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From collaboration to convergence: Nativist attitudes among non-radical right supporters

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Abstract. This study examines the impact of cooperation between radical right parties (RRPs) and non-RRPs on the policy attitudes of non-RRP supporters. As RRPs have gained prominence in recent years, particularly for their nativist and anti-immigration positions, this research investigates whether non-RRP partisans adopt similar views when their preferred parties collaborate with RRPs. Drawing on original survey data from Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom in 2019, the findings reveal a notable association: non-RRP supporters are more likely to express stronger nativist attitudes when they perceive their parties as having cooperative relationship with RRPs. These results suggest the potential for ideological diffusion, where voters adjust their beliefs in response to perceived alignment with allied parties. Ultimately, this paper seeks to enhance our understanding of how party cooperation affects voter attitudes, suggesting that alliances with RRPs may normalize exclusionary policies and exacerbate societal divisions.

The political landscape of Western democracies has shifted dramatically in recent decades with the rise of radical right parties (RRPs), characterized by their nativist, anti-immigrant and exclusionary rhetoric (Harteveld et al., 2021; Schwartz et al., 2020). At the core of this rhetoric is nativism – the belief that the interests of a singular 'native' people should take precedence over those of foreigners and minorities (Kokkonen & Linde, 2023). It frames 'the people' as a unified entity bound by shared culture, values and interests, while distinguishing them from outsiders and perceived threats (Mudde, 2007). By leveraging these narratives, RRPs have capitalized on growing anxieties around immigration and globalization, positioning themselves as defenders of the 'native' population. A prominent example is the French's Front National with its leader Marine Le Pen calling for drastic reductions in legal immigration and asserted that illegal immigrants 'have no reason to remain in France' (BBC, 2017). This kind of rhetoric resonates with many voters who feel threatened by socio-economic and cultural changes (Steenvoorden & Harteveld, 2017), leading to significant electoral gains for RRPs across Europe (Rooduijn et al., 2016).

As RRPs gain influence, cooperation between non-RRPs and RRPs has become more common. These cooperations range from formal coalitions, such as the ÖVP–FPÖ coalition in Austria and the Centre–True Finns coalition in Finland, to more informal arrangements, like the Venstre–DF agreement in Denmark and the VVD–PVV partnership in the Netherlands. Even in Germany, where mainstream parties have largely resisted collaborating with the RRP at the national level, there have been discussions at the municipal level about potential cooperation between the CDU and the AfD. This growing trend has sparked research into the effects of these collaborations on the electoral success of cooperating parties (Krause et al., 2023; Riera & Pastor, 2022), satisfaction with democracy (Harteveld et al., 2021), democratic quality (Bichay, 2024) and the voting behaviour of non-RRPs' supporters whose parties cooperate with RRPs (Hjorth & Larsen, 2022; Krause et al., 2023; Van Spanje & De Graaf, 2018).

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Despite these advances, less is known about how such cooperation influences voters' policy preferences, particularly among identifiers of non-RRPs whose parties collaborate with RRPs. Therefore, this paper aims to address this gap by asking whether supporters of non-RRPs adopt more nativist views when they perceive their parties cooperating with RRPs. By examining how cooperation serves as a cue for policy convergence, this study explores how cooperation with RRPs legitimizes nativist positions and lead non-RRPs' supporters to shift their views accordingly. This dynamic is important for two reasons. First, it suggests the potential for ideological diffusion between cooperating parties, where voters shift their views based on the perceived legitimacy of their party's alliance with RRPs. Second, it raises concerns for democratic stability, as the mainstreaming of nativist attitudes and normalization of the RRPs (Valentim, 2024) could undermine pluralism and inclusivity, which are essential to democratic governance.

To explore this, I conducted surveys in Denmark, Germany and the United Kingdom (UK) in 2019, examining perceptions of party cooperation and attitudes toward non-Western immigration and cultural diversity. I selected these countries because they each have a significant RRPs presence and show varying levels of interaction with RRPs: Denmark with frequent cooperation, Germany with national-level resistance and the UK with more indirect influence. By analyzing these cases together, this paper is the first to simultaneously examine how citizens' attitudes are influenced by RRPs and non-RRPs' cooperation across these three contexts.

I also examine the possibility of endogeneity – that preexisting nativist attitudes might prompt parties to cooperate with RRPs, rather than the other way around. While experimental or longitudinal studies are needed to definitively establish causality, the survey data allows for testing this alternative explanation. By focusing on left-leaning partisans of non-RRPs, who are less likely to hold nativist views, I assess whether perceived cooperation increases nativism within this group. If this effect is observed, it suggests that cooperation drives the shift in attitudes, rather than preexisting nativism motivating cooperation since their parties are unlikely to cooperate with RRPs to appeal to these partisans.

Despite variations in RRPs' engagement and potential reverse causality, the findings across all three countries consistently show that as non-RRP voters perceive greater cooperation with RRPs, their nativist attitudes strengthen, even when controlling for left-right self-placement, political knowledge, demographics and party-specific factors. This indicates a broader voter behaviour trend across Western Europe.

The following sections review the rise of nativist attitudes and support for RRPs, analyze the impact of party cooperation on non-RRP voters' nativist attitudes, and present the data and findings. The paper concludes with a discussion of alternative explanations and directions for future research.

Nativist attitudes and support for RRPs

Nativism, the belief that the interests and identity of the 'native' population should be prioritized over those of immigrants and minorities, has significantly influenced political discourse in many Western democracies.[1] It often arises in response to the socio-economic and cultural changes driven by globalization, where increased economic competition, labour market uncertainties and shifting cultural norms threaten the established way of life and identity (Rodrik, 2021). These perceived challenges frequently result in a backlash against immigration and cultural diversity,

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which are seen as eroding the cohesive identity of the native population and disrupting social order (Norris & Inglehart, 2019).

In turn, the rise of nativist attitudes has led to increased support for RRPs. These parties capitalize on nativist sentiments by presenting themselves as defenders of the 'native' populace, framing immigration and multiculturalism as existential threats to national identity, economic interests and cultural values (Hobolt & Tilley, 2016; Vachudova, 2021). By positioning themselves as protectors of the nation, RRPs effectively mobilize voters who believe their way of life is being eroded, framing their political discourse around the protection of cultural cohesion and economic security (Mudde, 2007).

At the same time, RRPs not only mobilize their base but also shift the political discourse towards more exclusionary policies that prioritize the native population (Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2020; van Spanje, 2010).[2] This creates an environment where non-RRPs may feel increasing pressure to respond to the growing nativist sentiments within the electorate. Consequently, cooperation with RRPs often becomes a strategic move for non-RRPs to remain electorally competitive and politically relevant.

Cooperating with RRPs and its impact on non-RRPs' voters

Understanding why non-RRPs collaborate with RRPs is crucial given the rise in nativist attitudes and growing RRP support. A key reason for this cooperation is the electoral success of RRPs and the resulting need for legislative support (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Meguid, 2005; Spoon & Klüver, 2020). For instance, the Danish People's Party (DF), which won 21 per cent of the vote in 2015, supported Venstre-led governments from 2015 to 2019 by providing key legislative support even without formally joining the government (Green-Pedersen & Otjes, 2019). In Germany, despite avoiding formal alliances with the AfD at the national level, some CDU members in eastern states, where the AfD enjoys substantial public support, have considered coalition partnership (Atzpodien, 2020). Similarly, in the UK, the Conservative Party adopted UKIP's positions on immigration and Brexit before the 2019 election, demonstrating policy convergence without formal alliances (Evans et al., 2023).

However, this cooperation has profound consequences. First, as illustrated by the UK's Conservative Party, it could influence the positions of non-RRPs on issues such as immigration. When non-RRPs collaborate with RRPs, they often adopt more nativist stances by embracing anti-immigrant and monoculturalist positions to counter the perceived threat posed by the radical right's success (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Han, 2014; Hjermitslev, 2022; van Spanje, 2010). This shift becomes particularly pronounced once RRPs enter parliament, as they can pose a significant electoral threat that mainstream parties feel compelled to address (Abou-Chadi & Krause, 2020). Therefore, while cooperation with RRPs might yield short-term electoral or legislative gains for non-RRPs, it ultimately leads to the mainstreaming of radical right ideologies and a fundamental transformation of the political landscape. This process could normalize extreme views and reshape the policy priorities of non-RRPs, fostering a political environment increasingly dominated by nativist and exclusionary rhetoric.

Second, because media in Western democracies frequently document interactions between parties (Adams et al., 2021; Santoso et al., 2024), voters can assess the degree of cooperation between specific party pairs.[3] Thus, when there is collaboration between non-RRPs and RRPs, it signals to voters that the policy positions of cooperating parties are becoming more aligned,

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regardless of the actual positions of these parties (Adams et al., 2016; Fortunato & Stevenson, 2013). This effect is particularly pronounced on nativist policies since RRPs are often perceived as owning these issues with hardline and distinct positions (Harteveld et al., 2021; Mudde, 2016). As a result, non-RRPs' voters may see this cooperation as a signal that their parties are shifting toward the views of the RRPs, prompting them to adjust their own views as well.

This shift in attitudes can be attributed to elite cues arising from cooperation with RRPs. These cues serve as heuristics, guiding partisans' policy preferences by signalling acceptable positions on key issues (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001; Zaller, 1992). Cooperation with RRPs signals to non-RRPs' supporters that their parties are adjusting their stances, particularly on immigration and cultural diversity, issues closely tied to RRPs.

While signalling raises voter awareness of party changes, it is the process of partisan rationalization that fundamentally drives attitude adjustments among partisans. Political parties often form a core part of a partisan's identity (Green et al., 2002; Huddy et al., 2015), creating a strong motivation to align personal views with the party's evolving stance, even on controversial issues. The need for cognitive consistency further compels partisans to reconcile their beliefs with the party's positions to avoid cognitive dissonance (Goren et al., 2009; Taber & Lodge, 2006). In polarized environments, this dynamic intensifies, as partisans strongly align with their party on divisive issues like immigration and cultural diversity, reinforcing their sense of belonging and ideological coherence (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015; Mason, 2018).

In summary, as non-RRP supporters perceive their parties cooperating with RRPs, it signals a convergence at the party-level toward more restrictive views on immigration and cultural diversity. Through partisan rationalization, these supporters are likely to adopt nativist perspectives in alignment with their parties' evolving positions. Thus, I hypothesize that:

H 1. *Partisans of non-RRPs who perceive higher levels of cooperation between their parties and RRPs are more likely to exhibit stronger nativist attitudes*

Research design

To test this hypothesis, I conducted surveys in Denmark (n = 1,278), Germany (n = 1,017) and the UK (n = 995) in 2019. While details of the surveys and justification for case selections are provided in the Supporting Information Appendix 1, the primary reason for their inclusion is twofold. First, RRPs held a substantial role in each of these countries' politics at the time. In Denmark, the Danish People's Party (DF) was the second-largest party. In Germany, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) was the third-largest party, while in the UK, the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) played a pivotal role in shaping the Brexit debate. Second, the interaction of mainstream parties with these RRPs varied considerably across the three countries. In Germany, the AfD were actively ostracized by mainstream parties, while in Denmark, the Danish People's Party (DF) had a track record of providing support to Venstre-led governments without entering a full coalition and had considerable influence on immigration and welfare policies. The UK represents a case where UKIP influenced mainstream politics despite never formally being in alliance with any party. This variation is crucial: if the analysis finds a positive relationship between perceived cooperation with RRPs and nativist attitudes across these diverse contexts, it suggests that the effect is not confined to specific political settings but reflects a broader trend in voter behaviour across Western Europe.

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In the next section, I briefly describe the operationalizations of the dependent variable (voters' nativist attitudes), the main independent variable (voters' perceived levels of cooperation between their parties and RRPs), and various control variables. Additional details and the descriptive statistics on the measurement are in Supporting Information Appendices 2 and 3.

Nativist attitudes

The primary outcome variable of this analysis is individuals' nativist attitudes, assessed through two questions that each reflect both specific policy dimensions and broader value orientations associated with nativism. The first focuses on immigration policy, asking respondents whether they support increasing immigration from non-Western countries, with responses coded from 'support' (1) to 'oppose' (7). The second assesses broader value orientations by asking respondents about the merit of cultural diversity in their countries, with responses ranging from 'cultural diversity makes the nation stronger' (1) to 'cultural diversity makes the nation weaker' (7).[4] While similar to previous studies that operationalize nativism using immigration preferences (Kokkonen & Linde, 2023; Rooduijn et al., 2021), this paper extends the measurement to encompass a broader value-based orientation. In both measures, higher scores indicate stronger nativist attitudes.[5]

Party identification

Moreover, as the paper examines the attitudes of partisans of non-RRPs, the survey includes several questions on party identification (see Q10-12 in Appendix 3). This allowed me to identify whether respondents are partisans and, if so, whether they support parties not classified as radical-right. To determine which parties are considered RRPs, I used the party classifications provided by The PopuList (Rooduijn et al, 2024).[6] Based on this source, the Danish People's Party (DF) and the New Right (NB) in Denmark, the AfD in Germany, and the UKIP in the UK are identified as RRPs. As such, respondents who indicate that they either identify with these parties or do not identify with any party are not included in the analysis.

Perceived cooperation with RRPs

To assess voters' perceptions of how much their party collaborates with RRPs, I used a survey question asking respondents about the perceived cooperation between specific pairs of parties in their country. The question was phrased as follows:

> *''How often do you think these two parties cooperate with each other in [your country's] federal politics?*[7]

Respondents could answer on a scale from 0 ('Never cooperate') to 10 ('Almost always cooperate'). Each respondent was asked about each pair of parties with seats in the legislature at the time of the survey, resulting in them evaluating 15 pairs.[8] While past studies used government coalitions (Adams et al., 2016) or media-based event data (Weschle, 2018) to measure cooperation, asking voters directly is more relevant here. It captures individual perceptions, which is key to understanding how voters interpret partisan interactions, rather than relying on externally imposed metrics.

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For testing the hypothesis, I only include responses to party-dyads where one party is the one the respondent identifies with, and the other is a RRP. For example, among all Conservative identifiers in my UK sample, I only include their responses for the Conservative-UKIP dyad. Similarly, for all CDU identifiers in Germany, I only include their responses for the CDU-AfD dyad. Appendix 2 provides the distribution of perceived cooperation between non-RRPs and RRPs across the three countries.

Control variables

Clearly, partisans' nativist attitudes are shaped by factors other than their perceptions of party cooperation with RRPs. One such factor is their ideological position on the left-right spectrum. As immigration and cultural issues have gained prominence, voters' left-right self-placement have become closely tied to these topics: those with anti-immigration views align with the right, while pro-immigration individuals lean left (de Vries et al., 2013; Rekker, 2016; Steiner, 2023). Therefore, I include respondents' left-right self-placement as a control.

I also account for respondents' partisanship by including a fixed effect in all models to control for unobserved party characteristics that may influence attitudes toward immigration and cultural diversity. Additionally, I account for political knowledge as lower political sophistication makes individuals more susceptible to nativist messages (Heiss & Matthes, 2019; Schmuck & Matthes, 2014).[9] I also include education, residence and age, as younger individuals (McLaren & Paterson, 2019), those with higher education (Campbell & Heath, 2021) and urban residents (Dražanová et al., 2023) tend to have more positive attitudes toward immigration and cultural diversity.

Empirical strategy and results

To test the hypothesis, I conduct two separate linear regressions for each country, focusing on two dependent variables: attitudes towards immigration and cultural diversity. The main independent variable is the perceptions of the extent to which the party they identify with cooperate with RRPs, while the control variables are respondents' left-right self-placements, education[10], place of residence, age[11] and party-fixed effect. In Germany and the UK, where only one RRP exists, the analysis is conducted at the individual level. In Denmark, where two RRPs are present, the unit of analysis is at the individual-RRP level. Since some Danish respondents perceive cooperation with both RRPs, I use clustered standard errors at the individual level to account for the correlation of errors within individuals. Again, the analysis includes only non-RRPs' partisans.

Table 1 presents the results. In all three countries, and for both measures of nativist attitudes, the positive and significant coefficients on cooperation with RRPs consistently support the hypothesis. This indicates that, on average, non-RRP partisans exhibit stronger nativist attitudes when they perceive their parties as being more cooperative with RRPs. This relationship holds after controlling for left-right self-placement, various demographic characteristics, and party-specific characteristics. The effect of cooperating with a RRP is substantively meaningful. A one unit increase in perceived cooperation with a RRP corresponds to a 0.07 to 0.18 unit increase in anti-immigration attitudes and a 0.08 to 0.18 unit increase in believing that cultural diversity weakens the nation. These effects are comparable to moving 0.64 to 1.08 units to the right on a left-right scale for anti-immigration attitudes and 0.78 to 1.78 units to the right for anti-diversity attitudes.

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Table 1. Analyses of nativist attitudes

	Denmark		Germany		UK	
	Immigration	Diversity	Immigration	Diversity	Immigration	Diversity
Cooperation with RRP	0.07*	0.082*	0.18**	0.177**	0.13**	0.16**
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.04)	(0.035)	(0.027)	(0.026)
Left-Right Self-Placement	0.098*	0.084*	0.278**	0.225**	0.123**	0.088**
	(0.04)	(0.038)	(0.047)	(0.041)	(0.031)	(0.03)
Political Knowledge (PK) (Base = Low PK)						
Medium PK	0.5*	0.196	−0.166	−0.082	0.03	0.136
	(0.25)	(0.23)	(0.236)	(0.208)	(0.16)	(0.156)
High PK	0.024	−0.25	−0.477*	−0.172	−0.29	−0.032
	(0.25)	(0.25)	(0.233)	(0.206)	(0.184)	(0.178)
Age	0.12**	0.054+	0.042	0.0246	0.049+	0.049*
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.029)	(0.025)	(0.03)	(0.024)
Age-Squared	−0.001**	−0.0006+	−0.0003	−0.0003	−0.0003	−0.0004
	(0.0004)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)	(0.0003)
Place of Residence (Base = Urban)						
Suburban	−0.11	−0.105			−0.221	0.03
	(0.19)	(0.189)			(0.15)	(0.146)
Rural	−0.41+	0.874	0.074	0.3*	−0.186	−0.172
	(0.23)	(0.207)	(0.15)	(0.132)	(0.182)	(0.176)
Education Dummies	Included					
Party Fixed Effect	Included					
Constant	0.62	2.16*	1.49*	0.98	2.55**	2.11*
	(1.17)	(1.06)	(0.75)	(0.667)	(0.68)	(0.67)
R^2	0.307	0.286	0.192	0.173	0.261	0.209
No. of Observations	587	585	636	632	776	773

Note: ** $p \leq 0.01$, * $p \leq 0.05$, + $p \leq 0.1$.
Robust standard errors clustered at the individual-level are in parentheses for Denmark, standard errors are in parentheses for Germany and UK.

In terms of model fit, the R-squared values indicate that across all three countries, the regression models consistently explain slightly more variation in immigration attitudes (19–31 per cent) than in cultural diversity attitudes (17–29 per cent). Still, they account for a meaningful portion of the variance across different models.

With regards to other variables, while it is no surprise that respondents' left-right self-placement has significant influence in their nativist attitudes, many demographic characteristics previously identified as important predictors are found to be insignificant. This implies that ideological alignment, as represented by left-right self-placement, and the inclusion of party

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dummies are more influential in shaping nativist attitudes than demographic factors in this study.

I also conducted several alternative model specifications to determine the robustness of the findings. First, I substitute respondents' left-right self-placement with the perceived left-right positions of the parties they identify with. Because the perceived position of these parties can influence respondents' placement on the left-right scale, I evaluate whether the findings remain consistent when using this alternative measure of respondents' ideological profile. Next, I replace the left-right self-placement with the difference between the left-right positions of the parties' respondents identify with and the left-right positions of the RRP. I include this variable since it is associated with both the degree of cooperation between the two parties, and respondents' nativist attitudes. Thus, it could act as a potential confounder in the relationship between cooperation with the RRP and nativist attitudes.

Third, I substitute the variables that measure partisans' levels of political knowledge with their self-reported political interest. Since political knowledge is measured by the number of correct answers given to several factual questions, it represents the kind of knowledge that must be gained from the media. By using the political interest question, I am accounting for the possibility that the individuals may be interested and even knowledgeable about politics (i.e., aware about civic facts), but are not paying attention to the news during the days leading up to the survey.

Fourth, I replace the dependent variables with the difference between respondents' positions and the perceived position of the RRP on the same issue to illustrate how perceived cooperation affects the alignment of respondents' views with those of the RRP's. Rather than examining whether respondents become more nativist when they perceive their parties cooperating with the RRP, this alternative model specifically investigates whether respondents' positions on immigration and diversity converge with those of the RRP's when they perceived cooperation with RRP increases. If respondents view their parties as more cooperative with the RRP, the gap between their positions on immigration and diversity and the RRP's should narrow.

The results of all the alternative specifications are presented in Appendix 4 and they support the main hypothesis, indicating that partisans tend to develop stronger nativist attitudes when they perceive their parties to be cooperating with RRPs.[12]

Alternative explanation

While the arguments above suggest that supporters of non-RRPs exhibit stronger nativist attitudes when their parties collaborate with RRPs, the causality remains uncertain. My explanation is based on the idea that partisans take cues from the parties they support, adopting nativist views when they see their parties cooperating with RRPs, which are known for their nativist stances. However, it is also possible that the causation is reversed. It may not be the cooperation with RRPs that causes non-RRP supporters to develop nativist attitudes. Instead, these partisans might already hold nativist attitudes, leading their parties to cooperate with RRPs with the hope of satisfying the policy preferences of their supporters.

Although establishing causality is challenging in cross-sectional studies, the survey allows for testing the implications of the argument proposed. Specifically, I focus on the relationship between cooperating with RRP and nativist attitude only among partisans who are leftists. Typically, leftist

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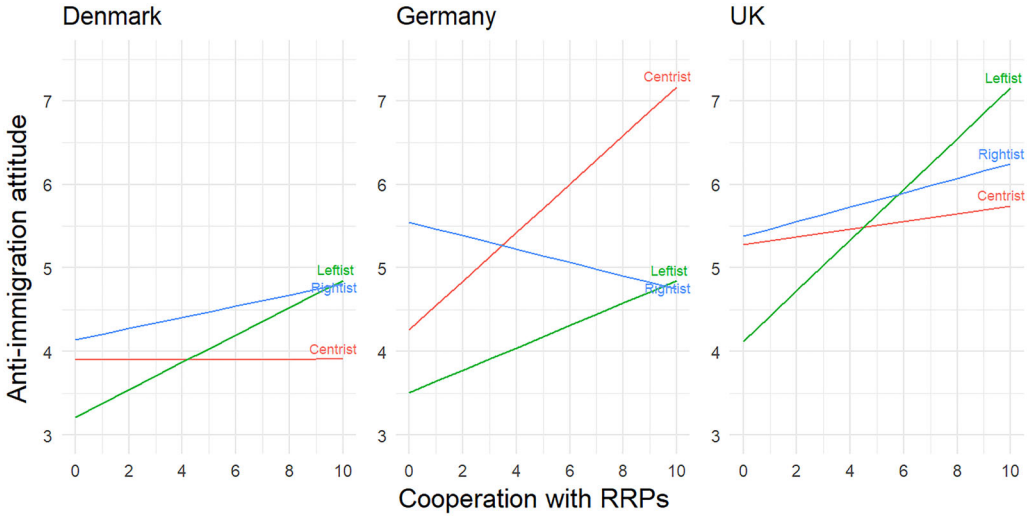

Figure 1. Substantive effects of cooperation with RRPs on immigration attitude by ideological groups

partisans exhibit the least nativist attitudes compared to centrists or rightists[13], indicating that if their parties decide to collaborate with RRPs, it is unlikely to be a strategy aimed at accommodating their policy preferences.[14] To test this assertion, I conducted similar analyses to the one in shown in Table 1, but this time, I interact the cooperation variable with respondents' ideological position. To depict how the relationship between perceived cooperation with the RRP and nativist attitudes differs across different ideological groups, Figure 1 plots predicted values for the interaction terms, while holding constant the other variables.[15]

Clearly, when leftist voters observe their parties to have higher levels of cooperation with RRPs, they tend to exhibit greater nativist attitudes (measured using the immigration variable) relative to fellow leftist voters who do not perceive such cooperation. Given that leftist voters are unlikely to have pre-existing nativist views that would prompt their parties to cooperate with RRPs, we can be reasonably confident that, at least for this group, their shifting attitudes are a response to their parties' cooperation with RRPs. This lends support to the idea that party cues are reshaping partisans' views, even among those typically resistant to nativist ideologies.

To reiterate, this observational analysis does not formally establish the causal direction of the relationship. However, the observed positive association among leftist partisans reveals that it is plausible for a substantial number of partisans to be influenced by elite-level actions, making the role of cooperation with RRPs in shaping these attitudes a credible proposition.

Conclusion

This study explores how cooperation with RRPs shapes attitudes towards non-Western immigration and cultural diversity among non-RRPs' supporters. Using original data from Denmark, Germany and the UK, the findings show that such collaborations increase scepticism toward immigration and cultural diversity. Importantly, this relationship holds across contexts with varying levels of interaction with RRPs, indicating that perceived cooperation consistently correlates with rising nativism, regardless of the actual levels of cooperation present in each country. This emphasizes the

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influence of perceived interactions among elites on policy preferences and highlights the rippling effects of partisan interactions on broader societal attitudes.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the role of political elites in shaping societal norms. Cooperation between mainstream parties and RRPs can legitimize nativist attitudes, signalling to voters that non-RRPs are shifting rightward on issues central to RRPs, such as immigration (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Hjermitslev, 2022). Consistent with the theory of partisan rationalization, non-RRP supporters respond to these signals by adopting more nativist views themselves. This process of legitimation not only shifts public discourse but also encourages partisans to pressure their parties into continuing or expanding cooperation with RRPs. As nativist attitudes become normalized, a feedback loop may emerge, with growing demands for these positions further solidifying the cooperation and deepening the influence of radical right ideas on policymaking.

However, due to the cross-sectional nature of the data in this paper, it is difficult to draw precise causal conclusions. Future research would benefit from longitudinal or experimental analyses to better capture the dynamic shifts in public opinion. Additionally, it is important to investigate which voters are more likely to accept or reject the legitimation of nativist policies, and how these attitudes influence their parties' decisions to cooperate with RRPs. Understanding this heterogeneity is crucial to explaining the varying effects of cooperation between mainstream and RRPs. Future studies could also explore how such cooperation influences other core elements of RRPs' platforms, such as anti-elitism, and whether non-RRP voters adopt these attitudes when their parties collaborate with RRPs – or even with left-wing populist parties. Lastly, since this study focuses only on three European countries, future research could explore whether similar patterns emerge in other contexts.

In conclusion, this paper contributes to the growing literature on radical right parties (RRPs) and their impact on democratic politics. By examining how party cooperation influences voter attitudes, it offers insights for policymakers and scholars tackling the challenges of nativism. Understanding the role of political alliances is crucial for countering divisive sentiments and fostering inclusivity. While existing research explores whether non-RRPs should pursue dismissive, accommodative, or adversarial strategies (Abou-Chadi, 2016; Meguid, 2008; Meijers & Williams, 2019), this paper emphasizes the need for careful evaluation of cooperation with RRPs. Such decisions should balance electoral prospects and legislative success with a genuine commitment to addressing voter demands. Cooperation must be approached cautiously to prevent normalizing divisive rhetoric and reinforcing nativist attitudes. Ultimately, leaders should weigh the short-term benefits of collaboration against the long-term risks of deepening societal divisions and undermining social cohesion.

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Data Availability Statement

The data and replication files for this paper are publicly available on the EJPR website.

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Online Appendix

Additional supporting information may be found in the Online Appendix section at the end of the article:

Appendix 1: The Cases and Survey
Appendix 2: Measurement Details
Appendix 3: Survey Details
Appendix 4 Alternative Model Specifications
Appendix 5: Analyses of Nativist Attitudes by Ideological Groups
Appendix 6: Exploration of Heterogenous Effects
Data Information

Notes

1. While nativism centres on the native population as the primary object of attachment, it differs from nationalism, which emphasizes attachment to the nation as a whole and a belief in its superiority (Kosterman and Feshbach, 1989; Mußotter, 2024). It is also distinct from ethnocentrism, which centers on a strong attachment to and prioritization of one's own ethnic group (Bizumic et al., 2021).
2. While some argue that RRPs have adopted a more civic form of nationalism (Halikiopoulou et al., 2013), this shift does not reduce their exclusionary impact. RRPs strategically invoke civic values like tolerance and liberalism, reframing them as core national traits and labelling outsiders who lack or cannot adopt these values as threats. This tactic enables RRPs to sustain exclusionary, anti-immigrant agendas while projecting an image of inclusivity.
3. Voters generally can perceive party collaborations in line with media reports on patterns of conflict and cooperation, making their perceptions reliable reflections of actual partisan interactions (Santoso et al., 2024).
4. Both questions offer a 'Don't Know' option, and responses selecting this are excluded (see Table A2.2 in Appendix 2 for the distribution).
5. The correlation between these two variables is 0.54 in Denmark, 0.58 in Germany, and 0.59 in the UK.
6. A party is classified as a RRP if it is identified by The PopuList as far-right.
7. The broad phrasing of this question is intended to capture the essence of partisan interactions, enabling respondents to interpret cooperation either in a broad or narrow sense, encompassing both formal and informal types. By centering on respondents' perceptions, the question can be interpreted as visible, institutionalized alliances to more subtle forms of cooperation like tacit endorsements or informal support. This flexibility is essential for understanding how voters perceive both the intensity and nature of cooperation, whether through official coalitions or less formal collaborations.
8. To minimize respondent fatigue, I do not ask Danish survey participants to evaluate all 45 possible party dyads from the 10 parties in parliament. Instead, I randomly select 6 parties for each respondent and ask them to evaluate 15 possible pairs from these 6.
9. See Appendix 3 for the construction of the political knowledge variable.
10. Since education systems differ across countries (see Appendix 3 for a detailed breakdown) and may include parallel tracks, this variable is represented in the models as dummy variables. This is to prevent the assumption of a linear relationship between education and respondents' attitudes.
11. To account for a possible non-linear relationship between age and nativist attitudes, I include an age-squared term in the regressions.
12. I also examine potential heterogeneity in the impact of cooperation on nativist attitudes in Appendix 6 and find consistent effects across different groups.
13. Table A5.1 in Appendix 5 confirms that on average, leftist partisans exhibit the least nativist attitudes compared to other ideological groups.

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14. Respondents who place themselves 0 to 3 on a left-right scale are classified as leftist, 4 to 6 as centrist, and 7 to 10 as rightist.
15. Table A5.2 in Appendix 5 presents the regression results used to create Figure 1 and an analysis using cultural diversity as the outcome variable. Essentially, the finding confirms that leftist groups develop stronger nativist attitudes when their parties cooperate with RRPs.

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