

## The path from trade to right-wing populism in Europe

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### ABSTRACT

Studies that focus on individual-level determinants of support for right-wing populist candidates and parties find little evidence that trade-induced economic hardship is important. By contrast, research that analyzes aggregate data often comes to the opposite conclusion: regions that are highly exposed to trade are more supportive of populist parties and candidates than other regions. To address these contradictory findings, we argue that import shocks engender a broad-based response at the regional level, beyond those whose economic interests are immediately and directly affected, and that this reaction is mediated through xenophobic beliefs about immigrants. Using individual-level data from the eighth wave of the European Social Survey (2016), regional import shock data for nine European countries and causal mediation analysis, we explore how imports affect support for right-wing populists in Europe. Our findings have important implications for understanding the relationship between individual- and contextual-level factors and support for the far right.

“The main thing at stake in this election is the rampant globalization that is endangering our civilization.”

Marine Le Pen, National Front candidate for the French presidency; [Chrisafis \(2017\)](#)

### 1. Introduction

On January 1, 2005, the European Union lifted a 40-year-old quota on Chinese textile imports ([European Commission, 2004](#)). Following this liberalization, Chinese imports flooded the markets across Europe ([Meller, 2005](#)). Cities like Calais in northern France, a historic capital of lace production were hard hit by the EU's decision. Calais has seen the number of individuals employed in lace factories plummet in the last 40 years, with a sharp decrease since 2005. Unemployment is now more than twice as high as the national average of 9.2% ([Alderman, 2017](#)). It is in towns like this that far-right populist parties attract a large share of voters. Indeed, Marine Le Pen of the French National Front won 57.4% of the vote in the presidential election in 2017 in Calais, nearly 20 percentage points over her national average ([Ministère de l'Intérieur, 2017](#)).

Across Europe, far right populist parties have been gaining strength in the past decade. From Austria, to France and Hungary, these parties are attracting voters who feel threatened by economic and cultural changes to their societies ([Golder, 2016](#); [Inglehart and Norris, 2016](#)). Framing their policies in terms of challenging the establishment, authoritarianism and nativism ([Mudde, 2010](#)), parties like the French National Front are both responding to these concerns and encouraging them through their framing of the key issues at stake in election

campaigns. Alongside their rise, we have seen an increase in research seeking to understand what explains support for these parties. Scholars have focused both on individual characteristics and attitudes as well as contextual factors, such as the state of the economy and immigration inflows.

In this article, we are interested in how, and the extent to which, exposure to import shocks at the regional level affects support for radical right-wing parties. We argue that the behavioral effects of these shocks are mediated through an individual's beliefs and attitudes, which then affect her voting decision. Individuals who are adversely affected by globalization are no more likely than those who are unaffected to support policies of economic closure and right-wing populism ([Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2007, 2010](#)), but *regions* that are exposed to trade are ([Colantone and Stanig, 2018a,b](#)). In other words, the level of analysis matters. We believe economic change engenders a widespread response that extends beyond those whose economic prospects are most directly affected by globalization to others who live nearby. Regions that are more exposed to imports are more supportive of right-wing parties.

The obvious go-to explanation for the levels of analysis puzzle is that people are thinking and behaving sociotropically with respect to their local economy. More specifically, the causal pathway is, first, that imports have a negative impact on the local economy; this, in turn, leads to pessimistic sociotropic evaluations of the local economy and beyond; and finally, these sociotropic evaluations make it more likely that individuals, whether they themselves are trade “winners” or “losers,” will vote for radical right parties. This explanation certainly fits the Calais experience and seems so reasonable that it has received very little if any empirical scrutiny. But is Calais representative of a more

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general backlash occurring throughout Europe? We evaluate this pathway from trade to right wing populism and find no evidence that trade affects support for right-wing populism through concerns about the economy. Instead, we find that the effects of regional import shocks on individual-level support for far right parties is mediated through anti-immigrant attitudes.

Our analysis makes three very important contributions. First, we argue that the separation of explanations for right-wing populism into purportedly mutually exclusive economic and cultural categories is very artificial and potentially counterproductive. Economic causes can have cultural effects and vice versa. Second, we analyze the empirical relationship between trade and support for the radical right during the crucial post-crisis period in Europe when right-wing populism exerts significant electoral influence. Third, we explore the causal mechanisms through which trade leads to support for the radical right using mediation analysis.

The article proceeds as follows. In the next section, we discuss two sets of explanations for why some voters support the far right: cultural and economic. We then outline an alternative causal mechanisms that is largely cultural in nature, but has an economic trigger (import shocks). In the following section, we empirically evaluate this and other mechanisms using causal mediation analysis. We combine regional-level data on import shocks with data from the eighth wave of the European Social Survey (ESS) for nine countries. Our sample includes Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and UK. The final section concludes and discusses the implications of our findings for understanding the underlying relationships between individual and contextual-level factors and far right support.

## 2. Why do voters support the populist right?

There is a large body of empirically oriented research that explains electoral support for the far right. One stream of literature argues that the populist right represents voters with cultural grievances driven by a fear of social change. The source of this fear is debated. Some see a backlash against modernization (Golder, 2016), as societies make the shift from materialist to post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1997). Others connect cultural grievances to immigration, which is the foremost political and policy issue for populist right-wing parties.

Scholars are divided over whether *exposure* to immigration leads to support for the radical right. In theory, some have argued that exposure to immigrants leads to a threat mentality that triggers xenophobic predispositions (Citrin and Sides, 2007). Yet, others have argued, drawing on the contact hypotheses (Allport, 1954), that exposure to larger immigrant populations promotes cross-cultural understanding and decreases prejudice. The empirical findings are mixed, both to whether there is a connection between size of the immigrant population to which one is exposed and anti-immigrant attitudes (Citrin and Sides, 2007; Schneider, 2008) as well as whether the size of the immigrant population influences the vote for the far right.

Some research has found a positive relationship between immigration and support for the populist right (e.g., Knigge, 1998; Lubbers and Scheepers, 2002; Golder, 2003; Halla et al., 2017). Studies using local-level data on the size of immigrant communities have typically found a strong positive relationship with far right voting (Bowyer, 2008; Halla et al., 2017). Conversely, other research has found that size has no or very little effect (Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Rydgren, 2008), and some have found evidence supporting the opposite relationship. In a meta-analysis of 515 studies, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) consistently find evidence that intergroup contact generally reduces intergroup prejudice. Several studies have demonstrated, moreover, that contact with minority groups decreases support for expelling immigrants from the country (McLaren, 2003; Ellison et al., 2011). Recent research has also found evidence in various contexts that contact with different groups reduces support for the far right (see, for example, Steinmayr, 2016; Vertier and Viskanic, 2018; Schindler and Westcott, 2017).

A second stream of research identifies globalization-induced economic change, from trade and immigration, as driving electoral support for the populist right. Both trade and immigration affect the labor market, producing winners and losers. There are *egocentric* and *sociotropic* versions of this argument. According to the egocentric version, globalization losers such as low-skilled workers, employees in import-competing industries and middle-class families who lose their savings in financial crises develop strong preferences for policies that limit or reverse global economic integration. Since these policies are embraced by the populist right, globalization losers find these candidates and parties more attractive than mainstream parties.

Early individual-level empirical studies found that the direct beneficiaries of globalization are more likely to support free trade and immigration, consistent with the egocentric position that policy preferences of individuals are driven partly by economic self-interest (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001; O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2001; Mayda and Rodrik, 2005; Mayda, 2006). However, recent empirical studies have ruled out the possibility that individual-level labor market outcomes explain support for policies that reverse global economic integration (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006, 2010) and a growing consensus now explains support for restrictive trade and immigration policies as cultural in nature, tied to out-group anxiety and shaped more by socio-tropic evaluations of the economy than egocentric ones (Mansfield and Mutz, 2009).

Importantly, when it comes to analyzing the relationship between globalization and politics, the level of analysis matters. While the evidence linking individual political and policy attitudes and personal labor market experiences is relatively weak, community attitudes and politics are related more consistently to the performance of local labor markets. This difference across levels of analysis is puzzling. At the regional level, Margalit (2011) finds that trade-related job loss in the United States reduces incumbent presidents' vote shares significantly in hard-hit counties and that Trade Adjustment Assistance blunts this effect. Dorn, Hanson and Majlesi (2016) show empirically that exposure to Chinese imports is associated with the election of more extreme Congressional candidates in the United States. Autor et al. (2016) find, moreover, that exposure to Chinese imports made a non-trivial contribution to the election of Donald Trump. In a similar study, Dippel et al. (2015) show that exposure to imports in Germany negatively affects local labor market performance, which, in turn, leads to higher vote shares for the extreme right.

Two recently published articles and a third working paper by Colantone and Stanig have advanced considerably our understanding of the relationship between trade and right-wing populism. In Colantone and Stanig (2018a), the authors show how import shocks from China affected the Brexit vote in 2016. At the NUTS-3 regional level, import shocks had a positive and statistically significant effect on the share of leave votes. Somewhat surprisingly, but consistent with the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954), they find that shares of immigrants in the regional population and immigrant arrivals are associated with a lesser share of Brexit votes.<sup>1</sup> At the individual level, they show that regional import shocks are associated with a higher probability of voting Leave, and, importantly, the effect does not depend on one's position in the labor market. Trade "losers" are no more likely than others to be affected by import shocks. Given the importance of immigration as an issue in the Brexit debate, the authors also examine the relationship between trade and immigration attitudes. Residents in regions hit with large, negative trade shocks are more likely to view immigrants as being bad for the economy and domestic cultural life and more likely to believe immigration levels are getting higher. Colantone and Stanig posit three possible mechanisms linking trade to anti-immigrant

<sup>1</sup> The authors attribute this to the fact that immigrants are attracted to urban regions with young and highly educated residents, such as London. Young, highly-educated urban residents tend to be immigrant friendly.

attitudes. First, trade shocks trigger concern about labor-market competition from immigrants. Second, high unemployment and populist politics lead to scapegoating. Third, trade shocks lead to compensation policies that burden the welfare state and raise concerns about immigration-induced strains on public services. All three of these mechanisms, including concerns about public finance, are economic in nature.

In Colantone and Stanig (2018b), their focus shifts to voting behavior in fifteen European countries between 1988 and 2007. The authors find that import shocks are associated with more nationalist and isolationist district-level ideology and higher vote shares for radical right parties. At the individual level, they find that citizens living in regions hit by strong shocks are more likely to vote for nationalist, isolationist and radical right parties, which they interpret as a general rightward shift in the electorate. Again, this effect does not depend on one's personal labor market status. Most recently, Colantone and Stanig (2018c) examine the effect of trade shocks on a number of political beliefs and attitudes including support for democracy and feelings about immigrants. They find that individuals living in hard-hit regions are more authoritarian and hostile toward immigrants. The latter set of results are particularly important for our purposes, as we build directly from their empirical models of attitudes toward immigrants.

In conclusion, there are two broad literatures that explain electoral support for the populist right. One focuses cultural grievances while the other focuses on two types of economic grievances, egocentric and sociotropic. The research on culture has considered extensively exposure to immigration as a trigger, but largely ignored the influence of trade, which is another way individuals are exposed to foreign goods and culture.<sup>2</sup> The economic determinants literature examines both trade and immigration as sources of policy positions that align voters with the radical right, but the mechanisms identified run exclusively through the labor market. Additionally, this research does not consider the mediating role of subjective beliefs about economic conditions. The focus is on objective economic conditions instead.

There is only weak evidence supporting the egocentric perspective that globalization losers such as low-skilled workers and employees in import-competing industries are more likely to develop anti-globalization or populist attitudes or become more accepting of populist candidates and parties when compared to the globalization winners in their communities. At the same time, the regional level evidence is much stronger. Individuals residing in high-import communities are more likely to support anti-globalization and populist politics regardless of their personal finances than individuals living in low-import communities. This seems to be consistent with the sociotropic explanation that regional-level empathy for those who are adversely affected economically by imports drives support for the radical right.

### 3. A socio-psychological path from trade to right-wing populism

Fig. 1 presents three pathways from import shocks to right-wing populism. The first two pathways are modified versions of the egocentric and sociotropic perspectives described above. The modification is that the individual-level behavioral effects of regional import shocks

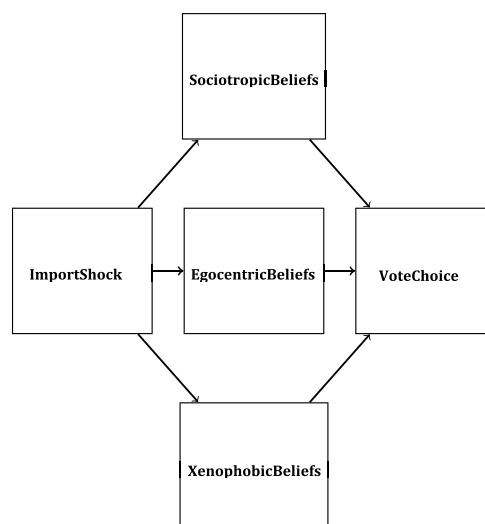


Fig. 1. Mediated pathways to right-wing populism.

are mediated by subjective economic beliefs. In this section, we describe a third pathway that is informed by theories of symbolic politics. This path is similar to what is proposed by Citrin and Sides (2007) and other contributors to the literature on immigration, except that exposure to imports triggers xenophobic predispositions in our framework.

Symbolic theories of political behavior start with the assumption that individuals form persistent predispositions such as prejudice, ethnic identity and nationalism early in life. These predispositions are activated by symbols that resonantly attach meaning to objects. When activated, symbolic predispositions drive political behavior that is emotional rather than cognitive (Sears et al., 1980; Sears, 1993). According to this view, the relationship between regional-level exposure to trade and support for the far right depends on the symbolic meaning attached to international trade. When it becomes an “attitude object” in one's informational environment, foreign trade has the potential to trigger emotional responses rooted in xenophobia. Similar to immigration, international trade is an objective process that can be symbolized as a threat from “foreign others.”<sup>3</sup>

Along this third path, the preference for right-wing populist parties and candidates extends beyond those whose personal or regional economic interests are directly affected to those who see imports as driving unnecessary dependence on foreigners or undesirable social and cultural change. For example, lace production is a longstanding artisanal craft inextricably linked to the regional cultural heritage of Pas-de-Calais. Trade competition has undermined this heritage. But even when trade has no effect on local production, and even when it benefits the local economy, trade can lead to social change by altering the bundles of goods that individuals consume. Trade creates a homogeneous McWorld of consumers that undermines local identity (Barber, 2010). Thus, globalization forces, such as trade, can generate reactionary and nostalgic attitudes that push voters to the political and sometimes radical right. Trade creates cultural grievances as well as economic ones. Significant exposure to one source of social change, such as import shocks, may sensitize communities to other sources of change and politically align voters with the radical right.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A notable exception is Sabet (2016), who develops a symbolic politics theory connecting trade attitudes and xenophobia. She argues theoretically and shows empirically, using survey data from the United States, that antipathy to foreign cultural influence dominates material self-interest when it comes to trade preferences. She posits that symbolic predispositions moderate the influence of material conditions on political behavior. This differs from our pathway argument which is about mediation. Whether one views symbolic predispositions as mediators or moderators depends, to a large extent, on the degree to which one sees these predispositions as fixed or variable with respect to changes in the environment. We see these two perspectives as complementary rather than competing. Analysis provided in the appendix suggests that mediation effects are reinforced typically by moderation effects.

<sup>3</sup> For theoretical reasons, all three pathways start with import shocks rather than a combined measure of imports and exports. Imports are the source of personal and regional economic hardship and also more plausibly symbolized as a foreign threat to one's regional and national culture. Focusing on imports allows us to compare our results with previous research as well.

<sup>4</sup> Note that when trade triggers an emotional xenophobic response, the mechanism is not captured by objective economic conditions such as a region's

In sum, the effect of objective material conditions on political behavior is mediated by subjective beliefs. With regard to trade shocks and individual support for the radical right, these beliefs can be economic in nature, regarding either one's personal finances or the economic vitality of the region in which one resides. Alternatively, economic trade has cultural consequences, and therefore may influence political behavior by activating xenophobic beliefs. In the next section, we present our empirical analysis based on the idea that beliefs mediate the relationship between trade and political behavior.

#### 4. Empirical analysis

##### 4.1. Data and methods

We use the approach to causal mediation analysis proposed by Imai et al. (2011).<sup>5</sup> The goal is to decompose an *average treatment effect* (ATE) into an *average causal mediated effect* (ACME) and an *average direct effect* (ADE). The ATE is defined as

$$ATE = E[Y(1) - Y(0)] \tag{1}$$

where  $E$  is the expectations operator and  $Y(t)$  is the outcome of interest under a given treatment status,  $t = 0, 1$ .  $Y(1)$  is the outcome under the treatment condition, and  $Y(0)$  is the outcome under the control condition. This should be viewed as the total effect of the treatment on the outcome of interest. The ACME is

$$ACME(t) = E[Y(t, M(1)) - Y(t, M(0))] \tag{2}$$

where  $M(t)$  is the value of the mediator under a given treatment status. ACME (1) is the average causal mediated effect under the treatment condition,  $Y(1, M(1))$  is the outcome under the treatment condition and  $Y(1, M(0))$  is the same outcome when the mediator is set to its value under the control condition. ACME (0) is the average causal mediated effect under the control condition,  $Y(0, M(0))$  is the outcome under the control condition and  $Y(0, M(1))$  is the same outcome when the mediator is set to its value under the treatment condition. This is the portion of the treatment's effect that operates through the specified mediator. Everything else is relegated to the ADE, which is defined as

$$ADE(t) = E[Y(1, M(t)) - Y(0, M(t))] \tag{3}$$

the expected difference in the outcome under treatment and control when the mediator value is held constant at  $t$ . This portion of the treatment's effect includes both unmediated relationships and unspecified mediated relationships. In our analysis, the outcome of interest is whether or not an individual votes for an extreme right party; the treatment is a regional-level import shock; and the mediators are individual-level subjective beliefs. It is unlikely that regional-level import shocks will have unmediated effects on individual-level political behavior. Therefore, direct effects in our analysis represent unspecified mediated pathways linking trade shocks to vote choice.

We use data from the eighth wave of the European Social Survey (ESS), which was in the field between September and December of 2016. From this survey, we include nine West European countries: Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and UK. We selected these countries as there was both a far right party contesting the most recent national election and respondents were identified by the subnational unit in which they live. Our outcome is a dichotomous variable for whether the respondent voted for the far right in the legislative election using the Manifestos Project

(footnote continued)

unemployment rate or a particular individual's employment status.

<sup>5</sup> These authors critique but also build upon a long tradition of path analysis using linear structural equation models in the social sciences (Blalock, 1964; Duncan, 1966). Imai et al. (2011) discuss and develop path analysis within a potential outcomes framework.

categorization of nationalist parties. See Table A1 in the Appendix for the list of parties included. Across respondents in our ESS dataset, 9.3% voted for a far right party based on this classification.

For our treatment variable (Import Shock), we follow Colantone and Stanig (2018a,b,c) using the formula

$$\text{Import Shock}_{cr} = \sum_j \frac{L_{rj(\text{pre-sample})}}{L_{r(\text{pre-sample})}} \times \frac{\Delta \text{IMPChina}_{cj}}{L_{cj(\text{pre-sample})}}$$

in which the subscripts  $c$ ,  $r$  and  $j$  index countries, regions and industries respectively.  $L$  is the number of individuals employed at the beginning of the sample period and  $\Delta \text{IMPChina}$  is the 5-year change in imports from China. The second term on the right-hand-side of the equation measures the size of the country-level import shock in a given industry *per worker*. This is then weighted by the regional-level importance of the industry with respect to total employment.

By calculating the import shock at the individual level, we are able to pool our sample across regions of different sizes. The regions were coded at the NUTS-2 level except for Germany and the UK because the ESS dataset only provides NUTS-1 level identifiers for the survey respondents. Table A1 lists the subnational unit used in the ESS for each country, its corresponding NUTS level and how many units there are. In Germany, for example, respondents are sorted into 16 states, which is at the NUTS-1 level. These data come from Eurostat (2017) and OECD (2017).

We construct mediator variables using four survey questions that were chosen to match as best as possible both the underlying theoretically-grounded causal pathways and previous research. The first (immigrant culture) asks respondents if immigrants undermine or enrich the country's cultural life based on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (undermine) to 10 (enhance); the second (immigrant economics), which uses an 11-point scale, asks respondents if immigration is bad (0) or good (10) for the national economy; the third (sociotropic) asks respondents how satisfied they are with the present state of the economy in their country using an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (dissatisfied) to 10 (satisfied);<sup>6</sup> the fourth (egocentric) asks respondents how satisfied they are with their own economic status using a four-point scale ranging from 1 (dissatisfied) to 4 (satisfied). The questions about immigrants capture well the in-group out-group mentality regarding "foreign others" that defines the first step along the xenophobic pathway. Moreover, given the importance of the immigration issue to right-wing parties and candidates, these mediators are best suited to drive the political behavior, voting for the radical right, that we aim to explain. See Table A2 for descriptive statistics of all variables used in our analyses.

##### 4.2. Results

We start with some preliminary regressions based on the specification in Colantone and Stanig (2018c). They find that Chinese import shocks are associated with higher levels of anti-immigrant sentiment. The regressions account for gender, age, education and NUTS-1 fixed effects. The results are reported in Table 1, which has five columns. The first four columns (1–4) show the relationships between import shocks and the mediating attitudes. We add sociotropic and egocentric economic evaluations to the list of mediating variables. The estimates are from linear regression models and the first two columns replicate Colantone and Stanig's findings. The third column suggests that individuals in high-import regions are *more* satisfied with the national economy. Column four shows no relationship between import shocks

<sup>6</sup> Ideally, we would use individuals' sociotropic evaluations of the regional economy, but this data is not available. Sociotropic evaluations of the national economy are likely to be a reasonable proxy. Research shows that individuals form their national-level evaluations on the basis of local economic conditions (Reeves and Gimpel, 2012; Bisgaard et al., 2016).

**Table 1**  
Import shocks and electoral support for the radical right.

	Attitude				Vote
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Immigrant Culture	Immigrant Economics	Sociotropic	Egocentric	Far Right
Import Exposure	-0.701** (0.302)	-0.587** (0.269)	0.224** (0.102)	0.031 (0.043)	0.743** (0.299)
Female	0.183*** (0.046)	-0.088** (0.040)	-0.210*** (0.042)	-0.050*** (0.012)	-0.473*** (0.078)
Age	-0.010*** (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	-0.003*** (0.001)	0.001*** (0.000)	-0.014*** (0.002)
Education Dummies	X	X	X	X	X
NUTS 1 FE	X	X	X	X	X
Observations	16716	16638	16702	16857	10886
Adjusted/Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.184	0.129	0.249	0.147	0.108

Standard errors in parentheses, clustered by region.

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

and satisfaction with one's own economic status. The last column (5) presents logit model coefficients that show the relationship between import shocks and the vote choice outcome variable.

These estimates imply a €1,524 import shock will lead to 1.07 and 0.895 unit decreases in an individual's self-placement along the immigrant culture and economic impact scales, which means trade shocks increase anti-immigrant sentiment.<sup>7</sup> The same import shock increases the odds of voting for a radical right party by more than 200%. With respect to sociotropic evaluations of the national economy, a €1,524 import shock leads to a 1.13 increase on the scale measuring satisfaction with the national economy. Respondents living in regions exposed to larger import shocks are more satisfied with the performance of the national economy than respondents exposed to lesser shocks. This is inconsistent with the sociotropic grievance explanation linking trade and support for the radical right.

In Table 2, we add a battery of controls to the basic regression. At the individual level, we include two covariates related to one's experience in the labor market. The first is the respondent's employment status. The second is whether or not one is a trade union member. These covariates have been found to influence support for the far-right (Arzheimer and Carter, 2006; Arzheimer, 2009; Inglehart and Norris, 2016). We also include an individual's level of religiosity and income. At the NUTS-2 regional level, we add the change in the percentage of foreign-born residents in a given region from the early 2000s to the year before the election corresponding to our vote choice outcome. While regions that have significant numbers of foreign-born residents (and have always had significant numbers of foreign-born residents), such as large metropolitan areas are typically immigrant friendly, we expect individuals living in regions experiencing relatively large increases in immigrant inflows might react differently. Focusing on the change in the numbers of foreign-born residents is important as the extant literature has argued that exposure to immigration can both increase (e.g., Lubbers and Scheepers, 2002; Norris, 2005; Rydgren, 2008; Inglehart and Norris, 2016) and decrease support for the far-right (e.g., Steinmayr, 2016; Schindler and Westcott, 2017; Vertier and Viskanac, 2018). We also include the region's unemployment and economic growth rates. These data are from Eurostat (2015).

The results are interesting. With respect to import shocks, the sizes of the effects on attitudes toward immigrants are larger, while the effects in columns 3–5 are similar in size to what we found previously. We find no systematic relationship between regional-level exposure to large immigrant inflows and either attitudes toward immigrants or vote

choice. In contrast with a number of earlier studies, we find an unemployment effect (cf. Mutz, 2018). Unemployed respondents hold stronger anti-immigrant attitudes, are less satisfied with the national economy, and are more likely to vote for radical right parties. This lends some support to the conventional economic anxiety story told frequently in the popular press. We also find that higher income individuals hold stronger pro-immigrant attitudes, are more satisfied with the state of both their personal and regional economic situations, and are less likely to vote for far right parties.

Tables 1 and 2 show that import shocks have large and statistically significant effects on voters' attitudes toward immigrants in ways that align their political and policy preferences with populist right-wing parties. This raises the possibility of a mediated relationship between import shocks and vote choice, which we explore next. The results of our causal mediation analysis are presented in Table 3. We define the control condition as no import shock and the treatment condition as exposure to an import shock at the 90th percentile of the empirical distribution of shocks. For each survey respondent, the counterfactual probabilities of voting for a radical right party are calculated under both the control and treatment conditions, allowing the mediator to vary with the treatment condition. The individual-level differences in these probabilities are recorded and then averaged over the sample. The average treatment effect, in turn, is decomposed according to equations (2) and (3) into a mediated and direct effect by holding either the treatment or the mediator constant. The confidence intervals for these effects are calculated via parametric bootstrap and represent sampling uncertainty.<sup>8</sup>

Across the four models, our estimates suggest that the average total effect (ATE) of the treatment (import shock) is an increase in the probability of voting for a radical-right party between 5.6 and 10.5 percentage points. To facilitate comparison with Table 1, if we start with the unconditional frequency of far-right voting (9.3%), a 10.5 percentage point increase raises the odds of voting for a radical-right party by more 140%. Focusing on the models in which attitudes toward immigrants mediate the trade shock, most of the ATE is attributable to the average direct effect (ADE), which reflects causal pathways that we have not considered, but the size of the mediated effect is substantial. The estimated average mediated effect (ACME) through one's beliefs

<sup>7</sup> €1,524 is the import shock located at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile of observed shocks in our data.

<sup>8</sup> The traditional approach to path analysis with linear structural equation models uses a product-of-coefficients approach to estimate the average treatment effect: a coefficient that represents the effect of the treatment on the mediator multiplied by a coefficient that represents the effect of the mediator on the outcome. The benefits of our calculation are that it is appropriate for non-linear models, it is non-parametric and less sensitive to outliers.

**Table 2**  
Import shocks and electoral support for the radical right (with additional control variables).

	Attitude				Vote
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Immigrant Culture	Immigrant Economics	Sociotropic	Egocentric	Far Right
Import Exposure	-0.888*** (0.270)	-0.729*** (0.214)	0.246** (0.116)	0.044 (0.043)	0.703** (0.330)
Female	0.171*** (0.052)	-0.119*** (0.043)	-0.271*** (0.044)	-0.002 (0.012)	-0.473*** (0.083)
Age	-0.009*** (0.001)	0.000 (0.001)	-0.002* (0.001)	0.003*** (0.000)	-0.013*** (0.003)
Unemployed	-0.078 (0.051)	-0.147*** (0.045)	-0.380*** (0.039)	-0.231*** (0.014)	0.349*** (0.088)
Union Member	0.051 (0.048)	-0.102* (0.054)	-0.184*** (0.045)	-0.021 (0.014)	0.036 (0.105)
Religion	0.020** (0.009)	0.031*** (0.008)	0.062*** (0.006)	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.041** (0.016)
Income	0.028*** (0.009)	0.046*** (0.009)	0.086*** (0.008)	0.122*** (0.003)	-0.037** (0.016)
Immigrant Exposure	-0.019 (0.017)	-0.019 (0.013)	-0.018** (0.008)	0.001 (0.002)	0.007 (0.031)
Regional Unemployment	-0.052* (0.029)	-0.062*** (0.023)	-0.007 (0.014)	-0.005 (0.004)	0.048 (0.042)
Regional Econ Growth	-0.005 (0.028)	0.011 (0.029)	-0.003 (0.015)	-0.017*** (0.006)	0.029 (0.053)
Education Dummies	X	X	X	X	X
NUTS 1 FE	X	X	X	X	X
Observations	14092	14047	14074	14220	9836
Adjusted/Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.186	0.139	0.268	0.340	0.118

Standard errors in parentheses, clustered by region.

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

about immigration and culture is a 3.5 percentage-point increase in the probability of voting for a radical right party (33.4% of the total effect). The ACME through one's beliefs about immigration and the economy is a 2.6 percentage-point increase in the probability of voting for the radical right (26.6% of the total effect). Again, the relationship between our hypothetical import shock and one's sociotropic evaluation of the national economy is positive. Individuals exposed to larger regional import shocks are more satisfied with the performance of the national economy. If anything, sociotropic evaluations of the national economy reduce the size of the positive relationship between import shocks and electoral support for the radical right. This seems to be inconsistent with the hypothesis that sociotropic economic voting behavior explains the connection between trade and the rise of the right-wing populism.

Causal identification comes from what Imai and coauthors call sequential ignorability.<sup>9</sup> This assumption states that, first, the treatment is exogenous and, second, that given the treatment assignment, the mediator is exogenous. In terms of our analysis, this assumption requires that the import shock is exogenous conditional on our pre-treatment controls. And then, once we account for the systematic shift in attitudes and beliefs associated with the treatment assignment and pre-treatment controls, any remaining variation must be independent of potential confounds. With respect to the first part of the sequential ignorability assumption, it is important to keep in mind that, given our regional-level controls, we are estimating the effect of an import shock using within NUTS-1 regional-level variation controlling for NUTS-2 levels of unemployment, economic growth, and immigration exposure. The first part of the assumption is plausibly satisfied with this specification.

With respect to the second part of the assumption, we can evaluate

<sup>9</sup> The conventional assumption for identification is that the treatment and mediator variables are exogenous in the system of equations—that is, independent of the unobserved structural disturbances in the model.

the sensitivity of our mediated causal effect to an unobserved confound. The mediator is endogenous and sequential ignorability is violated if the disturbances across the two stages of our mediation analysis are correlated. The sensitivity parameter ( $\rho$ ) reported in Table 3 gives the correlation coefficient consistent with the hypothesis of no mediated treatment effect. From this correlation, we can calculate the implied explanatory power of the unobserved confound with respect to both the mediator and outcome variables. In the case of our immigrant-culture mediator, the unobserved confound would have to explain proportions of the total variation in both the mediator and outcome such that the product of these two proportions is greater than 0.042 ( $R_{\text{mediator}}^2 \times R_{\text{outcome}}^2 > 0.042$ ). To help with interpretation, for our immigrant-culture mediator, the respective coefficients of (multiple) determination for the regression models in Table 3 are 0.20 and 0.201 and their product is 0.04. In other words, in order to make the mediated treatment effect go away (i.e., ACME = 0), the unobserved confound would have to have more explanatory power than the combined explanatory power of all of the covariates and fixed effects in our regressions. With respect to our immigrant-economy mediator, in order for our estimated average causal mediated effect to be entirely attributable to omitted variable bias, the product of coefficients of (multiple) determination would have to be even larger than in the previous case (greater than 0.047). While it is possible that the observed relationship is driven by an unobserved confound, the reasonable conclusion from our analysis is that our results are not very sensitive to this possibility.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we have sought to understand the relationship between import shocks and the vote for right-wing populist parties. We have argued and demonstrated empirically with post-crisis survey data that the path runs through an individual's beliefs and attitudes. Controlling for a large set of individual and regional covariates, we

**Table 3**  
Mediated effects of import shocks on electoral support for the radical right.

	Immigrant Culture		Immigrant Economics		Sociotropic		Egocentric	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage
Import Exposure	-0.772*** (0.256)	0.554* (0.309)	-0.584*** (0.203)	0.582* (0.320)	0.328** (0.131)	0.686* (0.376)	0.020 (0.052)	0.715** (0.336)
Immigrant Culture		-0.355*** (0.020)						
Immigrant Economics				-0.354*** (0.025)				
Sociotropic						-0.194** (0.025)		
Egocentric								-0.270*** (0.055)
Female	0.245*** (0.057)	-0.417*** (0.082)	-0.036 (0.045)	-0.496*** (0.082)	-0.221*** (0.043)	-0.514*** (0.083)	0.023* (0.013)	-0.471*** (0.083)
Age	-0.003*** (0.002)	-0.013*** (0.003)	0.007*** (0.002)	-0.010*** (0.003)	0.004** (0.002)	-0.012** (0.003)	0.005*** (0.001)	-0.012*** (0.003)
Unemployed	-0.089* (0.065)	0.301*** (0.085)	-0.125*** (0.052)	0.289*** (0.092)	-0.333*** (0.044)	0.278*** (0.090)	-0.192*** (0.017)	0.288*** (0.089)
Income	0.019* (0.009)	-0.029* (0.016)	0.048*** (0.011)	-0.023 (0.017)	0.092*** (0.010)	-0.020 (0.017)	0.113*** (0.004)	-0.006 (0.017)
Religion	-0.012 (0.010)	-0.050*** (0.016)	0.003 (0.008)	-0.041*** (0.015)	0.043*** (0.008)	-0.031** (0.016)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.041** (0.016)
Union Member	0.102* (0.055)	0.026 (0.112)	-0.040 (0.055)	-0.178*** (0.043)	-0.178*** (0.043)	-0.003 (0.105)	-0.012 (0.014)	0.036 (0.103)
Regional Unemployment	-0.049* (0.034)	0.014 (0.042)	-0.060** (0.027)	-0.009 (0.016)	-0.009 (0.016)	0.047 (0.042)	-0.001 (0.005)	0.050 (0.042)
Regional Econ Growth	0.002 (0.032)	0.015 (0.053)	0.035 (0.049)	0.006 (0.018)	0.006 (0.018)	0.029 (0.055)	-0.015* (0.008)	0.027 (0.053)
Immigrant Exposure	-0.017 (0.019)	0.004 (0.031)	0.008 (0.031)	-0.015* (0.008)	-0.015* (0.008)	0.004 (0.031)	0.001 (0.003)	0.007 (0.030)
Education FE	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
NUTS 1 FE	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Adjusted/Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.200	0.201	0.138	0.195	0.262	0.136	0.318	0.122
ACME	0.035 [0.013–0.058]		0.026 [0.009–0.045]		-0.008 [-0.016 to -0.002]		-0.001 [-0.003 – 0.002]	
ADE	0.070 [-0.008 – 0.161]		0.074 [-0.008 – 0.170]		0.092 [-0.009 – 0.215]		0.057 [0.002–0.115]	
TE	0.105 [0.021–0.200]		0.100 [0.015–0.197]		0.084 [-0.015 – 0.204]		0.056 [0.002–0.114]	
% of Mediated	0.334 [0.167–1.525]		0.266 [0.124–1.372]		-0.097 [-0.918 – 0.507]		-0.011 [-0.059 to -0.005]	
Sensitivity Parameter(ρ)	-0.4		-0.4		-0.3		-0.2	

Standard errors are in parentheses and clustered by regions. 95% confidence intervals in square brackets, estimated based on nonparametric bootstrap with 1000 resamples. Mediation equations are estimated with OLS and outcome equations are estimated with a logit. p\* < 0.10, p\*\* < 0.05, p\*\*\* < 0.01.

identified a mediated causal effect. Individuals exposed to import shocks have more negative attitudes about the cultural and economic impact of immigration. This partly aligns their political and policy preferences with the radical right and increases the probability that these individuals will vote for such parties. Importantly, while it is true that individuals exposed to significant import shocks are more likely to believe that immigration is bad for the economy, this should be attributed to general anti-immigrant sentiment rather than economic concerns. These same individuals are more likely to be satisfied with the performance of the national economy.

Our results also contribute to the literature on support for far-right parties by reconciling the individual- and aggregate-level findings. Voters seem to be motivated by community-level concerns that are

activated by import exposure. However, these sociotropic concerns are more cultural and social than economic. Voters are reacting to trade-induced social change that seems to magnify anti-immigrant sentiment.

Despite these contributions, there is still more work to be done. First, as we have a limited number of parties and countries in the dataset, the analysis should be expanded to include additional far right parties and countries. Second, our analysis is limited to a single election in each country. Future research should incorporate additional elections as survey data allows for. Third, we need to develop a better understanding of how economic and cultural forces interact to drive right-wing populism. Fourth, it will be important to consider why the nativist backlash has largely been seen as support for right-wing (and not left-wing) populist parties.

**Appendix. Supplementary Data**

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2019.04.002>.

## Appendix

The appendix provides (A1) country level information, (A2) the descriptive statistics of the main variables of interest, (A3) import shock, (A4) causal mediation analysis outcome on different treatment conditions (95th, 85th, 80th, 75th percentile of empirical distribution of import shocks), (A5-A7) additional analysis, and (A8) list of variables and the sources of data.

### A1. Country-level Information

Our dataset includes nine countries. The 8th Wave of the ESS wave provides the location of each respondent's residence measured at the regional level. In the ESS, respondents' residence is measured at the NUTS-3 level for Sweden and Finland. However, to compare with other countries, we aggregated Finland and Sweden up to the NUTS-2 level.

Table 1  
Country-level information (ESS wave 8).

Country	Election Year	Far Right Party	Sub-National Unit (ESS)	Number of Regions	NUTSLevel
Austria	2013	Freedom Party of Austria	States	8	2
Belgium	2014	Flemish Interest, National Front	Provinces	10	2
Finland	2015	True Finns	Large Areas	5	2
France	2012	National Front	Regions	18	2
Germany	2013	Alternative for Germany	States	16	1
Italy	2013	Northern League, Brothers of Italy	Regions	19	2
Netherlands	2014	Party For Freedom	Provinces	12	2
Sweden	2014	Sweden Democrats	National Areas	8	2
UK	2015	United Kingdom Independence Party	Regions	11	1

### A2. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2  
Descriptive statistics.

	mean	sd	Min	max
Vote Far Right	0.093	0.290	0	1
Immigrant Culture	5.667	2.617	0	10
Immigrant Economics	5.147	2.462	0	10
Sociotropic	5.230	2.292	0	10
Egocentric	3.219	0.769	1	4
Female	0.515	0.500	0	1
Age	50.055	18.772	15	100
Education	3.894	1.858	1	7
Unemployed	0.290	0.454	0	1
Religion	4.427	3.109	0	10
Union Member	0.407	0.491	0	1
Import Exposure	0.508	0.702	-0	3
Regional Unemployment	7.916	3.842	3	24
Regional Econ Growth	1.067	1.578	-8	9
Immigrant Exposure	1.999	4.374	-7	19
Trade Balance	0.077	1.191	-1.849	2.990
Income	5.493	2.738	1	10

### A3. Descriptive Import Shocks

Import shock is estimated based on equation (1) in the manuscript. Table A3 shows the distribution of the import shock. For instance, the 90th percentile region experienced an increase in Chinese imports by 1523 euros per person. Data sources are described in detail in A8.

Table A3  
Distribution of import shocks.

Percentile	Import Shock
10th	-0.1449
15th	0.0978
20th	0.1393
25th	0.1468
50th	0.3428
75th	0.6794
80th	0.7050
85th	0.8107
90th	1.5238
95th	2.5297



A4. Causal Mediation Analysis - Different Treatment Conditions

In the manuscript, we define the control condition as no import shock and the treatment condition as exposure to an import shock at the 90th percentile of the empirical distribution of shocks. Here, we present the ACME by defining the treatment condition as exposure to an import shock at different percentiles of the distribution of shocks.

Table A4  
Causal mediation analysis.

	Immigrant Culture	Immigrant Economics	Sociotropic	Egocentric
95th Percentile ACME	0.072 [0.023–0.125]	0.055 [0.009–0.106]	– 0.011 [-0.027–0.004]	0.002 [-0.006–0.010]
ADE	0.186 [0.040–0.356]	0.202 [0.047–0.384]	0.232 [0.041–0.462]	0.243 [0.059–0.457]
TE	0.258 [0.096–0.442]	0.257 [0.089–0.448]	0.221 [0.029–0.452]	0.245 [0.059–0.459]
% of Mediated	0.285 [0.164–0.756]	0.218 [0.123–0.618]	– 0.051 [-0.277 to – 0.024]	0.008 [0.004–0.033]
85th Percentile ACME	0.016 [0.006–0.026]	0.012 [0.002–0.022]	– 0.003 [-0.006–0.001]	0.0004 [-0.001–0.002]
ADE	0.039 [0.010–0.070]	0.043 [0.012–0.075]	0.050 [0.012–0.093]	0.052 [0.016–0.091]
TE	0.055 [0.025–0.088]	0.055 [0.023–0.089]	0.048 [0.008–0.090]	0.052 [0.016–0.091]
% of Mediated	0.290 [0.179–0.640]	0.222 [0.134–0.519]	– 0.054 [-0.226 to – 0.028]	0.009 [0.005–0.026]
80th Percentile ACME	0.013 [0.005–0.022]	0.010 [0.002–0.019]	– 0.002 [-0.005–0.001]	0.0003 [-0.001–0.002]
ADE	0.033 [0.009–0.059]	0.036 [0.011–0.062]	0.042 [0.010–0.077]	0.044 [0.014–0.076]
TE	0.046 [0.021–0.074]	0.046 [0.020–0.074]	0.040 [0.007–0.075]	0.044 [0.014–0.076]
% of Mediated	0.289 [0.180–0.630]	0.221 [0.137–0.510]	– 0.054 [-0.222 to – 0.028]	0.009 [0.005–0.026]
75th Percentile ACME	0.013 [0.005–0.021]	0.010 [0.002–0.018]	– 0.002 [-0.005–0.001]	0.0004 [-0.001–0.002]
ADE	0.032 [0.008–0.056]	0.034 [0.010–0.059]	0.041 [0.010–0.074]	0.042 [0.013–0.072]
TE	0.044 [0.020–0.070]	0.044 [0.020–0.071]	0.039 [0.007–0.071]	0.042 [0.014–0.072]
% of Mediated	0.289 [0.181–0.627]	0.221 [0.137–0.507]	– 0.054 [-0.221 to – 0.028]	0.009 [0.005–0.026]
70th Percentile ACME	0.012 [0.004–0.020]	0.009 [0.002–0.017]	– 0.002 [-0.005–0.001]	0.0003 [-0.001–0.002]
ADE	0.030 [0.008–0.052]	0.032 [0.010–0.056]	0.038 [0.009–0.069]	0.039 [0.013–0.068]
TE	0.042 [0.019–0.066]	0.041 [0.018–0.066]	0.036 [0.007–0.067]	0.040 [0.013–0.068]
% of Mediated	0.289 [0.182–0.624]	0.221 [0.137–0.505]	– 0.054 [-0.219 to – 0.029]	0.009 [0.005–0.026]

Note: This table reports the ACME (Average Causal Mediation Effect), ADE (Average Direct Effect), TE (Total Effect) using different import shocks at the 95th, 90th, 85th, 80th, 75th percentiles. The 95% confidence interval is in brackets. Confidence intervals are estimated based on a nonparametric bootstrap with 1000 resamples. The mediation equation and the outcome equation are presented in Table 2 in the manuscript.

A5. Analysis without Germany and the UK

The ESS provides the location of each respondent's residence measured at the regional level. For Germany and the UK, respondents' residence is measured at the NUTS-1 level, which cannot be disaggregated to the NUTS-2 level. For the robustness check, we present the results without Germany and the UK so that we have every region at the NUTS-2 level.

Table A5.1  
Import shocks on electoral support for the radical right.

	Attitude				Vote
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
	Immigrant Culture	Immigrant Economics	Sociotropic	Egocentric	Far Right
Import Exposure	-0.508*** (0.187)	-0.419** (0.202)	0.084 (0.106)	0.020 (0.051)	0.611* (0.327)
Female	0.240*** (0.057)	-0.051 (0.050)	-0.149*** (0.038)	0.001 (0.014)	-0.481*** (0.094)
Age	-0.008*** (0.001)	0.003* (0.002)	-0.005*** (0.001)	0.003*** (0.000)	-0.014*** (0.003)
Unemployed	-0.057 (0.052)	-0.126** (0.049)	-0.390*** (0.047)	-0.238*** (0.018)	0.352*** (0.096)
Income	0.028** (0.011)	0.046*** (0.012)	0.079*** (0.010)	0.125*** (0.004)	-0.032* (0.018)
Religion	0.006 (0.009)	0.017* (0.009)	0.056*** (0.008)	-0.005** (0.002)	-0.020 (0.019)
Union Member	0.015 (0.061)	-0.121* (0.065)	-0.160*** (0.058)	-0.031* (0.017)	0.014 (0.126)
Regional Unemployment	-0.036 (0.034)	-0.031 (0.026)	-0.021 (0.021)	-0.013* (0.008)	0.062 (0.053)
Regional Econ Growth	-0.006 (0.024)	0.030 (0.028)	-0.029* (0.015)	-0.017** (0.006)	0.009 (0.052)
Immigrant Exposure	0.032 (0.024)	0.020 (0.031)	-0.004 (0.016)	-0.005 (0.004)	0.026 (0.036)
Observations	10125	10092	10114	10225	7061
Adjusted/Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.221	0.134	0.268	0.357	0.115

Standard errors in parentheses, clustered by region.

\*p < 0.10, \*\*p < 0.05, \*\*\*p < 0.01.

A6. Moderated Effects of Import Shocks on Electoral Support for the Radical Right

Table A5.2  
Mediated effects of import shocks on electoral support for the radical right.

	Immigrant Culture		Immigrant Economics		Sociotropic		Egocentric	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage
Import Exposure	-0.380** (0.183)	0.567* (0.303)	-0.250 (0.183)	0.638** (0.314)	0.131 (0.118)	0.518 (0.363)	0.011 (0.062)	0.618* (0.331)
Immigrant Culture		-0.367*** (0.023)						
Immigrant Economics				-0.366*** (0.030)				
Sociotropic						-0.211*** (0.030)		
Egocentric								-0.285*** (0.067)
Female	0.295*** (0.063)	-0.412*** (0.094)	-0.009 (0.054)	-0.505*** (0.094)	-0.122*** (0.042)	-0.512*** (0.093)	0.029* (0.016)	-0.478*** (0.094)
Age	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.014*** (0.003)	0.009*** (0.002)	-0.011*** (0.003)	0.002 (0.002)	-0.014** (0.003)	0.004*** (0.001)	-0.013*** (0.003)
Unemployed	-0.101 (0.062)	0.300*** (0.092)	-0.124*** (0.054)	0.305*** (0.098)	-0.351*** (0.052)	0.275*** (0.101)	-0.197*** (0.022)	0.285*** (0.099)
Income	0.018* (0.011)	-0.024 (0.018)	0.046*** (0.014)	-0.018 (0.019)	0.083*** (0.012)	-0.015 (0.018)	0.117*** (0.005)	0.001 (0.019)
Religion	-0.026** (0.010)	-0.033*** (0.018)	-0.013 (0.010)	-0.024 (0.017)	0.036*** (0.009)	-0.011 (0.018)	-0.003 (0.003)	-0.021 (0.019)
Union Member	0.106 (0.072)	-0.000 (0.137)	-0.023 (0.069)	-0.048 (0.132)	-0.116** (0.055)	-0.017 (0.125)	-0.021 (0.020)	0.010 (0.123)
Regional Unemployment	-0.020 (0.042)	0.037 (0.052)	-0.014** (0.032)	0.061 (0.050)	-0.014 (0.025)	0.059 (0.053)	-0.002 (0.009)	0.065 (0.054)
Regional Econ Growth	-0.003 (0.030)	-0.009 (0.048)	0.030 (0.031)	0.025 (0.046)	-0.022 (0.017)	0.002 (0.052)	-0.013 (0.009)	0.008 (0.052)
Immigrant Exposure	0.030 (0.023)	0.036 (0.034)	0.026 (0.028)	0.041 (0.034)	0.001 (0.014)	0.027 (0.036)	0.001 (0.004)	0.026 (0.036)
Education FE	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

(continued on next page)

Table A5.2 (continued)

NUTS 1 FE	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Adjusted/Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.243	0.203	0.136	0.198	0.248	0.136	0.332	0.119
ACME	0.019		0.013		-0.004		-0.0003	
	[0.002-0.037]		[-0.005 - 0.031]		[-0.011 to -0.003]		[-0.006 - 0.005]	
ADE	0.077		0.088		0.075		0.093	
	[-0.001 - 0.169]		[0.005-0.184]		[-0.022 - 0.193]		[-0.001 - 0.206]	
TE	0.097		0.101		0.072		0.093	
	[0.014-0.190]		[0.015-0.198]		[-0.025 - 0.188]		[-0.001 - 0.007]	
% of Mediated	0.201		0.130		-0.048		-0.004	
	[0.095-0.930]		[0.061-0.591]		[-0.440 - 0.456]		[-0.033 to -0.006]	
Sensitivity Parameter(ρ)	-0.4		-0.4		-0.2		-0.2	

Standard errors are in parentheses and clustered by regions. 95% confidence intervals in square brackets, estimated based on nonparametric bootstrap with 1000 resamples. Mediation equations are estimated with OLS, and outcome equations are estimated with a logit. p\* < 0.10, p\*\* < 0.05, p\*\*\* < 0.01.

Table A6

Moderated effects of import shocks on electoral support for the radical right.

	Immigrant Culture	Immigrant Economics	Sociotropic	Egocentric
Import Exposure (IE)	0.545* (0.308)	0.789** (0.315)	1.081*** (0.370)	0.963*** (0.361)
Immigrant Culture	-0.356*** (0.0248)			
IE × Immigrant Culture	0.00202 (0.0180)			
Immigrant Economics		-0.330*** (0.0273)		
IE × Immigrant Economics		-0.0530** (0.0255)		
Sociotropic			-0.164*** (0.0286)	
IE × Sociotropic			-0.0679** (0.0340)	
Egocentric				-0.227*** (0.0643)
IE × Egocentric				-0.0786 (0.0642)
Female	-0.417*** (0.0818)	-0.503*** (0.0818)	-0.522*** (0.0834)	-0.473*** (0.0823)
Age	-0.0133*** (0.00309)	-0.00973*** (0.00309)	-0.0117*** (0.00287)	-0.0117*** (0.00279)
Unemployed	0.300*** (0.0851)	0.289*** (0.0918)	0.278*** (0.0909)	0.290*** (0.0891)
Religion	-0.0497*** (0.0158)	-0.0403*** (0.0154)	-0.0314** (0.0155)	-0.0412** (0.0163)
Union Member	0.0264 (0.112)	-0.0286 (0.110)	-0.00559 (0.105)	0.0341 (0.104)
Income	-0.0289* (0.0161)	-0.0227 (0.0171)	-0.0188 (0.0163)	-0.00575 (0.0167)
Regional Unemployment	0.0143 (0.0418)	0.0232 (0.0411)	0.0475 (0.0421)	0.0505 (0.0416)
Regional Econ Growth	0.0149 (0.0527)	0.0320 (0.0494)	0.0281 (0.0555)	0.0254 (0.0528)
Immigrant Exposure	0.00378 (0.0312)	0.00754 (0.0314)	0.00356 (0.0315)	0.00712 (0.0304)
Observations	9,768	9,729	9,777	9,830

Standard errors in parentheses, clustered by regions.

\*\*\*p < 0.01, \*\*p < 0.05, \*p < 0.1.

#### A7. Controlling for the Trade Balance at Regional Levels

It is possible that the import exposure measure that we use captures economic globalization which might not necessarily threaten the local economy. As a robustness check, we controlled for the trade balance (trade deficit) at the regional level.

Regional Trade Balance is estimated based on a similar procedure for import exposure (equation (1)) except we substitute  $\Delta IMPChina_{c,j}$  with  $\Delta TradeBalance_{c,j}$ . (1) We measure the trade balance for each industry (j) by subtracting the entire value of imports from the value of exports ( $TradeBalance_{j,t} = (export_j - import_{j,t})$ ) at election year(t) and the lagged year, respectively. For the details of this variable, please see A8.2.

Overall, our results are consistent with our main results.

**Table A7**  
Mediated effects of import shocks on electoral support for the radical right controlling for the trade balance

	Immigrant Culture		Immigrant Economics		Sociotropic		Egocentric	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage	First Stage	Second Stage
Import Exposure	-0.779*** (0.262)	0.569* (0.306)	-0.576*** (0.204)	0.591* (0.317)	0.344** (0.142)	0.710* (0.334)	-0.028 (0.051)	0.747** (0.328)
Immigrant Culture		-0.355*** (0.020)						
Immigrant Economics				-0.353*** (0.024)				
Sociotropic						-0.194** (0.026)		
Egocentric								
Trade Balance	-0.056 (0.179)	-0.107 (0.181)	0.073 (0.165)	-0.071 (0.173)	0.141 (0.010)	-0.159 (0.204)	-0.005 (0.030)	-0.269 (0.055)
Income	0.019** (0.009)		0.048*** (0.011)	-0.023 (0.017)	0.091*** (0.010)	-0.020 (0.017)	0.113 (0.004)	-0.006 (0.017)
Female	0.251*** (0.057)	-0.416*** (0.081)	-0.036 (0.044)	-0.496*** (0.082)	-0.221*** (0.043)	-0.514*** (0.082)	0.023* (0.013)	-0.471*** (0.083)
Age	-0.003* (0.002)	-0.013*** (0.003)	0.007** (0.002)	-0.010*** (0.003)	0.004** (0.002)	-0.012*** (0.003)	0.003*** (0.001)	-0.012*** (0.003)
Unemployed	-0.089 (0.064)	0.300*** (0.085)	-0.126*** (0.052)	0.289*** (0.092)	-0.333*** (0.044)	0.278*** (0.090)	-0.192*** (0.018)	0.288*** (0.090)
Religion	-0.012 (0.010)	-0.496*** (0.015)	0.003 (0.008)	-0.041*** (0.015)	0.042*** (0.008)	-0.031** (0.015)	-0.001 (0.002)	-0.041** (0.016)
Union Member	0.102* (0.056)	0.026 (0.109)	-0.040 (0.055)	-0.028 (0.109)	-0.178*** (0.043)	-0.003 (0.105)	-0.012 (0.014)	-0.035 (0.103)
Regional Unemployment	-0.052 (0.033)	0.010 (0.042)	-0.055** (0.027)	0.020 (0.041)	0.00006 (0.016)	0.041 (0.041)	-0.001 (0.005)	0.042 (0.042)
Regional Econ Growth	0.0002 (0.032)	0.023 (0.054)	0.008 (0.030)	0.040 (0.052)	-0.00001 (0.019)	0.041 (0.056)	-0.015 (0.008)	0.042 (0.054)
Immigrant Exposure	-0.018 (0.019)	0.003 (0.031)	-0.013 (0.015)	0.007 (0.031)	-0.014 (0.008)	0.003 (0.031)	0.001 (0.003)	0.006 (0.030)
Education FE	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
NUTS 1 FE	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Adjusted/ Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.203	0.202	0.142	0.195	0.262	0.133	0.321	0.122
ACME		0.035 [0.011 – 0.062]		0.026 [0.008 – 0.047]		-0.009 [-0.016 - -0.001]		-0.001 [-0.005 – 0.003]
ADE		0.072 [-0.005 – 0.161]		0.075 [-0.005 – 0.167]		0.096 [-0.003 – 0.215]		0.104 [0.010 – 0.214]
TE		0.108 [0.025 – 0.207]		0.101 [0.018 – 0.201]		0.086 [-0.011 – 0.205]		0.103 [0.009 – 0.215]
% of Mediated		0.334 [0.166 – 1.268]		0.258 [0.122 – 1.123]		-0.098 [-0.727 – 0.516]		-0.010 [0.056 - 0.004]
Sensitivity Parameter(p)		-0.4		-0.4		-0.3		-0.2

Standard errors are in parentheses and clustered by regions. 95% confidence intervals in square brackets, estimated based on nonparametric bootstrap with 1000 resamples. Mediation equations are estimated with OLS, and outcome equations are estimated with a logit. p\* < 0.10, p\*\* < 0.05, p\*\*\* < 0.01.

**A8. List of Variables**

We provide the definition of all variables in our dataset. All individual level variables are from Wave 8 of the European Social Survey (ESS). All sources of the regional level variables are described in A8.2.

**A8.1. Individual Level Variables**

- **age:** Age of respondents.
- **edu1-edu7:** Dummy variables indicating the level of education based on ES - ISCED classification.
- **egocentric:** Ordinal variable (1–4) asking if each respondent is satisfied with her own economic status. 1 refers to being extremely dissatisfied with it, 4 refers to being extremely satisfied with it.
- **female:** Dummy variable for gender. 1 equals female.
- **imm bgeco:** Ordinal variable (0–10) asking if the immigrant inflow has a positive or negative effect on the national economy. 0 indicates that immigrants are extremely bad for the national economy. 10 indicates that immigrants are extremely good for national economy.
- **imm cult:** Ordinal variable (0–10) asking if the country's cultural life has been undermined or enriched by immigrant inflow. 0 indicates that cultural life is undermined by immigrants and 10 indicates that cultural life is enriched by immigrants.
- **socio:** Ordinal variable (0–10) asking how satisfied respondents are with the present state of the economy in the country. 0 refers to respondents being extremely dissatisfied with the economy while 10 refers to respondents being very satisfied with the present economy.
- **unemployed:** Dummy variable for employment status. 1 is unemployed.

- **relig**: Ordinal variable (0–10) asking how religious respondents are. 0 refers to not at all religious, 10 refers to very religious.
- **union mem**: Dummy variable for labor union membership. 1 is union member.
- **vote right 2**: Dummy variable for voting for far right parties in each country. 1 indicates voting for the far right party.
- **hinctnta**: Ordinal variable (1-10) measuring net household income from all sources. 1 refers to the 1st decile and 10 refers to the 10th decile.

#### A8.2. Regional Level Variables

For Germany and the UK, respondent's residence is measured at the NUTS-1 level in the ESS, which cannot be disaggregated to the NUTS-2 level. Therefore, we use all regional variables at the NUTS-1 level for Germany and the UK, while we use all regional variables at the NUTS-2 level for other countries.

- **ie1000**: Regional import shock per person.

Regional import exposure is estimated based on equation (1) in the manuscript. In order to construct the measure of the regional import shock, we need (1) the data on imports from China to each country by industry, (2) regional employment data by industry, (3) national employment data by industry.

##### (1) Imports from China:

The data on imports from China to each country is sourced from the Eurostat COMEXT ([link](#)). The Eurostat COMEXT data provides the value (in euros) of bilateral import inflow from China by product type. Product type is coded as the 5-digit code of Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) Rev. 3. Later, the 5-digit SITC codes are mapped onto the 2-digit NACE Rev.2 code. NACE Rev.2 refers to the classification of economic activities and products. This allows us to aggregate values of imports by product to values of imports by industry. We use correspondence tables between SITC.Rev.3 to NACE Rev.1 from the World Bank ([link](#)) and correspondence tables between NACE Rev.1 to NACE Rev.2 from Eurostat ([link](#)).

##### (2) Regional Employment data by industry:

The data on regional employment by industry is sourced from Eurostat ([link](#)). This data also includes total regional employment. Region is classified at the NUTS-2 level. For Germany and the UK, we aggregated regional employment data up to the NUTS-1 level. We use correspondence tables from ISIC Rev.4 to NACE Rev.2 ([link](#)) to match the data on regional employment by industry with the data on imports from China.

##### (3) National employment data by industry:

The data on national employment by industry is sourced from Eurostat ([link](#)).

- **net 1000**: Regional trade balance per person

Regional trade balance is estimated based on a similar procedure we used for import exposure equation (1) except that we substitute  $\Delta IMPChina_{c,j}$  with  $\Delta TradeBalance_{c,j}$ . (1) We measure the trade balance for each industry ( $j$ ) by subtracting the entire value of imports from the value of exports ( $TradeBalance_{j,t} = (export_j - import_{j,t})$ ) at election year( $t$ ) and the lagged year, respectively and estimate the difference of the trade balance between the election year and the lagged year ( $\Delta TradeBalance_{c,j}$ ). The data on import and export by industry is sourced from the Eurostat COMEXT ([link](#)).

- **for born diff**: Regional inflow of immigrants

We calculate the change of the ratio of immigrants in the population of each region (NUTS-2 level). The data on regional inflow of immigrants is sourced from Census data provided in Eurostat ([link](#)). Eurostat provides the census data in 2001 and 2011.

- **reg unemp rate lag 1**: Regional unemployment rate.

We use the lagged regional unemployment rate from the election year. Regional unemployment data is sourced from Eurostat ([link](#)).

- **reg growth rate**: Regional economic growth rate.

Regional growth rate data is sourced from Eurostat ([link](#)). Eurostat provides the regional growth rate based on regional GDP per capita.

- **coun region**: NUTS-2 region indicator.

For Germany and the UK, the NUTS-1 region indicator was used.

- **n**: Dummy variable for the NUTS-1 region, used for aggregated region (NUTS-1) fixed effect.
- **cntry**: Country where respondent lives.
- **c**: Dummy variable for each country, used for fixed effect.

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