An Empirical Study on the Electoral Support of Radical Right Parties in the European Parliament from 2009 to 2024

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, Europe has experienced a growing presence of radical right parties (RRPs) within national governments. The latest European Parliament elections reveal that this trend is also extending to the supranational level. Therefore, the objective of this thesis is to examine electoral support for RRPs in European Parliament elections from 2009 to 2024, to understand the factors driving popular support for political views that deviate from the democratic principles and cosmopolitan vision defended by the European Union.

This study is based on a quantitative analysis that incorporates both supply-side and demand-side factors, aiming to use these theoretical approaches in a complementary manner to provide a more comprehensive and innovative analysis. The findings indicate that both the political space, particularly regarding immigration issues between conservative and radical right parties, and the size of the migrant population in a country are factors that influence electoral support for RRPs. Nonetheless, the results also raise important questions for future research, such as the role that specific countries like France and their national contexts may play in shaping these dynamics. Finally, this study has also encountered conceptual limitations; nonetheless, further examinations have been developed to ensure that these methodological choices have not affected the validity of the overall findings.

Key Words: Second-order Elections, RRPs, Supply-side Factors, and Demand-side Factors.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The radical right is one of the most successful political families in Europe since World War II. The literature also affirms that it has become a determining factor in the contemporary politics of the continent. This importance is evident at the academic level, where the topic has shifted from being an overlooked issue before the 90s to becoming a common scholarly focus point. Even the media reflects this increase in significance with multiple articles written in recent years about the rise of the radical right (Mudde, 2013). Moreover, these political parties have evolved from being marginalized from everyday politics to becoming cabinet members of national governing coalitions. The first time a radical right party became a member of a national government was in Italy during the 90s, followed by other countries from Eastern Europe. Later, other nations, such as Austria and Denmark, have also witnessed the radical right becoming a coalition member (Mudde, 2016). This trend aligns with the radical right's positive trajectory that has been observed at European levels.

Since 2009, the radical right has seen an increase in its popular support at each European election (Deloy & Reynie, 2010). Moreover, this year marked the start of a general trend at the European level, as it was the Parliamentary breakthrough of radical right parties (RRPs), such as the True Finns Party (Arter, 2010). Nowadays, this popular support continues to grow. In the 2024 elections, these parties gained fifty more seats than in the previous ones, thereby demonstrating that they are now consolidated at the European level (Jansen & Nguyen, 2024). Consequently, this situation, combined with the polarization of the Parliament, has considerable implications for the decision-making process of this European institution. Previously, scholars defended the limited capacity of the radical right to exert considerable influence at the European level, as coalitions excluding them were easily formed. Nonetheless, this cordon sanitaire was shaken when the Identity and Democracy group became the fourth-largest political force after the 2019 elections, and after 2024, when the possibility of forming a majority coalition with the conservatives and the radical right became a feasible scenario (Brack & Awenig Marié, 2024).

Therefore, given the current context in which the radical right is no longer simply represented in the European Parliament but is instead experiencing growing electoral support and gaining greater influence on EU policymaking, it becomes essential to understand the factors that have facilitated the rise of the radical right movement in Europe. Previous literature has grouped the explanations for this situation under two approaches: supply-side and demand-side (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). The former focuses on how the discourse of RRPs and the political context create electoral opportunities, while the latter refers to situations of public discontent where citizens demand this

radical approach (Golder, 2016). However, these two frameworks should not be considered as competing explanations, but rather as complementary ones (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). Nevertheless, as Golder (2016) discussed in his research, previous quantitative studies have mainly examined only one of these approaches, therefore failing to address the possible interplay between the two theoretical explanations. Consequently, this study contributes to the literature by presenting an innovative analysis that examines the interplay between the two. In addition, the time period examined in this thesis also contributes to its academic relevance, as the majority of previous studies employed a cross-sectional analysis. In contrast, this paper adopts a longitudinal approach, aiming to understand how the phenomenon varies fully over time. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to answer the following research question:

What is the effect of the demand and supply factors on the electoral support of radical right parties in the European Parliament since 2009?

The answer to this question will be obtained by performing a quantitative analysis, specifically using statistical regressions to understand the relationship between electoral support and demand and supply-side factors. On the one hand, the time period examined includes the last four European Parliamentary elections: 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024. As explained earlier, 2009 was a breakthrough year for some RRPs at the Parliamentary level, while the other elections were years of development and consolidation of popular support. On the other hand, the sample comprises all countries that have held European Union membership during any of these years.

Finally, beyond its academic relevance, understanding the phenomenon of popular support for the RRPs over the last few years also holds considerable societal importance. These political parties pose challenges to European democracies, as their ideology conflicts with fundamental pillars of democracy, such as minority protection (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). In this area, the radical right parties have a clear stance, arguing that European culture has a right to defend its cultural identity (Zaslove, 2004), through political measures such as forced repatriation policies (Euronews, 2025). In addition, the electoral victories of RRPs jeopardize the international multilateral system by rejecting the cosmopolitan and socially progressive aspects of its agenda. The RRPs' defense of a conservative approach to the international system can be exemplified by their rejection of initiatives, such as the 2030 Agenda (McCoy, 2023). Therefore, answering the research question and identifying the factors driving electoral support for the radical right could provide valuable insights into the strategies that mainstream parties might follow to safeguard democratic principles.

Consequently, this study is structured as follows: Section II presents the theoretical framework. Section III describes the methodology and the research design, where the operationalization of the

variables is explained, and the regression model is presented. Section IV presents the results of the statistical analysis. Finally, Section V contains the discussion of these results and concludes the thesis.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section of the thesis presents the theories that have explained the electoral support of radical right parties at the European level. Firstly, a historical evolution of their electoral results will be presented, followed by a more in-depth examination of the debate surrounding the definition of the radical right. Thereafter, the theoretical explanations will be presented. Based on previous literature, this last segment will be divided into two main approaches: demand-side and supply-side. Consequently, this framework will be relevant to answer the research question of this project.

2.1 The Rise of Radical Right Parties in the European Parliament

The members of the European Parliament are elected through national-level elections in each member state. In the literature, these are considered as second-order elections, in contrast to national ones, which are classified as first-order. The latter are described as elections where citizens can select the national government, while the former are, by definition, less important since they determine the results of non-national governments. In line with Reif et al. (1997), second-order elections are characterized by lower voter participation and an outcome that is highly influenced by the popularity of the governing party. In these elections, the national government commonly loses support, benefiting smaller parties. The European elections fall in this second category (Reif et al., 1997). According to Liñeira (2016), European elections do not hold the same public or political relevance as national ones, because citizens lack extensive knowledge about the European political context. Therefore, voting behavior is mainly influenced by the national context (Reif et al., 1997).

According to the literature, two main voting behavior strategies contribute to the electoral support of RRPs. On the one hand, multiple studies have corroborated that individuals believe that European elections are appropriate opportunities to evaluate the national government (Hobolt & Spoon, 2012). According to Reif and Schmitt (1980, as cited in Hobolt & Spoon, 2012), citizens can use the European elections as a means of exerting pressure or as a form of punishment. However, they do not necessarily shift their national political affiliation. This is a direct consequence of the second-order elections theory, where citizens perceive these elections as less critical, thus allowing a protest vote to occur. On the other hand, it is considered that citizens follow a more genuine strategy during these elections. They prioritize political parties that are closely aligned with their ideals, rather than those with a greater likelihood of forming a government, unlike in national elections. Consequently, based on Boomgaarden et al. (2016), this leads to a higher probability of success for new and extreme political formations. This trend has been evident during the last European elections.

In the 2024 elections, the RRPs reached a new high, securing control of twenty percent of the parliamentary seats. Hence, the emergence of this political family at the European level has been slow but constant (Díez-Gutiérrez & Jarquín-Ramírez, 2025). Before the 2000s, the electoral results of RRP were similar to those of niche parties. Although there were some exceptions, most of them secured a reduced number of seats and were unable to consolidate their presence in Parliament over multiple electoral cycles. Nevertheless, the 2014 European elections marked a shift in this trend (Mudde, 2017). This was the first time that two RRPs led the national polls in a member state, France and Denmark.

Additionally, during the 2019 elections, the radical right emerged as a significant victor. On this occasion, this political earthquake affected all of Europe except for Scandinavian countries, where this political family underperformed. These parties have increased their share of votes in sixteen out of the twenty-seven member states, becoming the second most voted option in the European Parliament by surpassing the Social Democrats (Díez-Gutiérrez & Jarquín-Ramírez, 2025). Hence, the political context of Europe has undergone significant changes over the last few decades, and the radical right is one of the main forces driving this shift. After the Second World War, these parties were "excluded from mainstream politics"; however, in recent years, they have reemerged in the public eye (Mudde, 2024, p. 122).

It is crucial to note that the advance of RRPs has not occurred uniformly across the member states of the European Union. Certain countries, such as France, have had a more established tradition of radical right political parties participating as viable options on European election ballots. For instance, although in the European elections of 2009 the presence of MEPs affiliated with this ideology did increase, this was, in fact, mainly driven by two RRPs from these member states: the French National Front and the Danish People's Party (Hawkins & Kallaway, 2014). Thus, it would be misleading to assume that all countries have contributed equally to the rise of RRPs' representation in the European Parliament. Consequently, this suggests that the national context of each member state may play a significant role in shaping this phenomenon. For this reason, this study will measure country-specific variables.

2.2 The Conceptualization of Radical Right Parties (RRPs)

Before formulating a hypothesis, it is essential to define what will be considered as RRPs. In previous literature, this political set of parties has also been defined as the extreme right; however, in this thesis, it will be referred to as the radical right. This aims to avoid conceptual ambiguity, as the term extremism is commonly associated with the rejection of democracy, a notion that not all these parties defend. Moreover, finding a scholarly consensus on the definition of the radical right

has proven to be a challenging undertaking (Kitschelt, 2007). Although there has been some degree of agreement regarding the classification of radical right as an ideology over the last few decades, a debate persists over what this ideology encompasses. Depending on the author, the concept can be attributed with different characteristics, resulting in simpler or broader definitions. (Mudde, 1996).

One of the most used conceptualizations is the one proposed by Cas Mudde, which focuses on the combination of three ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (2015). According to this scholar, nativism is the main characteristic of these political parties, defined as "an ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group and that nonnative elements are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state" (p. 22). Moreover, authoritarianism is not delineated as a nondemocratic regime, but rather as "a belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely" (p. 23). Finally, Mudde (2015, p. 23) defines populism as an ideology which "considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the pure people versus the corrupt elite, and argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people".

However, this conceptualization also has significant critiques. For instance, although Burni (2018) agrees with the three main defining characteristics proposed by Mudde, he disagrees with the definition of some of these concepts. Burni (2018) argues that populism is best conceptualized as a political style, rather than as a distinct ideology. Nonetheless, Mudde's conceptualization will be the one used throughout this project, as it facilitates the distinction between the extreme right and the radical right, thereby differentiating between parties that, despite sharing similar ideologies, reject democracy and those that do not. Additionally, this theoretical framework is empirically applicable and has been applied multiple times in both qualitative and quantitative studies of the radical right. Finally, this conceptualization also enables comparisons between these parties across different countries, which is the study's primary aim.

2.3 Theoretical Explanations for the Rise of the Radical Right

There are multiple theories about the factors that have driven this phenomenon; nonetheless, they can be grouped into two main categories: supply-side and demand-side. On the one hand, the supply-side factors refer to how the discourse of RRPs and the political context create electoral opportunities. On the other hand, demand-side factors allude to situations of public discontent where the citizens demand this radical approach (Golder, 2016). However, as stated by Muis and Immerzeel (2017), these approaches should not be regarded as mutually exclusive but rather as

complementary. Consequently, in this thesis, both will be studied to understand how their interaction affects the electoral support of RRPs.

2.3.1 Supply-side Factors

According to the supply-side factors, the electoral success of the radical right is related to the opportunities that the political space and the national electoral system provide (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017).

- **Political Space**

The European political space has undergone significant changes since World War II, one of which is the ideological convergence of mainstream parties. On the one hand, during the twentieth century, many left-wing parties moderated their economic stance in response to the post-war situation and the pressure from international organizations to adopt measures such as deregulation. On the other hand, in recent years, right-wing parties have adopted a more moderate stance on cultural and migratory issues (Berman & Kundnani, 2021). According to Downs' argument, the median voter theory, such convergence could electorally benefit them in a two-party system, as they aim to attract the median voter, where most citizens are located (Spoon & Klüver, 2019). Under this theory, mainstream parties decide to converge with the aim of obtaining votes from the ideological opposite mainstream party, becoming what Kirchheimer classified as catch-all parties (Meguid, 2005). These are parties that are shifting their electoral strategy from focusing on long-term party affiliation and instead rely on immediate electoral support by aiming to obtain the median voter's support (Kirchheimer, 1966).

Nonetheless, in the European context, a multi-party system, this convergence could have negative consequences. When mainstream parties fail to offer a clear discourse on issues that concern citizens, they create a political opportunity for niche parties (Berman & Kundnani, 2021). Hence, after this convergence, traditional party voters no longer feel represented by them; therefore, they will cast their votes in favor of the radical parties (Spoon & Klüver, 2019). A clear example of this mainstream political convergence is the German case, where the center-right and the center-left converge by economically shifting to the right and culturally defending a more left stance, respectively. As a consequence, a sector of their voters felt unrepresented by these new approaches and shifted their electoral support to the new RRP, the Afd (Berman & Kundnani, 2021).

Although these opportunities could be exploited by radical parties in either extreme, in recent years, this political space has mostly favored parties located in the radical right. This is a direct consequence of a realignment process in which the salience of the economic cleavage has decreased

compared to the sociocultural one, due to issues such as immigration (Rydgren, 2007). While the radical left mainly focuses on the cleavage that has lost relevance in recent years, the RRPs have benefited from this realignment by gaining the widespread support of the losers of globalization, defending a discourse that emphasizes the protection of the community and its cultural values (Rydgren, 2018). Therefore, based on this theoretical framework, the following hypothesis can be defended:

H1: The greater the political space between the center right-wing and the radical right, the higher the electoral support of RRPs

- **Electoral Systems**

The literature has also examined whether specific electoral systems may favor the success of RRPs. It is commonly assumed in the literature that the type of electoral system influences the vote share of political parties. Scholars, such as Anckar (1997), argue that this influence is executed through two different factors. The first is the mechanical effect, or in other words, the mechanism by which the votes obtained by each political party are translated into seats. In the case of proportional systems, a proportional method is applied; hence, the seats of the political institution are divided by the number of ballots cast. As a consequence, this system provides favorable conditions for political entrepreneurs to participate in the electoral competition, since it is easier for smaller parties to secure representation than in plurality systems. (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006). Moreover, the other effect is psychological, also known as the wasted vote phenomenon, which argues that when citizens have electoral knowledge, they are discouraged from voting for smaller parties when it is difficult for these parties to gain political representation due to the mechanical effect. Hence, to not waste their vote, they electorally support mainstream parties (Anckar, 1997).

Therefore, it has been a common assumption to relate RRPs' electoral support and proportional electoral systems, since these parties are small competitors; nonetheless, the empirical evidence shows an ambiguous connection (Carter, 2002). When analyzing the electoral outcomes of RRPs in proportionate systems, the results are inconclusive. However, although there is still a lack of empirical evidence about this relation, theoretically, it is reasonable to assume that these systems benefit RRPs. Based on the mechanisms explained above, an electoral system that penalizes smaller parties, in this case RRPs, indirectly encourages individuals to vote for mainstream political parties, ensuring their vote is not "wasted" (Carter, 2002). Therefore, the subsequent hypothesis can be formulated:

H2: The more proportional the electoral system, the greater will be the RRPs' electoral support at the European elections

2.3.2 Demand-side Factors

The demand side encompasses factors that have an adverse effect on an individual's socio-economic situation or their expectations, affecting their voting behavior. Most of these situations are outcomes of a globalization process that occurred during the late twentieth century, influenced by European integration, which promoted economic liberalization and competition between its member states (Minkenberg, 2000). As a result, the European job market context underwent a complete transformation, with a growing service sector providing opportunities for individuals with high levels of education. In contrast, manufacturing occupations, which required a lower level of education, diminished due to a deindustrialization process (Rydgren, 2018). Consequently, society can be divided into the winners and losers of globalization. The former are "those who consider themselves to have benefited from globalization", while the latter are the individuals "who see their life chances reduced" (Kriesi et al., 2006, p. 2). Hence, the political demands of these social groups diverge. On the one hand, the losers favor protectionist measures and maintaining clear national boundaries, aiming to protect their situation. On the other hand, the winners advocate for more economic integration and the elimination of national borders. In turn, political parties have aligned their discourses with these demands, aiming to compete for electoral support; however, the losers of globalization have been primarily attracted by RRPs. The radical right has been able to propose an attractive ideological package that addresses the situations concerning the losers of globalization, such as immigration (Decker 2004, as cited in Milner 2021).

- **Unemployment**

Commonly, the literature has associated the rise of national unemployment levels with the increase of the electoral support for left-wing political parties, since their programs are usually economically center. Nonetheless, multiple authors, such as Vlandas and Halikiopoulou (2019), in the literature have defended the idea that economic insecurity can be related to increasing levels of support for RRPs. Although the theoretical link between the two factors diverges depending on the scholar, the literature generally agrees that economic grievances caused by globalization increase the electoral support for the radical right (Vlandas & Halikiopoulou, 2019).

The economic vote theory presents an adequate theoretical framework to explain this situation. This argument defends that when a nation is experiencing a negative economic situation, citizens tend to blame the mainstream parties for this outcome; hence, in the next elections, they tend to

vote for the opposition parties. Empirically, this relation has been tested by multiple authors, such as Halikiopoulou and Vlandas (2016), who argue that situations of high national unemployment led individuals to perceive a potential risk of losing their jobs, thereby increasing their inclination toward radical political positions. The individuals who are usually more affected by these negative repercussions, such as unemployment, are blue-collar workers, those in the manual sector, and unskilled workers, in other words, the losers of globalization.

Therefore, this group assesses the globalization process with skepticism and aligns with the discourse of RRPs, rather than with the discourse of radical left parties. There are two main reasons for this: firstly, the fact that RRPs defend an economic protectionist stance. Furthermore, when jobs are scarce according to the ethnic competition hypothesis, immigrants are perceived as individuals that negatively affect the economic interest of the group, hence, the losers of globalization electorally support the political party that ensures the protection of their interests, in this case RRPs, who have an anti-immigration stance (Sipma & Lubbers, 2020). Thus, the following hypothesis is defended:

H3: The higher the level of unemployment, the greater will be the RRPs' electoral support at the European elections

- **Inequality**

A related explanation for the rise of RRPs is the increase in national economic inequality, and the frustration it generates among the population. Multiple studies have proven that economic inequality is a factor that should be carefully considered when analyzing RRPs (Mois & Jetten, 2020). Sprong et al. (2019) found evidence that rising inequality, among its many effects, influences political attitudes. As a consequence, there is a perception that national social cohesion is breaking, and hence, individuals are more inclined to support a radical ideology, represented by RRPs. These results are closely related to the social capital hypothesis proposed by Jesuit et al. (2009, as cited in Han, 2016). These scholars argued that a nation is based on social trust, and when the divergence between social classes increases, thereby leading to rising income inequality, this trust is undermined. As a result, low social groups electorally support RRPs, whose discourse focuses on preserving national unity, as they become less tolerant of ethnic diversity. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: The higher the level of inequality, the greater will be RRPs' vote share at the European elections

- **Immigration**

Over the last few years, there has been a considerable influx of immigrants into the EU. Although European RRPs have different discourses due to the divergent national context they emerge from, all of them have strong anti-immigration programs, which are commonly their main emphasis (Halla et al., 2017). As a consequence, the relationship between immigration and the success of these parties has been deeply empirically analyzed. Historical evidence has shown a correlation between the growth of immigration waves and electoral support for these parties. As a result, Luo (2018) concluded in his studies that areas receiving a higher quantity of immigrants experience a rise in electoral support for the radical right.

Although the literature presents multiple theories that could explain the relationship between immigration and RRPs from an economic perspective, as this argument has already been addressed in the unemployment section, the focus here is on the cultural approach. The cultural grievance thesis explains the relationship between immigration and the popular support for RRPs. According to this theory, the success of these political parties is a consequence of cultural competition between native values and those of immigrants. This new culture could diminish the national one and influence the accepted social norms. Consequently, this situation creates a prejudice against immigrants. Thus, citizens tend to support political parties in elections that have an anti-migration stance and emphasize the protection of national identity (Halikiopoulou & Vlandas, 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is stated:

H5: The higher the number of immigrants in the country, the greater will be the RRPs' vote share at the European elections

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, the methodological framework developed for this thesis will be presented. Since this project aims to empirically assess the factors that have affected the electoral support of RRPs, a quantitative analysis will be developed. Thus, in the following paragraphs, I will state the operationalization of the dependent, independent, and control variables for each of the hypotheses mentioned above.

3.1 The Model

The validity of the proposed hypothesis will be assessed with the development of a statistical model. The model is based on a dataset constructed by integrating various indicators from multiple databases, which were subsequently merged using Excel. The dataset has a panel data structure, which is adequate to analyze "an entity, in this case the rise of RRPs, that is observed repeatedly as it exists and evolves over time" (Dwyer et al., 2012, pp. 127-128). This structure provides multiple benefits for the analysis, since it allows to model complex relations by enabling the examination of temporal changes of the phenomenon across countries. Additionally, this structure is characterized by having two dimensions, temporal and spatial. This double-dimension structure offers another analytical advantage, as combining time and individuals provides a more realistic environment (Hsiao, 2022).

Regarding this study, the temporal dimension was delimited based on what the literature considers as the years of emergence of the RRPs in the European Parliament. Thus, the time period to be analyzed comprises four years, during which European elections were held: 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2024. Moreover, regarding the spatial dimension, the sample selected includes all the member states of the European Union. In the case of the United Kingdom and Croatia, both will be included because they have participated in at least one of the four elections. Therefore, 110[1] observations will be analyzed, using the statistical software Stata, to test how the relation between the supply-side and demand-side factors affected the electoral support of RRPs, through a linear regression:

$$\textbf{Model: } \textit{RRPs' Vote Share} = \beta_0 + \beta_n X_i + \alpha_i + \varepsilon_i$$

In this model, β_0 represents the intercept, which is the value of the dependent variable when X equals 0. One of the underlying assumptions of this type of statistical regression is that these two variables are linearly related (Su et al., 2012). Moreover, this model could include either random or fixed effects. On the one hand, the fixed-effects model controls the effect of non-included

[1] Annex A includes a table where all the observations included in the sample are presented in more detail.

variables that are stable over time, even though they are not explicitly included in this regression. On the other hand, the random-effects model considers that these non-included effects are random and do not correlate with the explanatory variables (Firebaugh et al., 2013). Therefore, to verify which effects are more appropriate for analyzing the variables, the Hausman test will be conducted to determine whether there are unobserved effects that correlate with the independent variables (Deutsch, 2012). The results of this test will be displayed and discussed in the analysis section.

Finally, the term ε represents the error, which is also subject to propositions in this model. Firstly, the exogeneity assumption argues that there must be no relation between the error terms and the independent variables (Peña & Slate, 2006). Consequently, this means that the model is correctly capturing the relationship between the independent parameter and the dependent one; thus, the error is random. Furthermore, the homoscedasticity condition states that the error term must have a constant variance for all values of the explanatory variable. This characteristic is determinant in obtaining accurate results, because if it fails to occur, there could be biased results, as some observations may have more influence than the rest. Therefore, to ensure that this condition is satisfied in the model, the Breusch-Pagan test will be performed. This test analyzes the residuals and determines if their variance changes as a function of an independent variable (Đalić & Terzić, 2021).

3.2 Dependent Variable

Although this study comprises multiple hypotheses, all of them share the dependent variable: the electoral support of RRPs. The electoral support was coded as *Vote Share* in the regression and operationalized with the electoral data provided by the European Parliament on its official website. Moreover, regarding the classification as an RRP, the operationalization had different steps. Firstly, as explained in the theoretical framework of this study, RRPs are defined following the conceptualization proposed by Cas Mudde (2015), based on three factors: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. The data regarding whether the political parties meet these conditions, and hence, are classified as RRPs, will be sourced from the 2009, 2014, and 2019 versions of The PopuList. This dataset classifies the European parties from thirty-one countries, which includes all EU member states, into four categories: populist, far left, and/or far right, according to the definition developed by Cas Mudde (2015). Moreover, this source employs an innovative method known as Expert-informed Qualitative Comparative Classification, which simultaneously provides case-specific information and a comprehensive classification framework. Additionally, this information is gathered from scholars who are experts in both areas (Rooduijn et al., 2023).

Nonetheless, since The PopuList does not present an updated version (it only includes information up to 2022), the classification of the political parties for the 2024 European election was based on the information provided by the Chapel Hill Survey (CHES). This dataset "estimates party positioning on ideology and policy issues" developed by experts in this subject (Chapel Hill Expert Survey, n.d.). Thus, this database is created through the answers of experts to surveys. Although the reliability of the survey results presented by the Chapel Hill Expert Survey have been extensively examined in the literature, proving to be accurate (Hooghe et al., 2010), this database was not elected as the primary source for the classification of the parties because it does not follow the definition presented by Cas Mudde. Hence, the classification between the two can vary. As a result, the three core characteristics of Cas Mudde (2015) were taken into consideration when obtaining the data from the CHES.

To capture each of these dimensions in the CHE the following indicators were considered. On the one hand, authoritarianism was represented by two variables: *galtan* and *civlib_laworder*. The former illustrates the party's position on democratic freedoms and rights, while the latter indicates its stance on civil liberties, as well as law and order. On the other hand, populism was operationalized using the *people_v_elite* variable, which captures whether the people or elected representatives "should have the final say on the most important issues" (Jolly et al., 2022, p. 30). Finally, nativism is measured by the *nationalism* variable, which assesses whether a party defends a cosmopolitan versus a nationalistic vision. These variables are coded on a 0 to 10 scale, where higher values represent positions more closely aligned with the radical right. Accordingly, parties that scored seven or higher in all three dimensions were classified as RRPs. The choice of seven as the threshold is grounded in several considerations. First, it is helpful to distinguish between radical right parties and conservative ones. Moreover, previous studies that have employed the CHES have also adopted seven as a threshold for classifying radical right, for instance, Wike et al. (2023). In Appendix A of their study, the scholars specify that the indicators selected have to be over 7 to be considered a radical right position.

3.3 Independent Variables

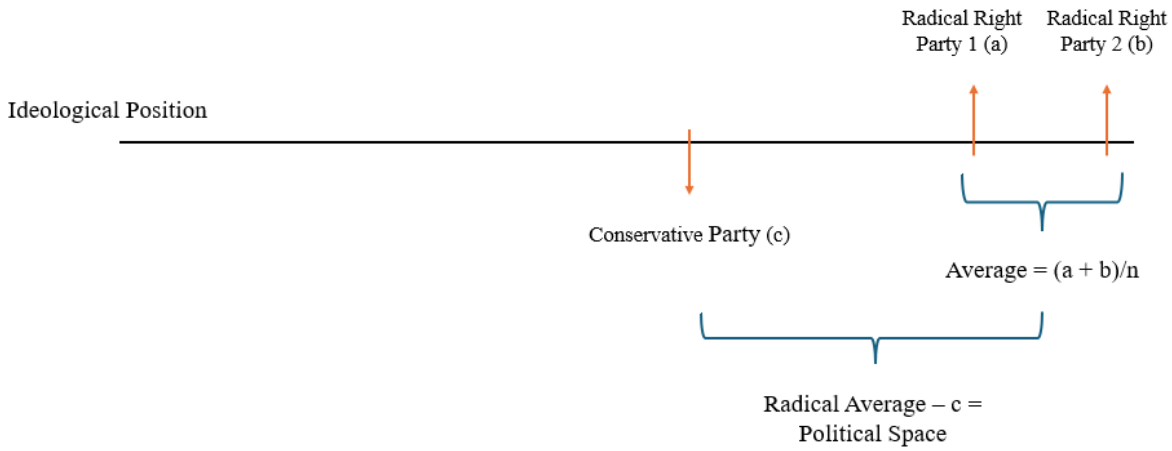
This empirical research will analyze multiple independent variables with the aim of understanding the effect of supply-side factors and demand-side ones on the dependent variable. The first independent variable of the study is the political space, which was quantitatively measured with the data provided by the CHES. The reason for selecting this source is that among the wide range of questions included in its survey, several are particularly relevant to this study, such as the positions of political parties on immigration policy. Thanks to this information, some of the most

sensitive areas of political debate can be examined. As stated in the theoretical framework, when RRPs present positions that are significantly more extreme than those of traditional conservative parties, they are more likely to attract support from individuals (Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). Therefore, when the political space between the conservative right and the radical right is greater, it can be expected that the latter will obtain a higher percentage of votes. Consequently, to operationalize this space, this project focuses on the party's position on social issues and immigration, as these areas reflect the distinctions between radical right and conservative party families.

On the one hand, a party's position on immigration was operationalized using the *immigrate_policy* indicator, which is measured on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 represents the most liberal position and 10 the most radical one. On the other hand, a party's stance on social issues, such as gender equality and rights for homosexuals, was measured with the *sociallifestyle* parameter, which measures the aspects just mentioned (Jolly et al., 2022). The scale of this indicator is the same as that of the one before. Both were renamed in the regression as *Immigration Policy* and *Social Policy*, respectively. This data was later collected for all RRPs based on the operationalization described in the previous section. An average was then calculated for their ideological positions on immigration and social issues. Afterward, the position of the conservative party most closely aligned with the radical right on these areas was also analyzed, in order to assess the extent of the ideological gap between the conservative right and the radical right. To facilitate the understanding of the steps, a diagram has been created to illustrate the process clearly:

Figure 1

Operationalization of the Political Space



Moreover, the second independent variable is the electoral proportionality, which was measured with the *Gallagher Index*, also known as the Least Squares Index. It represents the "disproportionality of elections", hence, the divergence between voting share and seats obtained, using the following formula where V is the percentage of votes spent on the given party and S is the percentage of seats won (Gwizdalla, 2008):

$$LSq = \sqrt{\frac{1}{2}} \sum_i (V_i - S_i)^2$$

The index results have been obtained from the Department of Political Science at Trinity College Dublin webpage, which collects data from worldwide electoral systems and has developed a dataset with all the Gallagher Index available. Nonetheless, data for all EU member states is not available for each of the election years included in this research. Consequently, in some instances, the Gallagher Index value from the closest available year has been used as a substitute for the corresponding year of the European election. Although the literature offers multiple approaches to measuring electoral disproportionality, such as the Loosemore–Hanby method, the Gallagher Index was selected for this analysis, as it is one of the most common scholarly operationalizations (Borisyuk et al., 2004). Hence, the Gallagher index measures disproportionality per election on a scale of 0 to 100, representing a range from perfect proportionality to high disproportionality (Gallagher, 1991).

The independent variable that represents income inequality was operationalized through the *Income Distribution* indicator from Eurostat, which is coded as sdg_10_41 . This coefficient represents "the ratio of total income received by the 20 % of the population with the highest income to that received by the 20 % of the population with the lowest income" (Eurostat, n.d.). Hence, when this value increases, there is a greater economic disparity between the richest and poorest sectors of society; in other words, the level of inequality in the country increases. Furthermore, unemployment levels were measured with the parameter *Unemployment Rate* provided by Eurostat, whose code is tesem120. This indicator is constructed with data from the European Labor Force Survey. It defines unemployed as a "person that is aged 15 to 74 who were: without work during the reference week, currently available for work, and actively seeking work". Both unemployment and income inequality have been operationalized using these parameters provided by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, which offers harmonized data that is easily comparable across countries (Atkinson et al., 2010). Furthermore, it was one of the few sources that provided continuous data on these variables for the entire time frame of this study.

Moreover, immigration was measured using the International Migrant Stock indicator, which was coded as *Migrant Stock* in the regression. The data about this parameter was collected from two databases: Human Progress and the UN. Although relying on a single data source reduces the risk of obtaining inaccurate results, it was not possible to identify a data source that covered the study's time period. Therefore, these two sources were used, since both adopt the same definition of migrant stock: "the number of people living in a country or area other than the one in which they were born, including refugees" (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2020) (Human Progress, n.d.). Consequently, Human Progress provided the data necessary to fill the number of migrants in each European Union member for the 2009, 2014, and 2019 elections, while the UN provided the same data for the 2024 election. However, although it has been theoretically established that combining data from both sources should not lead to inaccurate results, an empirical robustness check will be conducted using the statistical software employed for the data analysis.

Finally, this model also includes multiple control variables, which represent other factors that have been shown to influence the electoral support of RRPs. Hence, if they are not considered, this could undermine the internal validity of the study. Among the various factors that could affect the independent variable, the level of political corruption is one of them. The populist character of the RRPs is based on dividing society into two groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite. Consequently, when citizens experience political corruption, they are more likely to punish the national government during the European elections, since they act based on feelings of frustration and insecurity. RRPs capitalize on this situation and provide compelling narratives to establish a connection between these individual feelings and public actors or institutions. Therefore, when citizens are affected by these narratives, they are likely to blame the government and cast a punishment ballot in the elections (Ziller & Schübel, 2015).

Hence, as corruption could be a variable that affects the vote share of RRPs, it has been operationalized through the Public Sector Corruption Index, a parameter sourced from the V-Dem dataset. This indicator assigns a score to each country based on the experts' answers to the following question: "*To what extent do public sector employees grant favors in exchange for bribes, kickbacks, or other material inducements, and how often do they steal, embezzle, or misappropriate public funds or other state resources for personal or family use?"* (Coppedge et al., 2021, p. 306). The selection of this indicator was based on methodological concerns, as other suitable indicators, such as the Corruption Perception Index, lacked sufficient data to operationalize the variable over the selected time period. Additionally, in the regression model, this parameter has been renamed as *Public Corruption.*

Finally, economic growth is also another factor that has been considered. In his work, Stevenson (2001, as cited in Brückner & Grüner, 2020) compared 14 European countries and concluded that during periods of economic downturn, individuals tend to shift their preferences toward right-wing parties. On the other hand, during periods of economic growth, they tend to align more closely with left-wing parties. Theoretical explanations for this phenomenon were provided by Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou (2018), who argued that economic crises lead to the rise of RRPs when this financial downturn is perceived as a consequence of the government's inability to fulfill its responsibilities to its citizens. In other words, individuals believe that the party in government is incapable of managing the economic downturn, and hence, they lose trust in the public administration and its institutions. As a consequence, the government loses legitimacy, and citizens question the system, a factor that RRPs exploit by providing an alternative representation (Halikiopoulou & Vasilopoulou, 2018).

Regarding the operationalization of economic growth, this variable was represented by the Real GDP Growth, referred to as *GDP Growth* in the model, an index provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The definition this organization provides is the following: “the value at constant prices of final goods and services produced within a country during a specific time period” (2025). Moreover, the reason behind the selection of this parameter is that, as the IMF argues, this indicator is one of the most used operationalizations for national economic activity (International Monetary Fund, 2025).

Regarding the validity of the study, several factors within the research design strengthen its internal validity. For instance, the inclusion of control variables ensures that the observed relations between variables are not distorted by other factors unrelated to the hypothesis and theories presented (Spector & Brannick, 2011). Moreover, the data sources to develop the analysis are official sources, which reduces the possibility of measurement errors. In terms of external validity, the inclusion of all EU member states, rather than conducting a case study, enables the identification of general trends in the electoral support of RRPs. Finally, although this methodology has been developed to study the European Parliament elections, it could be replicated for different electoral contexts.

4. RESULTS

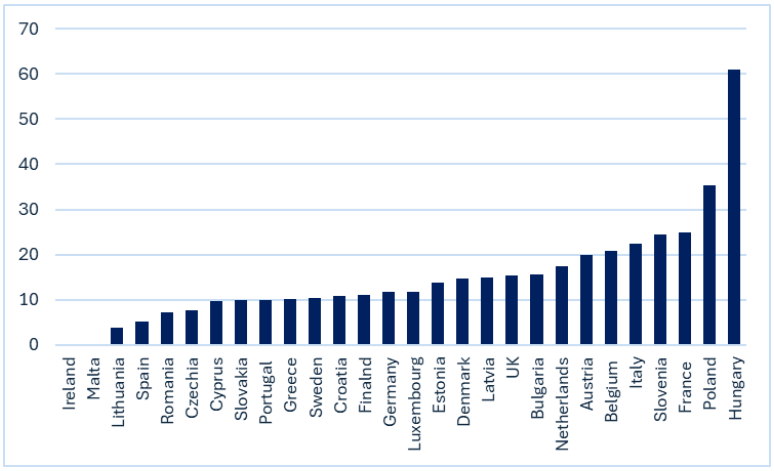
This section presents the statistical analysis conducted using the Stata program and the results obtained from this examination. This chapter is divided into multiple subparts that comprise the different steps executed to test the hypotheses proposed in the theoretical framework.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Before analyzing the regression results, it is essential to understand how the model's variables are distributed. Consequently, Table B.1 (see Annex B) displays the descriptive analysis of these parameters. One notable case is the dependent variable, *Vote Share*, whose mean is 13.585. This implies that during the time period of the study, and within the selected countries, the percentage of vote share obtained by radical right parties is relatively low. Nonetheless, this value cannot be generalized since there is considerable variation between cases. For instance, while in Hungary Fidesz (the RRP) was able to obtain a maximum of 71.13 percent of the votes in the 2009 elections, in Ireland this political family had a more modest performance with results closer to 0. Moreover, when focusing on the European electoral average of RPPs by country, this divergence is more noticeable. As shown in the graph below, the member state where the radical right has achieved the highest popular support throughout the last four European Parliamentary elections is Hungary, while in countries such as Ireland and Malta, this ideological family has largely gone unnoticed.

Figure 2

Scatterplot of RRPs' Vote Average by Member State from the 2009 to the 2024 European Elections



Regarding the independent variables of the study, multiple characteristics should be noted. Firstly, the mean of the *Gallagher Index* indicates that the electoral systems of the member states of the European Union exhibit moderate disproportionality. Although this index varies yearly, it is worth

noting that there are countries that consistently present a high level of disproportionality across the four elections, such as Hungary, whose score recorded a value of 17.8 during the 2014 elections. Moreover, other nations present more proportional values, for instance, Sweden, which obtained a score of 0.63 during the last European elections. Regarding the political space, there is more ideological divergence between the conservative and radical right in immigration policy. Consequently, this means that RRPs and mainstream conservative parties are closer ideologically in social issues than in migratory topics. However, it is interesting to note that in some instances, the radical right parties analyzed do not defend the most radical approach to these areas. This is the case of Latvia in the 2014 elections, where the National Alliance (RRP according to Mudde's conceptualization) had a less radical social policy stance than the Latvian Russian Union, a pro-Russian political party. This situation can be a direct outcome of the multiple conceptualizations that exist in the literature about the radical right. Since there is no scholarly agreement, the classification selected for this project follows Cas Mudde's definition. Consequently, there may be some political parties that adopt radical right postures on certain issues. However, they do not meet the three requirements necessary for the author to be classified as RRPs.

Concerning the other independent variables, *Unemployment* also presents a significant variation, with a difference of more than 20 points between the minimum and maximum values. This divergence can be attributed to the presence in the sample of nations that have been heterogeneously affected by economic downturns. For example, in the same election year, Austria had a 5.7 percent unemployment rate, while Spain reached a rate of 17.9 percent. Additionally, the *Migrant Stock* variable presents a significantly higher mean compared to the rest of the model´s variables. To address this imbalance and facilitate its interpretation, the variable will be log-transformed during the regression analysis. This transformation retains the information provided by the indicator while minimizing the scale of the variable. Following with *Income Inequality*, the parameter has one of the lowest variations, suggesting that the member states' values are concentrated within a narrow range.

Finally, regarding the control variables, on the one hand, *GDP Growth* shows a wide range between its minimum and maximum values, likely due to a similar situation to the one that produced the divergent *Unemployment* levels: the differing impact that economic recessions had on each country. This can be clearly reflected in the minimum and maximum values, where Latvia in 2009 had a GDP of -16, while other neighboring nations, such as Poland, achieved a GDP growth of 2.6%. On the other hand, *Public Corruption* presents a low mean value of 0.119, with all values located at the lower end of the distribution, as the maximum value is 0.609 and was obtained by Romania in

2009. Nevertheless, other countries present a zero perception of *Public Corruption*, such as Denmark, which obtained a 0 in the 2019 elections.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

To further understand the relationship between the model's variables, a correlation analysis was conducted, and the results are presented in Table B.2 (see Annex B). It is essential to highlight the correlation of the dependent variable with the independent ones. Regarding the *Gallagher Index,* it presents a significant correlation of 0.297. Hence, this would imply that an elevated disproportionality in the electoral systems could be linked to a higher percentage of RRPs' votes. Regarding the political space both of them, *Immigration Policy* and *Social Policy*, present a positive and significant correlation with *Vote Share*. Therefore, this suggests that if the political space between the radical right and the conservative wing widens, the former political family will tend to gain more electoral support in European elections. On the contrary, *Unemployment* presents a negative and significant correlation coefficient; therefore, this demonstrates that higher levels of unemployment are correlated with lower vote shares for the radical right. Regarding *Migrant Stock*, although the correlation is positive, it is not statistically significant. As a consequence, this suggests that the presence of migrants may not be a variable that explains the increase in the RRPs' vote share.

Moreover, based on these results, it can also be inferred that the model does not exhibit multicollinearity among the variables. In other words, none of the independent variables has a high correlation with any of the other independent variables or with the control parameters. For this reason, the internal validity of the study would be strengthened. However, to ensure the absence of multicollinearity and to continue improving and testing the model's validity, multiple statistical tests are conducted in the following section.

4.3 Internal Validity Tests

Although the study of correlations suggests that there are no multicollinearity issues, the Variance Inflation Factor has also been examined to confirm this conclusion statistically. Table B.3 (see Annex B) displays the results of this indicator. As can be observed, there is no case where the value of this parameter is above 2 for any of the variables. Thus, this quantitatively demonstrates that the model's indicators do not exhibit multicollinearity; therefore, the internal validity of the statistical model is strengthened.

Furthermore, the Hausman test has been conducted with the aim of examining whether it is adequate to perform a regression with fixed or random effects. As demonstrated by the data provided in Table B.4 (see Annex B), the p-value (0.17) of the Hausman's regression is greater than 0.005. As a result, the null hypothesis, which defends that the random effects model is adequate, cannot be rejected. Thus, including fixed effects, rather than random ones, does not have a significant impact on the final results. As a consequence, the linear regression model developed to test the previously formulated hypotheses will include random effects.

Finally, the Beusch-Pagan Test has also been performed to verify whether the regression's residuals exhibit heteroskedasticity. As shown in Table B.5 (see Annex B), the Beusch-Pagan test yields a p-value below 0.05; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that the variance is not constant, and thus, the model's errors exhibit heteroskedasticity. Since homoscedasticity is a fundamental assumption of the linear regression model, this situation will be corrected by employing one of the most common statistical solutions, using Huber-White standard errors, which are unaffected by heteroskedasticity (Croux et al., 2004).

4.4 Linear Regression

Considering the previous tests conducted, the model's regression with random effects and robust errors was estimated in Stata to determine whether the findings are consistent with the hypotheses. Table 4.1 indicates the relationship between the study's dependent variable and the remaining parameters, including alternative models to study the significance levels.

Table 4.1

Linear Regression Results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Vote Share without control variables	Vote Share with control variables	Vote Share without control variables and excluding France	Vote Share with control variables and excluding France
Gallagher Index	0.3646	**0.2662**	**0.4796**	**0.3894**
	(0.4040)	**(0.4198)**	**(0.4245)**	**(0.4420)**
Immigration Policy	2.3279*	**2.2090***	2.2992*	2.2040*
	(1.0954)	**(1.0737)**	(1.1298)	(1.1100)
Social Policy	0.0347	**-0.0839**	0.2465	0.1137
	(0.4521)	**(0.4610)**	(0.4639)	(0.4852)
Unemployment	-0.2087	**-0.0400**	-0.1496	-0.0012
	(0.2757)	**(0.2933)**	(0.2652)	(0.2882)
Income Inequality	-2.7601+	**-3.4768***	-3.0014+	-3.6619*
	(1.5223)	**(1.7501)**	(1.5797)	(1.7799)
Migrant Stock	1.7100+	**1.8557+**	1.5195	1.6360
	(0.9949)	**(1.0111)**	(0.9795)	(0.9996)
GDP Growth		**0.2670**		0.2337
		(0.1804)		(0.1740)
Public Corruption		**8.6430**		8.2913
		(11.7334)		(12.1126)
Constant	-0.2643	-0.3904	2.0121	2.1269
	(17.3989)	(17.2453)	(17.0133)	(16.9744)
Adjusted R-squared	-	-	-	-
AIC	837.1019	839.4941	804.106	806.8671
F	-	-	-	-

N	110	110	106	106

$^{+}$ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

4.4.1. Hypothesis 1: The Political Space

The first hypothesis of the study aims to determine whether the political space between the radical right and conservatives could favor the RRPs' vote share. In other words, this hypothesis argues that *the greater the political space between the center right and the radical right, the higher the vote share of RRPs.* This political space was operationalized in the model through the *Immigration Policy* and *Social Policy* indicators. Regarding the former, in Models 1 and 2, it is significant at a 95% confidence level, and it has a positive coefficient. This implies that when the political space between the radical right and the conservative, concerning immigration issues, increases, the RRPs are electorally benefited. Specifically, each unitary increase in the political space has as a consequence an increase in the RRPs' vote share by 2.2090. Nonetheless, there is a distinct situation when examining the political space in relation to the social sphere. The direction of the coefficient is negative, implying that as the political space increases, the radical right obtains a lower percentage of the vote share in European elections. However, since the coefficient is not significant in any of the first two models, no final conclusions can be drawn about the statistical relationship between the political space and the vote share of RRPs concerning social policy.

4.4.2. Hypothesis 2: The Disproportionality of the Electoral System

The second hypothesis examines the relationship between the degree of disproportionality in the electoral system and the results of RRPs in the European elections. Thus, the hypothesis states the following: *The lower the disproportionality of the electoral system, the greater will be the RRPs' vote share at the European elections*, which will be tested by examining the indicator *Gallagher Index*. This parameter, when including control variables, has a coefficient of 0.2662; however, it does not hold significance in the regression model. Therefore, the aforementioned hypothesis cannot be either rejected or not rejected. There is not enough evidence in the statistical model to state the relation between the disproportionality of the electoral system and the RRPs' vote share. This hypothesis was also tested by excluding France from the sample, following the methodology presented by Arzheimer & Carter (2006) in their study about electoral disproportionality and RRPs' electoral results. This omission is a consequence of France being an outlier, as it is a country where the radical right has obtained remarkable results; however, simultaneously, the electoral system

presents a high degree of disproportionality. The results of this new regression are displayed in Models 3 and 4; however, excluding this country does not alter the direction or significance of the relationship. Nevertheless, there is an important change in the significance of the *Migrant Stock*, which will be later examined in the outliers analysis.

4.4.3. Hypothesis 3: Unemployment

The *Unemployment* parameter is used to assess the validity of the third hypothesis of the study, which states: *The higher the level of unemployment, the greater will be the vote share of the RRPs at the European elections.* As observed in Table 4.6, the coefficient of *Unemployment* is -0.04, which suggests that with an increase in the national unemployment level, the radical right would experience a decrease in popular support. It is worth noting that although the coefficient is not significant, which means there is no conclusive evidence to support the hypothesis, the direction of the relationship between the dependent variable and this parameter is not the one expected based on the theoretical framework. Furthermore, this variable loses the statistical significance presented in the correlations. This situation will be further analyzed in the following section, where the robustness checks are developed.

4.4.4. Hypothesis 4: Inequality

The following hypothesis of this research states that *the higher the level of inequality, the greater will be the RRPs' vote share at the European elections*. The national levels of inequality are represented in the model through the indicator *Income Inequality,* whose coefficient in the regression is -3.4768 and is significant at a 95% confidence level. Consequently, contrary to what was stated in the theoretical framework, when the level of inequality increases in a member state, the electoral results of the radical right worsen. Thus, the hypothesis in this case can be rejected since the relation between the variables is significant and opposite to the expected one. In the discussion section, this unexpected relation will be theoretically examined to find an adequate explanation for this outcome.

4.4.5. Hypothesis 5: Immigration

The last independent variable is *Migrant Stock*, which operationalizes immigration to verify the following hypothesis: *The higher the number of immigrants in the country, the greater will be the RRPs' vote share at the European elections*. As it is displayed, the coefficient of this variable is positive and significant at a 90% confidence level; consequently, this suggests that the relationship between the variables is as expected. It is essential to note that this variable underwent a logarithm transformation; therefore, the coefficient indicates that when the number of migrant stock increases

by 1 percent, the electoral support of RRPs increases by 1.8557 percentage points. As a consequence, the hypothesis proposed cannot be rejected, since the results conclude that an increase in the presence of immigrants in a member state has a positive effect on the European Parliament electoral support of the radical right.

4.4.6. Control Variables

Furthermore, although *GDP Growth* and *Public Corruption* are not independent variables, it is also important to analyze them due to their relationship with *Vote Share.* Based on the literature, it was expected that the former would have a negative relation with RRPs' electoral support; however, the results of the regression show a positive but non-significant relation. The direction of this relation could be explained by the sample and time frame examined. This research focuses on four years of European elections (2009, 2014, 2019, 2024); however, the only one where the effects of the Global Economic Recession can be perceived is the first one. Since the years in between are not studied, these effects could be lost through this exclusion. Consequently, this temporal scope limitation could have an impact on the relation between *GDP Growth* and the dependent variable, in addition to the fact that during the other three years a great majority of the countries experienced favorable economic conditions Finally, *Public Corruption* presents an expected coefficient, which represents that an unitary increase of *Public Corruption* leads to a more than 8 point growth of the *Vote Share* of RRP, nonetheless it is no significant, which could be a consequence of the fact that this variable does not present high levels of variation. However, the direction of the relation is what was established in the theoretical framework.

4.4.7 The Exclusion of France

Although the exclusion of France was theoretically based on the research conducted by scholars Arzheimer & Carter (2006) on the relationship between electoral disproportionality and the vote share of RRPs, after omitting it, the significance of a different parameter changed: *Migrant Stock*. In Models 1 and 2, this variable was significant at a 90 percent confidence level; however, in Models 3 and 4, this significance is lost. This situation will be further examined through an outlier analysis in the following sub-chapter to understand whether it is a consequence of France being a statistical outlier.

4.5 Robustness Checks

To ensure the validity of the results, multiple robustness checks have been conducted, and the results will be displayed in this section.

4.5.1. Significance Examination

One surprising finding of the regression analysis was the lack of significance of some variables that were significant in the correlation analysis. Consequently, each variable has been independently assessed in the regression to understand what other effect is causing this lack of significance. Nonetheless, the results of this statistical examination concluded that this situation is not related to the variable inclusion process, but rather it could be an outcome of the model employed. As displayed in Table B.6 (see Annex B), in an OLS regression, the independent parameters retain the significance observed in the correlation analysis. Hence, this issue may be a consequence of applying a panel data analysis, where the theoretical considerations differ from those of an OLS regression. Nonetheless, the control variables in this new regression remain insignificant, which could imply that, in this study, they do not hold significant predictive power for the dependent variable.

4.5.2. Migration Stock

The first test developed focuses on analyzing the impact of Migrant Stock, as two different databases were used in the operationalization. Although it was verified that the concept of migrant stock has the same theoretical definition in both, this robustness check will examine if this situation could have influenced the results. According to the information displayed in Table B.7 (see Annex B), the results of these new models do not lead to different conclusions from those reached with the initial findings presented in Table 4.1. The parameters that were significant in the general model have maintained their significance after these alterations. Moreover, the direction of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variable has persisted.

4.5.3. Outliers Analysis

Furthermore, the outliers of all the independent parameters have been calculated, with the aim of testing if the existence of these cases has influenced the results displayed in Table 4.1. Consequently, new models excluding the outliers in the parameters have been developed. The examination of outliers is a crucial step in statistical studies, as regression analysis can be easily affected by these observations. Thus, the existence of outliers could lead to biased conclusions (Walfish, 2006). Therefore, in this case, the interquartile range (IQR) approach has been used to identify these observations. This technique helps to detect the outliers of the sample by calculating "the difference between the first quartile and the third quartile" (Vinutha et al., 2018, p. 514). Hence, any observation that is located outside this range is classified as a potential outlier and is

excluded from the regression. Table B.8 (see Annex B) represents the results of these alternative models.

The outlier analysis has shown that the presence of outliers did not significantly distort the results obtained by statistically analyzing the original regression of the research. As can be observed above, the variables that present robust results are *Immigration Policy* and *Income Inequality*, which maintain their significance across all regressions. Additionally, Migrant Stock is a parameter whose results are more sensitive to model outliers, as the variable's significance can vary depending on the regression model. Regarding the French case introduced in the previous chapter, as shown by the number of observations in Model 6, none are considered outliers following the IQR method. This could be a consequence of the outlier methodology used or a factor inherent to the French national context. Finally, *Gallagher Index, Social Policy and Unemployment* do not provide robust conclusions, since they present variation depending on the outliers that are excluded from the model. Consequently, these results defend the conclusions obtained in the first section of the analysis.

5. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The electoral rise of the radical right at the national and European levels has led to a considerable number of scholars analyzing this phenomenon. There are two main approaches to assess the causes of the popular support of RRPs during elections: supply-side and demand-side factors. While previous studies focus on one of these frameworks, while overlooking the other, this thesis aims to address this gap in the literature with a longitudinal study of the following research question: *What is the effect of the demand and supply factors on the electoral support of radical right parties in the European Parliament since 2009?*

Regarding the supply-side factors, which encompass the political space and the electoral proportionality, the analysis led to the subsequent conclusions. Regarding the political space, the results point to different outcomes depending on whether social or immigration issues are considered. Hence, regarding the immigration political space, the regression analysis demonstrates that as the ideological division between conservatives and the radical right increases, RRP support experiences higher popularity at European elections. These results are consistent with the convergence and cleavage realignment theories stated by Spoon and Klüver (2019) and Rydgren (2007), respectively. However, the findings regarding the social sphere differ. When the political space concerns social issues, a radical posture obtains less electoral support than a moderate one. Authors such as Jennings (2020) have analyzed this phenomenon and proposed a reasoning that could explain the divergent direction of these variables. During the last years, RRPs have moderated their stance towards social groups that previously were negatively targeted, for instance, Front National, France's (the French radical right representative), has become an advocate of homosexual rights, despite being opposed before. This ideological shift is an electoral strategy that aims to obtain the widespread support of citizens, who are not comfortable with the social radical right ideas, by distancing themselves from being associated with biological racism and fascism. Consequently, depending on the policy area, the relationship between the political space and the vote share of RRPs differs.

Furthermore, the statistical regression does not provide enough evidence to conclude about the relationship between disproportional systems and the RPPs' vote share. Although the direction of the relationship between the variables suggests that disproportionate electoral systems benefit the radical right, contrary to what was expected, the lack of significance does not provide support for the proposed hypothesis. Arzheimer and Carter (2006), who obtained a similar result, propose a reason to explain this situation by stating that it is possible that the voters of the radical right are not discouraged from voting for this political family, as they are unaware of the consequences of

the disproportionate electoral systems. As stated before, the European elections are considered second-order; hence, the political knowledge about this process and its consequences is limited compared to national elections (Clark, 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising that voters are more motivated by political discomfort rather than a strategic approach (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006).

Focusing on the demand-side factors, these include *Unemployment*, *Income Inequality*, and *Migrant Stock*. Firstly, there is no conclusive evidence regarding the relationship between *Unemployment* and the *Vote Share* of RRPs, contrary to what was hypothesized. Therefore, these findings contradict the expectations predicted by Vlandas and Halikiopoulou (2016). A possible explanation for these results is that in Europe, increasing unemployment levels tend to benefit radical left parties more than right-wing ideologies. The decline in wealth leads to citizens having fewer resources, and hence, favoring income distribution measures, which are generally defended by left-leaning political parties. This theoretical framework was demonstrated during the 2008 economic crisis, when European radical left parties achieved record levels of popular support (Mádr, 2003).

Following with the effect of *Income Inequality* on the electoral support of RRPs, the results conclude that an increasing income inequality does not translate to a higher vote share for RRPs. Multiple authors have reached the same conclusion. For instance, in his study, Winlker (2019) analyzed the effect of income inequality on electoral support for radical parties from both ideological families. His results determined that this relation was only significant for left parties. This is theoretically supported by the median voter theorem, which predicts that as income inequality increases, citizens will demand more redistributive measures, a common factor in the electoral programs of left-wing parties. Additionally, regarding *Migrant Stock*, the conclusions align with the findings of Luo (2018). When the presence of migrants in the country increases, the vote share of RRPs in the European elections is also greater. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that when France is excluded from the sample, the significance of this parameter disappears. Although an outlier analysis was later conducted to further understand this situation, the examination did not yield any conclusive findings. Hence, for future research, it would be interesting to comprehend how the national French context could be influencing the relationship between these two variables.

Furthermore, it is notable that most of these parameters were not significant in the model's regression, despite being significant in the correlation analysis. Multiple explanations could account for this issue. From a statistical perspective, the examination revealed that this may be due to some of the statistical assumptions underlying the panel data analysis, as evidenced by the significance of all independent variables in an OLS regression. From a theoretical perspective, it is

worth considering that the analysis focuses on the European elections, which are considered second-order elections; thus, as stated before, this has implications for voting behavior. Therefore, there could be factors that although are significant at the national level, when focusing on the European Parliament, citizens do not regard them as important.

Finally, the internal validity of these results was tested through multiple robustness checks, including the development of alternative statistical models, which provided subsequent evidence. On the one hand, excluding the control variables did not yield any different conclusions from those obtained with the complete regression model. Moreover, the robustness check of the variable *Migrant Stock*, due to its operationalization issues, indicates that the different conceptualizations of the variable do not influence the results obtained. On the other hand, although all the independent variables present some cases that could be classified as outliers, excluding them from the regression does not result in considerable variation. Therefore, the conclusions concerning the hypothesis remain robust despite the existence of outlier observations.

Furthermore, this project has faced some limitations that must be acknowledged. Specifically, the operationalization of some selected variables was limited due to the restricted availability of information for the studied time period. Consequently, *Migrant Stock* was constructed by relying on two divergent databases, which can lead to methodological inconsistency. Moreover, regarding the *Gallagher Index* the unavailability of data for the selected time period and sample led to the use of the closest available years to the selected ones, which can also methodologically affect the conclusions. Additionally, the study's limited temporal framework, which only encompasses election years, may overlook certain relationships between the parameters. In addition, the loss of significance during the regression analysis suggests that there could be underlying statistical relationships that are not being accounted for in the current model.

Finally, considering the conclusions and limitations of this research, multiple recommendations can be presented for further research. Firstly, new academic research could examine the relationship between the electoral support of RRPs and the two theoretical explanations, using a time period that includes both election years and the intervening years. Consequently, this will enable the researcher better to comprehend the relationship between the study's variables, as more variation and observation will be included. Furthermore, other variables could be included, as a new branch of the literature, where authors such as Muis and Immerzeel (2017) are located, highlights the potential role of other supply-side factors, like media outlets, have in normalizing the radical right discourse. Furthermore, due to the divergent characteristics between national and European elections, it could be interesting to include supranational factors and examine how they could influence the voting behavior of individuals. Lastly, further research could be conducted on the

French case to identify the factors in its national context that influence the relationship between the variables.

In summary, this study contributes to the literature on the electoral support of RRPs at the European level by presenting an analysis that examines factors from both demand and supply-side approaches to study this issue. Nevertheless, the analysis of this phenomenon is complex, and the approach adopted in this thesis represents only one of many possible perspectives. Therefore, this research opens the door to further studies that could continue to explore this issue, deepening the understanding of the radical right-wing movement that Europe has experienced in recent years.

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7. ANNEX A: DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

Table A.1

Countries Included in the Sample

Election Year	2009	2014	2019	2024
Countries	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.
Total Observations	27	28	28	27

8. ANNEX B: ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS

Table B.1

Descriptive Analysis of the Variables

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Vote Share	110	13.585	14.597	0	71.13
Gallagher Index	110	6.263	4.158	.63	17.8
Immigration Policy	110	1.416	1.427	-.972	7.166
Social Policy	110	.903	1.606	-5.397	5.731
Unemployment	110	7.999	4.222	2	26.6
Migrant Stock	110	2010410.8	3254454.9	31379	16750084
Income Inequality	110	4.809	1.092	3.24	8.1
GDP Growth	110	.420	4.204	-16	9.3
Public Corruption	110	.119	.126	0	.609

Table B.2

Pairwise Correlations of the Variables

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1) Vote Share	**1.000**								
(2) Gallagher Index	**0.297***	1.000							

	(0.002)								
(3) Immigration Policy	**0.378***	0.009	1.000						
	(0.000)	(0.926)							
(4) Social Policy	**0.267***	0.202*	0.395*	1.000					
	(0.005)	(0.035)	(0.000)						
(5) Unemployment	**-0.220***	0.108	-0.132	-0.088	1.000				
	(0.021)	(0.260)	(0.169)	(0.362)					
(6) Migrant Stock	**0.090**	0.154	0.104	0.097	0.017	1.000			
	(0.348)	(0.108)	(0.280)	(0.312)	(0.862)				
(7) Income Inequality	**-0.249***	0.096	-0.057	-0.025	0.399*	0.038	1.000		
	(0.009)	(0.318)	(0.555)	(0.793)	(0.000)	(0.694)			
(8) GDP Growth	**0.101**	0.067	0.066	0.121	-0.310*	-0.031	-0.044	1.000	
	(0.293)	(0.488)	(0.492)	(0.210)	(0.001)	(0.747)	(0.647)		
(9) Public Corruption	**0.016**	0.171	0.083	0.166	-0.015	-0.282*	0.403*	0.039	1.000
	(0.867)	(0.073)	(0.387)	(0.083)	(0.878)	(0.003)	(0.000)	(0.685)	

**** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

Table B.3

Variance Inflation Factor

	VIF	1/VIF
Income Inequality	1.579	.633
Public Corruption	1.552	.644
Unemployment	1.431	.699

Social Policy	1.285	.778
Migrant Stock	1.226	.815
Immigration Policy	1.219	.821
Gallagher Index	1.146	.872
GDP Growth	1.142	.876
Mean VIF	1.323	.

Table B.4

Hausman Test

	Coef.
Chi-square test value	11.594
P-value	.17

Table B.5

Breusch-Pagan Test

Ho: Constant variance
Variables: fitted values of VoterShare
chi2(1) = 18.40
Prob > chi2 = 0.0000

Table B.6

OLS Linear Regression

	(1) Vote Share	(2) Vote Share	(3) Vote Share	(4) Vote Share	(5) Vote Share	(6) Vote Share	(7) Vote Share	(8) Vote Share
Gallagher Index	1.0431**							

	(0.3225)							
Immigration Policy		3.8629***						
		(0.9113)						
Social Policy			2.4305**					
			(0.8425)					
Unemployment				-0.7594*				
				(0.3245)				
Income Inequality					-3.3315**			
					(1.2451)			
Migrant Stock						2.0412*		
						(0.9879)		
GDP Growth							0.3542	
							(0.3354)	
Public Corruption								1.8733
								(11.1759)
Constant	7.0518**	8.1133***	11.3891***	19.6598***	29.6073***	-14.0177	13.4355***	13.3611***
	(2.4212)	(1.8282)	(1.5473)	(2.9327)	(6.1395)	(13.4291)	(1.3982)	(1.9321)
AdjustedR-squared	0.0799	0.1347	0.0630	0.0394	0.0535	0.0291	0.0011	-0.0090
AIC	894.7687	888.0098	896.7709	899.4971	897.8776	900.673	903.8072	904.909

F	10.46006	17.96709	8.323351	5.475895	7.158964	4.26925	1.115628	.0280978
N	110	110	110	110	110	110	110	110

$^{+}$ p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Table B.7

Migrant Stock Robustness Check

	(1) Vote Share complete model	(2) Vote Share without Migrant Stock
Gallagher Index	0.2662	0.3675
	(0.4198)	(0.3963)
Immigration Policy	2.2090*	2.3437*
	(1.0737)	(1.1059)
Social Policy	-0.0839	-0.1184
	(0.4610)	(0.5251)
Unemployment	-0.0400	-0.0768
	(0.2933)	(0.2984)
Income Inequality	-3.4768*	-3.4723*
	(1.7501)	(1.7376)
Migrant Stock	1.8557^{+}	
	(1.0111)	

GDP Growth	0.2670	0.2574
	(0.1804)	(0.1762)
Public Corruption	8.6430	2.9114
	(11.7334)	(12.0362)
Constant	-0.3904	24.8850***
	(17.2453)	(7.3972)
Adjusted R-squared	-	-
AIC	839.4941	839.9719
F	-	-
N	110	110

$^{+}$ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table B.8

Outliers Analysis

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Vote Share without Gallagher Index outliers	Vote Share without Immigration Policy outliers	Vote Share without Social Policy outliers	Vote Share without Unemployment Outliers	Vote Share without Income Inequality Outliers	Vote Share without Migrant Stock outliers
Gallagher Index	0.4230	0.3323	0.2125	0.2698	0.3291	0.2662
	(0.4477)	(0.4014)	(0.4187)	(0.4124)	(0.4375)	(0.4198)

Immigration Policy	2.0259^{+}	3.3033***	2.2418*	2.2925*	2.2311*	2.2090*
	(1.1648)	(0.8397)	(1.1209)	(1.1588)	(1.0970)	(1.0737)
Social Policy	-0.0768	-0.2189	-0.0874	-0.1146	-0.2499	-0.0839
	(0.6016)	(0.4501)	(0.6295)	(0.4681)	(0.4557)	(0.4610)
Unemployment	0.0212	0.0029	0.0124	-0.0556	-0.1828	-0.0400
	(0.2927)	(0.2840)	(0.2937)	(0.2921)	(0.4142)	(0.2933)
Income Inequality	-3.6090*	-3.4989*	-3.5598*	-3.2812^{+}	-3.8396*	-3.4768*
	(1.7717)	(1.7281)	(1.7388)	(1.8576)	(1.8794)	(1.7501)
Migrant Stock	1.9461^{+}	1.5136	1.8518^{+}	1.8229^{+}	1.7409^{+}	1.8557^{+}
	(1.0239)	(0.9526)	(1.0514)	(1.0227)	(1.0208)	(1.0111)
GDP Growth	0.2887	0.1874	0.2941	0.2645	0.2658	0.2670
	(0.1818)	(0.1748)	(0.1829)	(0.1800)	(0.1903)	(0.1804)
Public Corruption	9.1506	3.8597	10.5033	8.9989	10.6332	8.6430

	(12.0938)	(10.6594)	(11.6662)	(11.5848)	(11.8519)	(11.7334)
Constant	-2.1244	3.1822	-0.4582	-0.8822	3.4475	-0.3904
	(17.4345)	(16.6786)	(17.6816)	(17.2269)	(17.7438)	(17.2453)
Adjusted R-squared	-	-	-	-	-	-
AIC	818.2088	819.367	806.2299	833.166	799.1591	839.4941
F	-	-	-	-	-	-
N	107	108	105	109	104	110

$^{+}$ ***p* < .10,** * ***p* < .05,** ** ***p* < .01,** *** ***p* < .001**