

Faustian Bargain: The Electoral Consequences for Mainstream Parties of Allying with Populists

Pacto Fáustico: Las Consecuencias Electorales de Gobernar con Populistas

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Abstract

Mainstream parties increasingly face a strategic dilemma when dealing with populists: to form a cordon sanitaire or be open to tainted coalitions. We develop and test a theoretical framework for competing hypotheses about the electoral consequences for mainstream parties of forming coalition governments with populists. On the one hand, mainstream parties may suffer a “contamination effect” from allying with populists due to reputational damage and loss of support among anti-populist voters. On the other hand, they may benefit from a “cooptation effect” by appealing to populist voters and delivering to supporters. An analysis of elections in Europe between 1990 and 2023 suggests that mainstream parties that govern with populists win 2.4pp more compared to cases where the cordon sanitaire is followed. The implications of the results are discussed in relation to the literature on populism and democratic backsliding.

Los partidos políticos convencionales (no populistas) se enfrentan cada vez más al dilema estratégico al tratar con populistas: formar un cordón sanitario o abrirse a coaliciones contaminadas. Desarrollamos y testamos marcos teóricos para hipótesis contrapuestas sobre las consecuencias electorales para los partidos convencionales que forman coaliciones con populistas. Por un lado, los partidos convencionales pueden sufrir un “efecto contaminante” al aliarse con populistas por el daño reputacional y la pérdida de apoyo de votantes anti-populistas. Por otro lado, podrían beneficiarse de un “efecto cooptación” al atraer votantes populistas y beneficiando a sus propios votantes. Un análisis de elecciones legislativas en Europa entre 1990 y 2023 sugiere que los partidos convencionales que gobiernan con populistas ganan 2.2 puntos porcentuales más comparado con aquellos que siguen un cordón sanitario. Las implicaciones de los resultados se discuten en relación a la literatura sobre populismo y la degradación democrática.

[The AfD] has declared its intention to destroy the CDU. We accept this challenge. We will now make very clear where the AfD stands in terms of content. We will distance ourselves very clearly and distinctly from them. And above all, it is important that we counter this with successful government work.

–Friederich Merz

I would not be able to sleep at night if I governed in coalition with Podemos.

–Pedro Sánchez

1. Mainstream Responses to Populism

Do mainstream¹ political parties benefit electorally from partnering with populists? Populism is commonly defined as an ideology that views politics as a struggle between “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite” (Laclau 2005; Mudde & Kaltwasser 2012; Müller 2017; Caramani 2017). Virtually all European democracies have experienced a surge in populist parties in recent decades. As a result, mainstream parties are increasingly confronted with the dilemma of whether to let populists into government. Mainstream parties have frequently opted to establish a *cordon sanitaire* (CS): a coordinated refusal to collaborate with a given political party (Axelsen 2011). This strategy most notably comes in the form of refusing to invite populists into coalition governments. To distinguish from coalitions that follow a CS, we label as *tainted coalitions* (TC) those where mainstream parties govern with populist partners. There is a growing list of European countries where a longstanding cordon sanitaire has been broken for the first time. In Norway in 2013, the Conservatives formed a coalition with the Progress Party; in Finland in 2015, the Center Party and the National Coalition Party formed a coalition with the Finns Party; and, in the Netherlands in 2023, the People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy and the New Social Contract agreed to form a coalition with the Party for Freedom.

As populist parties have risen across European democracies, their impact on political institutions has been a subject growing scholarly attention. Research on democratic backsliding shows that populists in government often erode democratic norms: they undermine institutional checks and balances, politicize state institutions, and restrict media freedom and judicial independence (Bermeo 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018; Haggard & Kaufman 2021). These effects are especially pronounced when populists control key executive offices or face weak coalition partners (Lührmann & Lindberg 2019; Vachudova 2021). This has motivated a growing debate over exclusionary vs. inclusionary strategies in the party competition literature regarding whether mainstream parties should isolate populists to protect democratic institutions or whether isolation backfires by reinforcing their anti-establishment appeal. Yet this debate has focused primarily on the consequences for populists (whether they are strengthened or

¹ This article uses the terms non-populist and mainstream interchangeably to refer to political parties that are not populist.

weakened by exclusion) and on the normative implications for democratic resilience. What remains underexplored is the electoral calculus of the mainstream parties themselves. Understanding whether collaboration with populists is electorally rewarded or punished is essential to assessing whether mainstream actors face political incentives – or disincentives – to adopt strategies that may ultimately determine the pace of democratic backsliding.

This paper addresses that question by examining the electoral consequences that follow when mainstream parties form coalitions with populist partners. We develop two competing hypotheses based on theories of party competition depending on whether mainstream parties incur in costs from partnering with populists (contamination effect) or benefit from it (cooptation effect). The hypotheses are tested by analyzing vote shares in European legislative elections between 1990 and 2025. The sample involves 2,047 observations of 524 parties from 265 elections in 30 European countries, which contains 122 cases where mainstream parties joined a TC. The findings suggest that mainstream parties that govern with populists tend to win 2.4pp compared to those that exclude them. These findings are then discussed in the context of party competition and democratic backsliding.

2. Exclusionary vs. Inclusionary Strategies

Political parties competing for electoral support can pursue strategies that are more inclusionary or exclusionary toward one another. This distinction has become central to the study of how established parties respond to populist challengers. Proponents of exclusionary strategies argue that isolating parties that threaten democratic norms reduces their visibility and electoral appeal, limits their influence on public policy and reinforces democratic consensus among mainstream actors (Wagner & Meyer 2017; Heinze 2018; Rooduijn et al. 2014; Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018; Bischof et al. 2023; Valentim 2021; 2024). Advocates of inclusionary approaches contend that ostracization backfires, radicalizing populist actors and strengthening them electorally by framing them as the only credible alternative to the establishment (van Spanje & van der Brug 2007; Akkerman & Rooduijn 2015; Heinisch 2003; Riera & Pastor 2022). While both camps generally share the normative goal of safeguarding liberal democracy, they principally diverge in their estimation of mainstream parties' gatekeeping capacity: their ability to contain anti-establishment challengers without inadvertently empowering them.

The case for exclusionary strategies rests on several complementary mechanisms. First, political isolation can suppress populist support by removing the visibility and parliamentary legitimacy that amplifies their appeal (Wagner & Meyer 2017; Heinze 2018). Second, cordons sanitaires limit populists' ability to influence the policy agenda and public discourse, reducing the normalization of their positions among voters (Rooduijn et al. 2014; Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018). Third, and perhaps most importantly, social norms against supporting anti-democratic parties play a significant suppressive role: Valentim (2021; 2024) shows that parliamentary entry and referendum victories serve to legitimize radical-right parties and increase their vote share, implying that exclusion helps maintain the normative boundaries that discourage voters from backing them. As Capoccia (2005, p. 125) observes, defence against a strong anti-system party is

only possible if mainstream parties resist the centrifugal pressures that extremists introduce into the party system.

The inclusionary counter-argument holds that exclusion can entrench the very dynamics it seeks to prevent. A *cordon sanitaire* may reinforce the populist narrative that established parties are part of a self-serving cartel, making them appear as the only authentic alternative to the status quo (van Spanje & van der Brug 2007; Heinisch 2003). Moreover, grand coalitions formed to keep populists out can blur programmatic differences between mainstream left and right, amplifying anti-incumbency sentiment and pushing voters toward the excluded party (Axelsen 2024). In terms of party strategy more broadly, Meguid (2005) shows that adversarial responses to niche and challenger parties often amplify their visibility, while accommodative strategies tend to weaken them. Most importantly, the act of being in government can weaken populist support. Parties in government tend to lose support due to tradeoffs in policymaking and anti-incumbency sentiment, known as the “cost of ruling” effect (Strom 1990; Paldam & Skott 1995). In fact, populists bear disproportionately high costs of ruling as their anti-establishment appeal is undermined by the compromises and failures of office (Van Spanje 2011; Heinisch 2003). Riera and Pastor (2022) find that populist parties entering coalitions as junior partners lose more vote share than non-populist incumbents, especially when ideologically extreme or when the cabinet commands a parliamentary majority. These findings suggest that mainstream parties may do more to contain populism by co-governing with it than by sustaining a *cordon sanitaire*, though what this implies for the mainstream partner's own electoral fortunes remains an open question.

Despite extensive research on party strategies toward challengers and the electoral costs of governing, the incentives facing mainstream parties when deciding whether to collaborate with populists remain theoretically ambiguous and empirically underexplored. Existing work tells us that exclusionary and inclusionary strategies can shape populist fortunes, and that incumbency almost always imposes electoral costs. Yet these findings offer conflicting expectations about whether tainted coalitions ultimately penalize or benefit the mainstream partner. Crucially, prior research has rarely examined mainstream parties as strategic actors with their own electoral calculations when choosing whether to maintain a *cordon sanitaire* or enter a tainted coalition. Understanding how these choices shape mainstream party vote shares therefore represents an important gap in the literature, which the following section addresses by outlining competing expectations of contamination and cooptation.

3. Tainted Coalitions: Contamination or Cooptation?

The electoral incentives of mainstream parties to cooperate with populists are relevant to the exclusionary-inclusionary debate. The decision to maintain a *cordon sanitaire* or enter a tainted coalition ultimately depends on which segment of the electorate is more elastic when inclusion occurs—mainstream or populist voters. Proponents of exclusionary strategies posit that mainstream voters are more electorally sensitive: if mainstream parties collaborate with populists, their supporters may abstain or defect out of disappointment, or they may swing to the populists who have been normalized and viewed as more authentic. Conversely, advocates of inclusionary strategies suggest that populist voters are the more elastic constituency: once populist parties enter government,

their supporters may become disillusioned with their performance and gravitate toward the mainstream partner. According to this view, cooperation can allow mainstream parties to absorb protest voters and blunt the long-term appeal of populist challengers. This is ultimately an empirical question: do mainstream parties perform better electorally when they isolate populists or when they govern alongside them? To address this, we develop two competing hypotheses. A “contamination effect” predicts that governing with populists erodes mainstream party support, while a “cooptation effect” expects such alliances to yield electoral gains.

The “contamination effect” posits that mainstream parties incur in extra political costs when they ally with parties seen as beyond the acceptable range of partnerships. First, allying with populists can lead to reputational damage, as mainstream parties are accused of betraying democratic norms. Voters that are concerned with preventing populists from taking over government and undermining democratic institutions may flock to other mainstream parties. As Axelsen writes (2023, p.279): “The mainstream party therefore risks alienating their moderate core voters and may suffer electoral and reputational losses that are considered greater than what they gain from the collaboration. With the purpose of avoiding these costs of ruling with a challenger, potential coalition partners may therefore consistently prefer exclusion over inclusion.”

Second, inviting populists into government can strengthen them at the ballot box because it normalizes them in the eyes of voters, signaling that they are no longer beyond the pale. This gives them greater legitimacy and visibility (Levitsky & Ziblatt 2018), makes it easier for them to attract competent and likeable candidates (Art 2007), and contributes to polarization by moving voters towards the poles of the ideological scale (Bischof & Wagner 2019). According to Valentim (2021; 2024), social norms are key to suppressing support for radical-right populists, showing that entering parliament and winning referendums serve to legitimize such parties and boost their vote share. Conversely, when a party is ostracized by all other parliamentary groups, this political isolation can dissuade voters from supporting them afterwards, nudging them to viable options rather than effectively wasting their vote (Wagner & Meyer 2017; Heinze 2018).

Third, mainstream parties that ally with populists might be forced to compromise on policy positions that alienate moderate voters. The formation of a coalition government with a populist partner would likely involve policy concessions that go against the interest of the party and their voters, which might cost votes in the next election. In line with this argument, studies have found that parties in ideologically heterogeneous coalitions lose more votes in Germany (Wurthmann & Krauss 2024), Greece (Aslanidis 2021) and Brazil (Pereira et al. 2023). Although populism is often considered a thin ideology with few fixed policy prescriptions, voters can still perceive the ideological and policy divides between populist and mainstream parties as intense if they are framed in such a way.

This reasoning leads us to formulate a “contamination” hypothesis about how mainstream parties are negatively impacted by joining coalition governments that include populist parties.

- **Hypothesis 1:** *Mainstream parties that form coalitions that include populist parties lose more vote share in the subsequent elections compared to mainstream parties that govern without populists.*

In contrast, the cooptation hypothesis posits that mainstream parties can actually benefit electorally from partnering with populists. First, it can help them gain ground with populist voters. By being part of the same government, they can take partial ownership of the positions and ethos of their populist partners (De Lange 2012; Goodwin 2011, p. 24). This is in line with the spatial theories of voting behavior (Downs 1957), and studies showing that accommodationist strategies are more effective than adversarial ones at preventing the rise of populists and niche parties (Van Spanje 2011; Meguid 2005).

The second reason why mainstream parties may benefit from inviting populists into coalitions is this undermines their outsider status. The central appeal of populist parties is that they seek a radical departure from the status quo. But once they enter government, they experience a demystification and taming effect that erodes their populist appeal (Grabow & Hartleb 2013: 39; Heinisch 2003: 101–2; Rydgren 2006: 177). Their ability to blame society's problems on the established elite is undercut once they become part of the government. In one empirical study, Riera and Pastor (2022) find that populist parties tend to lose support when joining coalitions as junior partners, even more than non-populists. This effect is amplified in cases when they are ideologically extreme, there is low intra-cabinet conflict, or the cabinet has the support of a majority of seats in parliament.

Conversely, a CS can reinforce the impression among voters that the populists are the only real alternative to the political status quo, and contribute to their further radicalization (Heinze 2018; Van Spanje & Van der Brug 2007: 1023). According to Axelsen (2024: 288), “A coalition between the largest mainstream parties on the left and the right may increase the real or perceived programmatic convergence between them. Any failures in government will leave voters with few clear alternatives”. In an age where anti-incumbency is on the rise due to inequality, social media and distrust in institutions, a CS may push voters into the arms of populists simply because they are perceived as the most anti-incumbent alternative.

Lastly, mainstream voters may prefer their party to partner with populists that are ideologically closer rather than a grand coalition that crosses established left-right divisions. Evidence shows that parties get punished when they form grand coalitions (Morini & Loveless 2021), that voters prefer coalitions that are ideologically narrower (Wurthman & Krauss 2024), and that moderate voters prefer alliances with radical parties if it advances their policy goals (Kedar 2005). This is especially true when parties form coalitions that voters find unexpected (Plescia & Aichholzer 2016; Plescia et al. 2022; Falcó-Gimeno & Fernández-Vázquez 2020). Ultimately, if voters find left-right divisions more salient, mainstream parties will likely benefit from partnering with populist parties that are ideologically closer.

- **Hypothesis 2:** *Mainstream parties that form coalitions that include populist parties gain more vote share in the subsequent elections compared to mainstream parties that govern without populists.*

In sum, mainstream parties face a real dilemma when deciding whether they should ostracize populist rivals or not. And there are sound theoretical reasons to expect an effect either way. On the one hand, voters may punish mainstream parties that break the CS, which also legitimizes and gives power to their populist rivals. On the other hand,

mainstream parties may benefit from appealing to populist voters and popular discontent, as well as eroding the outsider status of populists. The analysis aims to empirically test whether the hypotheses derived from these mechanisms correspond to significant and meaningful effects observed in the electoral performance of mainstream parties that form a government with populist parties.

Since the hypotheses relate to aggregate changes in vote shares, the results can reflect various dynamics in voting behavior based on the source of vote transfers. Mainstream parties that ally with populists can gain/lose vote share in relation to (i) opposition parties, (ii) coalition partners, or (iii) from abstention (and generational replacement). Any effect observed in the results would be due to differences in the rates of retention or gains from these sources combined. However, not all of these mechanisms are equally plausible in the context examined here. Given the well-established cost of ruling, it is unlikely that opposition-party voters systematically reward mainstream governing parties based on whether they collaborate with populists rather than with other mainstream actors. Plus, parties in complex and unclear coalitions tend to get punished even more by voters (Powell & Whitten 1993). Instead, any differential electoral performance associated with tainted coalitions is most plausibly driven by variation in voter retention among mainstream incumbents or by shifts among voters previously aligned with populist coalition partners. Although the aggregate nature of vote-share data does not allow us to directly trace individual-level vote transfers, observed differences in electoral performance between mainstream parties governing with and without populists can therefore be interpreted as reflecting these underlying dynamics.

4. Data and Methods

Sample

ParlGov (Doring 2013; 2016; Doring & Manow 2024) is the main database used in the study. It provides a comprehensive coverage of elections and cabinets across advanced democracies, including parties' votes share (and seats) as well as whether they were in government or opposition for each cabinet. The sample comprises 2,047 observations for party results, nested in 265 elections in 30 countries. The original sample is filtered to observations from European countries since 1990, following the coverage of the PopuList dataset (Rooduijn et al. 2024). Besides this, non-partisan parliamentary groups (e.g., one-seat independents) and new parties without a previous vote share are excluded from the sample. Moreover, the CDU and CSU in Germany are treated as a single party.

Vote Share

The outcome variable in the analysis is the vote share for a given political party in a given national parliamentary election, which is extracted directly from ParlGov. The data is then cleaned to address two concerns: electoral alliances and missing data. Electoral alliances occur when two or more parties run jointly in an election, typically as a combined list or by agreeing on running candidates from each party in certain districts. In these cases, although ParlGov does not indicate the vote share for each party, it does provide the vote

share of the electoral alliance as well as the number of seats that each party in the alliance won. To address this, the vote shares of parties in electoral alliances are imputed based on the proportion of seats they won within the electoral alliance. For example, in Hungary in 2010 Fidesz and KDNP ran together and won 53% of the vote, with Fidesz winning 227 seats and KDNP 36, so they are assigned 46% and 7% of the vote, respectively.

Missing data affects 1% of the sample, which typically happens for new democracies (e.g., Poland 1989), for small parties that won seats based on constituency-level votes or due to ethnic minority quotas. Missing data is imputed based on the seat share of the party. This means that the total vote share for an election can slightly surpass 100% in cases where some parties are assigned their seat share (e.g., ethnic minority seats in Romania 2004).

Party Status in Government

The status of political parties in government is one of the key independent variables in the analysis, indicating whether a given party was in *government* or in *opposition* based on whether they are in cabinet. One problem when assigning party status is that a country can have multiple cabinets between elections, and so parties can occupy different roles in each cabinet. Parties do not always form static coalitions that remain unchanged between elections. Coalitions can be expanded, dissolved or reshuffled according to party strategies to influence their electoral prospects. Parties often leave or dissolve coalitions ahead of elections in order to shed their appearance of incumbency. Other times the dissolution of a coalition is the cause for a snap election to be held. In these cases, the governing parties typically enter opposition while a caretaker government is established. This was the case of the 2019 Austrian elections, when the OVP dissolved its coalition with the populist FPÖ in the aftermath of the Ibiza Affair.

So which cabinet should we consider when assigning party status? We use four approaches for selecting cabinets: *longest*, *first*, *last* and *all*. The analyses are replicated using the four approaches. Each approach has distinct advantages: the longest cabinet is more likely to be perceived as the main administration for a given period; the first cabinet shapes voters' initial impressions of parties' revealed preferences; the last cabinet is the one that is in office when the election takes place; and considering all cabinets captures the dynamic reality of coalition governments more accurately and precisely. When considering all cabinets, parties can be assigned both government and opposition their status changed during period (e.g., Estonian Centre Party between 2019 and 2023). When available, we consider cabinets that are not caretakers because they require affirmative parliamentary endorsement from coalition parties.

Populist Classification

Political parties are classified as populist or not according to the PopuList database (Rooduijn et al. 2023a; 2023b), which uses expert-informed qualitative information

covering 31 countries from Europe between 1989 and 2022.² The PopuList has two important strengths: (i) it distinguishes between parties that are fully populist (e.g., RN in France) and borderline populists (e.g., Forza Italia); and (ii) it indicates when parties start/stop being populist (or borderline). For example, the Law and Justice party in Poland was categorized as borderline populist between 2005 and 2015 before becoming fully populist, corresponding to its ideological shift.³ For the main analysis, only fully populist parties are labelled as such while borderline cases are not.

Table 1 shows the frequency of observations according to party type (populist/mainstream), party status (government/opposition), and whether populists were in government applied to the longest cabinet of each period. There are 105 cases of mainstream parties in government with populist parties, which occurred in 53 coalitions.⁴ This classification has a missing cell for populist parties in government because it already implies that there are populists in government.

Table 1. Frequency of party-election observations based on populist classification and previous status (for longest coalition since the last election).

		Populist Party		Mainstream Party	
		Opposition	Government	Opposition	Government
Populists in government?	No	215	0	901	419
	Yes	55	66	265	105

As a robustness check, we also use an alternative populist classification database from Timbro (2020). Although Timbro and PopuList mostly agree regarding which parties are populist, there are some discrepancies. In general, Timbro is more willing to apply the populist label to parties that are ideologically radical, including socialist parties (e.g., Communist Party of Portugal and Red-Green Alliance of Denmark), and less so for anti-corruption parties. Meanwhile, PopuList tends to distinguish more between populism and ideological radicalism (it provides separate indicators for far-left and far-right), while it is more willing to apply the populist label to centrist anti-corruption parties, especially in Eastern Europe (e.g., New Era in Latvia, NDSV in Bulgaria and OLANO in Slovakia). These discrepancies between the populist classifications are useful to check whether our findings are conditioned by the idiosyncrasies of the populist classification.

Controls

In the models, we control for the effect of two variables that can arguably affect the change in vote shares. First, we control for previous vote share, given the potential for autocorrelation in electoral performance. The expectation is straightforward: parties that

² The full classification dataset can be found here: <https://popu-list.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/The-PopuList-3.0-short-version.pdf>.

³ “Since 2015, PiS has set the country on an illiberal trajectory, capturing the judiciary, usurping constitutional bodies, attacking liberal civil society, and imposing severe restrictions on abortion access.” (PopuList, Country Report on Poland, p. 1. <https://popu-list.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Poland.pdf>)

⁴ There are an additional 21 cases in 11 coalitions that were not the longest ones.

won more votes in the previous election are expected to win more votes in the next election. Second, the effective number of parties (ENP), measured as $ENP = 1/\sum v_i^2$ (Laakso and Taagepera 1979), is also included as a control and interacted with previous vote share to account for the rigidity of concentrated party systems. Higher values indicate that the party system is more fragmented. This helps account for the influence of electoral systems on the volatility and fragmentation of party systems. Parties in systems that are more concentrated due to structural/institutional factors (e.g., majoritarian electoral systems) are likely to experience more volatility.

Country-level controls are not included in the primary models because the data is structured as panel data at the party-election level, where changes in vote share are constrained within each electoral cycle. The net change in vote shares for parties in any given election will be zero, except for instances where new parties enter, old parties exit, or the vote share for non-partisan or independent candidates changes. As such, the total pool of votes is largely stable across elections, and most variation derives from transfers of votes among existing parties, rather than exogenous country-level factors. Moreover, country fixed effects account for time-invariant institutional features such as electoral systems or regime types. Including additional country-level controls risks introducing multicollinearity with structural variables already captured by fragmentation indices and party size, and would not vary sufficiently within panel units to improve model fit. In addition, given the nested structure of the data, any meaningful role for country-level characteristics would have to be specified through interactions with party-level explanatory variables, which would limit the parsimony of the models.

Specification

The models use OLS regression with robust standard errors clustered by party. The main analyses use a subset of mainstream parties in the sample. (Models including populist parties are shown in the Appendix.) The following equation shows the model specification for party i in country j for election in period t : V indicates vote share, ENP indicates effective number of parties, $Govt$ indicates whether the party is in government and TC indicates whether the government includes populists. The models also include country fixed effects, represented by β_j . Each model is replicated according to the four approaches for analyzing cabinets: all, first, longest and last.

$$V_{i,j,t} = \beta_1 V_{i,j,t-1} + \beta_2 V_{i,j,t-1} * ENP_{j,t-1} + \beta_3 Govt_{i,j,t-1} + \beta_4 Govt_{i,j,t-1} * TC_{i,t-1} + \beta_j + \varepsilon_{i,j,t}$$

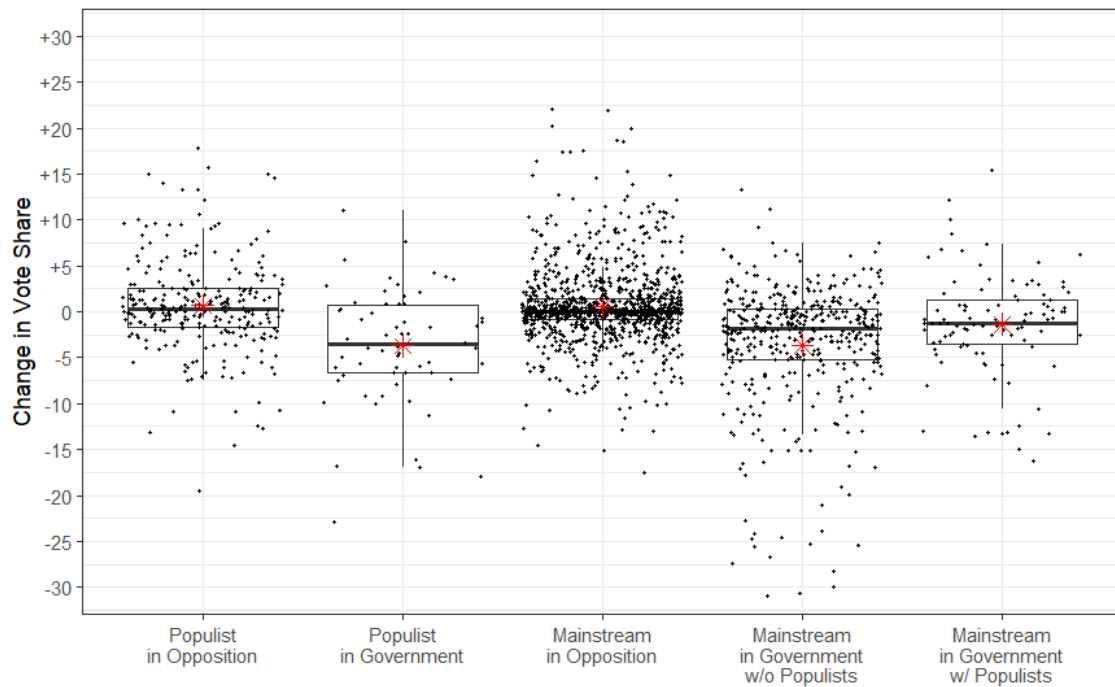
5. Results

Descriptive Analysis

The sample includes 122 cases where mainstream parties governed with populists in 58 tainted coalitions, using the PopuList classification. Based on the Timbro classification, there are 114 cases in 56 tainted coalitions. Table A2 of the Appendix lists cases of parties in TCs, specifying mainstream and populist parties involved as well as the date of the subsequent elections. In the sample, 22% of elections took place following a TC.

The jitter plot in Figure 1 shows the distribution in vote share change grouped by party role (in the longest cabinet) and populist classification. Mainstream parties in government are further split based on whether they governed with or without populists. Bold lines indicate median values, and asterisks indicate the average change in vote share for each group. We can observe how parties in government tend to lose vote share, while those in opposition on average stay the same. This is in part because opposition parties tend to be smaller, so their vote shares vary less, but it also reflects the cost of ruling. Meanwhile, regarding the relevant comparison, mainstream parties in government tend to lose less vote share when they govern with populists. This provides preliminary support for the cooptation hypothesis, as mainstream parties in tainted coalitions lost -1.4pp compared to -3.7pp for those that followed to the cordon sanitaire against populists and did not invite the latter to participate in government. Still, this is merely a descriptive analysis that does not account for controls. Next, we outline the results from OLS models.

Figure 1. Change in vote share grouped by party government status and participation of populists in cabinet



OLS Models

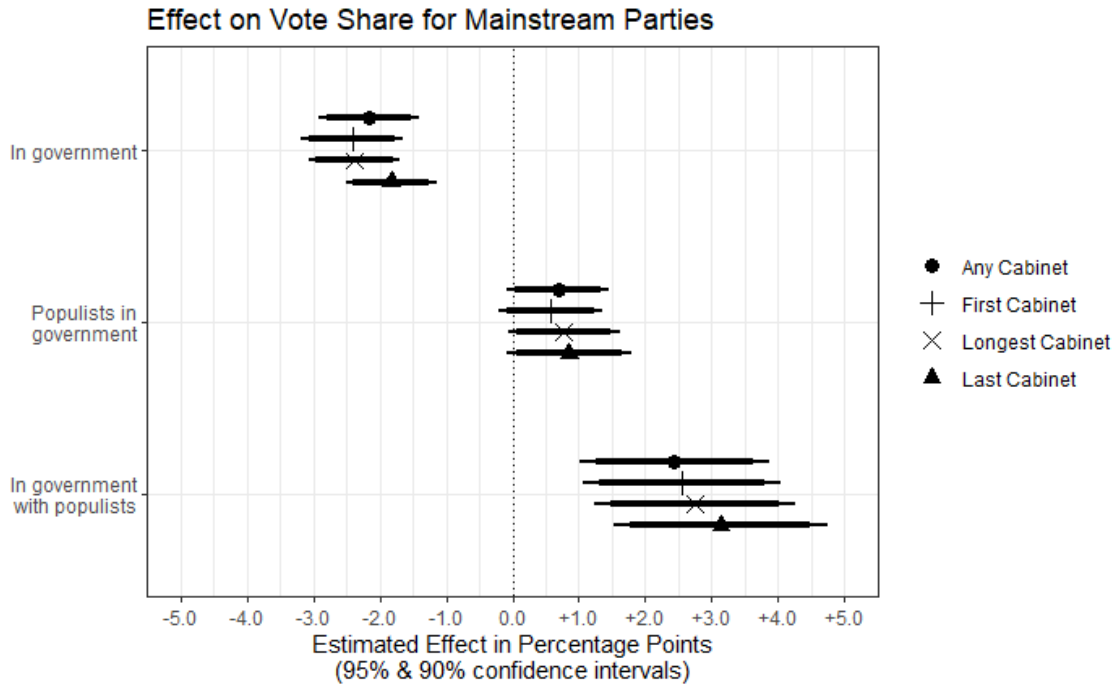
The main analysis involves OLS regression models of change in vote share for mainstream parties in national legislative elections. The models are replicated four times based on the cabinets analyzed: all, first, longest and last. The results are outlined in Table 2 and the estimated effects are plotted in Figure 2. In the appendix, Table A2 shows the results including populist parties in the sample.

The control variables have the expected effect. Previous vote share is highly predictive of subsequent electoral performance, and it has a strong negative interaction with the effective number of parties, meaning that larger parties tend to perform worse in more fragmented party systems. Consistent with the well-established cost of ruling (Strom 1990; Paldam & Skott 1995; Fortunato & Stevenson 2013), mainstream parties in government are expected to lose vote share on average; the question is whether governing with populists systematically modifies this penalty. In line with the “cost of ruling” thesis, the results show that parties in government tend to lose an estimated 2.2pp, when analyzing all cabinets.

Table 2. Main results of OLS regression models predicting vote share for party-election observations.

	Dependent Variable: Vote Share			
	Cabinet Observed:			
Sample: Mainstream Parties	<i>All</i>	<i>First</i>	<i>Longest</i>	<i>Last</i>
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Previous Vote Share	1.316***	1.309***	1.308***	1.309***
	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)
Number of Parties	0.383*	0.359*	0.370*	0.419**
	(0.151)	(0.153)	(0.153)	(0.153)
Previous Vote Share * Number of Parties	-0.094***	-0.093***	-0.092***	-0.094***
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Party Status (Ref. = Opposition)				
Government	-2.156***	-2.415***	-2.380***	-1.826***
	(0.384)	(0.393)	(0.354)	(0.348)
Populists are in cabinet	0.689	0.576	0.775	0.854
	(0.392)	(0.404)	(0.428)	(0.480)
Government * With Populists	2.442**	2.558**	2.754***	3.137***
	(0.726)	(0.763)	(0.775)	(0.828)
Country FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,719	1,719	1,719	1,719
Political Parties	433	433	433	433
Elections	265	265	265	265
Countries	30	30	30	30
R2	0.824	0.825	0.825	0.823
Adjusted R2	0.820	0.821	0.822	0.820
Notes: Sample filtered for mainstream parties. Clustered standard errors by party. Number of parties is calculated as effective number of parties. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001;				

Figure 2. Estimated effect from OLS models of party status, and governing with populists using the populist classification from PopuList.



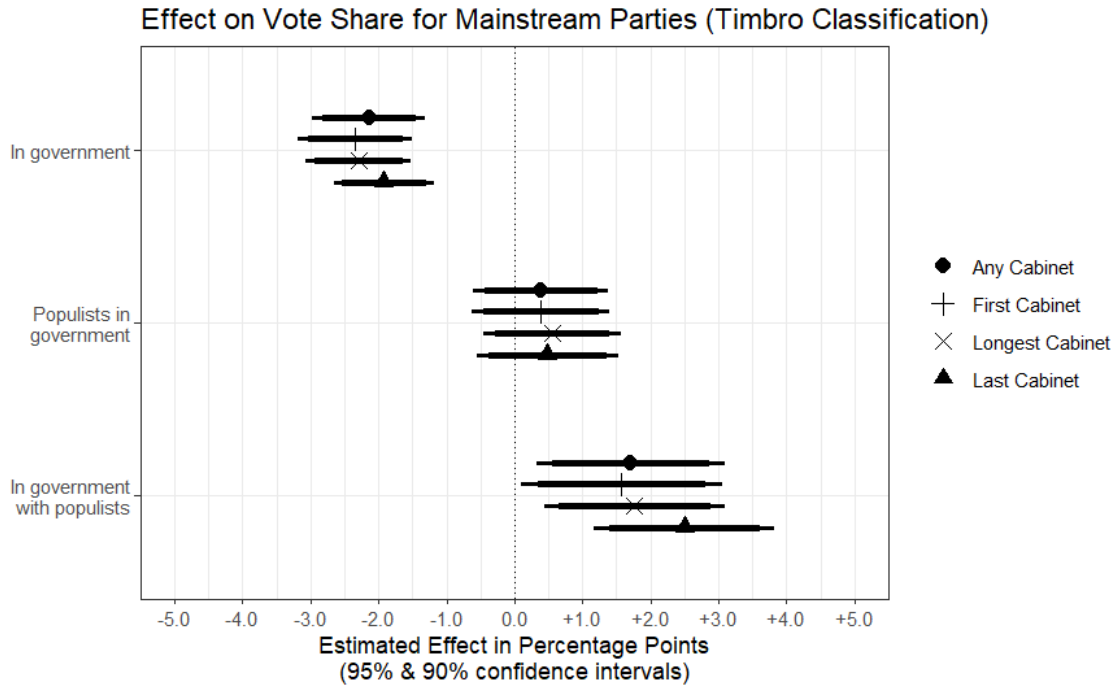
Regarding the hypotheses, the results suggest that mainstream parties benefit from inviting populists into their coalition, in line with the cooptation effect. The interactive effect of mainstream parties in government with populists in government indicates that they gain an estimated 2.4pp ($p < 0.01$) more compared to those that do not govern with populists. The results vary somewhat depending on which cabinet is considered, but they are all statistically significant. The results are strongest when analyzing the last cabinet before the election, suggesting that voters may be more sensitive to a recency bias when assessing governing trajectories. Overall, these results suggest that the voters of populist parties are more likely to defect to their mainstream partners rather than the other way around, or at least that mainstream parties prefer coalitions with populists over other mainstream parties.

Robustness Checks

As a first robustness check, we replicate the analysis using the populist classification from Timbro. Since Timbro and PopuList have some discrepancies on which parties are populist, this helps address concerns that the results may depend on idiosyncrasies specific to the classification used. This alternative classification changes roughly one-third of cases where mainstream parties governed with populists (see Table A3). Figure 3 shows the estimated effects using the Timbro classification, showing that the cooptation effect remains significant. The results yielded are slightly weaker but remain statistically significant. The mainstream parties suffer an estimated 2.1pp loss from the cost of ruling but if they govern with populists their vote share is 1.7pp higher (when analyzing all

cabinets). Interestingly, this effect is again strongest for the last cabinet, which is even more pronounced when using the Timbro classification.

Figure 3. Estimated effect from OLS models of party type, status, and governing with populists using the populist classification from Timbro.

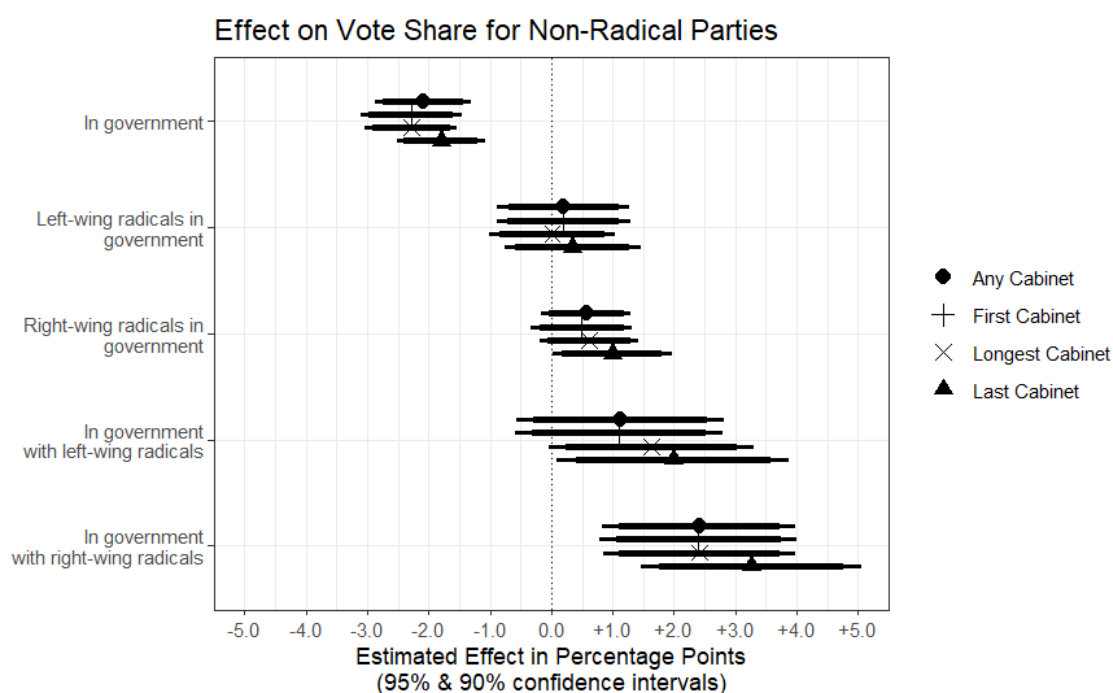


As a second robustness check, we focus on cabinets that included far-left and far-right parties, rather than populists. Populism and ideological radicalism often go hand-in-hand, but it is a subject of debate if parties that are on the extremes of the ideological spectrum are necessarily populist, and if populist parties can truly be centrist. It is also a matter of debate whether there is or should be an ideological asymmetry in populist dynamics. Some scholars view far-right populists as a threat to democratic norms, and the singular target of cordons sanitaires in a way that does not apply to left-wing populists. PopuList provides separate classifications for parties that are “populist”, “far-left” and “far-right”. Thus, we replicate the analysis focusing on coalitions where “centrist” parties enter coalitions with far-left or far-right parties. In other words, this operationalization classifies parties according to ideological radicalism rather than populism.

Categorizing coalitions based on ideological radicalism changes about one-third of the cases of interest. There are 111 cases where centrists governed with the far-right and 43 cases where they governed with the far-left (and 7 cases with both). Figure 4 shows the estimated effects of tainted coalitions based on ideological radicalism. The results show that centrist parties that govern with radical parties also tend to perform better than those that do not (see Table A4). This effect is stronger when governing with radical-right parties, for which it is statistically significant for any cabinet categorization, than with the radical-left, for which the effect is only significant for the last cabinet. The larger

confidence intervals are likely due to there being fewer cases of coalitions with far-left parties.

Figure 4. Estimated effect for centrist parties of governing with far-left and far-right using classifications from PopuList.



Lastly, we use jackknife resampling to assess the extent to which there may be country outliers that are driving the results. Appendix Figure A1 shows the estimated effect of governing with populists on the vote share of mainstream parties based on Model 1 of Table 2 (All Cabinets) when systematically omitting each country in the sample. None of the country group observations when omitted lead to the results becoming significantly different nor becoming non-significant. It is worth noting that most countries tend to strengthen the results when omitted. The exception to this is Switzerland and Latvia, which slightly weaken the effect when omitted, likely because they are the countries where tainted coalitions have been more common.

6. Discussion

As populist parties have risen in European democracies, mainstream parties increasingly face a dilemma: whether to isolate populist challengers through a cordon sanitaire or to invite them into coalition governments. This has motivated a debate in the party competition literature over whether exclusionary or inclusionary strategies are more effective at dealing with populist challengers. On the one hand, proponents of exclusionary strategies argue that isolating populists limits their legitimacy, suppresses their electoral appeal and reinforces democratic norms. On the other hand, advocates of

inclusionary approaches contend that exclusion backfires. It reinforces the narrative that established parties form a self-serving cartel and strengthens the outsider appeal of populists. Yet even though this debate has generated substantial theoretical and normative disagreement, a crucial empirical question has remained unanswered: do mainstream parties themselves benefit or lose electorally from choosing to govern with populists?

Based on national parliamentary elections in European countries since 1990, the results indicate that mainstream parties tend to benefit from a positive 2.4pp effect from governing with populists in the subsequent election, lending support for the “cooptation effect”. These findings point to a tension between short-term and long-term goals regarding democratic backsliding and how political leaders can protect institutions from populist erosion. The case for exclusionary strategies rests not only on electoral grounds but on normative arguments as well: that isolating populists signals their unacceptability, reinforces democratic consensus, and keeps them out of governing positions. However, our findings suggest that these short-term accomplishments come at the cost of long-term democratic protection. If cordons sanitaires impose electoral costs on mainstream parties while reinforcing an anti-establishment narrative, this may inadvertently strengthen populist challengers in the long run.

Several cases covered in the sample showcase how mainstream parties effectively contained populist challengers after governing with them: in the 2003 Dutch elections, VVD and CDA gained seats after governing with the populist LPF, whose support collapsed; the Conservatives in Norway contained the growth of the Progress Party in the 2017 and 2021 elections after governing together; the ÖVP in Austria has successfully staved off the populist FPÖ after coalitions in the elections of 2002 and 2019. In contrast, many countries that implemented a cordon sanitaire eventually saw populists rise at the cost of mainstream parties: in Sweden, the Moderates, Liberals and Christian Democrats have refused to form coalitions with the Sweden Democrats, which has surpassed them to become the country’s second largest party; similarly, Germany has displayed a staunch cordon sanitaire against AfD but it became the second largest party in 2025. These examples illustrate the trade-off between short-term exclusion and long-term survival for mainstream parties competing with populists.

The findings should be interpreted in light of some limitations. First, while we cannot rule out selection into tainted coalitions, the within-election zero-sum constraint and country fixed effects absorb many plausible confounders. Despite the controls and robustness checks included in the models, unobserved factors may still influence both coalition formation and subsequent electoral performance. For instance, mainstream parties may anticipate the electoral consequences of partnering with populists based on contextual knowledge of the party system and the electorate. That said, the effect is not driven by incumbency or coalition participation alone, since mainstream parties perform better specifically when their partner is populist. This is consistent with the cooptation mechanism, whereby populists bear a disproportionate incumbency cost that frees up votes for their mainstream partners. Second, given the sample of European elections since 1990, the findings apply to parliamentary multiparty systems with proportional or mixed electoral rules where coalitions are more frequent. As a result, the findings may not directly generalize to presidential systems or contexts where coalition governments are rare, and where the electoral meaning of governing with populist actors may differ. These

considerations delineate the scope conditions under which the results are most likely to apply. Still, Europe is arguably a hard case for the cooptation mechanisms to work given the general normative opposition to populism and prevalence of cordons sanitaires.

Future research should focus on identifying the micro-level mechanisms underlying the aggregate patterns documented here. While this study shows that mainstream parties tend to perform better electorally after governing with populists, it cannot determine whether this effect stems from retaining mainstream voters, attracting former populist supporters, or altering patterns of abstention. Disentangling these mechanisms requires individual-level data on vote switching and voter attitudes. Panel surveys or surveys collecting retrospective vote choice would allow researchers to assess whether tainted coalitions primarily stabilize mainstream electorates or instead facilitate the absorption of populist voters. Experimental designs manipulating coalition scenarios and governing partners would be particularly valuable in isolating causal effects and testing how voters evaluate mainstream parties under different inclusionary strategies. In addition, qualitative comparative work could help contextualize these mechanisms by examining how populist inclusion is perceived across different party systems. In particular, future studies might distinguish between contexts in which populism emerges through new challenger parties (e.g., Podemos in Spain) and those in which mainstream parties themselves undergo populist transformations (e.g., Fidesz in Hungary). The cooptation mechanism plausibly only applies to emergent populists because voters see them more as “outsiders”. Together, these approaches would help clarify when and why inclusionary strategies yield electoral benefits for mainstream parties.

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1. Appendix Tables

Table A1. Cases of mainstream parties in the sample participating in elections after governing with a populist party (PopuList classification).

Country	Election Date	Previous Cabinet	Mainstream	Populist
AT	24/11/02	Schuessel I	OVP	FPO
AT	01/10/06	Schuessel II/III/IV	OVP	FPO, BZO
AT	29/09/19	Kurz I	OVP	FPO
BG	25/06/05	Sakskoburggotski	DPS	NDSV
BG	05/07/09	Stanishev	KzB DL	NDSV
BG	05/07/09	Stanishev	DPS	NDSV
BG	26/03/17	Borisov II	Reformist Bloc	GERB
BG	26/03/17	Borisov II	ABV	GERB
BG	02/10/22	Petkov	PP	ITN
CH	20/10/91	Bundesrat 1987	FDP-PRD	SVP
CH	20/10/91	Bundesrat 1987	SP-PS	SVP
CH	20/10/91	Bundesrat 1987	KK/CVP	SVP
CH	22/10/95	Bundesrat 1991	FDP-PRD	SVP
CH	22/10/95	Bundesrat 1991	SP-PS	SVP
CH	22/10/95	Bundesrat 1991	KK/CVP	SVP
CH	24/10/99	Bundesrat 1995	FDP-PRD	SVP
CH	24/10/99	Bundesrat 1995	SP-PS	SVP
CH	24/10/99	Bundesrat 1995	KK/CVP	SVP
CH	19/10/03	Bundesrat 1999	FDP-PRD	SVP
CH	19/10/03	Bundesrat 1999	SP-PS	SVP
CH	19/10/03	Bundesrat 1999	KK/CVP	SVP
CH	21/10/07	Bundesrat 2003	FDP-PRD	SVP
CH	21/10/07	Bundesrat 2003	SP-PS	SVP
CH	21/10/07	Bundesrat 2003	KK/CVP	SVP
CH	23/10/11	Bundesrat 2007	FDP-PRD	SVP
CH	23/10/11	Bundesrat 2007	SP-PS	SVP
CH	23/10/11	Bundesrat 2007	KK/CVP	SVP
CH	18/10/15	Bundesrat 2011	FDP-PRD	SVP
CH	18/10/15	Bundesrat 2011	SP-PS	SVP
CH	18/10/15	Bundesrat 2011	KK/CVP	SVP
CH	20/10/19	Bundesrat 2019	FDP-PRD	SVP
CH	20/10/19	Bundesrat 2019	SP-PS	SVP
CH	20/10/19	Bundesrat 2019	KK/CVP	SVP
CZ	25/10/13	Necas I	ODS	VV
CZ	25/10/13	Necas I	TOP09	VV
CZ	21/10/17	Sobotka	CSSD	ANO
CZ	21/10/17	Sobotka	KDU-CSL	ANO
CZ	09/10/21	Babis II	CSSD	ANO
EE	04/03/07	Parts	Ere	ERP
EE	04/03/07	Parts	ERa	ERP

Country	Election Date	Previous Cabinet	Mainstream	Populist
EE	05/03/23	Ratas II	EK	EKRE
EE	05/03/23	Ratas II	IRL	EKRE
FI	17/03/91	Holkeri I	KOK	SP
FI	17/03/91	Holkeri I	SSDP	SP
FI	17/03/91	Holkeri I	RKP-SFP	SP
FI	14/04/19	Sipilae I	KESK	SP
FI	14/04/19	Sipilae I	KOK	SP
GR	08/04/90	Zolotas I*	ND	SYN
GR	08/04/90	Zolotas I*	PASOK	SYN
GR	06/05/12	Papademos*	ND	LAOS
GR	06/05/12	Papademos*	PASOK	LAOS
HR	11/09/16	Oreskovic	HDZ	Most
HR	05/07/20	Plnekovic I	HDZ	Most
HU	29/05/94	Antall/Boross	MDF	KFgP
HU	29/05/94	Antall/Boross	KDNP	KFgP
HU	21/04/02	Orban I	Fidesz	KFgP
HU	21/04/02	Orban I	MDF	KFgP
HU	06/04/14	Orban II	KDNP	Fidesz
HU	08/04/18	Orban III	KDNP	Fidesz
HU	03/04/22	Orban IV	KDNP	Fidesz
IT	21/04/96	Berlusconi I	FI	LN
IT	21/04/96	Berlusconi I	AN	LN
IT	09/04/06	Berlusconi II/III	FI	LN
IT	09/04/06	Berlusconi II/III	AN	LN
IT	13/04/08	Prodi II	PRC	IdV
IT	25/02/13	Berlusconi IV	FI	LN
IT	25/09/22	Conte II, Draghi I/II	PD	M5S
IT	25/09/22	Conte II, Draghi I/II	FI	M5S
LT	12/10/08	Brazauskas IV/V	LSDP	DP
LT	12/10/08	Brazauskas IV/V	NS-SL	DP
LT	12/10/08	Brazauskas IV/V	LVLS	DP
LT	14/10/12	Kubilius II/III	TS-LK	TPP
LT	14/10/12	Kubilius II/III	LRLS	TPP
LT	14/10/12	Kubilius II/III	LiCS	TPP
LT	09/10/16	Butkevicius I/II	LSDP	TT, DK
LT	09/10/16	Butkevicius I/II	LLRA	TT, DK
LT	09/10/16	Butkevicius I/II	DP	TT, DK
LT	11/10/20	Skvernelis III	LVLS	TT
LT	11/10/20	Skvernelis III	LLRA	TT
LV	03/10/98	Krasts I/II	LC	TB-LNNK
LV	03/10/98	Krasts I/II	DPS	TB-LNNK
LV	05/10/02	Kristopans I/II, Berzins, Skele	TP	TB-LNNK
LV	05/10/02	Kristopans I/II, Berzins, Skele	LC	TB-LNNK

Country	Election Date	Previous Cabinet	Mainstream	Populist
LV	07/10/06	Klavitis I	TP	JL
LV	07/10/06	Klavitis I	ZZS	JL
LV	01/10/10	Dombrovskis I/II, Godmanis II	ZZS	JL, TB-LNNK
LV	04/10/14	Dombrovskis IV, Straujuma I	Unity	RP
LV	04/10/14	Dombrovskis IV, Straujuma I	ZZS	RP
LV	04/10/14	Dombrovskis IV, Straujuma I	NA	RP
LV	01/10/22	Karins I	Unity	KPV
LV	01/10/22	Karins I	NA	KPV
LV	01/10/22	Karins I	JKP	KPV
NL	22/01/03	Balkenende I/II	CDA	LPF
NL	22/01/03	Balkenende I/II	VVD	LPF
NO	11/09/17	Solberg I	H	FrP
NO	13/09/21	Solberg II/III/IV	H	FrP
NO	13/09/21	Solberg II/III/IV	V	FrP
NO	13/09/21	Solberg II/III/IV	KrF	FrP
PL	19/09/93	Olszewski, Suchocka I/II	UC	ZChN
PL	19/09/93	Olszewski, Suchocka I/II	PC	ZChN
PL	19/09/93	Olszewski, Suchocka I/II	KLD	ZChN
PL	19/09/93	Olszewski, Suchocka I/II	PL	ZChN
PL	19/10/07	Kaczynski	PiS	SRP, LRP
SK	21/09/02	Dzurinda I	MK	SOP
SK	21/09/02	Dzurinda I	SDL	SOP
SK	17/06/06	Dzurinda II/III	SDKU-DS	ANO
SK	17/06/06	Dzurinda II/III	MK	ANO
SK	17/06/06	Dzurinda II/III	KDH	ANO
SI	29/02/20	Fico III/IV, Pellegrini	MH	Smer, SNS
SI	06/12/92	Peterle	SLS	NSI
SI	06/12/92	Peterle	ZS	NSI
SI	06/12/92	Peterle	SDS	NSI
SI	06/12/92	Peterle	SOS	NSI
SI	10/11/96	Drnovsek II/III/IV	LDS	NSI
SI	10/11/96	Drnovsek II/III/IV	ZL-SD	NSI
SI	10/11/96	Drnovsek II/III/IV	SDS	NSI
SI	21/09/08	Jansa I	DeSUS	NSI
SI	13/07/14	Jansa II	DeSUS	NSI, SDS
SI	13/07/14	Jansa II	SLS	NSI, SDS

Notes: *Caretaker cabinet. Populist classification is based on the PopuList database. Borderline cases are considered non-populist.

Table A2. Results of OLS regression models including populists in sample.

	Dependent Variable: Vote Share			
	Cabinet Observed:			
Sample: All Parties	<i>All</i>	<i>First</i>	<i>Longest</i>	<i>Last</i>
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Previous Vote Share	1.310***	1.304***	1.303***	1.304***
	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.049)	(0.049)
Number of Parties	0.494***	0.475***	0.478***	0.511***
	(0.137)	(0.139)	(0.139)	(0.140)
Previous Vote Share * Number of Parties	-0.089***	-0.088***	-0.088***	-0.090***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
Party Type (Ref. = Populist)				
Mainstream Party	-0.592	-0.515	-0.546	-0.680
	(0.387)	(0.380)	(0.368)	(0.362)
Party Status (Ref. = In Opposition)				
In Government	-2.100	-1.886	-2.146	-2.016
	(1.219)	(1.225)	(1.407)	(1.570)
Mainstream * In Government	-0.285	-0.730	-0.422	-0.015
	(1.263)	(1.286)	(1.460)	(1.604)
Populists are in cabinet	0.141	0.069	0.280	0.224
	(0.389)	(0.386)	(0.422)	(0.458)
Mainstream * In Government * With Populists	2.570***	2.708***	2.834***	3.256***
	(0.705)	(0.739)	(0.741)	(0.785)
Country FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	2,047	2,047	2,047	2,047
Political Parties	524	524	524	524
Elections	265	265	265	265
Countries	30	30	30	30
R2	0.824	0.825	0.825	0.823
Adjusted R2	0.820	0.821	0.822	0.820
Notes: Sample filtered for mainstream parties. Clustered standard errors by party. Number of parties is calculated as effective number of parties. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001;				

Table A3. Results of OLS regression models using the populist classification of Timbro.

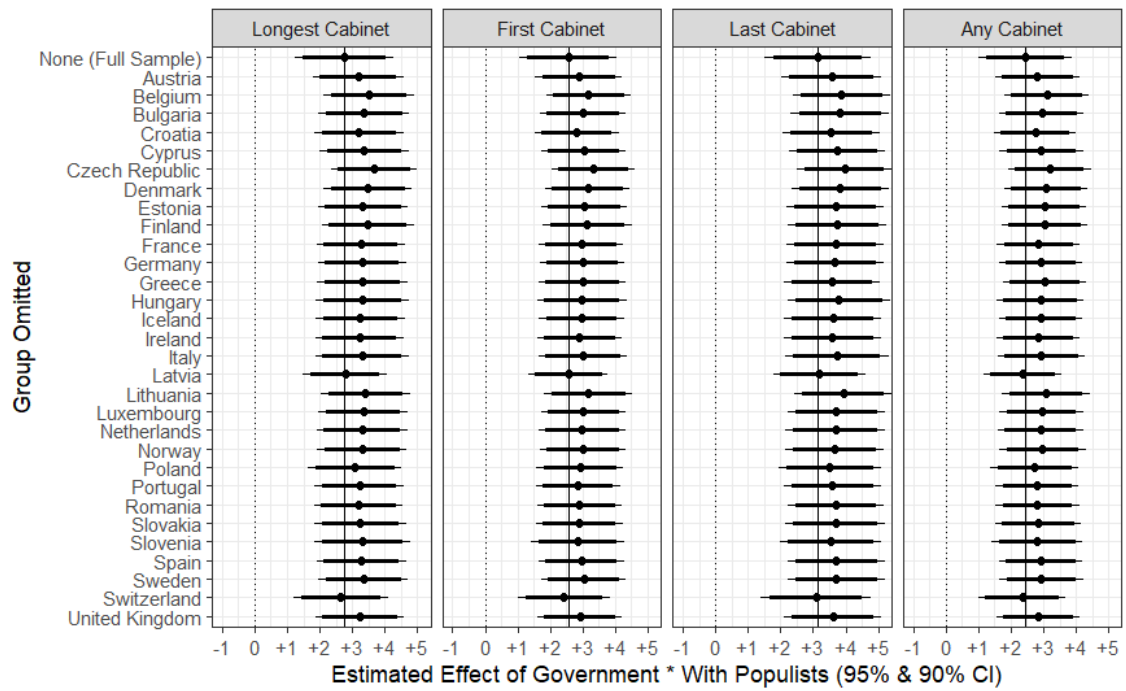
	Dependent Variable: Vote Share			
	Cabinet Observed:			
Sample: Mainstream Parties	<i>All</i>	<i>First</i>	<i>Longest</i>	<i>Last</i>
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Previous Vote Share	1.297***	1.290***	1.288***	1.290***
	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.053)	(0.052)
Number of Parties	0.486**	0.446**	0.476**	0.497**
	(0.168)	(0.167)	(0.169)	(0.170)
Previous Vote Share * Number of Parties	-0.091***	-0.090***	-0.089***	-0.092***
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Party Status (Ref. = In Opposition)				
In Government	-2.138***	-2.340***	-2.294***	-1.921***
	(0.423)	(0.427)	(0.396)	(0.377)
Populists are in cabinet	0.390	0.391	0.559	0.487
	(0.506)	(0.517)	(0.513)	(0.527)
In Government * With Populists	1.709*	1.576*	1.767*	2.498***
	(0.703)	(0.753)	(0.678)	(0.676)
Country FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,556	1,556	1,556	1,556
Political Parties	399	399	399	399
Elections	265	265	265	265
Countries	30	30	30	30
R2	0.824	0.825	0.825	0.823
Adjusted R2	0.820	0.821	0.822	0.820
Notes: Sample filtered for mainstream parties. Clustered standard errors by party. Number of parties is calculated as effective number of parties. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001;				

Table A4. Results of OLS regression models on the effect of governing with far-left or far-right parties for non-radical parties.

	Dependent Variable: Vote Share			
	Cabinet Observed:			
Sample: Non-Radical Parties	<i>All</i>	<i>First</i>	<i>Longest</i>	<i>Last</i>
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Previous Vote Share	1.316***	1.305***	1.301***	1.303***
	(0.053)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.052)
Number of Parties	0.410 *	0.397*	0.390*	0.440**
	(0.161)	(0.165)	(0.164)	(0.164)
Previous Vote Share * Number of Parties	-0.094***	-0.092***	-0.091***	-0.094***
	(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.013)	(0.013)
Party Status (Ref. = In Opposition)				
In Government	-2.534***	-2.727***	-2.642***	-2.107***
	(0.429)	(0.458)	(0.414)	(0.396)
Radical-Left in cabinet	0.230	0.171	-0.091	0.448
	(0.748)	(0.768)	(0.696)	(0.770)
Radical-Right in cabinet	0.448	0.298	0.607	1.033
	(0.417)	(0.486)	(0.463)	(0.539)
In Government * With Radical-Left	1.001	1.316	1.618	1.033
	(1.060)	(1.040)	(1.013)	(1.173)
In Government * With Radical-Left	2.775***	2.816**	2.662**	3.309***
	(0.814)	(0.835)	(0.819)	(0.935)
Country FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	1,559	1,559	1,559	1,559
Political Parties	402	402	402	402
Elections	265	265	265	265
Countries	30	30	30	30
R2	0.818	0.818	0.818	0.818
Adjusted R2	0.814	0.814	0.814	0.814
Notes: Sample filtered for mainstream parties. Clustered standard errors by party. Number of parties is calculated as effective number of parties. * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001;				

2. Appendix Figures

Figure A1. Effect of mainstream parties governing with populists in any cabinet plotted excluding one country at a time.



Note: Estimated coefficient of governing with populists for mainstream parties based on Model 1 of Table 2.