hypothesis 1.2: The less educated (a) have less support for political institutions and (b) have more affinity with a far-right political party.

Most importantly, the rationalist approach argues that the more educated are concerned much more by corruption than their educational counterparts, while they are more trustful of politics when corruption is low (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). Extending this insight to far-right affinity, we would expect that the education gap in support for political institutions and affinity with far-right parties will be particularly large in countries with little corruption, where the negative effect of education is more pertinent.

Hypothesis 1.3: There is a more pronounced negative effect of education on (a) having little support for political institutions and (b) having affinity with a far-right political party if a country is less corrupt.

Figure 1 displays the multilevel research design for the rationalist approach.

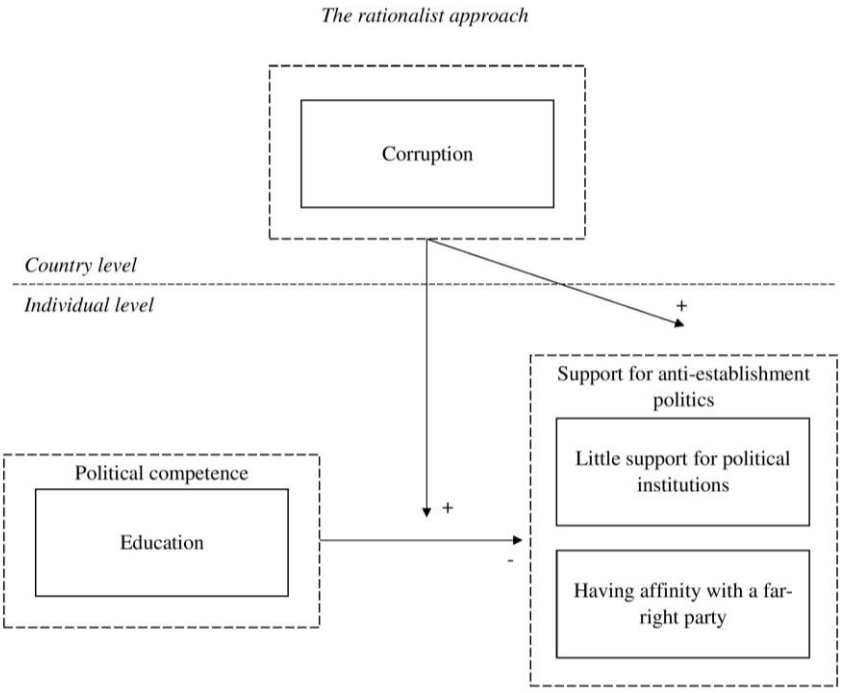

Figure 1. The multilevel research design of this study for the rationalist approach.

Opposing and Supporting Cultural Elitism: The Cultural Approach

In the cultural approach opposition to cultural elitism is the crux of understanding support for anti-establishment politics. While prior research shows that many policy preferences of those supporting the far right differ from those of the political establishment, it could be argued that opposition to established politics is merely the result of incongruences in policy between the public and political establishment (see e.g. Aaldering, 2017; Bélanger & Aarts, 2006; Bovens & Wille, 2017). A cultural sociological interpretation, however, offers a different reading. I will explicate below that the political establishment is perceived to signal cultural superiority by means of cultural progressiveness by the more culturally conservative public. This leads to a deeply-rooted cultural conflict, a European culture war, between the lesser-deemed, 'culturally inferior', public and the political establishment, perceived as the 'culturally superior' political elite. The public, and among it particularly those who have least affinity with the

elite's cultural progressiveness, will oppose the political elite and will support anti-establishment politics.

American culture war theory has a long tradition in defining such cultural clashes between the public and elite. Culture war theory proposes that clashes on cultural issues define opposition to the elite, constructing the elite as a cultural entity of progressiveness and guiding the wars between them and the public into "ideological and political harbors" (Serazio, 2016, pp. 189-190; cf. Hunter, 1991). Importantly, as many claim the elite is "out of touch" (Serazio, 2016, p. 190) with 'ordinary citizens' but nevertheless controls the means necessary for legitimizing its worldview, conflicts emerge over the realignment of American morals and public life (Hunter, 1991). While both sides are involved in "a strategy of public ridicule, derision, and insult" (Hunter, 1991, p. 136), the "blame language" (Oliver & Rahn, 2016, p. 193) of American culture wars clearly resonates with the rhetoric tapped on by anti-establishment politics in Europe (cf. Aalberts, 2012; Barr, 2009; De Gruijter et al., 2010; Schedler, 1996; Swyngedouw & Ivaldi, 2001, p. 8).

The cultural approach underscores cultural capital as a crucial resource for interpreting these cultural clashes. I understand cultural capital, following Lamont and Lareau (1988, p. 164) who build on Bourdieu (1984), as "widely shared, legitimate culture made up of high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, behaviors and goods) used in direct or indirect social and cultural exclusion". Cultural capital is primarily attained through life-long socialization and education in high cultural-capital milieus (Bourdieu, 1984; Jæger & Breen, 2016). While seminal literature on cultural capital readily shows that highbrow cultural consumption signals cultural superiority, more recently so-called emerging forms of cultural capital are illustrated to mark cultural superiority in contemporary Western societies as well (cf. Bourdieu, 1984; Jæger & Breen, 2016; see for an overview Prieur & Savage, 2013). Here, having reflexive, open, or, omnivorous cultural preferences (Bryson, 1996; Ollivier, 2008; Peterson, 1992; Van Eijck, 2000) and being culturally liberal (Currid-Halkett, 2017; DellaPosta, Shi, & Macy, 2015) or cosmopolitan (Kazin, 1998; Prieur & Savage, 2013), or in other words, being culturally progressive likewise denotes one's high cultural standing (cf. Prieur & Savage, 2013).

Recent public debates grant clear insights into predominantly four types of cultural progressiveness found among the European political elite and which are perceived to mark

cultural superiority (cf. Bourdieu, 1984; Bovens & Wille, 2017; Canovan, 1999; Golder, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Oliver & Rahn, 2016; Raines et al., 2017). First, clear examples of much-displayed ethnic tolerance among politicians are found across Europe. In the United Kingdom national surveys paint a picture of a public disenfranchised from the establishment's immigration policy and in Sweden and Germany a majority of the public is concerned about immigration (Clarke et al., 2016, pp. 141-143; Oroschakoff, 2017). Likewise, the Netherlands, a country where increasing ethnic and cultural diversity has "many [claiming] that all recent social change has been for the worse" (Duyvendak, 2011, p. 110), provides us with an example as well. Disaffected voters blame politicians for "[leaning] to foreigners" (Aalberts, 2012, p. 125) and for their "abundance of tolerance" (Van Bohemen, Kemmers, & De Koster, 2011, p. 154; cf. De Gruijter et al., 2010, p. 136). Next comes being morally progressive, or, the "progressivist vision" (Hunter, 1991, pp. 113-116). Although the majority of Irish people are Catholic, Collins (2017) writes for *Politico*, 56 percent of Ireland's parliament holds that the country's strict abortion policy should either be amended or replaced. In Germany and Slovenia a majority of members of parliament recently voted for legalization of gay marriage and Czech politicians followed other countries and proposed a legalization of euthanasia (Haas, 2016; Saeed, 2017; Završnik, 2017). Adding to this list is the elite's predilection with the environment and sustainability, which Ivarsflaten (2008, p. 8) terms "the postmaterialist green movement of the educated classes". During the general elections of 2017 in the United Kingdom, both green and conservative politicians put forwards ideas for protecting the environment (BBC News, 2017). Additionally, the political establishment clings to an anti-authoritarian, or, libertarian attitude. Here as well, as Mudde (2013, p. 13) states, "there has always been a significant gap between the more progressive elites and the more conservative masses on law and order issues".

While these value cleavages between the public and political establishment could be interpreted as mere incongruences in policy preferences, the cultural sociological framework I propose here adds an additional interpretation (cf. Aaldering, 2017; Bélanger & Aarts, 2006; Bovens & Wille, 2017). I argue that with cultural progressiveness being a mark of a high cultural standing in contemporary Western societies, the more culturally conservative public will find its values deemed culturally inferior by the political establishment who they perceive as culturally superior, or, the political elite. Cultural sociological literature has time

and again illustrated that perceived claims of superiority know resistance on the part of those who are observed as 'inferior'. Seminal literature highlights how the power of the 'dominant' to legitimize certain cultural outings as superior leads to "resentment, disgust, despair, alienation, [and] apathy […]" (Bourdieu, 1961, p. 161; cf. Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont & Lareau, 1988). If so, anti-establishment politics provides the politically disengaged, agonized, and lesser-deemed public with an antidote and will find a fertile breeding ground in countries where party politics is strongly characterized by cultural elitism. Not only will far-right parties, parties that devote most attention to combating cultural progressiveness through issues such as anti-immigration and authoritarianism (Ivarsflaten, 2008, pp. 15-17; Minkenberg, 2002, p. 346; Rovny, 2013), posit themselves as a viable alternative to a culturally elitist establishment, such an establishment will deteriorate support for political institutions among the public as well.

I construe cultural elitism in party politics in two ways and expect that each motivates one type of support for anti-establishment politics, while accounting for the rationalist approach. If cultural elitism is more salient in party politics *in general* I expect support for political institutions to decrease. Additionally, people will be driven more strongly to far-right parties, parties that openly counter the culturally elitist establishment, when cultural elitism *among non-far-right parties* is more salient.

> *Hypothesis 2.1: People (a) have less support for political institutions and (b) have more affinity with a far-right political party in countries where cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics is more salient.*

If the public feels lesser-deemed by the culturally progressive political elite for being more culturally conservative, those among the public that share least affinity with the elite's cultural progressiveness will feel lesser-deemed in particular. Education is a crucial resource for attaining cultural capital, for being exposed to inclusive and tolerant worldviews, and thus for developing affinity with cultural elitism (cf. Cotgrove & Duff, 1981; Hainmueller & Hiscox, 2006; Kuhn et al., 2014; Lehmann, 2007; Surridge, 2016). As discussed above, one type of cultural progressiveness and readily linked to the more educated is being ethnically tolerant (De Koster, Achterberg, Houtman, & Van der Waal, 2011; Gidron & Hall, 2017; Savelkoul

& Scheepers, 2017; Van Bohemen et al., 2011). It would hence come as no surprise that not only the least educated, but the least ethnically tolerant in particular, whose values are most culturally conservative, accuse the culturally progressive political elite of signaling cultural elitism. What's more, we can expect the same group to feel most "elite-abandoned" (Učeň, 2007, p. 58), most like a misfit (Lehmann, 2007), in contexts where politicians are perceived to signal cultural superiority most abundantly in party politics (cf. McLaren, 2017). Simply put, I expect the ethnically intolerant to be more supportive of anti-establishment politics. I also expect a salient European culture war in countries where party politics is more culturally elitist, leading to greater resistance among those who feel lesser-deemed.

Hypothesis 2.2: The ethnically less tolerant (a) display less support for political institutions and (b) have more affinity with a far-right political party.

Hypothesis 2.3: There is a more pronounced negative effect of ethnic tolerance on (a) having little support for political institutions and (b) having affinity with a far-right political party if cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics in a country is more salient.

Figure 2 displays the multilevel research design for the cultural approach.

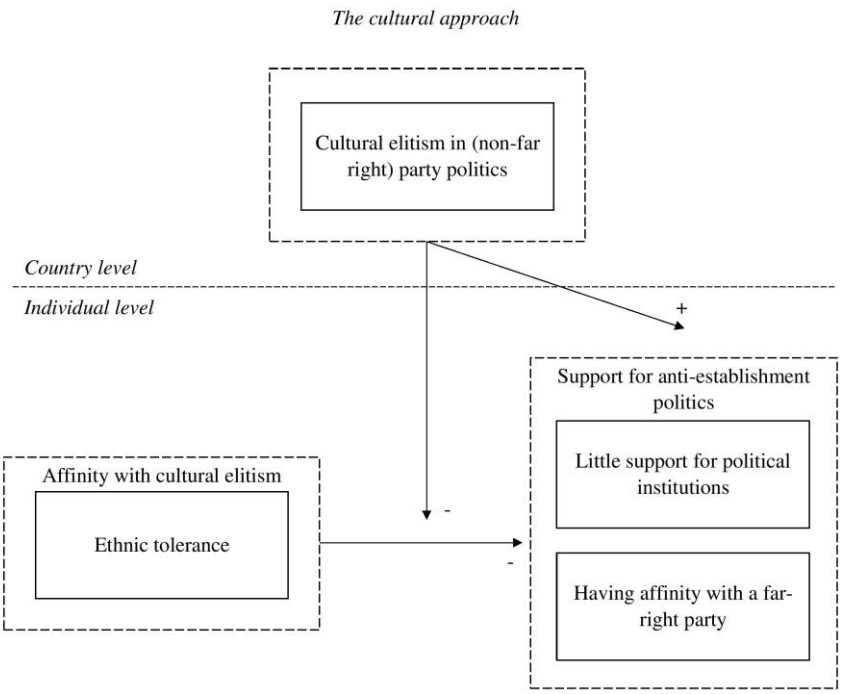

Figure 2. The multilevel research design of this study for the cultural approach.

Data, Method, and Operationalization

Data and Method

Political researchers increasingly call for multilevel, or, mixed-effects analyses (Anderson & Singer, 2008, p. 565; Bernauer & Vatter, 2012, p. 436). A multilevel structure also characterizes the data at hand. More specifically, my data have a cross-classified structure: individuals are nested in both countries and years. As incorrect standard errors and enlarged Type I error rates are the consequence of failing to account for the cross-classified nature of data, I follow the advice of Schmidt-Catran and Fairbrother (2016, p. 34) and use a model with individuals nested in country-years nested in countries (cf. Steenbergen & Jones, 2002, p. 219). Because models including random effects on the year level did not converge I incorporate fixed effects for years using a dummy variable as Schmidt-Catran and Fairbrother (2016, p. 25) suggest.

I use rounds 3 (2006), 5 (2010), and 7 (2014) of the European Social Survey. The ESS is a cross-national survey conducted every two years which collects data through face-to-face interviews. It covers a broad range of subjects and concepts, including political and

cultural attitudes, and is comprised of most European countries (see e.g. Anderson & Singer, 2008; Maxwell, 2010; Rooduijn, 2017; Rovny, 2013; Zmerli & Newton, 2008). Moreover, the ESS contains fine-grained questions on voting behavior and support for political parties. Not only do the selected 3 rounds contain suitable measurements, their timeframe is also congruent with the data on the contextual level. All individual-level variables used in the analyses stem from the ESS. The analyses are weighted using a post-stratification weight, which corrects for both faults in inclusion probabilities and in sampling and non-response errors. Table A1 in the appendix presents an overview of the countries that are included in the analyses, their abbreviations, and the response rate of each individual country for each year.

Country-level variables are obtained from various sources. First, the widely used Chapel Hill Expert Survey (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017; see e.g. Rovny, 2013; Vasilopoulou, 2018) is used to determine the level of cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics. Using experts positioned in the public sphere across European countries, the CHES estimates the position of political parties on social, economic, and cultural issues and offers the possibility to weight the scores for each party on the seats the respective party owns in national parliament. This allows weighting the scores based on the salience of each party in a given parliament. Second, scores for each country on the Corruption Perceptions Index are used (Transparency International, 2017). The Corruption Perceptions Index is an expert survey ascribing scores to countries on how corrupt their public sectors are perceived to be by experts. Last, Eurostat (n.d. a, n.d. b) and the World Bank Group (2017a, 2017b, 2017c) are consulted for contextual data on social and economic factors, namely immigration and unemployment rates, GDP per capita, and economic growth. Combining these datasets resulted in 20 European countries, 55 country-year combinations, and 67,654 valid observations.[2]

Table A2 in the appendix reports descriptive statistics for all listed variables. For all multi-item measurements, tables A3 and A4 report additional details on items, coding, and factor analyses.

[2] Included are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic (missing in 2006), Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece (only included in 2010), Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania (missing in 2006), the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia (missing in 2014), Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Dependent Variables: Support for Anti-Establishment Politics

As indicated above, support for anti-establishment politics is twofaced. First, *little support for political institutions* is a reliable five-item scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.886, 0.901, 0.900$ for each year, respectively), ranging from (1) to (4), created by combining items on satisfaction with one's country's government and the functioning of democracy with items on trust in one's parliament, politicians, and political parties.[3] Satisfaction with the government and democracy is used in other research as well (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Bernauer & Vatter, 2012; Lubbers et al., 2002; Maxwell, 2010; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). Likewise, all three indicators of trust in politics are found in other research (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Van der Meer, 2010). Higher scores indicate that the respondent displays less support for political institutions.

Second, I include a variable measuring whether a respondent *has affinity with a far-right party*.[4, 5] Following Gidron and Hall (2017), Ivarsflaten (2008), and Stojarová (2013), existing literature is consulted in order to classify far-right parties. Table A5 in the appendix contains a complete and comprehensive list of parties classified as far-right, in line with the definition stated above, including references that legitimize the categorization and additional information on the coding protocol. The individual-level variable is categorized by recoding the question "is there a particular party you feel closer to than all other parties?" (ESS, 2016a,

[3] See tables A3 and A4 for details on factor analyses run for multi-item variables.

[4] Voting behavior is the preferred measurement of supporting far-right parties. However, incongruences in the period wherein items of the ESS and contextual databases are measured make voting behavior impossible and ambiguous to use. Having affinity with a far-right party is, however, a valid substitute for voting behavior as it taps into a strong sense of attachment to or support for a political party.

[5] Note that parties with an overtly religious foundation are not coded as far-right parties, even though some argue their ideology shares common grounds with that of far-right parties. That is, their religious ideology could substantially explain why many of such parties can be termed far-right. As discussed above, right-wing populist, right-wing radical, and extreme-right parties all voice an anti-institutional and anti-culturally elitist rhetoric. Coding parties where a religious ideology largely accounts for their anti-institutional rhetoric does match the purpose of this study, as it is interested in opposition to cultural elitism as driving support for anti-establishment politics, not opposition to elitism out of religious motivation. However, this does not mean that parties characterized as far-right cannot be religious at all. Many of such parties, especially in Eastern Europe, have historically been influenced by religion.

2016b, 2016c) as (1) having or (0) not having more affinity with a far-right party than any other party.

Note that I perform a multilevel linear regression for the analysis of little support for political institutions as dependent variable. I apply a multilevel logistic regression for the analysis for having affinity with a far-right party as dependent variable, only including countries where far-right parties are present within a given year.

Country-Level Variables

I expect that people have more support for anti-establishment politics if *cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics* is more salient. A reliable four-item scale (Cronbach's α = 0.922, 0.923, 0.922 for cultural elitism in party politics, Cronbach's α = 0.923, 0.923, 0.923 for cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics) is constructed using party positions on libertarianism, moral progressiveness, environmentalism, and ethnic tolerance. All value dimensions are illustrated above to be indicative for the cultural progressiveness for which established politics is often ridiculed and blamed. Each item is based on a single item except ethnic tolerance, for which I first created a reliable three-item scale (Cronbach's α = 0.959, 0.958, 0.959 for cultural elitism in party politics, Cronbach's α = 0.958, 0.958, 0.958 for cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics) consisting of items on attitudes toward immigration and ethnic diversity. The scale for cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics is weighted on the seats a political party has in national parliament, which makes the measurement representative for the salience of culturally elitist attitudes in (non-far-right) party politics in a given country. With higher scores indicating that cultural elitism is more salient in (non-far-right) party politics, the variable ranges from (1) to (4).

Six variables are included on the country level. First, the Corruption Perceptions Index measures the extent in which the public sector in a given country is characterized by *corruption*, with higher values indicating more corruption, a variable frequently used in studies using the rationalist approach (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). Additionally, I follow previous studies and include a variable for whether a country (1) is or (0) is not a *Western European country* (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Hakverdian & Mayne, 2012, p. 744; Maxwell, 2010; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2016, p. 832), given the fact that we have to be sensitive to the historical and cultural differ-

ences between Western and Eastern European countries (Bustikova & Kitschelt, 2009; Mishler & Rose, 1997).

Four indicators are included as control variables for the economic situation of a country. Like other studies, I control for *unemployment* using the total percentage of the labor force (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Arzheimer, 2009; Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Lubbers et al., 2002; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2012; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017).[6] The estimated unemployment rate is harmonized and accounts for methodological differences, allowing for the comparison of countries across time (The World Bank Group, 2017c). *GDP per capita* is included as purchasing power parity in current international dollars, derived from the World Bank Group (2017a) and used in other studies as well (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Bernauer & Vatter, 2012; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2012; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). Higher scores indicate a higher GDP per capita. Additionally, also derived from the World Bank Group (2017b), I control for *GDP per capita growth* as an annual percentage, in line with Anderson and Singer (2008), Mayne and Hakhverdian (2016), Maxwell (2010), and Van der Meer and Hakhverdian (2017). Higher scores indicate a given country knows a stronger economic growth. Last, I control for immigration. *Immigration* is a variable consisting of the amount of immigrants entering a country as the percentage of the total population, with both data on immigration and the population derived from Eurostat (n.d. a, n.d. b).[7]

Individual-Level Variables

Two of the main variables in this study are education and ethnic tolerance, which the cultural approach argues are indicators of having affinity with cultural elitism. With education systems varying greatly between international contexts, the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) is used instead of the number of completed years of education (cf. Anderson & Singer, 2008; Maxwell, 2010; Senik, Stichnoth, & Van der Straeten, 2009). The

[6] Derived from the World Bank Group (2017c, details section), someone is categorized as unemployed when he or she is "without work, seeking work in a recent past period, and currently available for work, including people who have lost their jobs or who have voluntarily left work".

[7] Eurostat (n.d. a, section 3.4) defines immigration as "the action by which a person establishes his or her usual residence in the territory of a Member State for a period that is, or is expected to be, of at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another Member State or a third country".

ISCED is an international classification for education programs. ISCED 0 to 6 are collapsed to range between (1) less than lower secondary education; (2) lower secondary education completed; (3) upper secondary education completed; (4) post-secondary non-tertiary education completed; and (5) tertiary education completed. This allows for comparing levels of education between various countries. Higher scores indicate that the respondent enjoyed a higher *level of education*. Because education is a key variable in this study I removed from the dataset respondents who are still in their studies and have therefore not yet completed their educational trajectory. Second, I include *ethnic tolerance.* I constructed a reliable five-item scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.865, 0.879, 0.871$) consisting of questions measuring immigration skeptics and attitudes toward ethnic diversity (Lubbers et al., 2002; Maxwell, 2010). Higher scores on the scale ranging from (1) to (4) indicate that the respondent is ethnically more tolerant.

The analyses contain 17 individual-level control variables that are commonly used in other cross-national sociological studies using the ESS. *Age* is measured in years and respondents who are not eligible to vote for national elections in their country are removed from the dataset, *female* asks whether the respondent (0) is not or (1) is a female, and the variable *partner* asks whether the respondent (1) does or (0) does not live with a partner in the same household (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Senik et al., 2009). Following Senik et al. (2009), I control for the number of people living regularly as member of the household using *household size*, include a dummy for (1) having or (0) not having *children living at home*, and control for the *urban character* of respondents' living area by asking whether the respondent lives in (1) a farm or home in the countryside; (2) a country village; (3) a town or small city; (4) suburbs or outskirts of a big city; or (5) a big city. I control for *religious denomination* as well and use dummies for belonging to (1) no religious denomination; (2) a non-Eastern (Orthodox) Christian denomination; (3) an Eastern Orthodox Christian denomination; (4) the Islam; or (5) another religious denomination (Lubbers et al., 2002). Following Hakhverdian and Mayne (2012), *religious participation* is operationalized as attending religious services, ranging from (1) never to (7) every day (cf. Anderson & Singer, 2008).

Income is operationalized as a respondent's *household's total income*, measured in the ESS in both relative and fixed income categories, and used in other research as well (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Senik et al., 2009). Since this measurement varies between countries

both throughout each round and within rounds, I standardize respondents' deviation from the mean of the income category within each country-year combination. This increases the comparability of income measurements across country-year combinations. After standardization, the minimum score is -3.959 and the maximum score is 5.830.[8] Other variables are used to control for the economic situation of the respondent as well. I include (1) being or (0) not being *unemployed*, consisting of both those who do or do not actively look for a job (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Arzheimer, 2009; Lubbers et al., 2002). *Economic egalitarianism* asks respondents whether the governments should reduce differences in income levels (Senik et al., 2009). It ranges from (1) disagree strongly to (5) agree strongly, with higher scores indicating the respondent wishes to see a stronger reduction of differences in income levels. In controlling for *satisfaction with the state of the economy*, likewise done in other research (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Maxwell, 2010; Mishler & Rose, 1997), I control for economic grievances. It ranges from (0) being extremely dissatisfied to (10) being extremely satisfied.

Through the inclusion of *happiness* ranging from (0) extremely unhappy to (10) extremely happy and *subjective health* ranging from (1) very bad to (10) very good, the mental and physical wellbeing of respondents is controlled for, variables used in other sociological research as well (Rodríguez-Pose & Von Berlepsch, 2014). A dummy for (1) being or (0) not being part of a group *discriminated* against in a country is included as well, just as being *non-native* which is operationalized as respondents (1) having or (0) not having at least one parent that was born abroad (Maxwell, 2010). Last, a reliable three-item scale (Cronbach's α = 0.755, 0.781, 0.761) for *social trust*, consisting of questions on trust in others and the fairness and helpfulness of others, is used as in other research as well (Zmerli & Newton, 2008). Higher scores on the scale ranging from (0) to (10) indicate that the respondent has more social trust.

[8] As this broad range in individual household incomes possibly poses an outlier problem, I ran the analyses both with and without observations with a value of more than 4 for standardized household income. As this did not affect the conclusions, no observations are deleted in the presented analyses.

Results

Following the rationalist approach, we would expect that people are more supportive of anti-establishment politics in more corrupt countries (*hypothesis 1.1*), that particularly the less educated are receptive to anti-establishment politics given their little political competence (*hypothesis 1.2*), and that the negative effect of education on support for anti-establishment politics is more pronounced in less corrupt countries (*hypothesis 1.3*). Following the cultural approach, I expect support for anti-establishment politics to be stronger in countries where cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics is more salient (*hypothesis 2.1*). If opposition to cultural elitism underlies support for anti-establishment politics, then it must also be those who have more affinity with cultural elitism who are less receptive of anti-establishment politics, of which ethnic tolerance, primarily acquired through education, is an indicator (*hypothesis 2.2*). Moreover, I expect a more pronounced negative effect of ethnic tolerance on support for anti-establishment politics in countries where cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics is more salient (*hypothesis 2.3*).

Table 1 shows the results of 6 multilevel linear regression models run for little support for political institutions. Each analysis for each dependent variable includes both individual and country-level control variables. The first model includes corruption, after which cultural elitism in party politics is added. Afterwards education and ethnic tolerance are included one by one. Then I first add the interaction between corruption and education after which I add the interaction term for cultural elitism in party politics with ethnic tolerance.

The rationalist approach hypothesizes that people have less support for political institutions in countries that are more corrupt (*hypothesis 1.1*). Model 1 to 4 in table 1 corroborate this hypothesis as, in general, corruption decreases support for political institutions. Following the cultural approach, I additionally hypothesized that people are expected to display less support for political institutions in countries where cultural elitism in party politics is more salient (*hypothesis 2.1*). This hypothesis is not supported by table 1, model 2 to 4, as cultural elitism in party politics fails to reach significance when added to the models.

Table 1. Multilevel linear regression models run for little support for political institutions.[a, b, c]

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Direct effects						
Corruption	0.038**	0.038**	0.037**	0.033**	0.004	0.000
	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.016)
Cultural elitism in party politics		0.116	0.116	0.140	0.228	0.476***
		(0.124)	(0.124)	(0.119)	(0.124)	(0.108)
Education			-0.016***	-0.006	-0.030***	-0.025***
			(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.008)	(0.007)
Ethnic tolerance				-0.109***	-0.109***	0.316*
				(0.008)	(0.009)	(0.127)
Interaction effects						
Corruption x education					0.009***	0.008***
					(0.002)	(0.002)
Cultural elitism in party politics x ethnic tolerance						-0.175***
						(0.053)
Controls included	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Years dummies included	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	3.804***	3.526***	3.574***	3.668***	3.589***	3.012***
	(0.138)	(0.327)	(0.328)	(0.322)	(0.329)	(0.311)
Individual-level variance	0.184	0.184	0.183	0.180	0.179	0.178
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Country-year-level variance	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.005	0.007
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Country-level variance	0.005	0.005	0.005	0.006	0.004	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Slope Education					0.000	0.000
					(0.000)	(0.000)
Slope Ethnic tolerance						0.002
						(0.000)
n (individual level)	67,654	67,654	67,654	67,654	67,654	67,654
n (country-year level)	55	55	55	55	55	55
n (country level)	20	20	20	20	20	20

[a] Unstandardized coefficients; standard errors in parentheses.

[b] * = $p<0.05$, ** = $p<0.01$, *** = $p<0.001$.

[c] Full model available upon request.

In line with the rationalist approach, model 3 validates that the less educated have less support for political institutions (*hypothesis 1.2*). While the rationalist approach couples education with political competence, the cultural approach posits that education leads to the attainment of cultural capital, a vital resource for developing affinity with the culturally progressive values with which the political elite are perceived to signal cultural elitism. If education indeed functions as cultural capital, we would expect its effect to diminish once we add ethnic tolerance as an indicator of cultural progressiveness. Model 4 adds ethnic tolerance, which I expect to be negatively related to little support for political institutions (*hypothesis 2.2*). This hypothesis is corroborated as ethnic tolerance exerts a negative effect on little support for political institutions. The negative effect of education fully loses significance as well. It is therefore likely that education serves as an indicator of cultural capital, leading to ethnic tolerance, in its relation with little support for political institutions.

The rationalist approach theorizes that the effect of education is conditional on the level of corruption in a given country, expecting a more pronounced negative effect of education in countries with less corruption (*hypothesis 1.3*). Model 5 of table 1 indeed shows a significant negative interaction term of corruption with education. Moreover, this interaction term, visualized in figure 3, supports the pattern found by Hakhverdian and Mayne (2012) where the most educated have less support for political institutions under high levels of corruption while they have more support in uncorrupt contexts. I additionally test whether the difference in support for the most and least educated under the highest and lowest level of corruption is significant. This is only the case for the most educated. This upholds the interpretation of education as political competence in its relationship with corruption, as particularly those with the most political competence have little support for political institutions in countries where democratic functioning is characterized by corruption, while they show more support in uncorrupt countries.

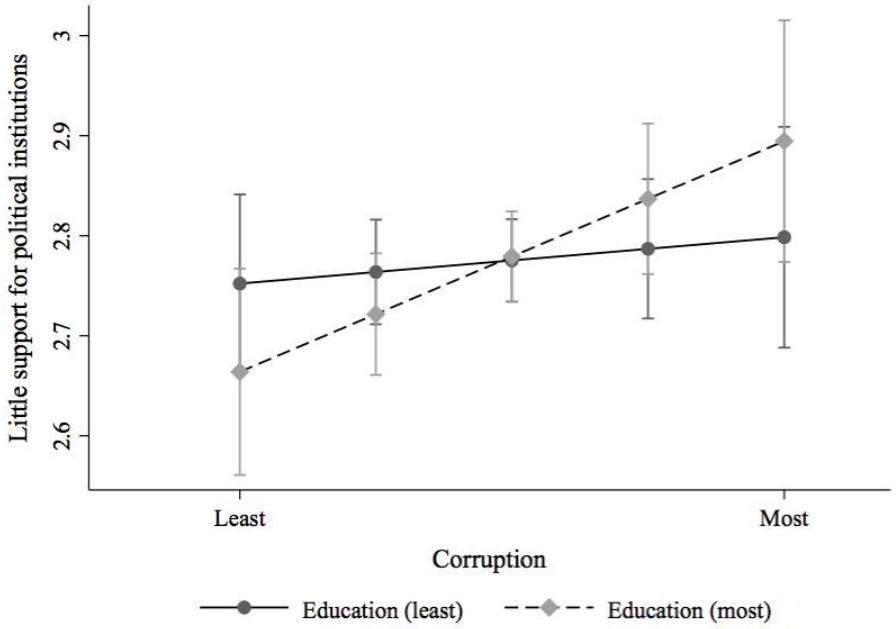

Figure 3. Predicted level of little support for political institutions for the least and most educated across different levels of corruption, controlling for the interaction between cultural elitism in party politics and ethnic tolerance (table 1, model 6). Included is a 95% confidence interval. The difference in little support for political institutions in contexts with least and most corruption is only significant for the most educated (p = 0.028).

The cultural approach would make us expect that those who are disgusted the most by perceived cultural elitism signaling by the political elite – those who show least affinity with cultural elitism, or, the ethnically intolerant - will be most strongly troubled by a salient cultural elitism in party politics (*hypothesis 2.3*). Model 6 adds the interaction between ethnic tolerance and cultural elitism in party politics, which retains significance. Figure 4 visualizes this negative interaction term. It shows that the least ethnically tolerant have low levels of support for political institutions in countries with a strong salience of cultural elitism in party politics. Their level of support is comparable to that of the most tolerant in countries with a lower salience of cultural elitism in party politics. Again, I test whether the difference in support for the least and most ethnically tolerant in contexts of the highest and lowest level of cultural elitism in party politics is significant. Here, the difference is significant only for the

least ethnically tolerant who my findings therefore suggest are agonized and disenfranchised the most by perceived cultural superiority signaling in party politics.

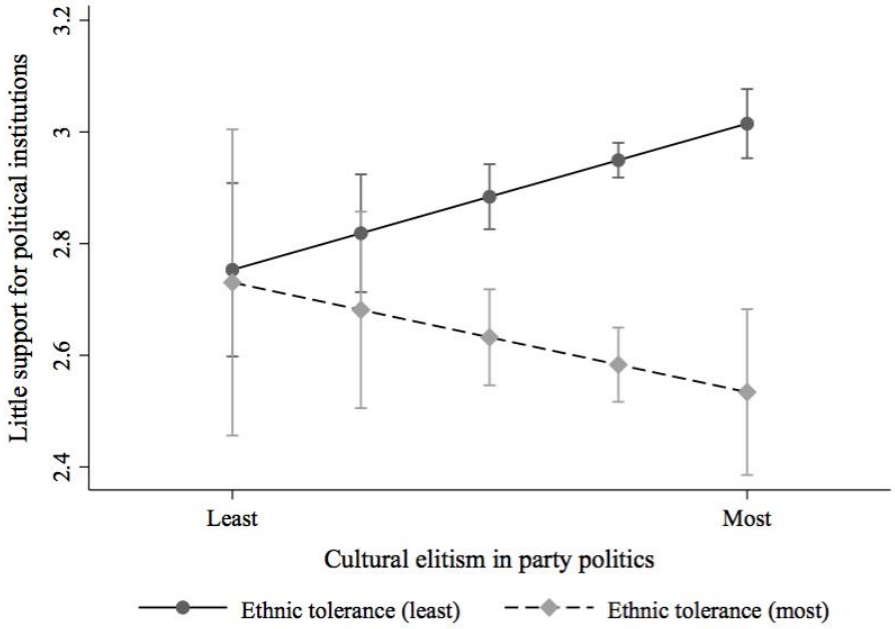

Figure 4. Predicted level of little support for political institutions for the least and most ethnically tolerant across different levels of cultural elitism in party politics, controlling for the interaction between corruption and education (table 1, model 6). Included is a 95% confidence interval. The difference in little support for political institutions in contexts of least and most cultural elitism in party politics is only significant for the least ethnically tolerant (p = 0.013).

Table 2. Multilevel logistic regression models run for having affinity with a far-right party.[a, b, c]

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Direct effects						
Corruption	0.033	-0.116	-0.127	-0.232	-0.499*	-0.859**
	(0.300)	(0.250)	(0.248)	(0.227)	(0.227)	(0.299)
Cultural elitism in non-far-right party		1.472*	1.504*	1.829*	1.737*	2.030
politics		(0.723)	(0.727)	(0.810)	(0.739)	(1.474)
Education			-0.126*	-0.030	-0.280***	-0.114
			(0.051)	(0.039)	(0.076)	(0.061)
Ethnic tolerance				-0.979***	-0.975***	-0.507
				(0.235)	(0.242)	(2.422)
Interaction effects						
Corruption x education					0.076***	0.029
					(0.020)	(0.019)
Cultural elitism in non-far-right party						-0.264
politics x ethnic tolerance						(0.985)
Controls included	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Years dummies included	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-2.443	-4.380	-3.986	-3.055	-2.751	-3.207
	(2.994)	(2.694)	(2.675)	(2.701)	(2.409)	(3.401)
Country-year-level variance	0.310	0.340	0.346	0.417	0.365	0.661
	(0.147)	(0.152)	(0.153)	(0.165)	(0.176)	(0.280)
Country-level variance	0.833	0.602	0.582	0.469	0.513	0.526
	(0.605)	(0.443)	(0.437)	(0.353)	(0.287)	(0.480)
Slope Education					0.014	0.016
					(0.006)	(0.009)
Slope Ethnic tolerance						0.634
						(0.148)
n (individual level)	42,384	42,384	42,384	42,384	42,384	42,384
n (country-year level)	35	35	35	35	35	35
n (country level)	16	16	16	16	16	16

[a] Log odds; standard errors in parentheses.

[b] * = $p<0.05$, ** = $p<0.01$, *** = $p<0.001$.

[c] Full model available upon request.

Table 2, which has the same order as table 1, displays the results of 6 multilevel logistic regression models run for my second dependent variable, having affinity with a far-

right party. The rationalist approach would make us expect that people have more affinity with a far-right party in corrupt countries, irrespective of education (*hypothesis 1.1*). Model 1 to 4 in table 2 do not support this hypothesis. People do not show more affinity with far-right parties in countries that are corrupt. Contrary to corruption, I do find significant effects for cultural elitism in non-far-right politics, added in model 2. This is in line with the hypothesis stated above that people have more affinity with a far-right party in countries where cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics is more salient (*hypothesis 2.1*). Figure 5 shows the direct effect of cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics on having affinity with a far-right party, while controlling for corruption. This figure clearly signposts that strongly signaled attitudes of cultural progressiveness, denoting cultural elitism, among non-far-right parties animates more affinity with far-right parties.

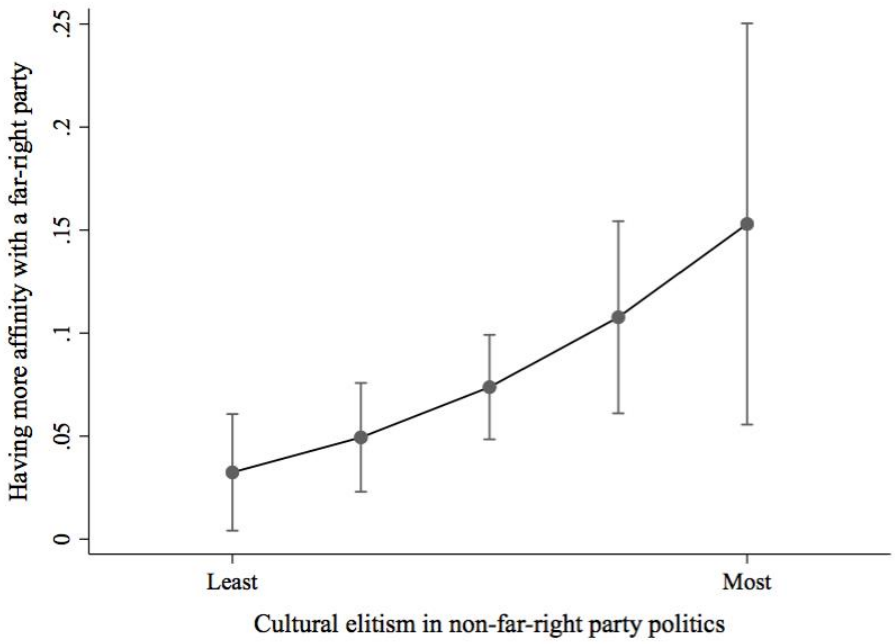

Figure 5. Predicted level of having affinity with a far-right party across different levels of cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics, controlling for the direct effect of corruption (table 2, model 4). Included is a 95% confidence interval. The significant difference in far-right affinity between each end of cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics is -0.120 (p = 0.043).

Model 3 in table 2 indicates that the less educated are, in general, more receptive of far-right parties (*hypothesis 1.2*). Again, model 4 suggests the possibility that education serves as a proxy for cultural capital, and hence having affinity with cultural elitism, as it loses significance once I add ethnic tolerance (*hypothesis 2.2*).[9] The ethnically intolerant, who share less affinity with cultural elitism, are more likely to feel attracted to the anti-elitist rhetoric of far-right parties, parties that openly combat the culturally elitist establishment.

In contrast to little support for political institutions, no conditional effect of education nor ethnic tolerance on cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics is found for far-right affinity (*hypothesis 2.3*). Education is, however, conditional on corruption in its effect on far-right affinity in model 6 (*hypothesis 1.3*). The same interaction term fails to retain significance when included simultaneously with the interaction term of cultural elitism in non-far-right politics with ethnic tolerance.

Table 3 summarizes the evidence found for each formulated hypothesis. My findings support both expectations in line with the rationalist and cultural approach. However, each approach has expectations that are not supported by my analyses. I return to these and their implications for understanding anti-establishment politics below.

[9] Comparing coefficients in logistic regression, and mediation in particular, is a much debated issue, mainly due to the dependency of coefficients on unobserved heterogeneity (Mood, 2010). However, the fact that education does not retain significance after ethnic tolerance is added is strongly suggestive of how ethnic tolerance mediates the effect of education.

Table 3. Each hypothesis and the elements supported by my analysis.

The rationalist approach		
Hypothesis 1.1	*a*	*b*
People (a) have less support for political institutions and (b) have more affinity with a far-right political party in countries that are more corrupt.	Yes	No
Hypothesis 1.2	*a*	*b*
The less educated (a) have less support for political institutions and (b) have more affinity with a far-right political party.	No†	No†
Hypothesis 1.3	*a*	*b*
There is a more pronounced negative effect of education on (a) having little support for political institutions and (b) having affinity with a far-right political party if a country is less corrupt.	Yes	No†
The cultural approach		
Hypothesis 2.1	*a*	*b*
People (a) have less support for political institutions and (b) have more affinity with a far-right political party in countries where cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics is more salient.	No	Yes
Hypothesis 2.2	*a*	*b*
The ethnically less tolerant (a) have less support for political institutions and (b) have more affinity with a far-right political party.	Yes	Yes
Hypothesis 2.3	*a*	*b*
There is a more pronounced negative effect of ethnic tolerance on (a) having little support for political institutions and (b) having affinity with a far-right political party if cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics in a country is more salient.	Yes	No

† = the effect loses significance after accounting for the competing theory.

Discussion and Conclusion: Evidence for a European Culture War

Series of scornful rants and humiliations of the political establishment by parties such as Flemish Interest (Swyngedouw & Ivaldi, 2001), the Finns Party (Arter, 2010) or Alternative for Germany (Arzheimer, 2015), as well as by the Polish Law and Justice party or Hungarian Jobbik as heard in Eastern European parliaments (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017), indicate that the political establishment is under attack. Moreover, weak elite-public linkages and little support for political institutions have resulted in what some refer to as a legitimacy crisis of the establishment, to which far-right politics allegedly contribute as well (Gidron & Hall, 2017, p. S57; Mishler & Rose, 1997; Raines et al., 2017, p. 7). Not only is understanding such phenomena like support for political institutions and far-right affinity, which I studied here as indicators of anti-establishment politics, crucial for the public sector itself, the gap between

the public and the political establishment is a recurring issue in many academic and public debates.

This study asked whether support for anti-establishment politics in Europe can be understood as opposition to cultural elitism. In answering this question I intended to achieve three aims. First, I introduce and test a novel cultural approach to support for anti-establishment. Grounded in culture war theory, the cultural framework posits that Europe's political establishment permeates the political institution with cultural progressiveness (Bourdieu, 1984; Bovens & Wille, 2017; Canovan, 1999; Golder, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Oliver & Rahn, 2016; Raines et al., 2017). With cultural progressiveness being a contemporary manifestation of cultural capital in contemporary Western societies, the political establishment is perceived to claim cultural superiority by means of cultural progressiveness by a more culturally conservative public (Bourdieu, 1984; Prieur & Savage, 2013). It is these claims which the lesser-deemed public, and particularly those who have least affinity with cultural progressiveness for which ethnic tolerance is regarded a proxy (Surridge, 2016; De Koster, Achterberg, Houtman, & Van der Waal, 2011; Savelkoul & Scheepers, 2017; Van Bohemen et al., 2011), resist and for which anti-establishment politics offers an antidote.

My second aim was to test the most dominant framework for understanding political support, the rationalist approach, against my novel approach. The rationalist approach couples political sophistication to education and relates this to a country's political functioning, or, corruption. It follows that the more educated would be more trustful of politics than the less educated, while corruption erodes political trust most strongly among the more educated given that they are troubled the most by corruption (Hakhverdian & Mayne, 2012; Mayne & Hakhverdian, 2017; Van der Meer & Hakhverdian, 2017). As a final contribution, I empirically assess the scope of this rationalist approach by extending and testing its arguments for not only political support, but far-right affinity as well.

My analyses of having little support for political institutions, which build on an extensive dataset involving 20 European countries, corroborate two out of three hypotheses for both approaches. As argued by the rationalist approach, echoing Hakhverdian and Mayne (2012) and Van der Meer and Hakhverdian (2017), corruption erodes political support, while cultural elitism in a country's party politics does not. In line with the rationalist approach's interpretation of education as political competence, I find that, compared to the least educat-

ed, the most educated are most supportive of political institutions when corruption is low, but are least supportive when corruption is high. My analyses also suggests, however, that education itself is a proxy for cultural capital. The ethnically intolerant, who the cultural approach argues have least affinity with cultural elitism, are less supportive of political institutions than the ethnically tolerant, over and above my finding for education. One particularly interesting venture for future research would therefore be studying the extent in which political competence itself can be regarded an indicator of elitism. If we interpret political knowledge as a "self-serving racket perpetuated by professional politicians" (Canovan, 1999, p. 6), it would be yet another perceived claim of superiority which the less educated resist. Last, the least ethnically tolerant's support is eroded most strongly in countries where cultural elitism is more pertinent in party politics. My analyses, therefore, offer support to the cultural approach's interpretation of the least ethnically tolerant as lesser-deemed, the 'culturally inferior', who resist the political elite through having little support for political institutions.

The cultural approach showed more merit for the analyses of far-right affinity than the rationalist approach. While two out of three hypotheses are supported for the cultural approach, none hold for the rationalist approach. People in general do not have more affinity with the far right in corrupt countries than in uncorrupt countries. Likewise, the more educated are not more likely to show far-right affinity in corrupt countries when compared to uncorrupt countries. Given these shortcomings, those following the rationalist approach should ask why the framework has little merit for understanding far-right affinity and could ask, for instance, whether the electorate in corrupt countries does not regard far-right politics as a viable option for countering corruption. In support of the cultural approach is the finding that the ethnically intolerant have more far-right affinity, over and above my findings for education. Also in line with the cultural approach is that cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics increases people's affinity with the far right, moving people toward an anti-elitist political antidote. Affinity with the far right, however, is not stronger among the ethnically intolerant when non-far-right party politics is characterized more by cultural elitism compared to when it is not.

Those following the cultural approach should identify why countries where cultural elitism characterizes non-far right party politics stronger know more far-right affinity among the electorate, while the ethnically intolerant show less support for political institutions when

cultural elitism in party politics is more pertinent compared to when it is not. One explanation could be that while the relationship between having little support for political institutions and ethnic tolerance is subject to the attitudinal mismatch between the ethnically intolerant and the political elite, decreasing trust among the former when this mismatch grows, far right affinity is not. That is, the relationship between having affinity with the far right and being ethnically intolerant is so strong that it is not sensitive to whether party politics is characterized by cultural elitism. Analyzing differences between support for political institutions and far-right affinity, but also within the far-right party family itself, could elucidate such differences further (see Vasilopoulou, 2018).

Another discussion following this study is that my findings can be interpreted in at least two ways. That is, my findings do not exclude the interpretation of anti-establishment politics as the result of incongruences in policy preferences between the public and the political establishment, while the cultural approach posits that those with little affinity with the establishment's cultural progressiveness consciously resist cultural progressiveness as perceived claims of superiority (cf. Aaldering, 2017; Bélanger & Aarts, 2006; Bovens & Wille, 2017). Yet, given culture war theory and seminal cultural sociological literature on the political ramifications of the cultural-capital distribution, it seems unlikely that support for anti-establishment politics is merely driven by differences in policy preferences. Qualitative research methods could be used to disentangle this further, aiming to illuminate the deliberate resistance on behalf of those who feel lesser-deemed by the political elite (see e.g. Arzheimer, 2015; Engesser et al.; 2017).

All in all, this study showed that the explanatory value of the rationalist approach for support for political institutions cannot be translated directly to far-right affinity, but that it nevertheless holds merit against my novel cultural approach. Moreover, my findings indicate that the cultural framework I propose here is valuable for understanding support for anti-establishment politics as opposition to cultural elitism, while at the same time the empirical limitations of this approach must be kept in mind. Hence, this study revealed some evidence for the existence of a European culture war.

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Appendix

Table A1. Included countries and response rates for the European Social Survey rounds 3 (2006), 5 (2010), and 7 (2014) based on documentation reports provided by the European Social Survey (2016a, 2016b, 2016c).[a]

Country	Abbreviation	2006		2010		2014	
		Response rate (%)	*n*	Response rate (%)	*n*	Response rate (%)	*n*
Austria	AT	64.0	2,405	59.6	2,259	51.6	1,795
Belgium	BE	61.0	1,798	53.4	1,704	57.0	1,769
Czech Republic	CZ			70.2	2,386	67.9	2,148
Denmark	DK	50.8	1,505	55.4	1,576	51.9	1,502
Estonia	EE	65.0	1,517	56.2	1,793	59.9	2,051
Finland	FI	64.4	1,896	59.5	1,878	62.7	2,087
France	FR	46.0	1,986	47.1	1,728	50.9	1,917
Germany	DE	54.5	2,916	30.5	3,031	31.4	3,045
Greece	EL			65.6	2,715		
Hungary	HU	66.1	1,518	49.2	1,561	52.7	1,698
Ireland	IE	56.8	1,800	65.2	2,576	60.7	2,390
Lithuania	LT			39.4	1,677	68.9	2,250
The Netherlands	NL	59.8	1,889	60.0	1,829	58.6	1,919
Poland	PL	70.2	1,721	70.3	1,751	65.8	1,615
Portugal	PT	72.8	2,222	67.1	2,150	43.0	1,265
Slovakia	SK	73.2	1,766	74.7	1,856		
Slovenia	SI	65.1	1,476	64.4	1,403	52.3	1,224
Spain	ES	65.9	1,876	68.5	1,885	67.9	1,925
Sweden	SE	65.9	1,927	51.0	1,497	50.1	1,791
United Kingdom	GB	54.6	2,394	56.3	2,422	43.6	2,264

[a] Missing information for a country for a specific year indicates that the ESS does not contain data for that country in that given year.

Table A2. Descriptive statistics.

	n	Mean	SD[a]	Min	Max
Dependent variables					
Little support for political institutions	88,738	2.792	0.615	1.000	4.000
Having more affinity with a far-right party	89,582	0.044		0	1
Country-level independent variable[a]					
Cultural elitism in party politics	55	2.407	0.162	1.847	2.718
Cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics	55	2.477	0.191	2.039	3.080
Individual-level independent variables					
Level of education	95,386	3.145	1.353	1	5
Ethnic tolerance	91,348	2.461	0.651	1.000	4.000
Individual-level control variables					
Age	95,543	51.428	17.134	16	114
Female	95,809	0.539		0	1
Partner	95,427	0.633		0	1
Household size	95,813	2.576	1.356	1	22
Children living at home	95,744	0.393		0	1
Living area (farm or home in countryside)	95,659	0.065		0	1
Living area (country village)	95,659	0.304		0	1
Living area (town or small city)	95,659	0.320		0	1
Living area (suburbs or outskirts of big city)	95,659	0.122		0	1
Living area (a big city)	95,659	0.189		0	1
Religious denomination (no religious denomination)	95,144	0.409		0	1
Religious denomination (non-Eastern (Orthodox) Christian denomination)	95,144	0.533		0	1
Religious denomination (Eastern Orthodox denomination)	95,144	0.039		0	1
Religious denomination (Islamic)	95,144	0.013		0	1
Religious denomination (other religious denomination)	95,144	0.005		0	1
Religious participation	95,437	2.578	1.544	1	7
Household's total income[b]	77,633	-0.000	1.000	-3.356	5.830

Unemployed	95,928	0.071		0	1
Economic egalitarianism	94,347	3.904	1.043	1	5
Satisfaction with state of economy	94,101	4.440	2.470	0	10
Happiness	95,348	7.178	1.974	0	10
Subjective health	95,779	3.707	0.922	1	5
Discriminated	95,159	0.066		0	1
Non-native	95,360	0.142		0	1
Social trust	94,685	5.203	1.929	0	10
Country-level (control) variables[c]					
Corruption	55	2.984	1.580	0.400	6.500
Western European country	55	0.673		0	1
Immigration (percentage of total population)	55	0.758	0.543	0.028	3.313
Unemployment (total percentage of labor force)	55	9.118	4.052	3.897	24.441
GDP per capita (PPP, current international $)	55	33,976.528	91,91.236	15,150.896	51,265.648
GDP per capita growth (annual percentage)	55	2.629	2.439	-5.601	10.924

[a] Standard deviation is not displayed for dichotomous variables.

[b] Standardized.

[c] Reported for country-year combinations.

Table A3. Details on individual-level multi-item measures.

Item[a]	Questions and response categories	Factor loadings, 2006[b]	Factor loadings, 2010[b]	Factor loadings, 2014[b]
Little support for political institutions[c, d]				
	Now thinking about the [country] government, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job? [Range answer categories re-coded from (0) to (10) to (1) *extremely satisfied* to (4) *extremely dissatisfied*][e]	0.784	0.801	0.798
	And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *extremely satisfied* to (4) *extremely dissatisfied*][e]	0.750	0.764	0.789
	Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust [country]'s parliament? [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *complete trust* to (4) *no trust at all*][e]	0.846	0.869	0.863
	Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust politicians? [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *complete trust* to (4) *no trust at all*][e]	0.890	0.907	0.901
	Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust political parties? [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *complete trust* to (4) *no trust at all*][e]	0.875	0.892	0.879
	Eigenvalue	3.449	3.600	3.590
	R^2	0.690	0.720	0.718
	Cronbach's α	0.886	0.901	0.900
Ethnic tolerance[c, f]				
	Is [country] made a worse or a better place to live by people coming to live here from other countries? [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *worse place to live* to (4) *better place to live*]	0.835	0.836	0.834
	And would you say that [country]'s cultural life is generally un-dermined or enriched by people coming to live here from other countries? [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *cultural life undermined* to (4) *cultural life enriched*]	0.802	0.826	0.822
	Would you say it is generally bad or good for [country]'s economy that people come to live here from other countries? [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *good for the economy* to (4) *bad for the economy*]	0.793	0.824	0.809
	How about people of a different race or ethnic group from most [country] people? [Answer categories range from (1) *allow none* to (4) *allow many to come and live here*][e]	0.818	0.830	0.818
	How about people from the poorer countries outside Europe? [An-swer categories range from (1) *allow none* to (4) *allow many to come and live here*][e]	0.802	0.814	0.799

Eigenvalue	3.280	3.412	3.334
R^2	0.656	0.682	0.667
Cronbach's α	0.865	0.879	0.871
Social trust[d]			
Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? [Answer categories range from (0) *you can't be too careful* to (10) *most people can be trusted*]	0.828	0.840	0.835
Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair? [Answer categories range from (0) *most people would try to take advantage of me* to (10) *most people would try to be fair*]	0.838	0.851	0.839
Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves? [Answer categories range from (0) *people mostly look out for themselves* to (10) *people mostly try to be helpful*]	0.791	0.811	0.794
Eigenvalue	2.015	2.089	2.031
R^2	0.672	0.696	0.677
Cronbach's α	0.755	0.781	0.761

[a] Original phrasing. For the ESS, original phrasing of wave 7 (2016c) is used as much as possible.

[b] Weighted on the individual level.

[c] Recoded to range from (1) to (4) in order to aid comparability across most relevant country- and individual-level variables.

[d] Scale scores calculated for respondents without missing values on individual items.

[e] Item reverse coded; reported range is after reversion.

[f] Scale scores calculated for respondents with not more than 1 missing value on individual items.

Table A4. Details on country-level multi-item measures.

Item[a] Questions and response categories	Factor loadings, 2006[b]	Factor loadings, 2010[b]	Factor loadings, 2014[b]
Cultural elitism in party politics[c, d]			
Position on civil liberties vs. law and order. [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly supports tough measures to fight crime* to (4) *strongly promotes civil liberties*][e]	0.952	0.951	0.951
Position on social lifestyle (e.g. homosexuality). [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly opposes liberal policies* to (4) *strongly supports liberal policies*][e]	0.897	0.876	0.875
Position towards the environment. [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) s*trongly supports economic growth even at the cost of environmental protection* to (4) *strongly supports environmental protection even at the cost of economic growth*][e, f]		0.874	0.871
Position on immigration policy. [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly favors tough policy* to (4) *strongly opposes tough policy*][e, g]			
Position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers (multiculturalism vs. assimilation). [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly favors assimilation* to (4) *strongly favors multiculturalism*][e, g]	0.939	0.949	0.949
Position towards ethnic minorities. [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly opposes more rights for ethnic minorities* to (4) *strongly supports more rights for ethnic minorities*] [e, g]			
Eigenvalue	2.591	3.335	3.326
R^2	0.864	0.834	0.832
Cronbach's α	0.922	0.923	0.922
Cultural elitism in non-far-right party politics[c, d]			
Position on civil liberties vs. law and order. [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly supports tough measures to fight crime* to (4) *strongly promotes civil liberties*][e]	0.951	0.950	0.949
Position on social lifestyle (e.g. homosexuality). [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly opposes liberal policies* to (4) *strongly supports liberal policies*][e]	0.895	0.874	0.873
Position towards the environment. [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) s*trongly supports economic growth even at the cost of environmental protection* to (4) *strongly supports environmental protection even at the cost of economic growth*][e, f]		0.877	0.876
Position on immigration policy. [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly favors tough policy* to (4) *strongly opposes tough policy*][e, h]			

Position on integration of immigrants and asylum seekers (multiculturalism vs. assimilation). [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly favors assimilation* to (4) *strongly favors multiculturalism*][e, h]	0.939	0.949	0.949
Position towards ethnic minorities. [Range answer categories recoded from (0) to (10) to (1) *strongly opposes more rights for ethnic minorities* to (4) *strongly supports more rights for ethnic minorities*] [e, h]			
Eigenvalue	2.588	3.335	3.332
R^2	0.863	0.834	0.833
Cronbach's α	0.923	0.923	0.923

[a] Original phrasing (Bakker et al., 2015; Polk et al., 2017).

[b] Weighted on the amount of seats a party owns in national parliament.

[c] Recoded to range from (1) to (4) in order to aid comparability across most relevant country- and individual-level variables.

[d] Scale scores calculated for respondents with not more than 1 missing value on individual items.

[e] Item reverse coded; reported range is after reversion.

[f] Environmentalism is not measured for 2006. Still, since party positions on various issues highly correlate, environmentalism is included in the scale for cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics and one missing value is allowed on individual items of the scale for cultural elitism in (non-far-right) party politics.

[g] Part of a three-item reliable scale measuring ethnic tolerance (Cronbach's α = 0.959, 0.958, 0.959).

[h] Part of a three-item reliable scale measuring ethnic tolerance (Cronbach's α = 0.958, 0.958, 0.958).

Table A5. Political parties classified as far-right for each analyzed country.[a, b]

Country	Party name	Abbreviation	Based on
Austria	Future of Austria (*Bündnis Zukunft Österreich*)[c]	BZÖ	Gidron and Hall (2017); Rovny (2013)
	Freedom Party of Austria (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*)	FPÖ	Arzheimer (2009); Arzheimer and Carter (2006); Bergh (2004); Engesser et al. (2017); Gidron and Hall (2017); Ivarsflaten (2008); Lubbers et al., (2002); Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Mudde (2004; 2013); Muis and Immerzeel (2017); Norris (2005); Rooduijn (2017); Rooduijn, De Lange, and Van der Brug (2012); Rovny (2013); Vasilopoulou (2018)
	Team Stronach[c]	TS	Brett (2013); Dolezal & Zeglovits (2014)
Belgium	Flemish Block (*Vlaams Blok*)/Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang*)	VB	Arzheimer (2009); Arzheimer and Carter (2006); Gidron and Hall (2017); Ivarsflaten (2008); Lubbers et al., (2002); Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Mudde (2013); Muis and Immerzeel (2017); Norris (2005); Rooduijn (2017); Rovny (2013); Swyngedouw and Ivali (2001); Vasilopoulou (2018)
Czech Republic	Dawn – National Coalition (*Úsvit – Národní Koalice*)	Dawn	Havlík (2015)
Denmark	Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*)	DF	Arzheimer (2009); Arzheimer and Carter (2006); Bergh (2004); Engesser et al. (2017); Gidron and Hall (2017); Ivarsflaten (2008); Lubbers et al., (2002); Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Mudde (2013); Norris (2005); Rooduijn (2017); Rovny (2013); Vasilopoulou (2018)
Finland	True Finns/Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*)	PS	Arter (2015); Arzheimer (2009); Gidron and Hall (2017); Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Mudde (2013); Rooduijn (2017); Rooduijn et al. (2012) ; Rovny (2013)
France	Movement for France (*Mouvement pour la France*)	MPF	Rovny (2013); Vasilopoulou (2018)
	National Front (*Front National*)	FN	Arzheimer (2009); Arzheimer and Carter (2006); Engesser et al. (2017); Gidron and Hall (2017); Ivarsflaten (2008); Lubbers et al., (2002); Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Mudde (2013); Muis and Immerzeel (2017); Norris (2005); Rooduijn (2017); Rooduijn et al. (2012); Rovny (2013); Swyngedouw and Ivali (2001)
Germany	Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*)	AfD	Arzheimer (2015); Muis and Immerzeel (2017)
Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally (*Laikós Orthódoxos Synagermós*)	LAOS	Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Mudde (2013); Rovny (2013); Vasilopoulou (2018)
Hungary	Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance (*Fidesz – Magyar Polgári*	Fidesz	Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009); Muis and Immerzeel (2017)

	Szövetség)		
	Jobbik, the Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*)	Jobbik	Bergmann (2015); Gidron and Hall (2017); Mudde (2000); Muis and Immerzeel (2017); Pirro (2015); Učeň (2007); Vasilopoulou (2018)
Lithuania	Party Order and Justice (*Partija Tvarka ir Teisingumas*)/Liberal Democratic Party (*Liberalų Demokratų Partija*)	PTT	Auers and Kasekamp (2015); Bergmann (2015)
The Netherlands	Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*)	PVV	Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Mudde (2013); Muis and Immerzeel (2017); Rooduijn (2017); Rooduijn et al. (2012); Rovny (2013)
Poland	Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*)	PiS	Bergmann (2015); Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009); Gidron and Hall (2017); Muis and Immerzeel (2017)
	League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*)	LPR	Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009); Minkenberg (2002); Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Učeň (2007); Vasilopoulou (2018)
	Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland (*Samoobrona Rzeczpospolitej Polskiej*)	S	Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009); Minkenberg (2002); Učeň (2007)
Slovakia	People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (*L'Udová Strana – Hnutie za Demokratické Slovensko*)	L'S-HZDS	Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009); Mudde (2000); Učeň (2007)
	Slovak National Party (*Slovenská Národná Strana*)	SNS	Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009); Gidron and Hall (2017); Mudde (2000); Pirro (2015); Učeň (2007)
Slovenia	Slovenian National Party (*Slovenska Nacionalna Stranka*)	SNS	Bustikova and Kitschelt (2009); Gidron and Hall (2017); Učeň (2007)
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*)	SD	Gidron and Hall (2017); Lubbers et al., (2002); Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Mudde (2013); Rooduijn (2017)
United Kingdom	British National Party	BNP	Lubbers et al., (2002); Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Mudde (2013); Muis and Immerzeel (2017); Norris (2005); Rooduijn et al. (2012); Swyngedouw and Ivali (2001); Vasilopoulou (2018)
	UK Independence Party	UKIP	Clarke et al. (2016); Engesser et al. (2017); Lubbers et al., (2002); Minkenberg and Perrineau (2007); Norris (2005); Rooduijn et al. (2012); Swyngedouw and Ivali (2001)

[a] Only parties and categories presented by the original variable and ticked by at least 1.5% of the respondents in a given country and year are included in the analysis, excluding categories such as 'other' and 'independent candidates' in the final coding. This cut-off point allows for the inclusion of both smaller and bigger parties on which literature agrees regarding their far-right party placement, while (fringe) parties for which no decisive sources regarding their political (far-right) placement could be

found or which failed to mobilize voters can be excluded. In doing so I follow Arzheimer and Carter (2006, p. 426). In face of consistency, this means that in a few cases this protocol led to the removal of far-right parties in one year and the inclusion of the same party in another year.

[b] Countries for which no respondent expressed more affinity with a far-right party than any other parties or for which no far-right party reached the 1.5% cutoff point are Estonia, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain.

[c] Included in the Chapel Hill Expert Survey data, but not found or did not reach the cutoff point in the European Social Survey data.