

# Radical Right Parties – From True Competitors to Companions of the Center-Right?

A quantitative study on the policy positions of the right-wing  
parties and their voting behavior in the European Parliament

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## Abstract

Has the right-wing become more united as the Radical Right's electoral support has flourished? This thesis will examine whether the existing literature's claim that greater unity has developed among right-wing parties, meaning the Radical Right, Conservatives and Christian democrats, can be confirmed. The accommodative strategy supposes that in response to other parties emerging as electoral threats, the mainstream parties adapt to the new party's position to prevent this threat from materializing. In the wake of the refugee crisis the literature has further assumed that as the Radical Right increased their presences in national parliaments all over Europe, the mainstream parties have tended to an accommodative response.

This thesis has analyzed the party position at both the national and the European arena by looking at the ideological groups' behavior in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament. By looking at expert surveys and roll call votes this thesis has examined the three groups ideological' positioning on areas such as immigration and economic policy and looked at the groups' voting behavior in the European Parliament. As the European Parliament has both gained power over the last decades and is a meeting point for several European parties, this provided a good basis for the examination of the ideological groups' behavior.

On the basis of the analyses, the assumptions in the existing literature cannot be confirmed as there is little to no support for the research question that the Right has become more united. Instead, future research should look at country differences as east-west differences, rather than a difference at national and European level.

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## List of abbreviations

ALDE	The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
CHES	Chapel Hill Expert Survey
ECR	The European Conservatives and Reformists
EFD	The Europe of Freedom and Democracy
ENF	The Europe of Nations and Freedom
EP	European Parliament
EPG	European Party Group
EPP	The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)
EU	European Union
EUL/NGL	The European United Left/Nordic Green Left
G/EFA	The Greens/European Free Alliance
O.C.	Optimal Classification
RRP	Radical Right Parties
S&D	The Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European parliament

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In the recent decades Radical Right parties (RRPs) have entered the political landscape and increased their presence in parliaments all over Europe. Since the 1960s, RRP, along with other “niche” parties, have gained popularity based on issues such as the environment, immigration, and regional autonomy. RRP have been characterized as parties with flourishing support by virtue of charismatic leadership, but were predicted to have a limited lifespan (McDonnell and Werner, 2020, 1-2,25). However, the RRP in Europe have challenged the mainstream parties and, on several occasions, performed well in national parliamentary elections even with party leadership changes. The RRP’s influence has increased, and for this reason, they should no longer be viewed as “temporary protest parties,” but as established competitors of the center-right.

The RRP’s popularity has been viewed as a threat to mainstream parties’ electoral and governmental dominance (Meguid, 2005, 347). Some of the center-right parties have chosen to adapt and accommodate to the RRP’s positioning in response to the RRP’s increased influence. Across Europe center-right parties are leaning even further to the right in an attempt to attract voters that would otherwise vote for a RRP (Spoon & Kluver 2020, 273). Moreover, as the mainstream parties accommodate the RRP’s positioning, the center-right parties consider RRP and their politicians “koalitionsfähig” – acceptable for coalitions (Mudde, 2019, 20). To summarize, it is argued that more mainstream parties are moving to the right, while RRP are also being viewed as increasingly acceptable coalition partners.

Cas Mudde, one of the most prominent scholars on the literature on the Radical Right, adds to this and claims that RRP’s ideas are “openly debated in mainstream circles, while populist Radical Right policies are adopted, albeit it generally in (slightly) more moderate form, by mainstream parties” (2019, 21). The literature on political behavior and party positioning appears to agree that the right-wing parties are more united in their ideological positioning meaning the left – right political axis, as well as on political dimensions such as immigration and European integration. I will return to this in chapter 3.

To test the assumptions that the right-wing parties have become more united, my research question asks:

*Has the right become more united?*

To answer this question, I study the political ideology of Radical Right and Conservative/Christian democratic parties over the last decade in terms of expert evaluations and parliamentary votes in the European Parliament. The focus on Christian democrats and Conservatives is based on their traditional role as center-right parties. The parties on the right are more vulnerable to the RRP's electoral success, according to van Spanje (2010, 567), and will consequently be the ideological party groups analyzed in the thesis.

Moreover, in times of crisis, Radical Right parties have the opportunity to shine (Downes and Loveless, 2018). In the wake of the economic crisis in 2008 the RRP's support grew, and they have since increasingly established themselves on the European electoral arenas. The RPPs are therefore considered to have further anchored their establishment as parties in the wake of the economic crisis of 2008. (Downes and Loveless, 2018). For this reason, the timeframe for the thesis is set from 2009 to 2019.

### *The European Parliament*

The RRP's have also become notable features in the European Parliament (EP) and in the European elections. In the wake of the economic crisis, the Radical Right increased its representation in the EP through the 2009 European elections. As Startin states, "the combination of the legitimization of immigration as an issue and the growing sense of global economic uncertainty reinforced by the worldwide recession unsurprisingly led to the election of more Radical Right MEPs from more EU countries" (2010, 442-3). This trend did not change in the 2014 European elections. In the 2014 elections, almost a fourth of the votes went to representatives from protest parties – especially anti-establishment representatives. This brought more RRP's into the European Parliament than ever before (Grabbe and Groot, 2014, 33). For this reason, it is interesting to investigate if a change in party positioning on the right in national parliaments is also reflected in the European Parliament.

Furthermore, the EP is the only directly elected supranational assembly and is a productive arena for the investigation of ideological groups across national borders. Over the last few years, the EP has increased its power – especially due to the co-decision procedure introduced by the Treaty of Maastricht (Crombez, 1997), that amongst other things gave the EP veto power. The EP is organized by party groups primarily based on ideological traditions that largely dominate the politics of the parliament. Hence, the behavior of the ideological groups can easily be compared to the national parties' ideological and policy dimension positioning, and the EP is a good arena for examining whether the parties' positions are reflected in the voting behavior.

To summarize, the thesis aims to answer whether the ideological groups of the Radical Right, the Conservatives, and the Christian democrats have got closer to each other and whether this is reflected in their voting behavior and at the European arena by looking at the European Parliament. The change in position will be examined on the basis of expert surveys, and the groups' behaviors will be examined using votes from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament.

## **1.1 Outline**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. In the second chapter, the reader is introduced to a conceptual clarification of the ideological groups and an elaboration of the European Parliament and the European Party Groups (EPG). The definition of the “Radical Right” is said to be a ‘definitional minefield’ and it is therefore essential to clarify what the thesis refers to when discussing Radical Right parties.

In the third chapter, I introduce the reader to the literature and theoretical framework that is relevant to the research question. Several hypotheses will be presented, organized into three sub-groups: party position, party group cohesion, and vote and coalition patterns. Party position refers to the placement of the different party families on a variety of policy dimensions; party group cohesion refers to how united the parties are in an EPG, and vote and coalition refers to who votes together and who does not. The chapter begins with an introduction to the RRP's establishment and criteria for how new parties may influence a party system. The chapter goes on to cover an important theory on motivation for party behavior and one on parties' strategic choices when threatened by other parties. Chapter four introduces the data and methods used to examine and answer the research question together with the hypotheses.

The results of the analyses are presented in the fifth and sixth chapters. Party positions in the fifth chapter, and vote and coalition patterns in the sixth chapter. In the fifth chapter, I begin with evaluating the parties' positions, first with a descriptive analysis using point maps, followed by a more statistical analysis using regression tables. Both include a variety of dimensions on which Radical Right parties are expected to have taken a radical stance. The vote and coalition patterns are analyzed in the sixth chapter using an optimal classification model on approximately the same political dimensions as used when analyzing party positions.

In the final chapter, the results of the analyses are discussed before presenting a conclusion to the research question.

## 2. BACKGROUND

This chapter is the thesis's conceptual toolbox. It reviews the thesis's key conceptual elements and addresses their respective relevance and importance. This section combines looking at the three ideological groups (Radical Right, the Conservatives, and the Christian democrats) and the relevance of the European Parliament as a case in two sub-chapters. The first sub-chapter presents the ideological groups. It is essential to distinguish between these and their respective sub-groups encompassed by the label of the far right. The second sub-chapter presents the EP, and key elements that make the EP a good arena for the examination of the relationship between the ideological groups.

### 2.1. Ideological Group

“[P]arties are said to act as “aggregators”, adding together social demands, channeling them into the political system and reaching crucial decisions as to how they are to be traded off in a context of limited resources” (Hix and Lord, 1997, 7). Parties are therefore seen as organizations which channel people's will into societal structures such as the political assembly. Parties often follow the dividing lines of class, religion, region, and ethnicity and are divided into different party families (Hix and Lord, 1997, 9). As this thesis aims to distinguish between and compare parties on the right of the left-right dimension, it is crucial to clarify the classifications for the ideological groups in focus.

The data used in this thesis to study at national parties positioning, called CHES (Bakker, Hooghe, Jolly, Marks, Polk, Rovny, Steenbergen, Vachudova, 2020 : Polk, Rovny, Bakker, Edwards, Hooghe, Jolly, Koedam, Kostelka, Marks, Schumacher, Steenbergen, Vachudova and Zilovic, 2017: Bakker, de Vries, Edwards, Hooghe, Jolly, Marks, Polk, Rovny, Steenbergen and Vachudova, 2015), builds its ideological groups on Hix and Lord's classifications of party families from 1997. Hix and Lord look at a variety of policy dimensions, such as economic issues, sociopolitical issues, and parties' stance on European Integration (Hix and Lord, 1997, 9). This thesis will rely on this classification as a baseline when discussing the parties' positioning and behavior. For the Radical Right parties, due to the great difference that underlies in the literature, it is further necessary to delimit what the thesis refers to when it comes to these parties. Therefore, in addition to Hix and Lord's classification, this thesis also

applies Cas Mudde's definition to conceptualize RRP. Mudde is one of the main contributors to the literature on the Radical Right Parties.

### 2.1.1. The Radical Right

#### *Far-right, Radical Right, Extreme Right, Populist Right*

Radical right, far-right, extreme-right, and radical right populism are terms that are often used interchangeably. As there are several definitions and understanding of what the radical right is, it is important to outline what is understood by RRP in this thesis. This thesis is concerned with the parties encompassed by the term "radical right".

Cas Mudde describes the term "*far-right*" as those hostile to liberal democracy and distinguishes between two broader sub-groups: the extreme right and the radical right (Mudde, 2019, 7). The *extreme right* is described as those who "reject [...] the essence of democracy, that is, popular sovereignty and majority rule" (Mudde, 2019, 7). The *radical right*, however, "accepts the essence of democracy, but opposes fundamental elements of liberal democracy, most notably minority rights, the rule of law, and separation of powers" (Mudde, 2019, 7). The Radical Right is more commonly represented in the electoral arena than the extreme right. Another difference between the two sub-groups made by Mudde is that the radical right has trust in the power of people, while the extreme right does not (Mudde, 2019, 7). There are the following historical mainstreams for the Radical Right family: (1) the neo-fascist parties, (2) the nationalist and xenophobic parties, and (3) a combination of nationalist ideology and a string of anti-tax protests against the welfare state (Hix and Lord, 1997, 42).

Additionally, the term *radical right populists* is often used interchangeably with those mentioned above. According to Mudde, the radical right can be populist, and in the twenty-first century, predominantly most of them are (2019, 8). A collective focus in the literature on radical right populism consists of three elements: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde, 2010, 1174-5). *Nativism* refers to an ideology based on a mixture of nationalism and xenophobia. The state should only be inhabited by the nation, and there is a separation between the nation and "the others" (Mudde, 2010, 1173-4). There is great variation in who is considered as outsiders and how "dangerous" these outsiders are thought to be (McDonnell and Werner 2020, 22). *Authoritarianism* refers to a belief in a society with strict rules and where

violations of these guidelines deserve harsh sanctions. *Populism* is based on the argument that the elite is corrupt and a distinction between them and “the pure people” (Mudde, 2010, 1175).

RRPs also stand out from other parties through their stance on political issues. On sociopolitical issues, the right parties are all anti-immigration, anti-abortion, anti-LGBT rights (Hix and Lord 1997, 42-44). In addition, radical right parties are strongly opposed to European integration, with some exceptions such as the Belgian Vlaams Blok and the Polish PiS, the latter not being opposed to European Integration but somewhat skeptical (Hix and Lord 1997, 42-44; Kopecký and Mudde, 2002, 312).

This thesis focuses on the Radical Right parties together with Conservative and Christian democratic parties. The Radical Right parties differ from the two other groups in many ways. The Conservatives and Christian democrats are usually more centric and leader-centric (Mudde, 2019, 50). Their political focus often revolves around a handful of policy issues on which they campaign. The most prominent political issue clusters, as Mudde puts it, are: immigration, security, corruption, and foreign policy (2019, 31). Radical Right parties are typically obsessed with *immigration* policy. This issue is two-fold and comprehends both integration and immigration. The Radical Right typically highlights immigrants and refugees as an existential threat. The nativist tendency of the Radical Right parties is often expressed in their immigration policy (Mudde, 2019, 32-33), and in their *security* policies. As with immigration policy, the nativist feature of Radical Right is a component in their stance on security policy – where “aliens” and “the others” are seen as the main threat to the native’s security. Law and order weigh heavily in their security policy, together with the point of view that the elite is corrupt (Mudde, 2019, 33-37). The last of the four issue-clusters Mudde points to as characteristic for Radical Right politics is foreign policy. Mudde describes it as a “dog-eat-dog world in which internal relations are a zero-sum game”; in other words, every man for himself. Radical Right-wing parties are usually very suspicious of supranational organizations such as the EU (Mudde, 2019, 37-38).

This thesis is concerned with the parties encompassed by the “right-wing” umbrella. As the focus of this thesis is parties in modern democracies, the most extreme groups have naturally not been included in the analysis, as they are not in the “electoral league”. In other words, this thesis analyzes parties that are usually described as Radical Right or Radical Right populist and can be characterized by the definition *above*. Other definitions of right-wing populism include

more specific characteristics, but their overall common feature is the set of ideas characterized by an antagonism between the people and the elite (McDonnell and Werner 2020, 24-25). Given that this thesis seeks to examine ideological groups, a broad definition encompassing multiple actors and capable of offering up a more comprehensive explanation, will be most helpful.

The prominent characteristics of both RRP's definition and their policy will be examined in more detail in the thesis' section on analysis.

### 2.1.2. Conservatives and Christian democrats

The Conservatives and Christian democrats are viewed as the prominent political families on the right and are usually referred to as right-wing mainstream or center parties – and are the other ideological groups that will be investigated in this thesis. These two party families rarely exist within the same party system; nevertheless they can in many ways be viewed as functional equivalents (Gallagher, Laver, and Mair, 2011, 260). For this reason, it is important to include both when investigating whether the right has become more united.

Hix and Lord portray the Christian Democrats as the main family on the political right in those states that were traditionally aligned with the church of Rome during the reformation and counter-reformation (Hix and Lord, 1997, 29). Conservatives on the other hand, were the main center-right party in those states that had independent national churches. While this description does set out a general rule, there are exceptions. Spain, Portugal, and Italy have traditionally had Christian Democrats as their principal center-right parties. However, over time this tradition has become less marked, and more national and secular positions have become dominant on the political right. (Hix and Lord, 1997, 29-32)

On sociopolitical issues such as abortion and divorce, the Christian democrats are usually to the right of the Conservatives. On economic issues, things are the other way round. One of the Christian Democrats' typical characteristics is that they are firmly in favor of European Integration – a subject where the Conservatives have been more divided after the Maastricht Treaty (Hix and Lord, 1997, 29-32). In the European Parliament these two ideological groups are mostly joined in a party group denominated European People's party. In addition, there is another group that also includes Conservative parties, the European Conservatives and

Reformists. However, this party group is rather more extreme than the European People's party, and also includes several parties that can be defined as RRP.

I have now set out which ideological groupings the thesis analyzes, and conceptualized the terms used in my analysis. Next, it is important to outline the main features of the European Parliament and highlight its relevance for the thesis.

## **2.2. The European Parliament**

The European Parliament (EP) is the only body in the EU that is directly elected. Each member country is allocated seats in proportion to its population (Servent 2019, 333). This means, for example, that Germany has 96 seats in the EP while Sweden, which has a smaller population, is allocated 21 seats (European Union 2020). Over the years, the power of the EP has grown.

There are two central aspects of the EP that account for the EP being a good case to study when looking at party behavior in Europe. Firstly, the EP has been through several enlargements, and has gone from a, as stated by Hix and Høyland, “a toothless Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community to an equal partner with the European Union (EU) Council in almost all policy areas” (Hix and Høyland, 2013, 172). There have been two major steps on the road to enhancing the EP's power since the treaty of Rome in 1957. Firstly, the introduction of the cooperation procedure that came with the Single European Act in 1987, which gave greater weight to the EP's opinion, albeit without giving the EP power to block legislative proposals (Crombez, 1997). Secondly, the 1993 Maastricht Treaty added the co-decision procedure to the then existing cooperation procedure. The co-decision procedure gave the Parliament the power to veto decision, giving it greater legislative weight (Hix and Høyland, 2013, 172).

Secondly, The European elections are considered second-order elections, meaning that voters consider the elections for the EP less important than national elections. In the European election, the electorate's vote is based on a sense of how parties have performed on the national arena rather than on the European arena (Hix and Lord, 1997, 87-90). As a result, legislators at European level are held accountable by the electorate to a lesser degree. This means that the parties can act without too much concern for their voters' opinions, and can even act according to the preference of the European party group or the national party.

### *Responsibilities*

To fully understand the EP's power, it is important to consider the decision-making processes of which the EP forms part, and what power it holds. The EP's power is divided into three main branches: legislation, monitoring, and budget. Within the legislative area, the EP has the power to, among other things, adopt laws jointly with the Council based on proposals from the European Commission; decision-making power for international agreements; ask the European Commission for legislative proposals (European Parliament Powers and Procedures, n.d.) In terms of supervisory responsibility, the EP can undertake democratic scrutiny of EU institutions, elect the of the President of the Commission, and approve the Commission. The EP has the opportunity to make no-confidence motions, approve terms and supervise the way the EU budget has been used (European Parliament, n.d. a). Within budget and financing, the EP can put together a budget jointly with the EU Council, and approve the EU's long-term budget (European Parliament Powers and Procedures, n.d.)

Furthermore, the EP works in two different ways – through committees and plenary sessions. The EP consists of 20 committees, each with its own area of responsibility. The committees are responsible for preparing and preparing legislative proposals. Party groups discuss this among themselves and opt to either propose a halt to a proposal or approve it. The plenary sessions vote on proposals (European Parliament Powers and Procedures, n.d.)

### *Party groups in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament*

The European Parliament is divided into various European Party Groups (EPG). These are groups in the European Parliament composed of a variety of parties from the different member states. Mostly the EPGs are organized by political affiliation. However, the literature argues that there are two reasons why a party joins an EPG: ideological and pragmatic reasons respectively. The traditional explanation is based on ideological compatibility between the political groups forming the party group. The alternative explanation posits that parties join the party groups to obtain the benefits that will follow (Bressanelli, 2012, 5-8). Most commonly, the reason lies in ideological compatibility, with pragmatic reasons making the EPGs even more attractive. The affiliation to an EPG will be discussed in the next chapter together with the benefits of being affiliated to such a group in the EP and the influence of both the EPG and the national party over parties in the EP. The EPGs primarily discussed in this thesis are the Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the European Conservatives and

Reformists, the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group, and Europe of Nations and Freedom (only in the 8<sup>th</sup> term).

The 7<sup>th</sup> European Parliament consisted of the following EPGs: The Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats) (EPP), the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament (S&D), the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE), the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), the Greens/European Free Alliance (G/EFA), the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (EUL/NGL) and the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group (EFD). Not all MEPs are attached to one of the EPGs. In the 7<sup>th</sup> term, there were 26 non-attached members (Previous European Parliamentary Elections, n.d.). The two first EPGs are the two groups commanding the largest number of seats and are considered to be the dominant EPGs on right side of the left-right axis (Servent, 2019, 333).

In the 8<sup>th</sup> European parliament there was not much change in the EPGs composition except for the establishment of a new euro-sceptic Radical Right EPG, the Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) (McDonnell and Werner, 2018, 748-9). The research question focuses on three ideological groups: The Radical Right, the Conservatives and the Christian democrats.

In both terms the EPP had the largest number seats of all the EPGs. In the 7<sup>th</sup> European elections, the EPP had 265 seats (36.1%) and ECR 55 seats (7.47 %). The EFD had only 35 seats (4.35%) during the same term (Previous European Parliamentary Elections, n.d.). In the 8<sup>th</sup> term the EPP had around 220 seats, while the ECR won 15 more seats than the previous term. Both the EFD and ENF were among the EPGs with the lowest number of seats, but together they had around the same seats as the ECR. It is also relevant to note that the ENF was not established until 2015.

### **2.3. Summary**

This chapter has demonstrated the diversity of terminology used to describe the far right and the Radical Right. RRP have come to stay, and evaluating their relationship with the mainstream right parties is more important than ever. As one of the biggest EPGs in the EP consists of the two mainstream center-right party families, it is all the more important to look at the political right both on the national arenas and on the European one. Other reasons why

the EP are a good case for investigating parties' behavior and positioning have also been presented, including their "free-pass" from electoral punishment and the growing power of the EP.

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The political positions and party behavior require additional background knowledge, and the definitions of the ideological groups. In order to get a better grasp of the topicality of the research question, a review of the existing literature and of the theoretical framework is required. This chapter addresses literature relevant to the research question. It combines literature that focuses on the parties on the right on the one hand and voting patterns and coalition formation on the other. In addition, it provides relevant theoretical frameworks that can advance our understanding of the underlying patterns in the literature – together with the different aspects of the research question.

Two theoretical frameworks are seen as highly relevant: one on strategic choice and how well-established parties may react to other parties that are being electoral threats (Meguid, 2005), and one on goal-motivated party behavior and why parties tend to behave the way they do (Muller and Strøm, 1999). The chapter presents four hypotheses. The timeframe of all the hypotheses is set to 2010–2019, after the financial crisis and before and after the refugee crisis.

#### 3.1. The Radical Right as an electoral threat

As the Radical Right is considered an electoral threat to many center-right parties, a short insight into the establishment of the Radical Right is required to understand their role in the political landscape. In addition, performance theory is presented to better understand how the establishment of the RRP can affect mainstream parties.

##### *Performance Theory*

For established mainstream parties to even take a stance on whether or not to respond to new parties/niche parties, the new party/niche party needs to have actual influence on the party system/political space. Harmel and Svåsand point out two ways that “new” political parties may influence the party system. The first one involves new parties that become significant players in terms of their electoral support. They are large and successful enough to be noticed by the other parties. The other way pointed out is from the mainstream parties’ point of view and if they experience the “new” parties as a threat. (Harmel and Svåsand 1997, 315-6).

When it comes to exerting influence, Harmel and Svåsand point out that probably the most important way a new party affects the other players is through “influencing the very identity of other parties by causing them to change their key issue/ideological position (1997, 316). For this to be possible, the new party must be perceived as a legitimate threat by the other parties – like loss of electoral support” (1997, 317). Further, Harmel and Svåsand (1997, 317) presents two conditions that must be held for a party to be considered as a threat:

1. The new party must gain enough electoral support to be noticed. An established party will not adapt or change its course if no evidence could indicate that a new party should or could be viewed as a threat.
2. Already established parties must believe that the new party’s success is substantially at their expense. The party must genuinely believe that the new party is in fact a threat to their position.

As shown in the introductory chapter, RRP’s have performed well in national elections and in the European elections. Hence, the first condition has been met. As the RRP’s are to the right in the political spectrum, and are proven to have gained electoral support, the electorate must come from somewhere, and the nearest other parties in ideological sense are the center-right parties Conservatives/Christian democrats. Before further discussing the party families’ behavior in relation to each other, explanations for RRP’s electoral support will be reviewed.

#### *The reasons for RRP’s electoral support*

Two approaches, demand-side and supply-side, are often used to explain the rise of the Radical Right parties. There is little consensus in the literature on the effect of demand-side or supply-side explanations on support for the Radical Right or Radical Right party success (Spoon and Kluver, 2020, 275), and the two explanatory approaches should be viewed in a complementary way rather than competing (Van der Brug and Fennema, 2007 in Muis and Immerzeel, 2017, 912). The *demand-side* explanation emphasizes the RRP’s role as a protest party – and that grievances make the Radical Right attractive. According to Spoon and Kluver, this includes modernization, economic, and cultural grievances (2020, 275). Those voters that are left behind by modernization, globalization, or are facing financial hardship, are among those who have primarily voted for a RRP (Spoon and Kluver, 2020, 275-6). Following the *supply-side*

explanations, the RRPs' successful mobilization and establishment is "the result of constraints and opportunities that the political-institutional context offers, most importantly the electoral system and the "political space" left open by political competitors" (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017, 912). In other words, supply-side explanations emphasize the political opportunity structures, which includes the type of electoral system (Spoon and Kluver, 2020, 275).

In light of these approaches, the refugee crisis of 2014 and 2015 provided "ammunition" for the RRPs' debate on, for example, immigration policy. According to Mudde, this also worked as a catalyst for the process of "mainstreaming" the RRPs (Mudde, 2019, 4). This resulted in considerable support for many of the RRPs in 2014 and 2015, and the policy issue in light of the crisis one of the most debated issues at the time. In other words, the policy area of immigration and security has grown to be one of the most important issues which the RRPs, in a sense, have dominated with their strong opinion.

As discussed, according to Harmel and Svåsand's (1997) first condition, RRPs can be considered an electoral threat, as they have gained enough electoral support to be noticed. In several countries they have been in government, or been part of coalition governments (Golder, 2016, 477). Secondly, it is shown that the RRPs and the center-right parties are competing for some of the same electoral supporters and that the electoral gains for the RRPs have often been at the expense of center-right parties (Downes and Loveless, 2018, 148-50). This will be elaborated and discussed further in the following section.

### **3.2. The Center-Right and the Radical Right**

As parties of the Radical Right have entered the electoral arena and established themselves as "true competitors" to the right of the political scale, political party patterns in many European party systems have been reshaped. The Radical Right's electoral gains have caused a change in party competition, especially on the right (Wagner and Meyer, 2017, 84, 98-99). The RRPs' growing influence is as relevant today as when they were first established. Moreover, RRPs are one of the party families that have been given much attention by scholars in the last 30 years. A large share of the literature on party behavior investigates how established parties react to a shift in either public opinion or elections, and also reasons why parties have obtained increased support. An aspect of party behavior that has received less attention to is parties' response to

other parties' behavior (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020, 829). However, a few scholars have touched upon this aspect. Amongst them are Abou-Chadi and Krause (2020), as well as Bonnie Meguid (2005), who has mapped out some of the different [response] strategies parties tend to use.

In addition, the economic crisis of 2008 has been given a lot of scholarly attention, and scholars have recognized that the RRP's have viewed the crisis as an electoral opportunity (Downes and Loveless, 2018). As stated, the timeframe for the thesis and hence the hypotheses are set to 2010-2019. Moreover, this section will outline literature and findings on the relationship between the RRP's and the center-right parties, together with strategic choice theory.

### 3.2.1. Party position: Theory

#### *Strategic Choice Theory*

Bonnie Meguid (2005) has mapped out a *strategic choice theory* on party behavior, where she has examined the role of mainstream party strategy in niche party success. The theoretical framework states that when a niche party or new party enters competition for government, the mainstream (and dominant) parties are left a choice between a dismissive, accommodative, or an adversarial strategy (Meguid, 2005). While RRP's are generally no longer considered new parties, they often bring new and untraditional positions to the political agenda, thereby fitting with the typology the framework was meant for (Meyer and Miller, 2015).

According to Meguid's strategy theory, if the mainstream party considers the issue as too challenging to address or unimportant, they can choose to ignore it – opting for the dismissive strategy. When not taking a stance on the issue introduced by the niche party, the mainstream party sends out a signal that the issue lacks importance. The voters may be pursued by the mainstream's assessment of the issue as insignificant and choose not to give the niche party any more attention on the subject (Meguid, 2005, 349). This strategy has the consequence that the mainstream party does not challenge the niche party's ownership of the issue position (Meguid, 2005, 348-9). For example, if the Radical Right promotes a political opinion and the center-right chooses to ignore this, it refers to the dismissive strategy.

If the mainstream party decides to respond, there are two strategies: an accommodative strategy (convergence) and an adversarial (divergence) strategy – movement towards the niche party's

stance or movement away from the niche party's issue position. The two strategies have in common that no matter the response, both of them will boost the issue's salience. Other than this similarity, the two strategies have nothing else in common.

With the accommodative strategy, the mainstream party moves towards the niche party's position and removes the niche party's distinctiveness on the new issue position. This leaves the voters with a choice between the parties. Meguid states that because mainstream parties are more established and usually have a greater reach to their voters and typically are more experienced in the legislative field, they will attract more voters than the niche party (2005, 349). Lastly, this strategy may also have an overtaking/undermining mechanism. By adopting the position, the mainstream party could undermine the new party's ownership of the issue (Meguid 2005, 348-9). According to this strategy, when the Radical Right pushes forward one of their "untraditional" stances on an issue, the center-right will move closer to the Radical Right's position and adopt their stance on the given issue. This strategy may also help legitimize the RRP's agenda (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017, 913).

The other response tactic, adversarial strategy, is when the mainstream party moves away from the niche party's position on the issue. When a party declares its opposition, they strengthen the niche party's ownership of the issue position. This strategy leaves the voters with a choice among different issue positions rather than different parties. As Meguid puts it, "It strengthens the link in the public's mind between that issue stance and the niche party as its primary proponent" (Meguid 2005, 350).

Based on this theory, it is expected that one out of the following three will be the outcome; (1) the party positions have not moved as the mainstream party has chosen to not react to the RRP's position, (2) the Conservative/Christian Democrats have moved toward the Radical Right's position, or (3) the Conservative/Christian Democrats have moved away from the Radical Right's position. The second possible outcome is most consistent with several of the following scholarly findings.

### 3.2.2. Party positions: literature

#### *Positions*

As a party takes a stance on a given policy issue, the other parties must find ways of dealing with this. Findings indicate that mainstream parties are more willing to adopt the positions of the Radical Right if these have become successful and established players in the electoral arena, much in line with Meguid's (2005) accommodative strategy (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020, 829). As many RRP have secured a good foothold in the legislative competition across Europe and are competing with the center-right parties, they are now considered established actors.

The most prominent political issue clusters for RRP are immigration, security, corruption, and foreign policy. RRP are often those who "shout the loudest" on these topics (Mudde, 2019, 31). As the center-right parties are competing with the RRP, they must also consider if they should adjust their stance on the same topics. Han argues that as mainstream parties appraise RRP as a threat, it may cause them to shift their position on given policy issues, which corresponds to two of Meguid's strategic choices (Han, 2015, 571-2). Equally, Wagner and Meyer also argue that mainstream parties tend to choose a responsive strategy, and to be more precise, the accommodating strategy. Per this, they state that "Mainstream parties have become more like the Radical Right both in terms of policy positions and in terms of issue salience; over time, the mainstream has shifted towards the right and increasingly addressed liberal-authoritarian issues in their party programs" (Wagner and Meyer, 2017, 98-99). In other words, mainstream parties have tended to respond with shifts to approach the position of the RRP. Another scholar that has attributed to the literature on responsive strategies is Tim Bale, who states the following.

*"Where a significant or potentially significant far right party exists, the centre-right has exploited its existence in order to regain office and, once there, has put in place policies (notably on immigration) that traditionally were more closely associated with the extreme rather than the mainstream". (Bale, 2003, 84-5)*

### *Salience*

According to Meguid, the mainstream party's strategic choice can affect the extent to which RRP's issue ownership is re-enforced. Moreover, this strategic choice can further emphasize the importance given to the issue, hence increasing the issue salience. In other words, if a mainstream party adopts a more extreme policy and chooses an accommodative strategy, this may further increase the salience of the issue. However, it is important to distinguish between issue salience and issue ownership. Scholars who have exemplified this are, amongst others, Abou-Chadi and Krause (2020). They state that if a mainstream party views RRP's as a threat, they may follow in their steps and shift towards their political stance. If this is so, this may further cement the position of the RRP's increased issue salience over the given issue by the RRP's (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020, 831-34). Minkenberg supports this assumption and argues that by pushing for the same issues or positions, center-right parties are helping legitimize the RRP's role and position, something which is also in accordance with Meguid's second assumption (Minkenberg, 2013, 20). Based on the Radical Right parties' upswing in the wake of the refugee crisis, I submit my first general hypothesis:

*H1 (Position): The distance between mainstream and Radical Right parties decreased after the refugee crisis.*

### *Policy dimensions*

When the Radical Right emphasizes a policy area, it has been shown that the center-right parties also focus on this (Schumacker and van Kersenbergen, 2014, 309). This has been particularly evident in selected policy areas, such as immigration. In light of this, a large share of the accommodative literature investigates whether center-right parties adopt a more Conservative immigrant position when the Radical Right parties have used this policy dimension as one of their front issues. Several scholars have confirmed that center-right parties have moved further to the right on immigration. Amongst other, Bale has stated that these center-right parties have adopted policies usually not associated with the mainstream but rather with the extreme (2003, 84-85). This is also supported by comparative quantitative studies that have confirmed an effect on anti-immigrant dimension positions (Abou-Chandi and Krause, 2018, 890). The RRP's impact has been proven to drive moderate right parties to shift their position to a more culturally

protectionist profile (Abou-Chadi, 2014, 433). The center-right is said to have become more skeptical of multiculturalism due to the RRP's greater establishment.

Another aspect of the literature directs attention to how the issues' importance is affected. Abou-Chadi and Krause's findings signal that perhaps it is not the Radical Right positioning on specific issues that affects other parties' position, but rather how the Radical Right directs more attention to specific issues (Abou-Chadi, 2014, 433). They found that the "(...) Radical Right as an actor plays a fundamental role in the politicization of the immigration issue" (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020, 843). These arguments accumulate in the same conclusion – that there has been a shift to the right. According to the arguments presented here, there should be decreased distance between RRP's and the mainstream right parties on the immigration dimension.

Building on Meguid's strategic choice theory, scholars have, through the last few years, confirmed a case of Meguid's second assumption: the accommodation strategy, especially on specific policy areas. Given this, I expect a substantial shift in the position of the center-right closer to the RRP's on policy areas such as immigration and foreign affairs. This therefore brings me to my second hypothesis:

*H2 (Position): The distance between the RRP's and Conservative/Christian democratic parties has decreased, with the distance on issues concerning foreign affairs and immigration decreasing significantly.*

#### *External factors*

That said, there may be external factors affecting party positioning. Abou-Chadi and Krause (2020, 830) point to a lack of consideration of other developments that have led to a shift in most empirical studies. According to them, it is nearly impossible to rule out entirely that the detected changes are not driven by other factors, such as a shift in public opinion. There is a question as to whether we can causally identify one party's effect on other parties. It is difficult to distinguish if a party has changed its behavior due to another party or due to a change in public opinion, given that the two are likely correlated (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020, 830).

This is exemplified by countries where the RRPs have gained more votes and center-right parties have adopted a more Conservative position on immigration policy; simultaneously, the state has experienced an increase in immigrant-related violence (Minkenberg, 2013, 20). This also seems to be Steinmayr's conclusion when measuring the number of asylum applications in relation to right wing populist support (2017)

Therefore, external factors may impact whether center-right parties have moved further to the right. However, as these external factors have contributed to the rise of the RRPs, it is natural to connect ideological and external factors. Moreover, when parties advance their immigration policy, this may both be to prevent losing votes to their Radical Right-wing competitors who have put the topic on the agenda, or it may be due to the rise of immigration to Europe. This may also account for the RRPs' establishment in the legislative arena (Spoon and Kluver, 2020, 274-5).

#### *Counter-arguments*

There is, however, reason to believe that parties do not chose the accommodative strategy. According to Joon Han, RRPs' electoral success need not always result in mainstream parties shifting their position. He points to three reasons why mainstream parties may not adapt to RRPs and shift their position. *First*, if the voters the party can potentially lose are not part of the party's core electoral supporters, the need for change might not be regarded as necessary (Han, 2015, 558). If the party shifts its position, it runs the risk of losing its core electoral supporters. As the European elections are considered second-order elections – meaning they are not prioritized by the electorate – this reason for not adapting the party's position is not as relevant for the EP case, but remains vital for the positioning in Europe. *Secondly*, if a party shifts its position, this could potentially signal to voters and other parties that it is willing to shift their stance just out of fear (Han, 2015, 558), signaling weak moral. The *third* assumption is that if the party's stance is too far from RRPs' position, the party will most likely not adopt the position. This is more applicable for left-oriented parties found on the opposite side of the political spectrum that usually do not compete for the same electoral voters (Han, 2015, 558).

There is disagreement on whether mainstream parties have moved further to the right. Minkenberg argues that since there hasn't been an exclusion trend among the RRPs in East Europe, there is a more fluid relationship between the two ideological family groups

(Minkenberg, 2012, 20-21). Some researchers have shed doubt on the existence of Radical Right contagion, arguing that its effect is overstated (Abou-Chadi, 2018, 890).

That said, most of the literature points to a shift in policy position. The overall pattern is that Radical Right success has a causal effect on established parties' positions, mainly on immigration and cultural policies (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020, 843-4). Despite these counter-arguments, the empirical findings are so strong that the hypotheses presented will be considered nevertheless.

### *Summary*

In sum, the literature agrees that center-right parties accommodate RRPs on policy issues such as foreign policy and immigration, and that center-right parties have shifted closer to the RRPs in light of the latter's electoral gains and establishment on the electoral arena. Some counter arguments for why parties may desist from shifting their position have also been presented. However, most findings point to a more united right-of-center.

As this section has discussed different strategies parties tend to pursue when threatened by another party, it is also important to understand the underlying motivation. The next section will discuss the behavioral positioning of parties in terms of voting and coalitions, mostly in the EP, and the motivational logic behind this.

### **3.3. Voting Patterns and coalition formation**

How political parties choose to react to other parties depends on their own goals and motivation. This section will look at the literature on party behavior in the EP. Most of the literature concerning behavior in the EP looks into voter behavior and coalition-building. For the thesis research question "Has the Right become more united?", it is important to look into the coalition patterns in the EP. The EP, by its nature, is clearly different from other legislative, governmental institutions. Different mechanisms usually found in most legislative chambers are not found in the EP, e.g. there is no motion of no confidence in the European Parliament. The environment of the parties differs in many ways. The parliament is compounded by parties from different nations, with different party political and electoral systems. In the EP, there is no single dominant party in control as is usually associated with other democratic legislative bodies

(Bowler and McElroy, 2015, 1356). Consequently, the EP consists of several party groups that can resemble coalitions. Research has shown that the coalition formation in the EP has mainly happened along the traditional left-right dimension (Cencig and Sabani, 2017, 971). Before revising the literature, Muller and Strøms's (1999) theoretical framework on party motivational factors will be presented. This is to provide a better understanding for the underlying motivation for party behavior.

### 3.3.1. Voting patterns and coalition formation: Theory

A party's behavior may be motivated by different goals. Wolfgang Müller and Kaare Strøm address a theoretical framework that deals with divided loyalties and the basis of what a party's motivation for their behavior is. The framework can arguably have explanatory power for the strategic choice theory illustrated by Meguid, as Meguid has slightly touched upon the logic behind the strategic choices.

In the literature on party groupings and coalition building, the framework is well established, both nationally and at the European level, and is a good match for the case studied in this thesis. The theory is primarily used when explaining political parties' behavior in the context of forming coalitions, but it is also applied when studying voting behavior (Müller and Strøm, 1990, 8; McDonnell and Werner, 2020, 35). The theory distinguishes between the following three motivations: policy-seeking motivation, office-seeking motivation, and vote-seeking motivation. These "ideal types" can be combined and reinforce each other (McDonnell and Werner, 2020, 35). One does not need to only pursue one goal, and the goal may differ at various times. As Hix states, "It does not necessarily follow that the same choices will be made at all points in time, in response to all stimuli, and in all strategic situations" (Hix 1999, 13).

*Office-seeking* motivation refers to parties' goal of getting into position in a parliament for the purpose of maximizing their control and gaining access to the benefits that come with this. Coalitions are seen as desirable if the party in question obtains an additional opportunity to position itself (Müller and Strøm, 1999, 6-8). Coalition bargaining is motivated by the desire to get into office (Müller and Strøm, 1999, 6). The primary assumption with this motivation is that parties fundamentally seek to win in parliamentary democracies, in order to control the executive branch (Riker, 1962 in Müller and Strøm, 1999, 5). The benefits that come with the office are also seen as a motivational factor. Other scholars highly support the assumption that

parties are attracted to being a part of a group or coalition for pragmatic reasons. Benefits such as more speaking time, more resources, and easier access to important roles in committees should also be included (Bressanelli, 2012). Through joining, certain benefits will follow, such as more influential positions in the parliament, greater speaking time, and more funding (McDonnell and Werner 2020, 38-9). In the EP, there isn't a single coalition that wins office; however, the bigger the EPG, the more benefits will follow.

*The policy-seeking* motivation refers to the parties' wish to implement their policies, to exert greater influence, and maximize their impact on policymaking. The parties are willing to form coalitions, but with the provision that their desired policy will be implemented (Müller and Strøm, 1999, 6-8). "A party's success in pursuing its policies depends on its ability to change public policy towards its most preferred positions or to prevent undesirable changes" (Müller and Strøm, 1999, 8). This motivation is often connected with office-seeking motivation. A party with policy-seeking motivation can, in the case of the EP, regard joining an EPG to maximize its influence over the policy-making procedure and to acquire important positions.

*The third*, motivation, vote-seeking, can be used both in advance of elections and policies. In the case of coalition building, this motivation can be crucial if a party fears that they might lose votes in the event of a coalition (Müller and Strøm, 1999, 6-8). Hix, Raunio, and Scully, when discussing this theory of behavior, refer to it as re-selection: "to be re-selected as a candidate in European elections MEPs must pursue actions that promote the interests of the sections of their domestic party that control the re-selection process" (1999, 12). This explanation is not as relevant to the thesis's research question as the two others, but it can be linked with the parties' national versus group affiliation. The ones in control of who gets a seat in the EP is the national party, but the EPGs controls the important positions of the EP. However, vote-seeking behavior can be used to explain why parties in the EP may vote in accordance with their national party – as it is the national party that has the control of re-selection.

The theoretical framework is intended to be applied at a national level. However, it is relevant to take this into account as the EP consists of representatives from national parties that make up such a small proportion of the total sum of representatives that they cannot function effectively by themselves. The way the parties form the party groupings in the EP similarly means that the application of Müller and Strøm's theoretical framework will be helpful when studying alliances and groups in the EP.

Moreover, the theoretical framework is relevant for the thesis because of the focus on both positioning in terms of coalition formation, and behavior in terms of votes. The thesis aims to answer whether the Right has become more united; to study this it is important to also understand underlying motivations. This theoretical framework can contribute to understand the motivational factors behind the party behavior or strategic choices presented in Meguid's strategy choice theory. The two frameworks complement each other in terms of the issues' scope. Furthermore, Muller and Strøms' theoretical framework for behavior can help explain the background for the choices in Meguid's framework.

### 3.3.2. Voting patterns and coalition building: literature

With an underlying understanding of the motivational theoretical framework, it is now important to look into the voting and coalition behavior of the party families of interest. A big share of the literature on parties' behavior in the EP, is largely about coalition and group affiliation. This is a key aspect of the thesis' research question because looking at vote and coalition behavior is one of the empirical ways one can actually examine whether the right has become more united.

#### *National or ideological affiliation*

As alluded to, a party's affiliation can be a part of their motivation. There is an age-old debate as to whether national parties in the EP are driven by national interests, power motivation, or ideological convictions. The parties have several sources of affiliation and can behave according to their national party or follow the party group in the EP. As stated by Cencig and Sabani, the two different "principals" both require the party's loyalty, the national party and the EPG. The national party has the power of selecting candidates for the European election, while the European party group controls the various allocations (Cencig and Sabani, 2017, 971). Building on Muller and Strøm's theoretical framework, from this point of view there is a question of whether they want the benefits that comes with the EPG; the office-seeking motivation, or if they instead prioritize to be re-elected, as the national party controls the election of candidates.

The party's affiliation can be distinguished further in terms of the direct influence of both the national party and the EPG over the individuals elected. As discussed, the national party's gate-

keeping role may influence the parties in the EP. But as pointed out by Arnold and Sapir (2013), the national party may have even more substantial influence over the elected MEPs. When in Parliament, the national party continues to play a vital role by providing guidance and instructions for the MEPs. Through this process the national parties can thus affect the MEPs' legislative behavior in the EP (Arnold and Sapir, 2013, 1296). In contrast, the EP party group does not have this type of control over who is elected. However, observations have shown that "(...) European party groups have structural influence on MEPs, as they have the power to call for roll call votes, and effectively discipline members of the party group which otherwise might defect" (Hix 2002:2004, in Arnold and Sapir, 2013, 1296). In other words, the party must look out for the strategic interest of both their European party group as well as their national party to avoid fatal consequences (Herman, Hoerner, and Lacy, 2021, 15). The research on the field of party affiliation in the EP has brought mixed results, but in most cases the EPGs have been found to be less effective in their influence than national parties (Arnold and Sapir, 2013, 1296).

Moreover, another aspect of the affiliation debate concerns whether the party in the EP votes along national lines or with its EPG. Hix and Noury point to the fact that voting occurs more along transnational party lines than along member states lines (Hix and Noury, 2009, 162). Costello and Thomson support this by stating that "(...) party group loyalty appears to be stronger than national loyalty, in that MEPs vote more similarly to MEPs from the same party group than to MEPs from the same member state" (Costello and Thomson, 2016, 774). However, the party groups in the European Parliament are based on ideological affiliation, while the other parties from the same member state often do not share the same ideological tradition. These findings lead the way into the literature on cohesiveness.

### *Cohesion*

Cohesion in legislative bodies has been a widely researched topic. For this thesis it is important to investigate the party group cohesiveness as well as if the ideological groups have gotten closer to each other, because if the EPGs do not have a high degree of cohesiveness, this could lead to instability among the right.

Two approaches have often been used when studying the cohesion of transnational party groups. Looking at roll-call vote, most findings have a collective perception that there are high levels of party group cohesion. Expert surveys on the positions of the MEPs also support high

levels of cohesion in transnational party groups (Costello and Thomsen, 2016, 774). The cohesion of the political groups in the European Parliament remains high and has not increased or declined significantly over the years. Voting along national lines, in contrast, remains low (Hix and Noury, 2009, 159, 162). These findings recur in the literature on party group cohesion in the EP.

Amie Kreppel has also examined party cohesion in the EP. She conducted a study of cohesion over several years and states that there has been a “remarkably high level of internal group cohesion regardless of time or legislative procedure” and points out that this is particularly true for the S&D and EPP (Kreppel, 2002, 172). Bressanelli argues that the high level of vote cohesion could be explained by the similar ideological logic applied by the parties in a party group. It is in line with the findings stating that national affiliation is strong (Bressanelli, 2012, 740). Hix and Noury, who have investigated the party groups before and after the enlargement of the EU, support that the dominant dimension of competition in the EP is the left-right dimension (Hix and Noury, 2009, 159). These findings also suggest that one should not expect much change from one parliamentary term to another (Hix and Noury, 2009, 172). This leads to the following hypothesis:

*H3 (Cohesion): The European Party Groups can be characterized by the traditional left-right dimension and, therefore, have a high degree of cohesiveness.*

#### *Coalition formation*

A last aspect of the behavior in the European Parliament that will be mentioned is coalition building. The dominant dimension of competition in the European Parliament is and has “always” been the left-right dimension (Hix and Noury, 2009, 159). Hix and Høyland also comment on coalitional patterns (2013). They show that research on roll-call votes had revealed three types of winning coalitions. The first, a “grand coalition” formed by S&D together with EPP, often accompanied by ALDE which makes it a “super grand coalition”. The second coalition, a “left coalition” consisting of the group on the left for S&D. Lastly a “right coalition” – EPP, ALDE, mostly together with the ECR (Hix and Høyland, 2013, 178-9).

Through the years, it has become harder to obtain an absolute majority composed on either of the sides, left-wing or right-wing parties. As stated by Servent “Most legislative procedures

cannot succeed without the support of the large political groups, which explains why the EPP and the S&D have formed (formally or informally) a ‘grand coalition’ that structures the internal life of the EP” (Servent, 2019, 333). Therefore, there has been more coalitions built across the left-right dimension (Servent, 2019, 335-6). Servent addresses the strategic behavior of “cordon sanitaire” that makes an absolute majority based on the left-right dimension even more difficult. The S&D together with the EPP have earlier tended to use Cordon sanitaire as a strategic behavior of excluding parties or refusing to cooperate with them (Servent, 2019).

### 3.4. Summary

The findings in the reviewed literature point to a decrease in distance between the RRP and the Conservative/Christian democratic parties. In addition, a difference is expected as a result of the RRP’s increased influence in the wake of the refugee crisis. However, literature on voting behavior and coalition formation shows that there has not been any change during the past few years. Therefore, it will be interesting to see whether there has been a positional change and whether this is reflected in the parties’ voting behavior.

Building on these hypotheses, one can expect the EPGs to be cohesive, but that the Conservatives, the Christian democrats and the RRP will mostly vote together, in accordance with their expected relatively close ideological position. On the basis of this, the last hypothesis is presented:

*H4 (voting patterns): The three ideological groups tend to vote together*

As of the review of previous literature and theoretical framework the following hypotheses have been submitted:

Hypothesis 1 (Position)	The distance between mainstream and Radical Right parties decreased after the refugee crises.
Hypothesis 2 (Position)	The distance between the RRPs and Conservative/Christian democratic parties has decreased, with the distance on issues concerning foreign affairs and immigration having decreased significantly.
Hypothesis 3 (Cohesion)	The European Party Groups can be characterized by the traditional left-right dimension and are, therefore, have a high degree of cohesiveness.
Hypothesis 4 (Voting)	The three ideological groups tend to vote together

*Table 3.1: Summary of hypotheses*

## 4. METHOD AND DATA

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research design used to analyze the research question and hypotheses. The thesis aims to investigate if the Right has become more united. The underlying hypotheses aim to examine the decreased distance between the families on the right, party group cohesion, and the party families voting and coalition patterns. To investigate this, expert survey and roll-call votes are utilized. As the thesis and hypotheses examine the positions and behavior of the political parties, the two types of data will give a good basis for the investigation of the research question.

The different methodological choices will be elaborated and accounted for below. The two datasets and methods used will be elaborated for separately. First, I will account for the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) data and explain data units, the timeframe for the data, and the variables used. As the CHES data is composed of expert surveys, this data collection method will also be discussed. Second, the data and method used to analyze roll-call votes will be presented. To analyze voting patterns and legislative behavior, an optimal classification model is applied. Thereafter, as in the first part, the units and timeframe of analysis will be accounted for. The validity and reliability relevant for the thesis will be assessed throughout both parts.

Because the two types of data – CHES data set and voting data – offer different types of insights, both must be included in the analysis. While the data set from CHES has collected experts' placement of parties, voting data is a direct picture of parties' voting behavior in parliament.

### 4.1. CHES: Party Position

This thesis' first of the two main objectives is to examine political positions for three ideological groups: the Radical Right, the Conservatives and the Christian democrats. The aim is to investigate if there has been any change over the years 2010 to 2019 and if the change differs for various dimensions. As CHES has conducted expert surveys since 1999 and covers country variation together with the party positions along several policy areas. Despite being limited to European countries, it has become one of the dominant datasets on party positions (Gjerløw, 2014, 19-21). The use of expert surveys is widely discussed, but as Gjerløw states in his thesis on different methods for party positioning, "(...expert surveys is the one source that maximizes

the possibility that one is asking the most well-informed individuals and gets as much information as possible into the measure at a manageable price” (Gjerløw, 2014, 19).

#### 4.1.1. CHES

Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) collects data through expert surveys. The data estimate party positioning in European countries on issues such as European integration, ideology, and different policy areas. CHES have provided information about how many experts asked in two out of the three years. In 2014 337 political scientists specializing in political parties and European integration, and in 2019 421 political scientists specializing in political parties and European integration (Chesdata, n.d.). The analysis will show the possible separations of positions graphically using point maps, a type of symbol map that looks like a two-dimensional scatterplot. The different dots represent the parties from the chosen ideological groups and are coded with different colors to distinguish them. The coordinate axis represents the different policy areas. In addition, the positions are also measured and analyzed using OLS. One of the tables include a step-wise introduction of variables.

Several researchers have used this dataset, and the validity and reliability of the dataset have therefore been established on several occasions (Hooghe et al., 2010; Marks et al., 2007; Netjes and Binnema, 2007; Volkens 2007 in McDonnell and Werner, 2020, 46). Because the dataset consists of many experts’ positioning of parties, any single expert’s attitudes and bias will not significantly affect the results. CHES has also examined the parties that are relevant here. The majority of other approaches have not given much emphasis on right-wing populist parties, which could have made the analysis more difficult to carry out.

#### 4.1.2. CHES: units and timeframe

The unit of analysis consists of the three ideological groups: the Conservatives, the Christian Democrats and the Radical Right in national parliaments. In the CHES-dataset, the ideological groups are pre-categorized. Other ideological groups will also shortly be looked at, but only to provide a comparable base. The overall number of countries has increased since CHES first started collecting data. CHES was established in 1999 and at the time their data only included 14 Western-European countries. In 2006, 24 countries were included in the survey, and 32

countries in 2019. This increase corresponds to the rise in the number of national parties from 143 to 277 (Chesdata n.d.).

The RRP's are said to have had greater representation in the years after the financial crisis in 2008, and as the timeframe includes the refugee crisis in 2014 and 2015, which also gave them an electoral upswing. The timeframe for the thesis and hence the data is from 2009 to 2019, and the thesis looks at the data from 2010, 2014 and 2019.

#### 4.1.3. Variables and dimensions

The variables and dimensions included in the thesis are filtered based on where the RRP's have had a strong voice. The dimensions have been chosen based on existing literature and the policy dimensions where RRP's are expected to have distinguished themselves most. The dimensions chosen are: ideology, economics, immigration, security policy, EU position, EU's stance, social lifestyle, GAL'TAN and civil liberties, which will be elaborated on further below. All variables can be seen in Table 4.1.

The policy dimensions range mainly from 0 to 10 and from 0 to 7. 0 symbolizing either one side of a thematic issue, e.g. left and right, or symbolizing "nothing"/"not at all" when the experts have been asked a question regarding "how much". When the question is "how much", 10 and 7 thus represent the other side of the thematic issue, or "great importance"/ "extreme".. The different variables included are as follow:

##### *Dependent variable*

In the OLS regression the dependent variables measure the distance between the Radical Right and the Conservatives/ Christian democrats' positions. In the first regression the dependent variable measures the distance between these on the left-right dimension (Table 5.1.). On the second regression (Table 5.2.) it is two folded: first the Dependent variable measured the distance on the immigration dimension, thereafter on the EU's foreign and security policy.

##### *Economic stance*

The first variable measures a party's position in terms of ideological stance on economic issues. The ideological stance on economic issues can be considered on the basis of issues such as

privatization, the welfare state, taxation, and government spending. The variable is coded from 0 to 10, with 0 symbolizing extreme left-wing views, 10 extreme right-wing view, and 5 as neutral. The parties considered to be on the left favor a government that plays an active role in the economy, and the parties considered to be on the right side are assumed to favor a government with a smaller economic role (Bakker et.al., 2020, 22).

As one can see in table 5.1. the minimum value observed for the economic dimension is 1. This shows that some of the observations are almost at the lowest value (0). With a maximum of 10 and a mean of 6.15. This indicates that, overall, this variable results in high numbers.

### *Ideologic stance*

The variable “ideological” measures the party’s overall ideological stance. Ideological is coded from 0-10 where 0 corresponds to “extreme left”, 5 to center, and 10 to “extreme right” (Bakker et.al., 2020, 22). For the ideological dimension, the numbers are even higher than for economic issues. The minimum observed for the ideological dimension is 4.40, and the maximum at 10. This shows that the lowest number almost starts at the center for the parties included. The mean is also relatively high and is at 7.41.

### *Position on the EU*

EU position measures the party’s overall orientation towards European integration. The variable is coded from 0-7, as in 1 – Strongly opposes, 2 – Opposes, 3 – Somewhat opposes 4 – Neutral, 5 – Somewhat favors, 6 – Favors, 7 – Strongly favors. (Bakker et.al., 2020, 19). The highest observed value for EU position is observed at the maximum level, 7. However, the minimum observed is low compared to the other dimensions, which is at 1 for the EU position. The mean is at 4.36.

### *GALTAN*

GALTAN measures a party’s position in terms of their view on social and cultural values. The variable is coded from 0 to 10, where 0 corresponds to libertarian/postmaterialist, 5 to center and 10 to traditional/authoritarian. As stated in the CHES codebook, “libertarian” or “postmaterialist” parties favor expanded personal freedoms, e.g. abortion rights, divorce, and same-sex marriage. “Traditional” or “authoritarian” parties reject these ideas in favor of ideas of order, tradition, and stability, believing that the government should be a firm moral authority

on social and cultural issues (Bakker et.al., 2020, 23). The minimum observed for the GALTAN dimension is 3.11. In contrast, the maximum is 10. The first quartile is at 6.43, which shows that it is relatively high. The same goes for the mean which is , at 7. 49.

### *Social lifestyle*

The social lifestyle variable measures a party's position on questions regarding social lifestyle. CHES has referred to policy areas such as gender equality and LGBT as example issues included in the variable. It is coded from 0 to 10, where 0 is coded as "strongly supports liberal policies" and 10 is coded as "strongly opposes liberal policies" (Bakker et.al., 2020, 25). The mean for the social lifestyle dimension is 7.06, which means it is fairly high. The first quartile is at 5.5, above the middle. The minimum observation is, however, at 2.28, which is comparatively low. The maximum observation is at 10.

### *Foreign and Security Policy in EU*

The variable "EU Foreign and security policy" measures the position of a party's leadership on EU foreign and security policy. It is coded from 1 to 7, where 1 is coded as "strongly opposed", and 7 is coded as "strongly favors". (Bakker et.al., 2020, 21). For this dimension, the minimum observation is at 1, in other words, at the lowest value possible. The maximum observation is at 6.86, a little below the highest possible value (10). The lower quartile is 2.33.

### *Immigration*

The variable "Immigration policy" measures a party's immigration policy position. The variable is coded from 0 to 10, where 0 corresponds with "Strongly favors a liberal policy on immigration" and 10 corresponds with "Strongly favors a restrictive policy on immigration" (Bakker et.al., 2020, 26). According to table 5.1. immigration has one of the highest means at 7.57,. The upper quartile is approximately 9, which is relatively high. One thing worth noticing is that immigration is the dimension with the highest standard deviation – which corresponds to the variation.

### *Civil liberties vs. law and order*

The variable "civil liberties vs. law and order" measures a party's position on civil liberties versus on law and order. The variable is coded 0 to 10, where 0 corresponds to "Strongly

promotes civil liberties” and 10 corresponds to “Strongly supports tough measures to fight crime” (Bakker et.al., 2020, 25). For this dimension, the minimum observation is found at 3.38. and the maximum at 10. The mean lies at 7.51, which is relatively high. Both of the quartiles presented are above 6, which means that most of the observations can be found on the center’s right side.

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Family	220	2.11	1.09	1	1	2	4
EU position	220	4.36	1.94	1.00	2.57	6.22	7.00
Ideology	220	7.41	1.27	4.40	6.55	8.30	10.00
Economic	220	6.15	1.52	1	5.2	7.3	10
Social lifestyle	220	7.06	1.89	2.38	5.50	8.54	10.00
Civil liberties versus law and order	220	7.41	1.62	3.38	6.27	8.75	10.00
Immigration	220	7.57	1.82	3	6.4	9.3	10
EU foreign and security policy	220	3.99	1.79	1.00	2.33	5.58	6.86
GALTAN	220	7.49	1.55	3.11	6.43	8.66	10.00

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistic for CHES variables

#### 4.1.4. Expert survey

Expert Surveys is a widely used data collecting method. There has been an increased use over the last 15 years, and the method has gained popularity because of its sheer accessibility (Budge, 2000, 103).

Steenbergen and Marks have taken on the task to evaluate expert judgments and have looked at the use and validity of expert surveys on party positions (2007). They look at the use and validity of expert surveys on party position and use Budge (2000) as a framework. They point to four problems that can have an impact on expert surveys. First, the expert’s ability to conceptualize a question similarly (Steenbergen and Marks, 2007, 347-8). In other words, who is being examined or judged by the experts. Is it the leadership of a party, the party organization, or the electorate? The second question raised concerns “what criteria experts bring to bear when they judge party position?” (2007, 348). How do they judge based on abstract labels like left and right? Third, what are the expert actually judging – the parties’ behavior or intentions? Lastly, the importance of the timeframe. “Some experts may evaluate a party’s position at the present moment, while others may consider a larger time span of perhaps several years.

Steenbergen and Marks evaluated the expert surveys as measurement instruments and how much variation there is across experts. (2007, 351) Since the survey they have used as a case is on political positions, this may also be adequate for the CHES dataset. Their conclusion states that the amount of cross-expert variation is small. When evaluating expert surveys as a measurement model, they conceptualized experts as measurement instruments. The congeneric test framework was used and allowed them to consider all of the four concerns. According to Steenbergen and Marks, “It assumes that there is no systematic measurement error that replicates across experts or is related to the true party placement” (2007, 355). The test is based on Pearson correlations and Spearman correlations. It shows that the correlation on average is high, which results in “impressive reliabilities” (Steenbergen and Marks, 2007, 355-7). As this test is done on other data than that used in this paper, there some uncertainty remains as to whether the results can be regarded as valid for the CHES data as well. However, expert surveys on political position as data collection method have been proven to provide a high degree of reliability.

All in all, the validity and reliability of expert surveys as measured as high, but one should have in mind that “Rather than being able to pinpoint where a party stands, an expert may at best be able to provide a range within which the party stance is located” (Steenbergen and Marks, 2007, 353).

Gjerløw, who has done a Validation of Party Policy Position Measures where he compared mass surveys, expert judgements, and human coding of party manifestos, finds that “(...) the measures differ very little when used for hypothesis testing and prediction” (Gjerløw, 2014, 1).

Gjerløw argues that one of the main advantages of CHES “(..) is that it offers a cross-national time-series of expert surveys” and that “the stability of the wording makes it possible to compare movement through time” (Gjerløw, 2014, 21).

## 4.2. Voting patterns

The other main objective in this paper is to examine the legislative behavior specific for the ideological groups in the EP and see whether this correlates with the ideological positioning

examined. In other terms, the paper will try to assess to which extent the ideological groups in focus have changed their voting pattern in terms of voting more unanimously and if there is any sign of policy adoption.

In order to analyze the legislative behavior, I have employed vote-watch data on roll call votes from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament. The analysis' explanatory power is examined and presented initially in the analysis. The Optimal classification gives the proportion of incorrectly predicted and correctly predicted votes. This will then correspond to how much explanatory power the analysis has. This can possibly give implications on different voting patterns. The different policy areas explored in this paper will be in accordance with the policy areas from CHES: gender equality, foreign and security policy, immigration policy, economic matters, and EU policy. However, the first figures (6.1. and 6.2.) presented will not include a cutline but only give a visualization of how the parties are placed in relation to each other for both the 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament.

#### 4.2.1. Optimal Classification Model

Optimal classification is an estimation method developed by Keith Poole that maximizes the correct classification of legislative choices (Poole 2005, 46). It is a “general nonparametric technique for maximizing the correct classification of binary preferential choice data” (Poole, 2005, 85). The method places legislators in a specified number of dimensions – in this case, two – and fits a Euclidean spatial model. As stated by Godbout and Høyland, “One of the principal characteristics of the spatial analysis of legislative voting is that the distribution of ideal points between legislators generally reflects different partisan coalitions” (Godbout and Høyland, 2011, 369).

The optimal classification model is an exploratory analysis. The method assumes that one can place representatives at given positions. The analysis aims to find the optimal position on which to place the representatives, and also their voting. The method aims to place the representative in a way that in as far as possible enables a cutline to distinguish between the representatives who voted in favor of and against on specific votes (Poole, 2005, 26-7). In other words, the representatives on the same side of the cutline are expected to vote the same. In this thesis, I will use this method for two dimensions. The analyses are illustrated through point maps, where the dots represent legislators.

In this method, it is common to exclude votes where there were only a few legislators on one side of the cutline and also to remove legislators that only vote a few times. In this thesis, if there are less than 20 on the losing side of a vote, the vote is dropped. Similarly, if a legislator has attended less than 15 votes, the legislator is dropped. The low number of legislators on the losing side is because we are interested in an ideologically radical group which may have voted on its own on several occasions. However, some of the votes are predicted wrongly; this may have implications for the validity of the analysis.

To ensure the model’s validity, the correct predictions have been compared vis-à-vis the wrongly predicted votes. This has been done for all of the groups of interest in this thesis. The terms “wrong yeas” and “wrong nays” refer to the proportion of mispredicted votes; the terms “correct yeas” and “correct nays” refer to the proportion of votes identified correctly. In tables 4.2. and 4.3. the proportions are converted to show the percentage that was incorrectly predicted. As the model tries to give an optimal prediction of the legislator’s position also in accordance with voting, it is relevant to investigate how many of the votes have been correctly predicted in order to validate the use of this method.

The overall results for the two terms show that for the 7<sup>th</sup> European parliament, only 6.52 percent of the votes were wrongly predicted, while for the 8<sup>th</sup> European parliament, only 5.4 percent were predicted wrongly. This gives us a solid number of votes that were predicted correctly and can ensure that the findings from the analysis have a high degree of validity.

	<b>Wrong Yeas</b>	<b>Correct Yeas</b>	<b>Wrong Nays</b>	<b>Correct Nays</b>	<b>Number of mispredictions?</b>
<b>EP 7</b>	109	1963	127	1421	6.52 %
<b>EP 8</b>	188	3827	198	2941	5.40 %
<b>EP7 and 8</b>	297	5763	325	4362	5.79 %

*Table 4.2: The amount of wrongly and correctly predicted votes from the 7th and 8th European Parliament (votewatch.eu)*

The overall amount of wrongly predicted votes is less than 6 percent when looking at the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> term. Such a small error rate should not affect the model’s explanatory power. Equally relevant, the following part will examine this for the various groups in focus to see whether the voting patterns presented for those groups have explanatory power.

	<b>EP7</b>	<b>EP8</b>
<b>RRPS</b>	11.78 %	7.41 %
<b>EPP</b>	4.61 %	3.36 %
<b>ECR</b>	6.93 %	9.18 %
<b>EFD</b>	19.62 %	8.64 %

Table 4.3: The percentage of votes that was incorrectly predicted from the 7th and 8th European Parliament for the groups of interest (votewatch.eu)

The number of wrongly predicted votes differs from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> term, but for the different EPGs as well. The EPP is the EPG with the lowest number of wrongly predicted votes with under 5 percent for both terms. In the 7<sup>th</sup> European parliament, the EFD and the RRP were the groups with the highest amount of wrongly predicted votes, where EFD almost had 20 percent wrongly predicted votes. Since Radical Right parties are seen as niche parties, they care about a specific issue most of the time. This can make it challenging to predict the Radical Right parties' voting patterns. For that reason, despite a share of 19.62 percent of incorrectly predicted votes, the model should still be considered to have explanatory power. All of the other groups have less than 10 percent incorrectly predicted votes in both terms.

#### 4.2.2. Units and timeframe

The *units* of analysis are the European Party Groups in the EP. With a view to optimum visualization of the voting patterns, all groups will be included in the analysis, focusing on the voting pattern of the Radical Right, the Christian democratic, and the Conservative parties. Previous research has shown that the party's main motivation when joining a political group in the EP is, first and foremost, the ideological resemblance to the group (Cencig and Sabani, 2017, 971). The group "The European People's Party" (EPP) contains members identified as Christian Democrats and Conservatives. Another group that contains Conservative parties is the group "European Conservatives and Reformists" (ECR). However, it is relevant to note that the ECR group also contains several parties that can be said to belong to the Radical Right. Radical Right-wing parties have also been aligned in an EPG. In the 7<sup>th</sup> European parliament, this group was the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD). In the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament, in addition to EFD, Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF) was another EPG that included Radical Right-wing and Euro-skeptic parties (Reference).

In addition, to get a better overview of the RRP's cohesiveness, a new category has been created in the data EPG column named the "Radical Right". This group is based on the information found in the data from CHES to make the two analysis more compatible for comparison.

The *timeframe* for the analysis is set to the 7<sup>th</sup> (2009-2014) and 8<sup>th</sup> (2014-2019) European parliament. I have selected these terms because it is argued that the Radical Right benefitted from an electoral "push" in the wake of the financial crisis in 2008. Therefore, the analyses for voting behavior begin with the Parliament that was voted in following the financial crisis, the 7<sup>th</sup> European parliament. It also includes the 8<sup>th</sup> European parliamentary term, as this includes the time before and the aftermath of the refugee crisis in 2014 and 2015 – which also propelled the RRP's forward.

### **4.3. Models**

The next two chapters will present different statistical models. In chapter 5, on the CHES data all dependent variables are on an interval level. The regression will therefore use an OLS model. To analyze the roll call votes I utilize the Optimal Classification model described earlier.

## 5. ANALYSIS: political positions

This chapter addresses and examines the ideological positions of the party families, together with their placement on different policy dimensions. I will evaluate to what extent the difference in the distance between the Radical Right, the Conservative, and the Christian democrat parties have changed since 2010 (H1), and evaluate the distance for the specific policy dimensions immigration and foreign policy (H2). In order to do so I will examine CHES data on party positioning.

I will begin informally with scatterplots to give a visual representation of the difference in party positioning; first generally, then for different policy areas. The first plot will include all party families, and the later ones will only contain the Radical Right, Conservatives, and Christian democrats, as these are the ideological groups of interest. The estimated party positions are helpful because they offer a picture of how the parties may have got closer to or further from each other on several policy dimensions. The first part, i.e. the scatterplots, can give some indications as to whether the hypotheses are correct. In order to go into greater depth, two regression analyses are included, one for all the policy areas and year being studied; the other regression analysis is for the immigration and foreign policy dimensions.

### 5.1. Positions

#### 5.1.1. Party families on EU position and their ideological stance

Figure 5.1. shows all the ideological families on an ideological left-right scale together with their positions on EU membership. The ideological question measures the party's position in terms of its overall ideological stance. The parties are placed in a traditional order with the radical left on the left side and the Radical Right on the right side, with the liberal in the center. Furthermore, there are somewhat fluid transitions between the parties' placements. The radical left dominates the extreme left side of the sphere (0-2.5), accompanied by the greens and socialists closer to the center (5). One can find the liberals somewhat scattered on both the left and right side of the center. The Conservative and Christian democratic parties are spread to the right of the center, with the Radical Right furthest to the right. This general description and the positions have not changed much in the nine years observed and continue relatively consistent with previous literature that has stated that the ideological left-right dimension

continues to be one of the dominant features of European politics. This can arguably weaken the H1 on an expected decreased distance between the Radical Right, Conservative and Christian democratic parties. However, it is hard to confirm or discard the hypothesis based on this. For that reason, this only gives us a pointer as to whether the ideological positions continue to be vital for a party's character.

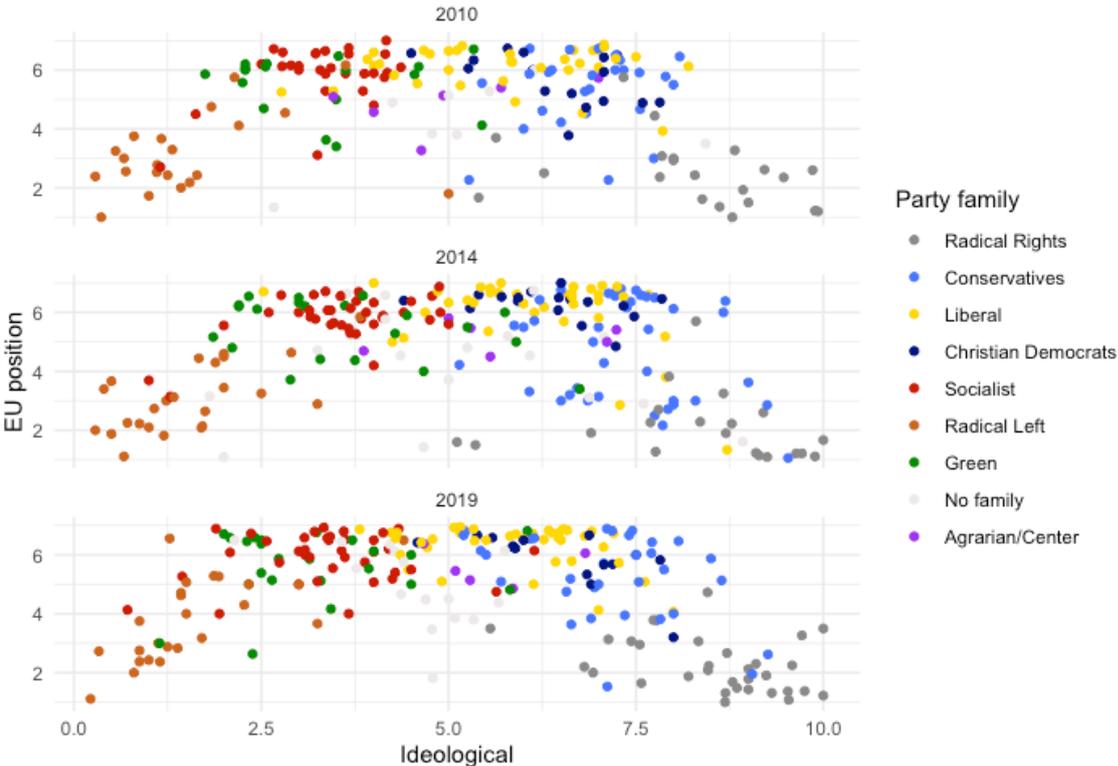


Figure 5.1: Calculation for Ideological groups on EU position and ideological stance based on CHES (1999-2019) (Ideological 0:10, 0=Extreme left, 5=center, 10=extreme right. EU position 1:7, 1=Strongly opposed, 4= Neutral, 7=strongly in favor)

The EU position variable is measured from 1 (strongly opposed) to 7 (strongly in favor) and considers the party leadership's overall orientation towards European integration. On the variable measuring the parties' stance on EU positions, a majority of the ideological groups are to be found on the favorable side (4+), except the radical left and right. In addition to the two radical ideological families, the Conservative and the green parties have shifted and positioned themselves more on the opposing side of European integration. This is not the case for the majority, merely an aspect to take note of. Like the previous measurement, this gives us a pointer to how one can expect this to be reflected in the parties' voting and coalition patterns. It does not seem natural for the Radical Right, Conservative and Christian democrats, to be voting together on EU policies.

### *Positions of the Radical Right, the Conservatives and Christian democrats*

Having looked at the parties' placement on the question of the EU, it is now relevant to take a closer look at the three groups of interest. In the remaining part of this chapter, only the positions of the Radical Right, Conservative, and Christian democratic parties are evaluated.

#### 5.1.2. EU position

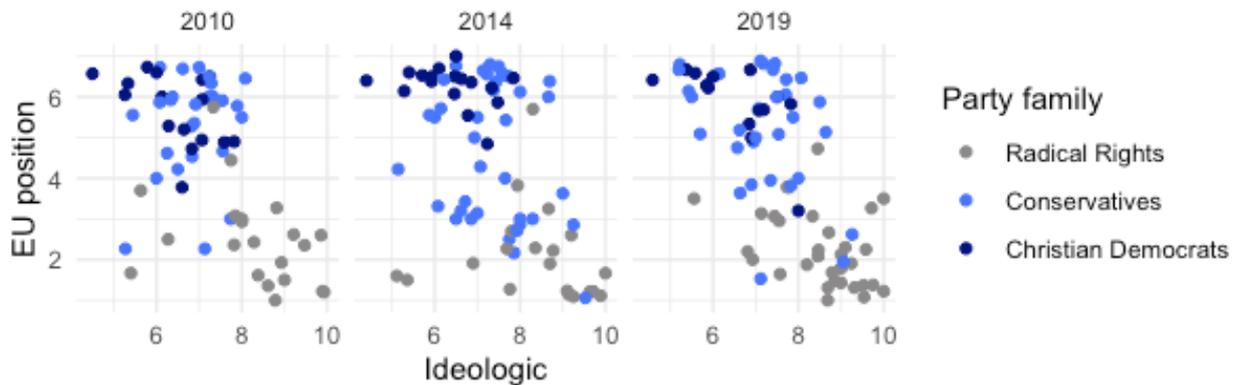


Figure 5.2: Calculated position on EU's position towards European integration and ideologic stance based on CHES (1999-2019). (Ideological 0:10, 0=Extreme left, 5= center, 10=extreme right. EU position 1:7, 1=Strongly opposed, 4= Neutral, 7=strongly in favor)

Figure 5.2. indicates that the RRPs live up to their euro-skeptical reputation. According to figure 5.2. the RRPs are strongly opposed to European integration. They are mostly grouped between what is defined as “opposed” and “strongly opposed” to European Integration, with no change over the years.

Conversely, the Conservatives and Christian democrats can be found on the sphere's favorable side in 2010 – in other words, they favor European integration. However, about half of the Conservative parties became more negative to European integration in 2014, yet not as vehemently opposed as the RRPs. The movement towards the “opposing side” (1-4) was greater in 2014 than in 2019, as the movement slightly halted in 2019. This indication may strengthen H1 on parties' decreased distance after the refugee crisis, but the change has been very small change, if indeed there has been any.

### 5.1.3. Economic and ideologic position

Similar to figure 5.1., the following figure also measures parties' ideologic stance. But the question on the parties' position on the EU has been replaced with their position on economic approach.

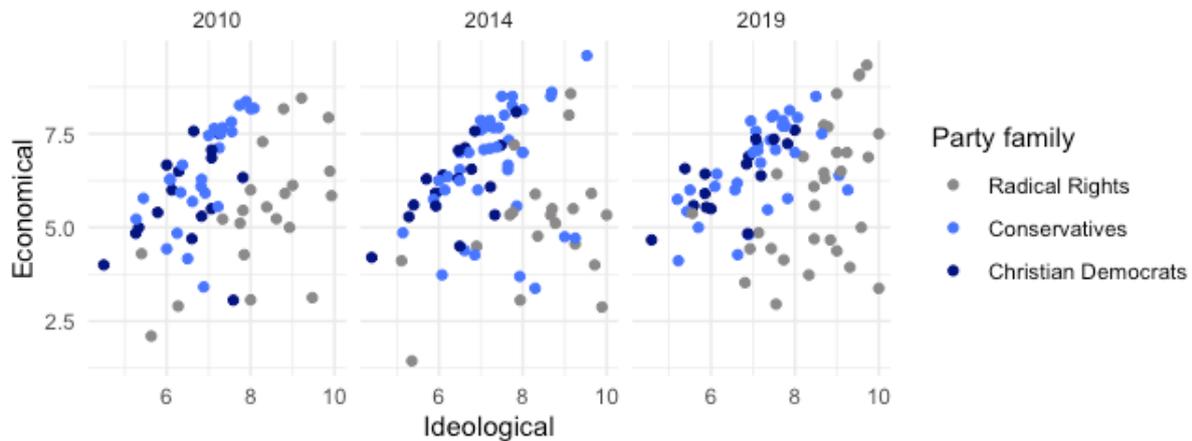


Figure 5.3: Calculated ideological and economic stance based on CHES (1999-2019) (Ideological 1:10, 0=Extreme left, 5=center, 10=extreme right, Economical 0:10, 0=Extreme left, 5= center, 10=extreme right)

The three ideological groups RRP, Conservatives, and Christian democrats are all to be found on the right side of the center (5+) in all the years included in this analysis. The RRP are clearly gathered further to the right of the spectrum than the Conservatives and the Christian democrats during these three years. The distinction is more apparent in 2010 than in the following years. The ideological groups have gotten slightly more mixed over the years – albeit with the RRP continuing furthest to the right. These implications strengthen the first hypothesis (H1) on less distance between the ideological groups.

The economic question measures the party's position in terms of its ideological stance on economic issues. While right parties want governments to take a smaller role in relation to the economy, the left wants the government to play an active role in economics. In the years studied here, the ideological groups are mixed across the spectrum, ranging between 2.5 and 8 with some parties moving further to the extreme right in 2014 and 2019. In 2014 the Conservatives and Christian democrats were further to the extreme right than the RRP, but this changed in 2019 when one can see that the RRP moved further to the extreme right. All three ideological groups continue spread between the extreme economic right (10) and economic left (2.5), while they could mostly be found between the center and the extreme right in 2019. It is clear here

that the ideological groups are getting closer to each other over the years and more mixed. These measurements serve to strengthen H1, as we observe a difference between before and after 2014 as figure 5.3. shows that the ideological groups have gotten closer.

#### 5.1.4. GALTAN

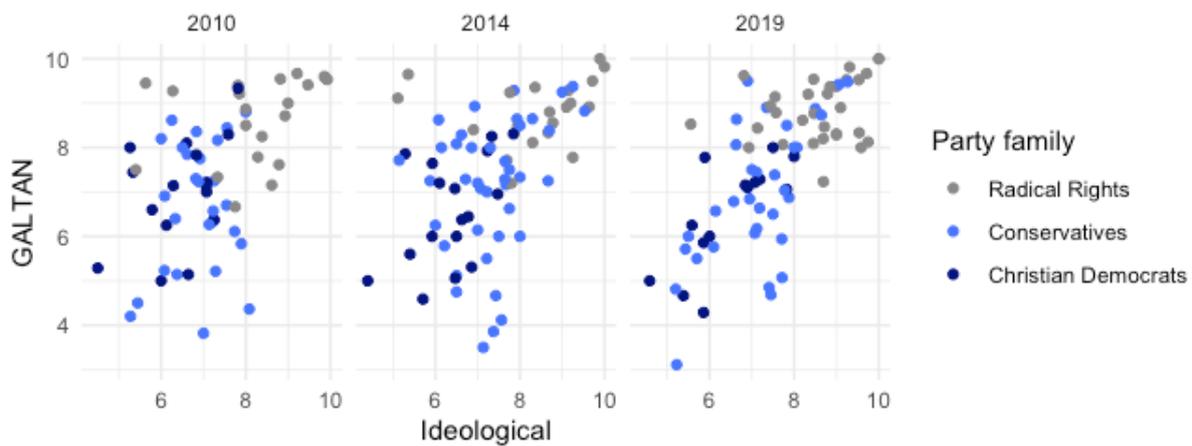


Figure 5.4: Calculated position on GALTAN and ideological stance based on CHES (1999-2019). (Ideological 0:10, 0 = Extreme left, 5 = center, 10=extreme right. GALTAN 0:10, 0 = Libertarian/Postmaterialist, 5 = center, 10 = Traditional/Authoritarian)

Another important measurement is the party’s views on social and cultural values. The party’s views are measured from 0 – libertarian/post-materialist to 10 – traditional/authoritarian. In the dataset, libertarian/postmaterialist are parties that “(...) favor expanded personal freedoms, for example, abortion rights, divorce, and same-sex marriage”, traditional/authoritarian parties do not share the same values. They believe that the government should be a firm moral authority on these issues (Bakker et. al., 2020, 23).

As expected, the RRP’s view on social and cultural values is far on the spectrum’s traditional/authoritarian side, not even close to the center. This does not change through the years. The Conservatives and the Christian democrats’ views are also on the traditional/authoritarian side of the spectrum but are further towards the center. There is not much movement for these two ideological groups, except that some Conservative and Christian democratic parties have shifted slightly to the more liberal and postmaterialist side of the scale. There has not been, based on this, a drastic decrease in the distance between the RRP’s and the Conservatives/Christian democrats, which could appear to weaken the first hypothesis.

### 5.1.5. Social Lifestyle

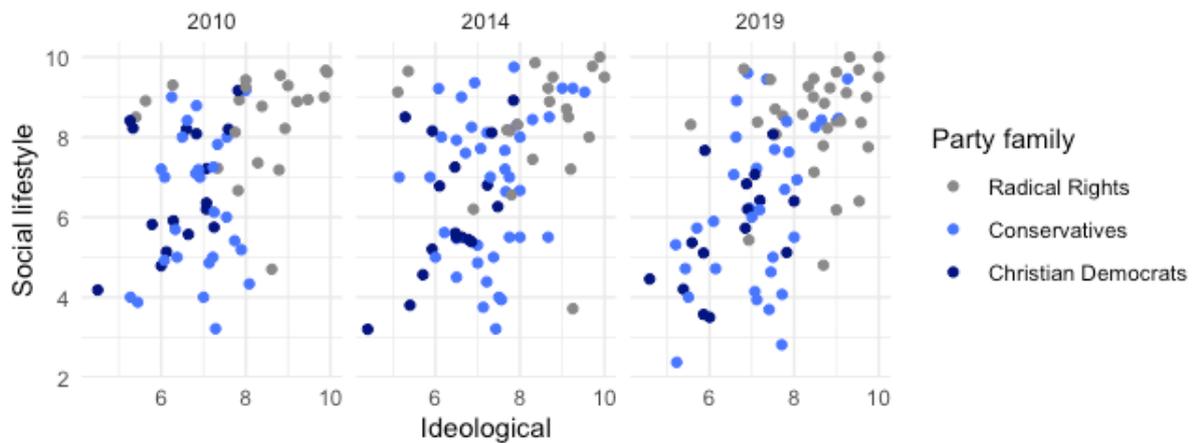


Figure 5.5: Calculated position on Social Lifestyle dimension and ideological stance based on CHES (1999-2019). (Ideological: 0=Extreme left, 5= center, 10=extreme right, Social Rights: 0=Strongly supports liberal policies, 10= Strongly opposed liberal policies)

The measurements of views on social lifestyle gauges whether and to what degree the party supports or opposes the liberal policy and their position on social lifestyle, such as LGBT rights and gender equality. On the figure above, the facet on 2010 shows the Radical Right on the opposing side of the center, with some parties further to the center. The Christian democrats and the Conservatives are, however, found scattered across the center (5) and with several parties on the strongly “opposing side” (10). There is not much change in the parties’ positioning on social lifestyle except that a small part of the Christian democrats and the Conservatives have moved modestly further to each direction. Much like the GALTAN dimension, these findings also seem to weaken H1 regarding the expectation of a decreased distance between the ideological groups between 2010 and 2019,.

### 5.1.6. The EU’s foreign and security policy

In 2010 the RRP’s were evenly dispersed on the right side of the EU’s foreign and security policy variable. In 2014, they were grouped even further on the opposite side of the variable, but continued to be spread out, up to a point. In 2019 they were strongly grouped on the opposing side, with some parties being less opposing but still found on the center’s opposing side.

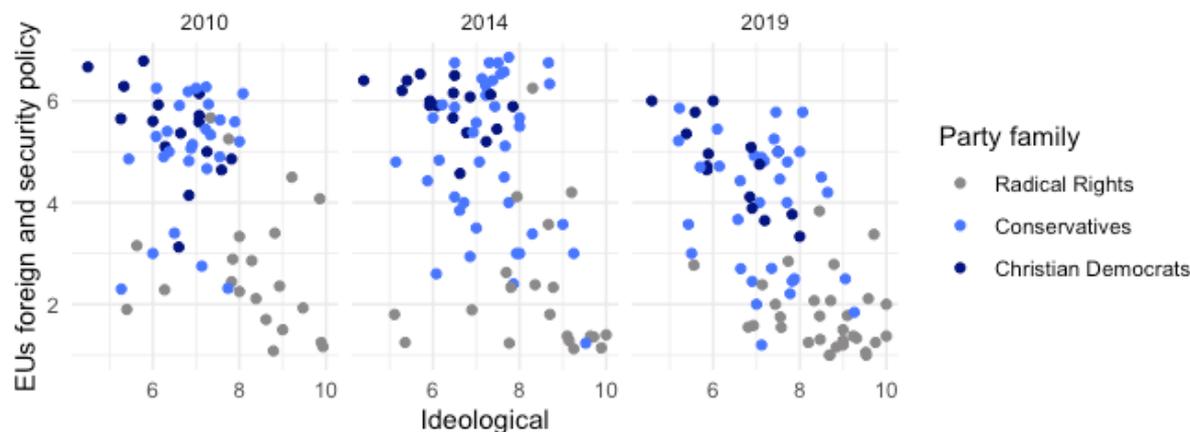


Figure 5.6: Calculated position on the EU's foreign and security policy and ideological stance based on CHES (1999-2019). (EU's foreign and security policy: 1=strongly opposes, 4= neutral, 7=strongly favors) (Ideological 0:10, 0=Extreme left, 5=center, 10=extreme right)

The Conservatives and the Christian Democrats were also evenly dispersed, but around the center. Some of the Conservative parties have increasingly moved to the "opposing side" on the EU's foreign and security policy, hence closer to the RRP according to figure 5.6. According to the data, the Christian democrats have not experienced the same rapid change as the Conservatives. In 2010 most of the Christian democratic parties were to be found to favor the EU's security and foreign policy. In 2019 they moved slightly towards the center and closer to the RRP.

To sum up, a large share of the three ideological groups were in 2019 to be found near/in the lower right corner, meaning that they strongly oppose the EU's foreign and security policy. All of the RRP and around half of the Conservatives are clearly on this side, while the Christian Democrats are largely neutral. On this basis, it can be argued that the parties from the three ideological groups became more united. These implications may strengthen H1 in terms of decreased distance between the parties and H2 on a more united right on issues concerning, amongst others, foreign affairs.

### 5.1.7. Immigration

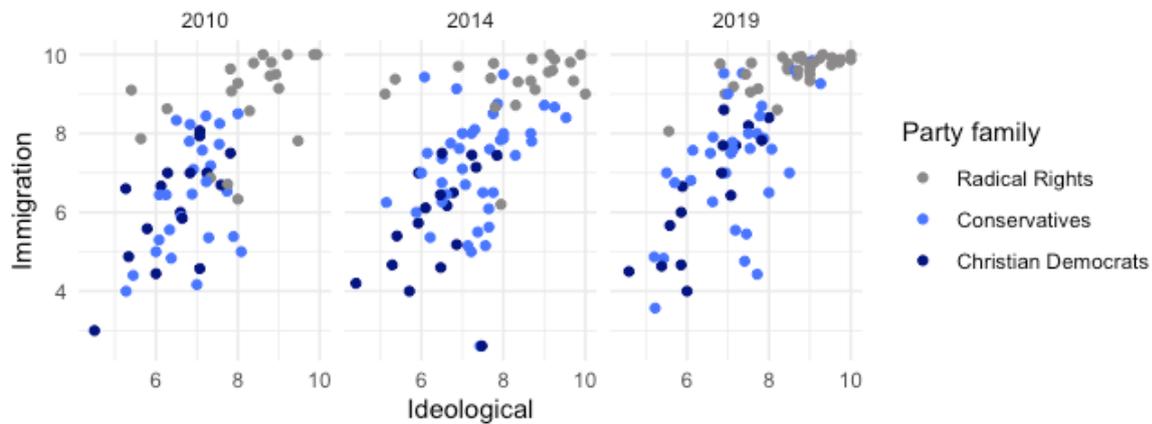


Figure 5.7: Calculated position on immigration dimension and ideological stance based on CHES (1999-2019). (Immigration policy 0:10, 0= strongly favors a liberal policy on immigration, 10= strongly favors a restrictive policy on immigration. (Ideological 0:10, 0=extreme left, 5= center, 10=extreme right)

In 2010, the RRPs were spread out on the center’s more restrictive side (5+), with most of them grouped at “strongly favors a restrictive policy on immigration” (10). The RRPs that were not grouped on the most extreme side of the sphere in 2010 have between 2014 and 2019 moved further to the restrictive side. The Christian democrat and Conservative parties are not as restrictive in their position on immigration policy as the RRPs and can be found scattered around the center in 2010, mainly on the restrictive side. In 2014, however, the plots show that there has been some movement, especially for the Conservative parties that have moved further to a more restrictive position. The Christian democrats are still to be found mostly on the restrictive side of the center, but more so than in 2010.

Nevertheless, by 2019 the Christian democrats have moved further to the restrictive side of the center, and together with the Conservatives the groups are much closer to the RRPs’ position than they were in 2010. In the study of the Radical Right, the immigration dimension is one of the most researched topics. As the literature has stated, on the issue of immigration the right has become more united as center-right parties have moved closer to the RRPs. This strengthens the first hypothesis which suggests a rapprochement among the parties. In addition, it also strengthens H2 which suggests decreased distance on, amongst others, immigration policy.

### 5.1.8. Civil liberties versus law and order

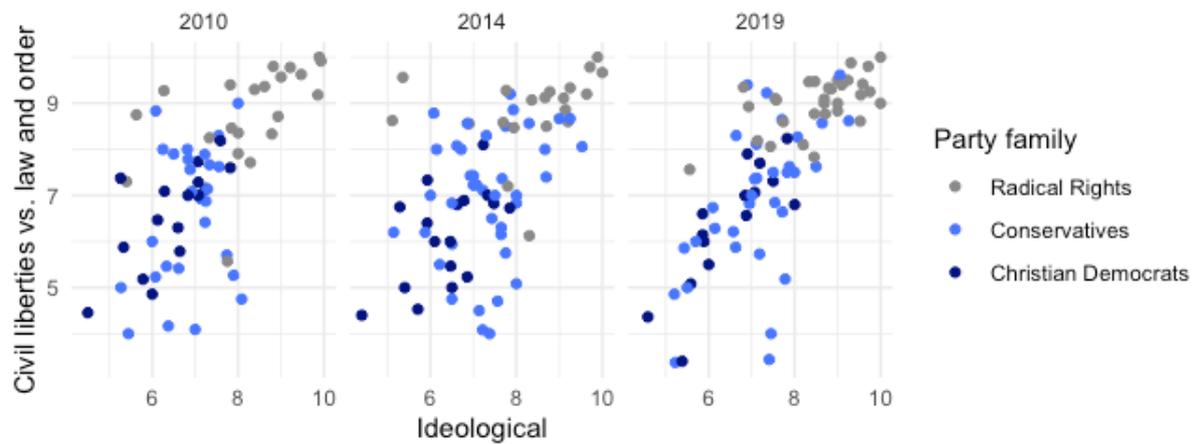


Figure 5.8: Calculated position on civil liberties versus law and order and ideological stance based on CHES (1999-2019). (Ideological 0:10, 0=extreme left, 5= center, 10=extreme right, civil liberties vs. law and order: 0=strongly promotes civil liberties, 10=strongly supports tough measures to fight crime)

As mentioned in the conceptual clarification, one of the characteristics of RRP is authoritarianism: the belief that a society consists of stricter guidelines and violations of these guidelines deserve harsh sanctions. For that reason, it is useful to examine the positions of the parties on this dimension. The assumptions are indeed recognizable in Table 5.8. The RRP are further to the law-and-order side of the variable and have kept up this position throughout the years included in this study. There is nearly no difference in the RRP's positioning over the years. The same goes for the Conservatives and the Christian democrats, who are positioned on the center's upper side, meaning most of them are more supportive of tough measures to fight crime. However, based on the figure one can argue that some Conservative and Christian democrat parties have moved further to the law-and-order side, the Conservatives more so than the Christian democrats. Nevertheless, the changes are small, if they are present all, which weakens the first hypothesis, as the differences – if any – are minimal.

## 5.2. Summary of positions and distance

The positions estimated through the CHES-data have given different indications. The positions on eight different policy areas are estimated. Five out of eight of the positions seemed to strengthen H1: expectation of a change between 2010 and 2019, while the three remaining tended to weaken H1. The two positions that regarded the second hypothesis that the distance on immigration policy and foreign policy would decrease, were also strengthened as the two

plots on these dimensions showed the Conservative and Christian democratic parties moving closer to the RRP’s position.

It is, however, interesting to look at the positions from another perspective. Therefore, the mean distance between RRP and C/CD has been analyzed. According to Figure 5.9. the distance between the RRP and the center-right parties does not change that much between 2010, 2014, and 2019. Figure 5.9. contradicts the implications already seen in Figure 5.1. to 5.8. These findings further weaken H1 and H2.

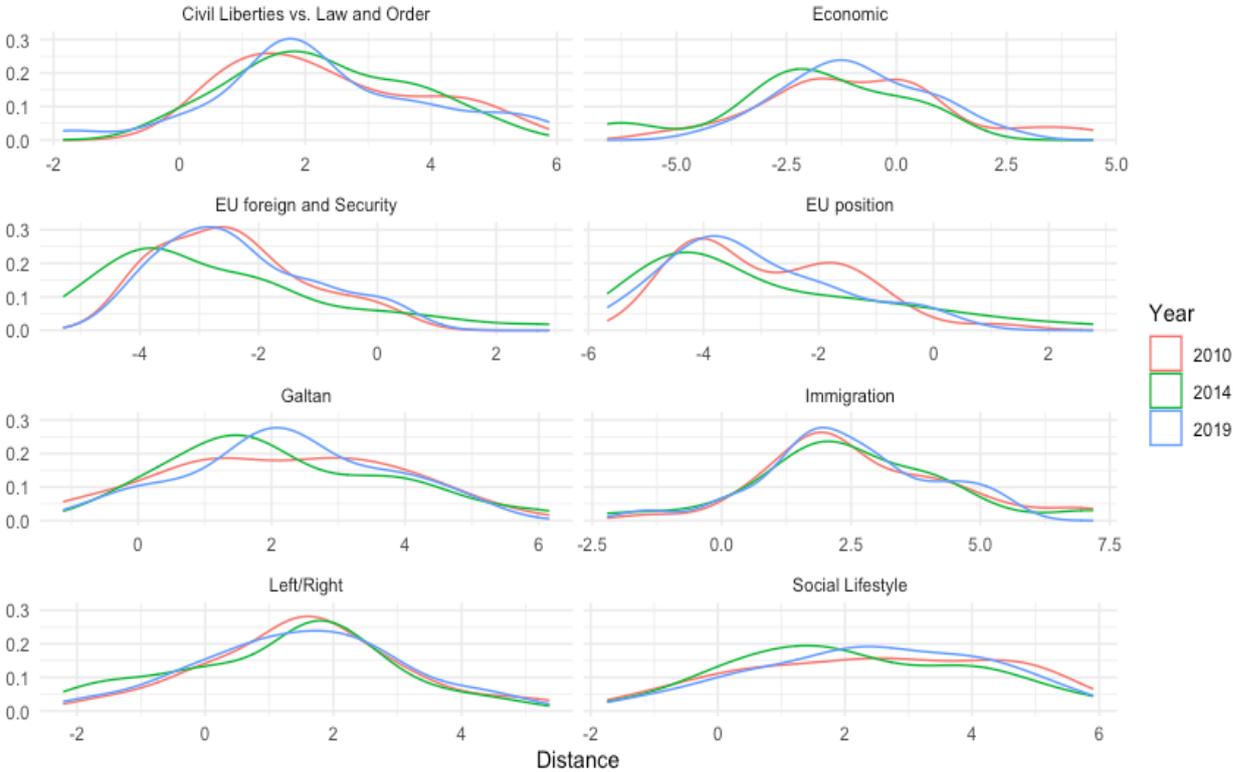


Figure 5.9: The calculated distance between RRP versus Christian democrat and Conservative parties based on CHES (1999-2019).

However, these analyses are only giving an informal visual interception. The next section will analyze the positions in greater detail using OLS regression.

**5.3. Measurements of distance**

The positions of the RRP and the Conservative, and Christian democratic parties have been shown informally and descriptively and given us an idea of whether there has been a shift in

the distance between the parties. The descriptive analyses have shown that there is a great difference in the distance among the parties in the different policy areas, and this must be taken into consideration when discussing the thesis' research question.

As well as looking into the position and distance from the descriptive analyses, it is also relevant to look at it more formally to better discuss the party position in Europe. For that reason, the following tables show a systematic analysis of the measures regarding the distance between the parties. The tables present the estimated increased or decreased distance between the RRP and the Conservative/Christian democrat parties over the years (Table 5.1.). Different policy dimensions are also included to investigate whether the difference between the parties on different policy dimensions varies (Model 3). In addition, country variation will be included to examine the within-country effects as fixed effects for countries are added (Table 5.1.). A dummy variable for the Christian democratic parties is also included (Model 2). In Model 4 in Table 5.1. The reference category for the year coefficients is 2010, for the policy coefficients the left-right dimension, and Conservatives for the ideological group coefficient.

### 5.3.1. Distance between the RRP, the Christian democrats, and the Conservatives

Table 5.1 presents four models. The first model shows the distance between the RRP and the Conservative and Christian democrat parties' effect over year 2014 and 2019 compared to the reference category. Model 1 gives no reason to believe there to be a change in the years 2014 and 2019. As such, this does not support the first hypothesis on a decreased distance between the ideological groups in the time before and after the refugee crisis.

Model 2 adds the "Christian democrat" coefficient, which compares the distance between RRP and Christian democrats to that between RRP and Conservatives. It shows that, compared to Conservative parties, on average Christian democrats are further from RRP with a 2.113 scale point increase with a significant effect at the 0.01 level. Furthermore, the results for the year coefficients are not significant here either, hence there is no change from the previous model.

<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
Distance between RRP and Conservatives/Christian democrats				
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
2014	0.675 (0.755)	0.935 (0.748)	0.935 (0.729)	-0.322 (0.771)
2019	-0.423 (0.636)	-0.024 (0.640)	-0.024 (0.620)	-0.527 (0.610)
Christian democratic		2.113*** (0.600)	2.113*** (0.576)	1.681* (0.918)
Civil liberties vs. law and order			3.081*** (0.896)	3.081*** (0.823)
EU foreign and security policy			3.689*** (0.754)	3.689*** (0.771)
EU position			7.167*** (0.896)	7.167*** (0.883)
Gal-Tan			2.656*** (0.875)	2.656*** (0.822)
Immigration			4.916*** (1.086)	4.916*** (1.008)
Economic			0.727 (0.895)	0.727 (0.864)
Social Lifestyle			4.420*** (0.988)	4.420*** (0.931)
Constant	7.920*** (0.507)	7.014*** (0.548)	3.682*** (0.655)	9.631*** (1.630)
Country FEs	No	No	No	Yes
Observations	968	968	968	968
R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.016	0.080	0.192
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.001	0.013	0.070	0.167
Residual Error	Std. 8.496 (df = 965)	8.445 (df = 964)	8.196 (df = 957)	7.759 (df = 937)
F Statistic	1.398 (df = 2; 965)	5.173*** (df = 3; 964)	8.301*** (df = 10; 957)	7.446*** (df = 30; 937)

Note:

\*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01

Reference categories: Year=2010, Policy dimension= left-right, Ideological group = Conservative

Table 5.1: Regression table: Distance between Radical Right and Conservative/Christian democrat on the left-right dimension, policy dimensions, and country differences (CHES 1999-2019).

As in the previous models, the year coefficients are not significant in Model 3. Furthermore, when adding policy areas, there is no change seen in the “Christian democrat” coefficient. The policy areas are all significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level, except for the economic dimension, which has no significant results. All of the values on the policy dimension are positive; these significant results show that, compared to the left-right dimension, the difference between the parties is more extensive in some of the policy areas.

Adding country fixed effects in Model 4 also fits with the same pattern, as it does not show any significant effect on the year. However, the coefficient of the Christian democrats has changed and is at 1.681 in Model 4 with a significant effect at the 0.01 level. This means that when running controls countries, there is less changed effect of between being Christian democrat than Conservative. There is little support for H1 in any of the models’ results.

### 5.3.2. Distance in Immigration and EU foreign and security policy

Table 5.2 provides results from four regression models, two on immigration policy, and two on EU’s foreign and security policy. These models are the tests for H2, which expects that the distance between the RRP and Conservative/Christian democrat parties has decreased, with the distance on positions concerning foreign affairs and immigration having decreased significantly. As immigration policy often is often part of the EU’s foreign and security policy this provides a good basis for comparing “national positions” and positions at an EU level.

Model 1 and Model 2 both concern the distance between the Radical Right, and the Conservative and the Christian democrat parties on the *immigration* dimension. Model 1 gives no reason to believe there to be a change in the years 2014 and 2019 as no significant effect is found. However, there is a significant difference between being a Christian democratic party rather than a Conservative party, as the Christian democrat coefficient shows a significant positive correlation. In Model 2, however, the Christian democrat coefficient no longer has a significant effect when adding country fixed effects, meaning there is no longer a significant difference between Christian democrats and Conservatives. The results from these two models give little support to H2.

<i>Dependent variable:</i>				
	Distance in Immigration		Distance in EU foreign and security policy	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
2014	0.271 (2.810)	-0.017 (2.453)	3.784** (1.618)	2.988* (1.593)
2019	-0.884 (2.277)	-0.654 (2.159)	0.075 (1.235)	-0.134 (1.370)
Christian democrat	6.303*** (2.322)	3.260 (3.812)	2.296** (1.107)	3.098* (1.677)
Constant	7.835*** (1.941)	22.901*** (7.194)	6.425*** (1.141)	3.197 (2.458)
Country FEs	No	Yes	No	Yes
Observations	121	121	121	121
R <sup>2</sup>	0.078	0.461	0.097	0.299
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.054	0.334	0.074	0.133
Residual Std. Error	10.570 (df = 117)	8.872 (df = 97)	6.220 (df = 117)	6.016 (df = 97)
F Statistic	3.305** (df = 3; 117)	3.614*** (df = 23; 97)	4.175*** (df = 3; 117)	1.803** (df = 23; 97)

*Note:* \*p<0.1; \*\*p<0.05; \*\*\*p<0.01  
Reference categories: Year=2010, Ideological group = Conservative

Table 5.2: Regression table: Distance between Radical Right and Conservatives/Christian democrats on immigration and EU's foreign and security policy (CHES 1999-2019).

Model 3 and 4 concern the other aspect of H2, *foreign policy*. In Model 3, there has been a significant change in the distance between the ideological groups on the EU's foreign and security policy for 2014. However, the other year's coefficient (2019) gives us no reason to believe that this change also applied to 2019. Furthermore, Model 3 shows a significant difference for Christian democrats as the coefficient shows a significant positive correlation which contradicts the H2, thus weakening it.

In Model 4, when adding country fixed effects, the pattern for the year coefficient continues; the 2014 coefficient shows a significant positive correlation, but it is weakly significant at a 0.10 level. As there is no significant effect, there is no change for 2019. Moreover, Model 4,

similarly to model 3, shows that being Christian democratic has a significant effect, but like the 2014 coefficient the significance is weak, at 0.10. Similarly, and like Model 3, Model 4 shows an increased rather than decreased distance between the ideological groups, weakening H2.

#### **5.4. Summary of results**

In sum, the first descriptive analysis showed some movement between the three ideological groups between the years 2010 and 2019. According to the scatterplots, the RRP, Conservatives, and Christian Democrats have become more mixed on five out of the eight policy dimensions examined. On the variables where RRP is known to take a firm stance, such as immigration and EU's foreign and security policy, the Conservatives and Christian Democrats are easily distinguishable from the RRP through the scatterplots, and they seem to have got closer to RRP on both dimensions. This strengthens the H2, which proposes less distance on those policy dimensions. When looking at the distance between them in the other descriptive analysis, it implicated that the changes could not have been very large, as the figure did not show any major variation.

In addition to the descriptive analyses, two regression tables were presented to develop a more sophisticated understanding. Based on the first regression table there was no reason to assume a change in the parties' position after the refugee crisis, as there was no significant effect on the year coefficients in table 5.1; hence this table weakens the H1. Additionally, another regression table was presented to test H2, including four models. The two first models in table 5.2. tested whether distance between the parties on the immigration dimension has decreased. The results did not show any significant year effect; therefore, these results do not support H2. Yet, on EU's foreign and security policy, there has been a change for the ideological groups' positioning for 2014. However, Table 5.2. (Models 3 & 4) showed that distance had grown, contradicting H2. This means that the expected reduction in distance was in fact an increase in distance between the parties on their positions regarding EU's foreign and security policy. Furthermore, Table 5.2. only shows a significant year effect on 2014, and not on 2019. In sum, as the results contradict the hypothesis or give no reason to believe a change has happened, these results weaken H2.

## 6. ANALYSIS: Voting and coalition patterns

In the previous analyses, I examined the party positions of the ideological groups Radical Right, Conservative, and Christian democrat. In the following chapter, the positions of the ideological groups in terms of the European Party Groups (EPG) will be further investigated, together with a sample of their voting behavior in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> European terms. Furthermore, the cohesion of the EPGs housing the party families will also be looked at in line with H3 on party group cohesion. This will allow us to understand the positions and behavior of the party families on a European level, in addition to the national level explored in chapter 5.

In this analysis, all the European Party Groups are included together with the non-attached members in the European Parliament. Most of the Radical Right parties are either not attached to an EPG or with the Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) – some are also members of the EPG ECR. In addition, the ENF, another euro-critic party group was established during the 8<sup>th</sup> EP, and includes several RRP. The focus of the analysis are the EPGs EPP, the ECR, ENF. However, it is also important to include the other EPGs as the literature has pointed out three types of possible coalitions: grand coalition (S&D and EPP), super grand coalition (S&D, EPP, and ALDE), and a right-wing coalition (ALDE, EPP, and mostly ECR) (Hix and Høyland, 2013, 178-9). By including the other EPGs, one can distinguish between different coalition patterns.

Furthermore, the exact position of the EPGs is of little relevance for the thesis, as the focus is on the EPGs positions vis-à-vis each other. The figures from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> EP are not positionally comparable since the rotation of the 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> European parliament is not the same. Nevertheless, in this analysis, it is the behavior in terms of voting behavior and possible coalition patterns that are examined; the exact position will not be commented beyond the first two figures (Figure 6.1. and 6.2.). In the first two figures (6.1. and 6.2.), an O.C. for the EPGs' placement in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> European parliament is presented, without the cutline.

A cutline will be included in the rest of the presented votes, differentiating between those that voted in favor and those who voted against. In the method chapter, the number of correctly predicted votes versus the incorrectly predicted votes was presented, which verified the O.C. model's explanatory power. Based on the predicted votes, possible voting and coalition patterns

will be presented. It is, however, important to notice that the votes from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> EP are not the same, but are illustrations of votes on the same policy area.

### 6.1. Movement and cohesion

Before looking into the voting of the EPGs it is interesting to investigate whether there has been any change between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> parliamentary terms, as well as looking at the cohesion of the EPGs in line with H3.

#### *Movement*

From a comparative perspective, there are several changes that can be detected visually between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> parliamentary term. In the 7<sup>th</sup> EP, no parties lay in the immediate vicinity of each other. In the 8<sup>th</sup> EP, however, ALDE has placed themselves closer to the EPP and S&D by being positioned right in between the two EPGs, making it natural for the three of them to vote together on votes where the cutline is “horizontal”. In addition, it is more natural to assume that the EPP’s and ALDE’s voting patterns resemble each other more closely in the 8<sup>th</sup> term than the 7<sup>th</sup>. The positional movement discussed can also makes a super coalition more likely, hence it becomes easy for the parties to use a “cordon sanitaire” strategy and override the RRP (Hix and Høyland, 2013, 178-9; Servent, 2019, 335-6). However, ECR has also moved closer to the EPP during the 8<sup>th</sup> European parliament, which forms the basis and increases the probability for a right-wing coalition, that also can include the RRP not aligned with the ECR.

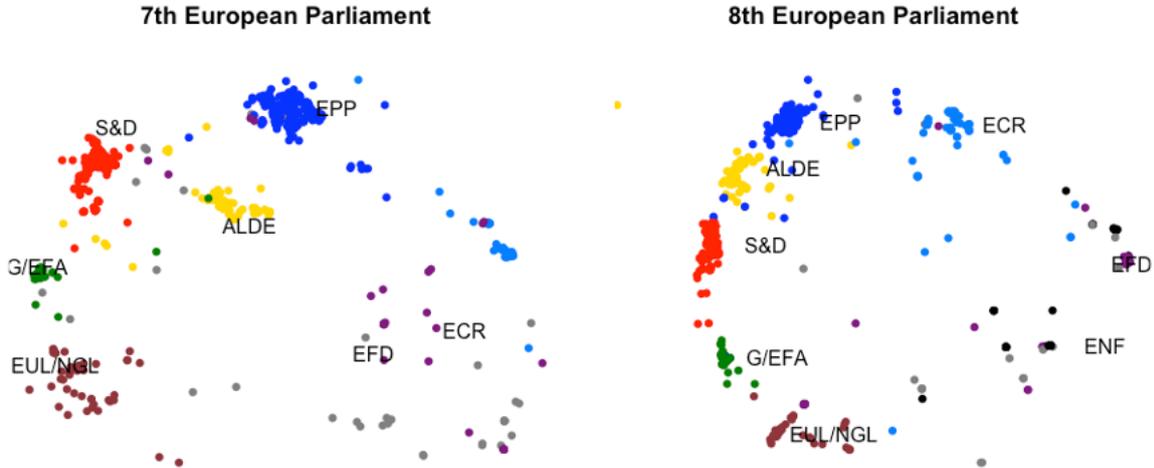


Figure 6.1: (to the left) Optimal classification of parties in the 7th European Parliament. (votewatch.eu)

Figure 6.2:(to the right) Optimal classification of parties in the 8th European Parliament. (votewatch.eu)

In addition to looking at these figures (6.1. and 6.2.), it is interesting to look at the movement through density plots. Figures 6.3., 6.4., and 6.5., show the distribution for the distance between the MEPs in a party group towards MEPs in other of the party groups investigated here.

The density plot presenting the distance between the EPP and the Radical Right EPG(s) (Figure 6.3.) show that in the 8<sup>th</sup> EP, the distance between the MEPs in EPP and the MEPs in EFD are more spread out than in the seventh. There are two groupings for the 7<sup>th</sup> when comparing the positions of EPP and EFD. They are between 0.6 and 0.8. In the 8<sup>th</sup> EP, they are more spread out, and therefore more moderate. It should, however, be noticed that the scale between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> are not equal.

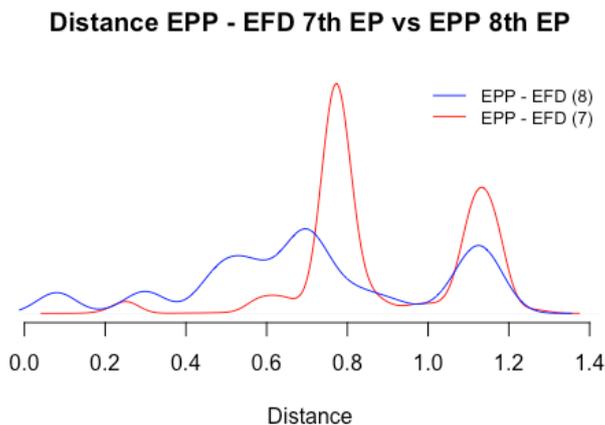
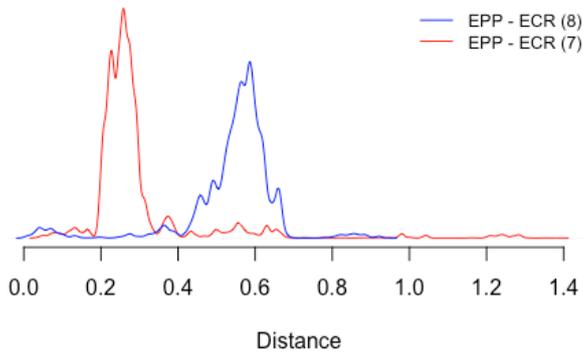


Figure 6.3: Density plot for EPP towards EFD based on optimal classification of roll call votes

For the 7<sup>th</sup> term the distance between the MEPs in EPP and MEPs in EFD are distributed in two tops. The same goes for the difference between the MEPs from the same EPGs in the 8<sup>th</sup> EP. The largest tops for each of the parliamentary terms are to be found more to the right. The average distance has increased from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament. In the 7<sup>th</sup>, most observations are between 0.2 and 0.3, and for the 8<sup>th</sup> it is approximately at 0.6. The ENF, the “newly” formed EPG consisting of RRP have less smaller tops than the two other measured distances.

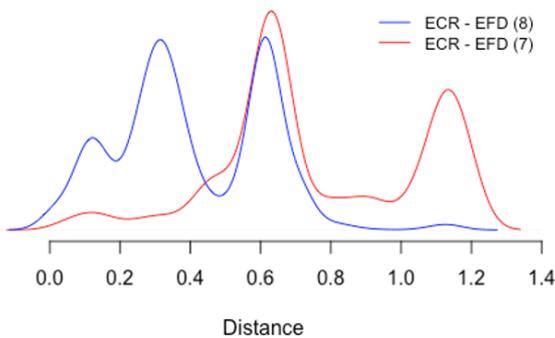
**Distance EPP - ECR 7th vs EPP - ECR 8th EP**



*Figure 6.4: Density plot for EPP towards ECR based on optimal classification of roll call votes*

When comparing average distance between the MEPs of ECR with those of RRP, two groupings are found in both terms. In the 7<sup>th</sup> parliament, the largest grouping is at around 0.6 and 0.7 while the other one is at around 1.2. For the 8<sup>th</sup> EP the largest groupings of MEPs are to be found around 0.3, and the second between 0.6 and 0.7.

**Distance ECR - EFD 7th vs ECR - EFD 8th EP**



*Figure 6.5: Density plot for EFD towards ECR based on optimal classification of roll call votes*

In sum, there has not been any major difference between the two parliamentary terms. These results therefore weaken H1, which states “The distance between mainstream and Radical Right parties decreased after the refugee crisis”.

A t-test showed that there was a significant difference between the party groups position for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> EP. However, as can be seen in table 6.1. and 6.2. the distance between the EPP and ECR has decreased, however this is the only pair which have experienced a decrease in both

dimensions. As H1 expected the decrease to appear for all pairs at both dimensions, this is weakened by these results.

	<b>7<sup>th</sup> European Parliament</b>		<b>8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament</b>	
	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 1	Dimension 2
<b>EPP</b>	0.116	0.248	-0.033	0.397
<b>ECR</b>	0.465	-0.163	0.216	0.347
<b>EFD</b>	0.330	-0.403	0.304	-0.353

Table 6.1: Mean position calculated for the EPGs EPP, ECR and EFD for the 7th and 8th European Parliament. (votewatch.eu)

<b>Distance between:</b>	<b>Dimension 1</b>		<b>Dimension 2</b>	
	7 <sup>th</sup> EP	8 <sup>th</sup> EP	7 <sup>th</sup> EP	8 <sup>th</sup> EP
<b>EPP - ECR</b>	0.349	0.249	0.441	0.050
<b>EPP - EFD</b>	0.214	0.337	0.651	0.750
<b>ECR - EFD</b>	0.135	0.088	0.240	0.700

Table 6.2: Compared distance between the EPGs' position (votewatch.eu).

*Cohesion*

Another visual change is the party group cohesion. According to the H3, the EPGs should have a high degree of party cohesion. When looking at Figures 6.1 and 6.2, EPP appears to have a higher degree of cohesiveness in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament than in the 7<sup>th</sup>. When it comes to the parties assumed to be RRP, both EFD and unattached members (ENF in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament), it looks as if they are spread across a limited spectrum of figures in both of the parliamentary terms. However, it is hard to determine if there has been any change regarding group cohesiveness; comparisons are also difficult. To understand whether the effects conveyed in the illustration are accurate and to get a better picture, the standard deviation for the RRP and the EPP has been explored.

	<b>7<sup>th</sup> European Parliament</b>		<b>8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament</b>	
	Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 1	Dimension 2
<b>RRPs</b>	0.221	0.495	0.219	0.218
<b>EPP</b>	0.035	0.062	0.029	0.105
<b>ECR</b>	0.037	0.153	0.058	0.177
<b>EFD</b>	0.112	0.316	0.231	0.300

Table 6.3: Standard deviations calculated for the ideological groups EPP and RRP for the 7th and 8th European Parliament. (votewatch.eu)

The standard deviation gives us the amount of variation measures for the objects of study. For both the 7th and 8th EP, the RRP have a higher standard deviation than the EPP, which corresponds to a high degree of variation in the parties' voting patterns. In other words, the RRP are less cohesive than the Conservative and Christian democratic parties in the EP. However, there has been a massive decrease on the second dimension for the RRP with the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament having less than half of the deviation of the 7th Parliament. This means that the variation among the RRP has decreased drastically. This trend has been reversed for the EPP, where the EPP were more cohesive through the 7th than the 8th EP, but the change is not as dramatic as for the RRP. In addition, it is important to note that the EPP has experience the lowest degree of variation out of the four groups included in table 6.1. For the ECR, one can see that there was more variation in the 8th term than in the 7th term on both dimensions. This is visibly reflected in figure 6.1 and 6.2. For the EFD, it varies on the first and second dimension. There is more variation on the first dimension in the 8th term than in the 7th, but for the second dimension, the variation has decreased slightly. Therefore, it is still hard to determine whether the H3 on party group cohesion is true; however, the degree of cohesion appears to be relatively stable, except for the RRP's second dimension, which indicates that the RRP are more "united" than before.

## 6.2. Voting patterns on policy dimensions

As both cohesion and distance among the EPGs are investigated, I will now go into greater depth on the question whether there has been a clear shift in the ideological groups' voting patterns based on different policy areas. The cutline represents an illustration of the separation between “yeas” and “nays”, and which parties have similar voting patterns. The cutline *only refers to the particular vote being measured*, and cannot necessarily represent any pattern for votes on the same policy area. Votes on the same policy area are chosen for both the 7th and the 8th EP, and the policy dimensions correspond to the ones in the party positioning analysis (Chapter 5): gender equality, which is a part of the social life style dimension, EU security policy, foreign policy, civil liberties versus law and order, and lastly economic.

### 6.2.1. Gender Equality

During the 7th term, the EP voted on the EU's policy framework to fight violence against women. The new comprehensive policy approach against gender-based violence that was proposed included, inter alia, urging member states to provide shelters for victims, establish a legal framework, ensure appropriate resources to prevent violence against women, etc. (European Parliament, 2011). The 8th EP's vote on gender equality concerned the EU's strategy for gender equality in general. The EU wants to strengthen women's rights and gender equality more comprehensively (European Parliament, 2016).

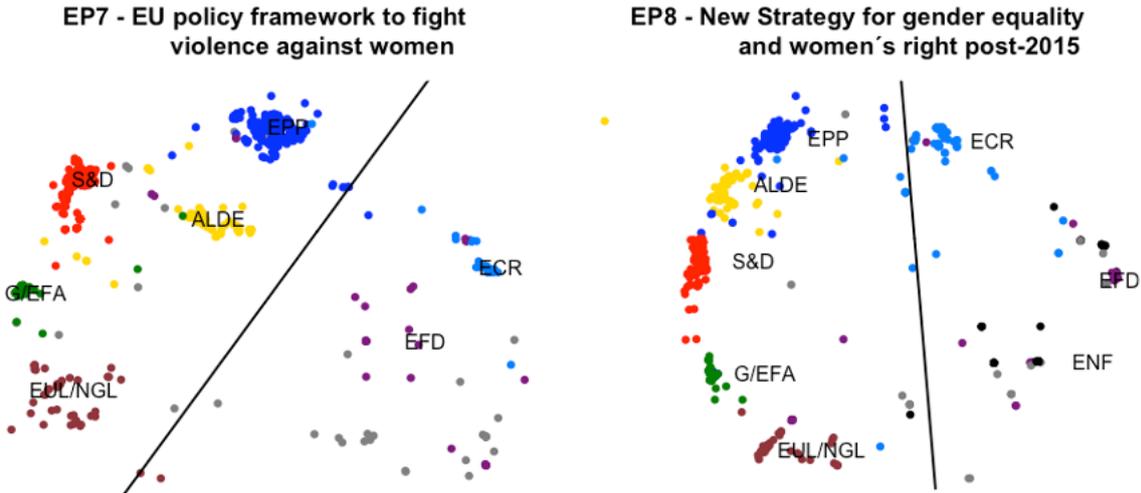


Figure 6.6: (to the left) Optimal classification cutline on the 7th European parliament, EU policy framework to fight violence against women. Vote ID: 1590

Figure 6.7: (to the right) Optimal classification cutline on the 8th European parliament – New strategy for gender equality and women's rights post 2015. Vote ID: 2650 (Votewatch.eu).

These samples of votes on the topic of gender equality do not show a large visible shift in the voting patterns from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> EP. The vote from the 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament concerns the EU policy framework to fight violence against women (Figure 6.6.). The vote on gender equality from the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament concerns the resolution for a new strategy for gender equality and women's right (Figure 6.7.). Both votes are on the same policy area and therefore comparable.

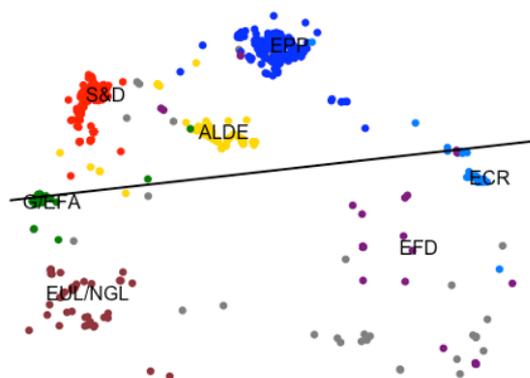
For both the votes, the cutline shows a separation between the EPP, ALDE, S&D, G/EFA, and EUL/NGL (super grand coalition) on one side, and ECR and EFD (and in 8<sup>th</sup> ENF) on the other. Meaning a separation between EPP and the rest of the party groups of interest. In the vote on the EU policy framework to fight violence against women in the 7<sup>th</sup> EP, there were 551 in favor, 84 against, and 17 abstaining votes – 85% of the votes were in favor.

Even though there is little noticeable change in the figures, according to our data under 50% voted in favor (337 yeas, 286 nays, 78 abs) in the 8<sup>th</sup> parliament. In this case of votes on a social lifestyle dimension, the three ideological groups the Radical Right, Conservatives and Christian democrats did not vote together in either of the parliamentary terms. This weakens H4 that the three groups tend to vote together.

### 6.2.2. Security policy

These two first votes on EU's foreign and security policy included are much alike and easily comparable. The vote from the 7<sup>th</sup> EP highlighted key threats and challenges facing the European Union such as terrorism and organized crime, energy security, poverty, and cyber-security. It also considered that the primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security in the world lies with the UN Security Council. Another important aspect of the vote is stated in the final text adopted by the EP: "(...) the Union must enhance its strategic autonomy through a strong and effective foreign, security and defense policy (...)". (European Parliament, 2010a). The vote from the 8<sup>th</sup> EP covers much of the same ground, but with a more overall security policy view. The text adopted states that it is necessary for member states and the union to shoulder greater responsibility for their security and defense and stresses the importance of member states working together (European Parliament, 2015).

**EP7 The implementation of the European Security Strategy and the Common Security and Defence Policy**



**EP8 Implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy**

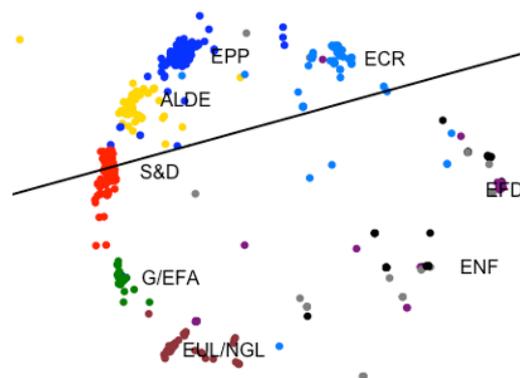


Figure 6.8: (to the left) Optimal classification for 7th EP - The implementation of the European Security Strategy and the Common Security and Defence Policy, Vote ID: 475

Figure 6.9: (to the right) Optimal classification for 8th EP – The implementation of the Common Security and Defence Policy. Vote ID: 895 (votewatch.eu)

When comparing these two votes, there is a change. The cutline in the vote from the 7<sup>th</sup> parliament made a separation between G/EFA and EUL/NGL with one side of the cutline, and between EPP and ECR with the other side. This changed in the 8<sup>th</sup> EP when ECR voted together with the EPP and ALDE, creating a right-wing coalition. However, the RRP were left on the other side of the cutline. In the 7<sup>th</sup> parliament, 419 MEPs voted for the proposal, 44 voted against, and 10 abstained. In the 8<sup>th</sup> EP, 370 MEPs voted in favor, 260 voted against, and 47 abstained. This shows that a more considerable proportion of the members have shifted to vote against the proposal in 2019 (8<sup>th</sup>) than in 2014 (7<sup>th</sup>). Even though the EPP and ECR voted together in the 8<sup>th</sup> EP, the results from these votes weaken H4 as the right-wing continues without being “united” with the RRP, which are left on the other side of the cutline.

### 6.2.3. Foreign policy

As with the two previous votes, these votes are also part of EU’s foreign and security policy, as foreign policy and security policy are merged in the EU.

The legislative resolution from the 7<sup>th</sup> European parliament centers to a considerable degree on the relocation of refugees. It states that the EU aims to promote relocation as a solidarity tool and the conditions pertaining to relocation. Further, the resolution states “The Union’s objective to constitute an area of freedom, security and justice, should be achieved, inter alia, through common measures framing a policy on asylum and immigration, based on solidarity between

Member States” (European Parliament, 2014a). The final text from the 8<sup>th</sup> EP on the asylum and migration fund also revolves around the migration situation, however, with slightly more focus on integration policy (European Parliament, 2019).

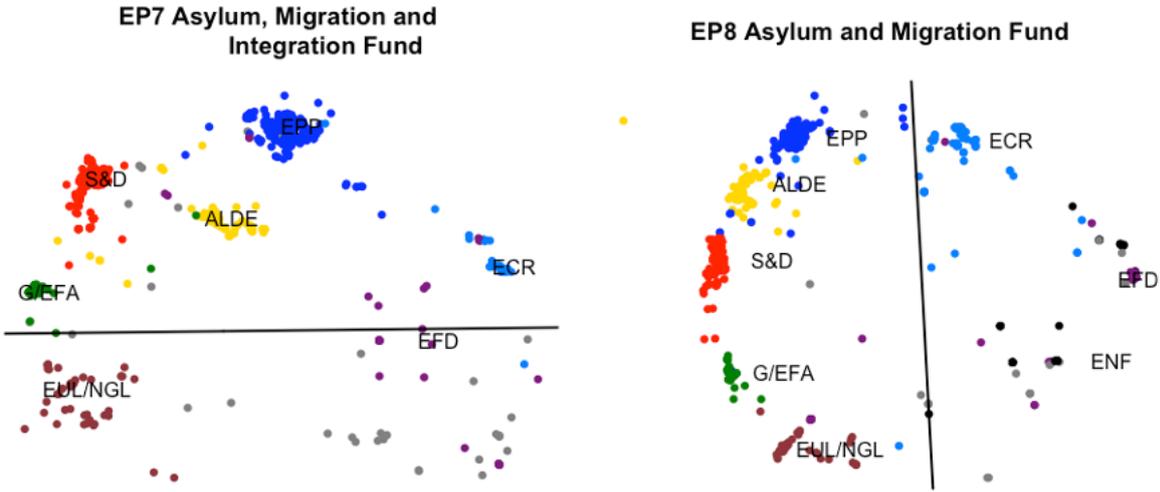


Figure 6.10 (To the left) Optimal classification for the 7<sup>th</sup> EP – Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, vote ID 6223 (votewatch.eu)

Figure 6.11: (To the right) Optimal classification for the 8<sup>th</sup> EP – Asylum and Migration Fund vote ID: 9468(votewatch.eu)

Observing these votes, there has been some detectable change. In the 7<sup>th</sup> Parliament the cutline separated the EPP and ECR from the RRP groups. Together with the EPP and ECR S&D, ALDE and G/EFA are also to be found on the same side of the cutline. In the 8<sup>th</sup> term, the ECR has moved to the other side of the cutline. The separation now divides the ECR and RRP groups from the rest of the parties, including the EPP. As the three ideological groups have not voted together in either of the terms, this also weakens H4. However, as noted above, it is important to remember that these votes are not the same, but an illustration of votes on the same policy area.

6.2.4. Civil liberties versus law and order

In order to shed light on the policy area of civil liberties versus law and order, it may be helpful to consider the example of rule of law. For the 7<sup>th</sup> EP, the final vote on “Evaluation of justice in relation to criminal justice and the rule of law” is examined. The text adopted emphasizes that the rule of law and fundamental rights mechanism “(...) must be applied to all Member States on a transparent, uniform and equal footing, and must seek complementarity with the

work of other international institutions (...)” (European Parliament, 2014b). It also emphasizes a common trust between the member states and the importance of a protected rule of law (European Parliament, 2014b).

Since 2010 the Polish party PiS has been in government, and there have been debates on whether Poland’s rule of law is under threat. The vote points to symbols that show that Poland is not complying with EU Treaties. This includes Poland’s legislative proposal that would prohibit abortion in a range of circumstances, the large-scale logging in a UNESCO World Heritage forest. Last but not least, EU also shares their concerns about the situation in the adopted text, stating that the EU: “Is deeply concerned at the redrafted legislation relating to the Polish judiciary, as regards specifically its potential to structurally undermine judicial independence and weaken the rule of law in Poland” (European Parliament, 2017a: European Parliament, 2017b).

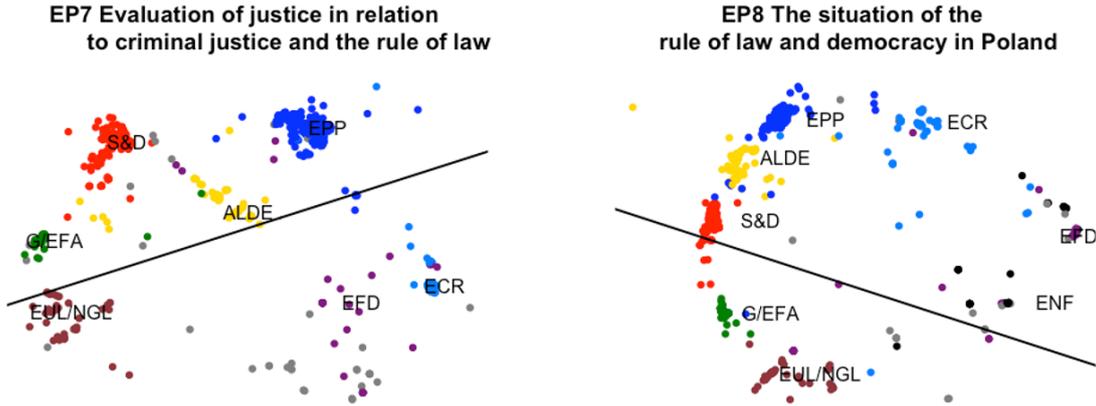


Figure 6.12: (to the left): Optimal classification for the 7th EP – Evaluation of justice in relation to criminal justice and the rule of law, vote id 6194 (votewatch.eu).

Figure 6.13: (to the right): Optimal classification for the 8th EP – The situation of the rule of law and democracy in Poland, vote id 6144 (votewatch.eu).

In the 7<sup>th</sup> EP, there was a division of EPGs almost around the middle of the figure with EUL/NGL, EFD, and ECR on the opposing side, and G/EFA, S&D, ALDE, and the EPP in support, making it a super grand coalition. There were 472 votes in favor, 163 votes against, and 47 abstentions. In the 8<sup>th</sup> term, the vote picture looks different. There are still almost the same number of Yeas and Nays (438 Yeas, 152 Nays, 71 abstentions). Here the EPP, ECR, EFD, and ENF voted together (with S&D and ALDE as well), which was not the case during the 7<sup>th</sup> term. As the three ideological groups voted together, the vote in the 8<sup>th</sup> Parliament

strengthens H4; however, it is important to note that the vote from the 7<sup>th</sup> EP concerned Rule of Law more generally while the vote on from the 8<sup>th</sup> EP was more country-specific.

6.2.5. Territorial, economic, and social cohesion in the EU

As the parties of interest often are said to be euro-skeptic, it is relevant to examine if this is reflected in their voting behavior. Therefore, the votes on the territorial, social, and economic cohesion in the EU have been examined. For both of the votes, the committee responsible was Committee on Regional Development. The adopted text from the 7th Parliament states that promoting economic, social, and territorial cohesion, together with solidarity among Member States, are the European Union’s prioritized objectives (European Parliament, 2010b). In both of the adopted texts the EP stresses the importance of cohesion and how “competitiveness and cohesion are neither contradictory nor incompatible but have elements of complementarity” (European Parliament, 2018). On economic questions, most of the time it is easy to distinguish between left and right-wing parties. Therefore, this thesis examines budgetary votes from both parliamentary terms. The votes are intended to illustrate possible coalitions and cannot be generalized for all votes on the same policy areas.

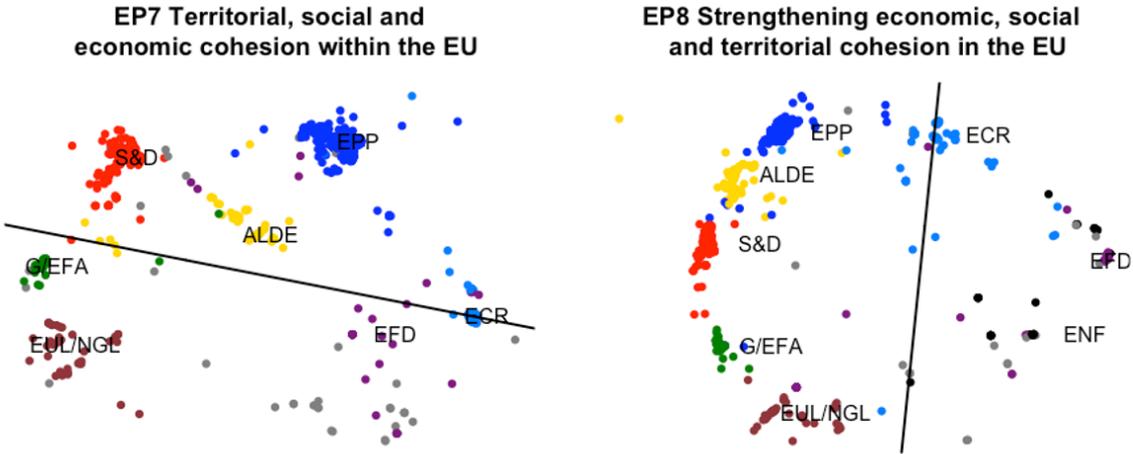


Figure 6.14: (to the left): Optimal classification for the 7th EP – Territorial, social and economic cohesion within the EU, vote id 1262 (votewatch.eu).

Figure 6.15: (to the right): Optimal classification for the 8th EP – Strengthening economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU, vote id 6955 (votewatch.eu).

The figures 6.14. and 6.15. show that the three-party groups S&D, ALDE, and EPP voted together in both terms, making it a super grand coalition in both of the examples, leaving the RRP's on the opposite side of the cutline. In both parliamentary terms the Conservative party group ECR was split in two halves, as the cutline goes straight through the group. In the 7th term, there were 491 votes in favor, 117 against, and 13 abstentions, while in the 8th, 506 voted in favor, 71 against, and 45 abstained. As this shows, the groups did not vote in a united manner, thus weakening H4. Regarding EU cohesion, it is also relevant to look in greater depth at votes that only concerns the EU's economic affairs.

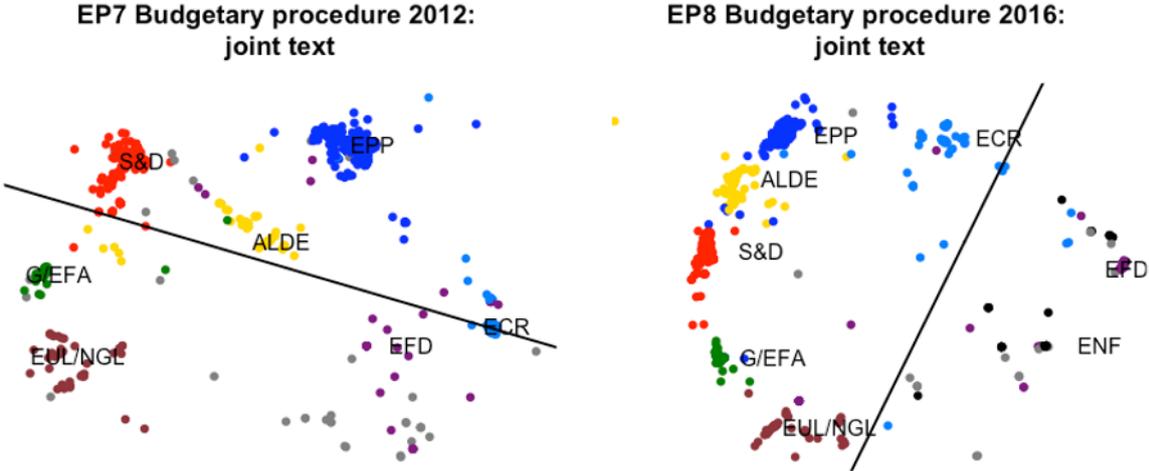


Figure 6.16: (to the left): Optimal classification for the 7th EP – Budgetary Procedure 2012, joint text, vote ID 2367 (votewatch.eu).

Figure 6.17: (to the right): Optimal classification for the 8th EP – Budgetary procedure 2016, joint text, vote id 2162 (votewatch.eu).

In the vote regarding the budget for 2012, the cutline is similar to Figure 6.12, and the cutline for votes on the budget for 2016 is similar to the one in Figure 6.13, except that a bigger share of ECR is on the same side as EPP. As with the previous example of votes, these results do not strengthen H4 on the ideological groups aligning more closely in their votes.

### 6.3. Summary of voting and coalition patterns

The analysis has shown that there is variation in different voting patterns. Table 6.4. illustrates the different voting compositions that have been used in order to analyze the groups' "preferred" alliances.

	<b>Voting composition</b>				
	EPP	ECR split	EPP+ECR	RRPs split	EPP+ECR+RRP
<b>7th EP</b>	3	2	1	-	-
<b>8th EP</b>	2	1	2	-	1
<b>In sum</b>	5	3	3	-	1

*Table 6.4: Composition of voting patterns*

The most frequent outcome in the included votes was EPP voting separately from the ECR and the RRP. This happened on five occasions. In addition, this was also the case in three of the votes, but the ECR was divided between the EPP and the RRP. In other words, the EPP and ECR voted together without the Radical Right eight times; on three of these occasions the ECR was divided. Only in one of the cases did all three groups vote together. This only happened in the 8th EP in the vote on the rule of law in Poland, which was case-specific for the situation in a single country. The other vote regarding the rule of law (in the 7th Parliament), the EPP voted separately from the two others. In other words, in the votes analyzed here, none of the votes from the 7th Parliament suggest that all three of the groups voted together. Only one of the 12 votes presented here suggests that the three groups voted together. Based on these results, H4 is weakened, as the RRP, Conservatives, and Christian democratic did not vote in a united manner.

## 7. DISCUSSION

The results suggest that there has not been as much accommodation as suggested in the literature. The thesis has aimed to answer the research question: *Has the right become more united?* I have implemented three types of analyses in order to find an answer: a descriptive examination, a regression analysis, and an O.C. model of roll call votes in the EP. Four hypotheses were formulated to tackle the research question systematically. The hypotheses were divided into sub-groups: position, party group cohesion, and vote and coalition patterns. I tested H1 by applying CHES data together with the O.C. model. To test the second hypothesis (H2), the CHES data were applied through an OLS regression using CHES data measuring the party's stance on those specific policy dimensions (immigration and the EU's foreign and security policy) for the years 2010, 2014, and 2019. The last two hypotheses were tested using optimal classification on roll call votes from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> EP.

The chapter will first discuss what one can take away from the analyses. Do the findings correspond with, first of all, the literature and hypotheses? In addition, do the results from the national level correspond with the results from the European level? In other words, have the parties' positions changed as much as suggested in the literature, and if so, is this reflected in their behavior in the EP?

Lastly, I present suggestions for further research along with pointing out the limitations of this thesis.

### 7.1. Discussion of results

Based on previous literature, different hypotheses were formulated and then tested through descriptive and statistical analyses. Table 7.1. contains the hypotheses that will be discussed together with the findings.

Hypothesis 1 (Position)	The distance between mainstream and Radical Right parties decreased after the refugee crisis.
Hypothesis 2 (Position)	The distance between the RRP's and Conservative/Christian democratic parties has decreased, with the distance on foreign affairs and immigration decreasing significantly.
Hypothesis 3 (Cohesion)	The European Party Groups can be characterized by the traditional left-right dimension and, therefore, have a high degree of cohesiveness.
Hypothesis 4 (Voting)	The three ideological groups tend to vote together.

*Table 7.1: Summary of hypotheses*

### *Position (H1)*

The previous literature on mainstream parties' response to niche parties has showed to Meguid's theory on party choice theory (2005). In the literature on the center-right, there is a collective perception of mainstream parties tending to use an accommodative strategy to respond to the RRP's growing electoral support. Much of the literature also points to the refugee crisis as one of the times where the RRP's really were viewed as the center-right's competitors. Based on this, the first hypothesis was formulated (H1).

The hypotheses were first examined through two descriptive analyses in Chapter 5 and using the CHES data. The first, consisting of "point maps" showing the ideological groups' placement on different policy dimensions in 2010, 2014, and 2019, showed that there had been some movement towards a more united right-wing position on several of the policy dimensions investigated. Both the ideological dimension and the immigration dimension echo previous literature and Meguid's theory on parties accommodating strategy (2005) – especially after the refugee crisis. H1 is thus strengthened. The other descriptive analysis illustrated the ideological groups' position through density plots. The implications from this analysis gave no reason to believe that there had actually been any change between 2010 and 2019.

The regression analyses confirmed what the density plots had indicated – they gave no reason to believe that there has been a statistically significant change over the years included in this thesis, not even when adding other policy dimensions or country fixed effects. The results of this thesis therefore run counter to the previous literature and the theory of accommodating party strategy on the right side. In addition to testing the hypothesis with CHES data, the positions of the MEPs of the different European party groups in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> EP were compared. Like the previous results, this provides no reason to believe that the Radical Right, Conservative, and Christian democratic parties are positioned more closely to one other after the refugee crisis.

For that reason, H1 is rejected based on the fact that no evidence was found to support that there had been any changes before and after the refugee crisis, be it on the national arena or the European level.

#### *Decreased distance in Immigration and EU's foreign and security policy (H2)*

Furthermore, much of the literature has focused on the immigration dimension. Abou-Chadi and Krause are among those who claim that the RRP's impact has been proven to drive the center-right parties to shift their position to the right (2018, 890). As a reduction in the distance between the ideological groups was already expected, and this was underlined by the literature, especially for immigration and foreign policy, the second hypothesis was formulated. On the one side, the descriptive scatterplots showed the apparent differences between before and after the refugee crisis on these policy dimensions. On the other side, the distance between the ideological groups was also illustrated by the density plots but did not reveal any major difference among the years.

As with hypothesis H1, the regression on immigration and foreign policy could not confirm that the distance between the parties was diminished. Contrary to the models on immigration, the regression on the EU's foreign and security policy showed that the distance between RRP's and Conservative/Christian democrat parties had actually increased, rather than decreased which was the expectation. Based on these results, H2 is rejected. There was no statistically significant effect that could confirm that the distance had decreased between the ideological groups on the immigration dimension and on the EU's foreign and security policy dimension.

### *Cohesion (H3)*

In the EP, the parties are not as responsible to the electorate as within national parliaments. Therefore, it is especially interesting to investigate the behavior of the ideological groupings in the EP. As they are not considered accountable for their actions in any large sense – the parties should behave as they actually are, of course, with some strategic whims. Based on the measurements table 6.1. it is difficult to conclude whether these groups have high or low cohesion. The only thing one can conclude with at this point is that EPP had the lowest degree of variation – highest cohesion and that the Radical Right had a lot higher. In addition, one thing which must be highlighted is the substantial decrease on the second dimension in the 8<sup>th</sup> EP compared to in the 7<sup>th</sup> for the RRP. Based on this, there is not enough information to accept H3.

Nevertheless, another measure for party cohesion is to see whether the party groups have voted in a united manner in the sampled votes. Following the analysis on voting and coalition patterns, there were only a few occasions on which an EPG did not vote the same. In both the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> parliaments, only on three occasions did an EPG not vote as one, and this was the ECR. In other words, only one of the parties did not vote together as an EPG which means that three out of 36 times a party voted in the votes selected for this study, an EPG was not united (3 ideological groups, 12 votes, 2 terms). These findings show implications for a high degree of party group cohesion for the EPGs. However, as only 12 votes were studied, this case does not offer enough information to conclude with a true H3 either, even though it one can argue that the hypothesis has been strengthened.

### *Voting and coalition patterns (H4)*

More united voting behavior was expected from the right-wing parties. However, it was only in one out of the 12 votes where all EPGs were to be found on the same side. On the other hand, the EPP and the ECR voted together three times. As stated, the ECR is a party heavily colored by Radical Right parties, even though they have had a long history as Conservatives. In one way, the EPP has voted together with the Radical Right. Out of the votes included this occurred

even more times in the 8<sup>th</sup> than 7<sup>th</sup> parliamentary term. However, as the EPP is mainly to be found on the opposite side from the RRP (including ECR), one cannot conclude that the right-wing has become more united. For this reason, H4 must also be discarded.

*Do the results mirror each other?*

Are the results consistent? Furthermore, do the results from the analyses on national position reflect the results from the analyses on the EP? At first glance, yes, but not in the way it was expected on the basis of the literature. As there was no statistically significant change over time, the ideological groups' behavior and positions highly correspond at the national and the European levels between 2010 and 2019, as there has been no change at both. However, in the literature there was a collective understanding that the parties had moved close to one another, which led to an expectation of them being more united. This was, however, not found to be the case in this analysis.

No indication is found that the Right has become more united in the ideological groups, the positions, or in their behavior in the EP. The hypotheses on position, party group cohesion, and voting patterns have all been rejected. In other words, there has not been as much accommodation as suggested in the literature.

Moreover, as there is no sign of a united right-wing coalition, it is also hard to know what the motivation behind their coalition formation is. However, the motivational theoretical framework may perhaps be more applicable for studies on the formation of new European Party Groups, such as the newly formed "Identity and Democracy", which is the Radical Right's new EPG in the 9<sup>th</sup> EP.

## **7.2. Limitations**

Earlier studies have either focused on RRP in national parliaments or how they behave together in the European Parliament. The studies that have been done on how Radical Right parties' growing support affects the other parties on the right side mainly concern the electoral outcomes, but also whether they have used an accommodative strategy. Many of the scholars have used expert surveys. Although widely accepted, expert surveys as a method of data collecting suffer from some limitations. As presented in the method chapter, there are four pitfalls one must be aware of. One of these what the expert judge and if they have the same conceptualization (Steensbergen and Marks, 2007). This may apply to the data used in this thesis as well as the CHES lack an operationalization of the questions.

For the analyses on roll call votes, only a few of the votes from the parliamentary terms were included. Hence this can only provide indications of patterns, but not confirm an actual change.

### **7.3. Conclusion**

The rise of the Radical Right Parties (RRP) and their growing electoral support have received a lot of scholarly attention. The literature on party behavior has claimed that the mainstream parties have accommodated the RRP's position, especially on issues concerning immigration, as a result of the RRP's growing influence. Scholars have even argued that center-right parties have considered the RRP acceptable for coalitions (Mudde, 2019, 20). This thesis aims to examine whether this is correct and if the right side of the political spectrum has become more "united" in its position and behavior. Have the RRP gone from being competitors of the political right to becoming companions? The refugee crisis gave the mainstream parties reason to consider the RRP as electoral threats; this trend was strengthened as the RRP experienced an electoral upswing and were present in most of the national party systems in Europe. For this reason, the time 2010-2019 has been the timeframe for the thesis.

The thesis has examined the position and behavior of the right-wing parties at both the national level, through analyzing expert surveys, and at the European level by looking at roll call votes for the EP. The results have shown that there has not been a statistically significant change in the parties' position over time (2010-2019). The ideological groups Conservative, Christian democratic, and Radical Right have not moved closer to each other after the refugee crisis. Nor has there been any indication of change in the EP. The party group cohesion for the European Party Groups was examined, along with a sample of votes from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> EP to investigate whether the ideological groups have voted together more frequently.

Despite the collective perception in the literature of a change involving greater unity on the right, I conclude that this is not the case; to answer the research question directly: no, the right has not become more united. Even though the literature has argued that the distance between the parties has decreased, this has not been the case here – and the Radical Right Parties continue as competitors rather than companions of the political right.

#### **7.4. Suggestion for further research**

This study has examined the positions of Radical Right Parties, Conservative Parties, and Christian democratic Parties and examined whether the distance between these ideological parties has decreased. This thesis concluded that there the Right has not become more united at the national or European levels. Further studies could, however, investigate if the distance varies over time and whether there is a country-separation, and hence whether there are differences based on, for example, Eastern and Western Europe.

Furthermore, it could be interesting to see if the ideological groups behavior in terms of speeches in both national and the European parliament. As Mudde claims, RRPs' ideas are more openly debated (Mudde, 2019, 21). As the RRPs ideas mainly are on the same topics often associated with the RRPs, it would be interesting to examine whether there has been change on especially on speeches concerning those policy areas that are seen as important for RRPs, amongst the right side.

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## Appendix:

*The R scripts can be provided by request*

T-test of distance for EPP and EFD in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament:

Welch Two Sample t-test

```
data: distancesEPP_EFD8 and distancesEPP_EFD7
t = 48.889, df = 17008, p-value < 2.2e-16
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means is not equal to 0
95 percent confidence interval:
 0.1718955 0.1862549
sample estimates:
mean of x mean of y
0.8863980 0.7073229
```

T-test of distance for EPP and ECR in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament:

Welch Two Sample t-test

```
data: distancesEPP_CONS8 and distancesEPP_CONS7
t = -177.77, df = 37880, p-value < 2.2e-16
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means is not equal to 0
95 percent confidence interval:
-0.2516333 -0.2461450
sample estimates:
mean of x mean of y
0.2935351 0.5424243
```

T-test of distance for EFD and ECR in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> European Parliament:

Welch Two Sample t-test

```
data: distancesECR_EFD8 and distancesECR_EFD7
t = 52.48, df = 4721.2, p-value < 2.2e-16
alternative hypothesis: true difference in means is not equal to 0
95 percent confidence interval:
 0.3485419 0.3755928
sample estimates:
mean of x mean of y
0.7665743 0.4045070
```