

Strengthening Mainstream Consensus? The Effect of Radical Right Populist Parties on the Defense Policies of Left Parties*

Miku Matsunaga[†] & Thomas Winzen[‡]

Accepted at Political Science Research and Methods

Abstract

We study how the electoral success of radical right populist parties (RRPPs) affects mainstream parties' defense policy positions. The success of RRPPs threatens the credibility of established left-wing parties with coalition and international partners due to substantive overlap between their and RRPPs' defense-skeptical position. We argue that left parties adopt more assertive defense positions to distinguish themselves from RRPPs, thus increasing mainstream consensus on defense policy. Examining 27 European countries between the end of the Cold War and Russia's occupation of Crimea (1990-2013), we test this argument based on a regression discontinuity design around electoral thresholds for obtaining parliamentary seats. We find that, in response to RRPP success, left parties adopt more assertive defense policy positions, whereas center-right parties stand their ground. This study yields evidence for an adversarial response to the radical right, often thought to have lost out to accommodation, and for mechanisms other than electoral incentives, in a highly consequential domain.

Keywords: Radical Right Populist Parties, Defense Policy, Europe, RDD

*We are grateful to the PSRM editors, three anonymous reviewers for insightful comments and Ben Burnley for helping us to finalize the replication material. We also thank participants of the Populism Seminar and Yuliy Sannikov.

[†]Department of Politics, International Relations and Philosophy, Royal Holloway University of London

[‡]Department of Social Sciences, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf

Introduction

The defense policy of radical right populist parties (RRPPs) has attracted significant attention. In the context of the Russian war in Ukraine, RRPPs have advocated more ambiguous and pro-Russian position than established or mainstream parties, defined as parties that have held parliamentary seats for longer than RRPPs. Important RRPPs have long been close to Russian policy (Snegovaya, 2022; Heinisch and Hofmann, 2023). Most hold distinct defense policy positions more generally. In line with their ideological orientation, they are cautious with respect to military engagements abroad and multilateral obligations within the European Union and NATO (Verbeek and Zaslove, 2015; Balfour et al., 2016; Henke and Maher, 2021; Chrysogelos, 2021; Ishiyama, Pace and Stewart, 2018).

We examine whether the electoral success of RRPPs influences the defense policy positions of established parties. We suggest that the positions of RRPPs overlap sufficiently with military-skeptical stances of left parties to raise concerns. Given the low electoral salience of defense policy, this proximity is electorally unproblematic. Yet, it is a problem for the reputation of left parties as coalition parties and international partners. Illustrating this logic, the head of the German parliament's defense committee, a leading Liberal party member, harshly criticized the head of the Social Democrat parliamentary group for sharing defense positions with the radical right AfD that deviate from the country's foreign policy commitments. The Social Democrats aggressively rejected any similarity between their and the radical right's stance.¹ Importantly, the comparison with the AfD triggered the strong reactions, highlighting not only the Social Democrats' effort to avoid any perception of similarity, but also a dynamic we might not have observed absent of a parliamentary presence of the radical right. We suspect that this example illustrates a more general mechanism. We thus argue that the electoral success of RRPPs might encourage left parties to adopt more assertive defense positions to safeguard their reputation, whereas mainstream right parties are likely to stand their ground. The overall result is increased mainstream consensus on defense policy.

While most literature argues that mainstream parties adopt an accommodation strategy towards the radical right for electoral reasons, we highlight an adversarial strategy and non-

¹see <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/ukraine-ampel-streit-100.html> (accessed 26 March 2024) and <https://www.handelsblatt.com/dpa/spd-politikerin-mast-wirft-strack-zimmermann-boesartigkeit-vor/29716420.html> (accessed 26 March 2024).

electoral mechanisms. However, we do not so much dispute existing findings than stress that adaptation strategies and mechanisms vary across policy domains. Existing literature focuses on the electorally salient core issues of RRPPs, especially immigration, and stresses electoral mechanisms (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020; Krause and Giebler, 2020; Meijers, 2017; Merrill and Grofman, 2019; Schumacher and van Kersbergen, 2016; Rydgren, 2005). These works suggest that, for fear of losing votes to RRPPs, mainstream parties adopt an accommodation strategies by moving closer to radical right stances (Meguid, 2005). Yet, in the defense domain, electoral incentives are likely to be secondary compared to reputation concerns. In this context, we expect the closest mainstream parties, left parties, to move away from RRPPs, thus adopting an adversarial strategy.

Empirically, we focus on parties' positions on defense policy. In Europe, defense mainly refers to support for European and international military collaboration such as NATO and peacekeeping missions (Deighton, 2002; Balfour et al., 2016; Chryssogelos, 2021; Ishiyama, Pace and Stewart, 2018). We draw on a cross-national regression discontinuity design (RDD). Cross-national data are important for explaining RRPP effects so as to go beyond geographic and situational political opportunities. Hence we created quasi-panel data combining twenty seven European democracies that include Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland. European countries have experienced significant successes of RRPPs, albeit to varying degrees and at different times. Following recent work (e.g. Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020; Valentim, 2021), we build an RDD around electoral thresholds for obtaining parliamentary seats. Our focus is on proportional systems, in which legal or effective thresholds can be found.

Our main contribution is to provide cross-national evidence for the adversarial strategy, often thought to have lost out to accommodation, and mechanisms other than electoral incentives in a highly consequential policy domain. In contrast, we find no evidence for the accommodation strategy in defense policy, neither on the left nor on the right. As discussed in the conclusion, while further, electorally less salient domains need to be studied, this finding suggests limits as to the policy scope of the impact of the radical right on party policy in Europe. It indicates

reluctance of party leaders to accommodate radical right policy absent of (perceived) electoral pressure. And it raises broader questions as to whether the adversarial strategy could gradually become more relevant even in electorally salient domains.

Our study also contributes to understanding the party politics of the defense domain. We agree with recent work that parties play an important role in defense policy (e.g., [Wagner et al., 2018](#)). In this respect, the literature raises concern as to the detrimental impact of radical right governments on EU-level defense policy ([Orenstein and Kelemen, 2017](#)). Moreover, since work on other policy domains suggests that mainstream parties adopt accommodation strategies, RRPPs could have been expected to have a detrimental indirect effect by jeopardizing the assertiveness on defense of mainstream parties. Especially left parties, given difficult internal politics around defense issues, could have been considered at risk. Our results instead suggest that such concerns might be overstated and that the success of RRPPs so far reinforces rather than undermines the mainstream's relatively united defense policy stance.

Mainstream parties and RRPPs

The current debate focuses on how established parties adapt to the core issues of RRPPs. It conceptualizes RRPPs as challenger parties that benefit from opposition to cultural, political, and economic openness of the national community, the liberalization of societal values, and the perceived socio-economic marginalization of certain groups, with immigration becoming their most important issue ([de Vries and Hobolt, 2020](#); [Kriesi et al., 2006](#); [Norris and Inglehart, 2019](#); [Gidron and Hall, 2020](#)). RRPPs are crucial drivers of the salience of immigration, globalization, and European integration issues ([Hooghe and Marks, 2009](#); [Kriesi et al., 2006](#); [Green-Pedersen and Otje, 2019](#)). In their core domains, they trigger policy shifts by the other parties ([Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020](#); [Krause and Giebler, 2020](#); [Meijers, 2017](#); [Merrill and Grofman, 2019](#); [Schumacher and van Kersbergen, 2016](#); [Rydgren, 2005](#)).

The literature explains the success of RRPPs with their ability to politicize "wedge issues" ([de Vries and Hobolt, 2020](#); [Hobolt and de Vries, 2015](#); [Kriesi et al., 2006](#)). Wedge issues are ill-aligned with existing dimensions of competition and can divide the platform of other parties ([van de Wardt, de Vries and Hobolt, 2014](#), p. 987). By politicizing these issues, RRPPs pressure mainstream parties to define a reaction and, potentially, shift their positions ([Abou-Chadi and](#)

Krause, 2020; Meijers, 2017; Merrill and Grofman, 2019; Schumacher and van Kersbergen, 2016). Specifically, RRPPs seek to target mainstream voters that doubt the party leadership's stance, expose divides within governing coalitions, and highlight conflict within mainstream parties (van de Wardt, de Vries and Hobolt, 2014).

Most studies stress an electoral mechanism. Abou-Chadi and Krause (2020, p.831) suggest that mainstream parties try to “keep the niche party from stealing their votes at the subsequent elections.” For Meijers (2017, p.415), they hope “to lure supporters of the challenger to their party by incorporating elements of the challenger’s policy.” In Meguid’s (2005) classification, this is the accommodation strategy, in which parties challenge the issue ownership and positional exclusivity of the challenger to win back voters. The main alternative, for which limited evidence exists so far, would be an *adversarial* strategy, in which parties distance themselves from the challenger. Meguid (2005) recommends adversity for "non-proximal" parties to aggravate the electoral competition between the challenger and the closest mainstream party.

Whereas most literature focuses on the electoral mechanism, we note that parties adopt positions, legislate, and govern in highly consequential yet less electorally salient domains as well. They might ignore RRPPs in these domains, Meguid’s dismissive strategy, but they might also respond due to non-electoral mechanisms. Some studies mention such mechanisms, including constraints on policy change arising from policy-seeking (Merrill and Grofman, 2019), the need to remain a coalition partner (van de Wardt, de Vries and Hobolt, 2014), or international commitments (Bardi, Bartolini and Trechsel, 2014). For example, in the European Parliament, which is one step removed from electoral politics, parties have upheld a (imperfect) *cordon sanitaire* to far-right parties, demanded sanction against far-right governments, and the European Peoples Party split with the Hungarian Fidesz party (Kantola and Miller, 2021; Kelemen, 2024; Meijers and van der Veer, 2019), all despite radical right electoral gains. What the aforementioned mechanisms imply for party strategy more generally remains unclear, however.

Defense is a paradigmatic case of a highly consequential yet low salience domain. In data on the salience for 15 policy areas based on the comparative manifesto project (Gunderson, 2023), “peace” ranked only as the 9th priority on average (SD: 2.9, median: 10) considering all parties and elections in the countries we study since 2000. Peace ranked among the top 3 priorities

in only 26 of 1,145 party-election observations. The numbers differ little for successful parties (e.g., with more than 5 percent of the vote). There are certainly moments in which defense gains high salience, but these focus on exceptional decisions on war, peace, and military missions, and even then the electoral relevance is subject to debate (Aldrich et al., 2006; Clements, 2013).

Defense policy exemplifies domains in which constraints besides electoral politics are crucial. The point is not, as recent work highlights (Wagner et al., 2018), that "politics stops at the water's edge". Yet, European countries are deeply embedded in decades-old multilateral structures, which rely heavily on the credibility of commitments, so that parties' credibility as coalition and international partners could suffer if they appear close to challengers with deviant policy stances. For example, exploring why government and opposition parties kept supporting involvement in Afghanistan, Kreps (2010) highlights party leaders' awareness of the reputation costs and defense implications of deviating from the alliance consensus. This, alongside limited electoral salience, raises the question as to whether arguments based on the electoral mechanism apply in defense policy.

Reacting to the defense policy positions of RRPPs

A pre-condition for RRPP influence on the positions of mainstream parties is that they adopt distinct positions. The literature indicates strongly that this condition is met. Regarding mainstream responses, we stress coalition-reputation concerns and international commitments. Emphasizing these rather than electoral motivations leads us to expect that left parties will adopt an adversarial strategy, in line with demands from potential coalition partners and international commitments.

RRPPs hold distinct and controversial positions in defense policy. Being characterized by authoritarianism, nativism, and populism (Mudde, 2013; Caramani, 2017; Stanley, 2008), and situated at the authoritarian end of the GAL-TAN dimension, they value law and order and security services, including the military (Biard, 2019; Henke and Maher, 2021). They consider the role of the security services as domestic, however. Nativism – RRPPs' focus on 'the people' – suggests a focus on domestic concerns. Border protection agencies, countering the perceived threat of immigration, and territorial defense assume greater importance than foreign engagements (Balfour et al., 2016; Henke and Maher, 2021; Özdamar and Ceydilek,

2020). Moreover, populism, and its scepticism of institutional constraints, collides with the multilateral nature of European defense policy (Falkner and Plattner, 2020; Henke and Maher, 2021; Chrysogelos, 2021).

The defense policy of many, but not all (Wondreys, 2023), RRPPs is further characterized by their relationship with Russia and ambiguous stance towards transatlantic relations. Snegovaya (2022, p.410) highlights an "intellectual and ideological fascination among many European radical right populist parties with Putin's Russia." Russia, in turn, has cultivated "trojan horses" in Europe's foreign policy among parties and governments on the radical right (Orenstein and Kelemen, 2017). RRPPs sympathize with Russia and reduce support for the military if Russia is a potential target (Ishiyama, Pace and Stewart, 2018). They often oppose the dominant role of the US at the global level and in NATO (Chrysogelos, 2021).

RRPPs' association with Russia has triggered strong criticism. The Italian Northern League leader Salvini saw his credibility questioned due to his stance towards Russia.² The former leader of the UK Independence Party, Nigel Farage, has oscillated between praise for the Russian president Putin and rejection of the conditions in Russia, and has been challenged strongly by established parties.³ The German AfD has hesitated to blame Russia for the war in Ukraine and faced harsh criticism.⁴ RRPPs' sympathies towards the Russian regime are evident in their reactions to current events⁵, contrasting sharply with established parties that have reinforced their defense stances, especially some historically cautious parties on the left.

How do established parties respond to RRPPs? Center-right parties are in a comfortable position. They have long-standing positions on defense (Wagner et al., 2018), are most supportive of the use of force in European comparison (Haesebrouck and Mello, 2020), and endorse Europe's multilateral defense commitments. Indeed, they are *not* the "proximal competitor" (Meguid, 2005), but far away from RRPPs' positions and likely to oppose these parties' stances strongly. Moving towards RRPPs in defense would require center-right parties to forgo long-

²see <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/changing-tune-italys-salvini-pledges-help-refugees-ukraine-2022-03-08/> (accessed 11 March 2022)

³see <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/mar/31/nigel-farage-respect-vladimir-putin-more-kids-runs-britain> (accessed 11 March 2022)

⁴see <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afd-fraktion-ringt-um-distanzierung-zu-russlands-angriff-auf-die-ukraine-a-b58f437f-2af2-47f8-be84-764c76d6c683> (accessed 11 March 2022) and <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2022/03/afd-krieg-gegen-ukraine-russland.html> (accessed 11 March 2022)

⁵see <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2022/03/15/siding-with-the-underdog-explaining-the-populist-radical-rights-response-to-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/> (accessed 27 March 2022)

standing policy commitments without, given low electoral salience, expecting to gain votes. In fact, even if the defense domain was electorally salient, the best option of the center-right, according to Meguid, would be adversarial: to stand their ground so as to underline the difficult position of the left.

The situation of the left is more difficult. Left parties, are more critical of the military, more cautious on defense, and question military engagements abroad (Wagner et al., 2018). A study of expert surveys and party manifestos from 2010-2014 indicates that center-left parties held similar views on peace and security missions as RRPPs, with far-left parties being moderately more sceptical (Haesebrouck and Mello, 2020, p. 575). If party families are compared, socialist parties differ more from RRPPs, albeit with exceptions (Haesebrouck and Mello, 2020, p. 577). Additionally, far-left parties and factions within center-left parties harbor sympathies towards Russia (e.g., Snegovaya, 2022). This is not to deny that, following long-term moderation, center-left parties now hold more moderate positions than before the 1990s. Yet, they frequently retain influential factions with cautious views, as the example of the German Social Democrats in the introduction illustrates. This renders them vulnerable to criticism when RRPPs enter parliament and become a relevant comparison.

We suggest that this policy proximity motivates left parties to move away from RRPPs by adopting more assertive positions. Defense policy might not be electorally decisive, but proximity to RRPPs calls into question parties' and leaders' credibility as coalition and international partners. This challenge comes to the fore if RRPPs succeed electorally and thus draw attention to similarities with other parties. As government parties have to work with defense commitments within NATO and the EU (Wagner et al., 2018, p. 542), the success of RRPPs could draw attention to questions as to whether left parties are committed to these policies and willing to act accordingly in key decisions. And it could raise questions about their own relationship with Russia, given RRPPs' alleged proximity to Russia (e.g., Snegovaya, 2022). Center-right parties as well as party elites from the European party family, within which party elites regularly meet to debate policy (Senninger, Bischof and Ezrow, 2022), can be expected to challenge left parties for proximity to the radical right. Faced with these challenges, left party leaders are likely to distance themselves and their parties from RRPPs' defense policy stances.

We have not distinguished party families on the left but suggest that the argument extends to radical left parties that seek government participation. Which parties are office-seeking is hard to identify and some radical left parties remain shut out of coalition politics, as in Germany (Wagner, Wurthmann and Thomeczek, 2023). However, many have moderated their demands (Fagerholm, 2017), have participated in governments (Bale and Dunphy, 2011; McDonnell and Newell, 2011), and have voters who endorse institutional participation and gradual reform (Krauss and Wagner, 2023). Interviews with Northern European radical left leaders show readiness to join governments and to demonstrate “one’s cooperativeness, one’s responsibility, one’s competence, one’s continuing *koalitionsfähigkeit*” (Bale and Dunphy, 2011, p. 280). In Portugal the radical left supported the government and reliably voted for government policy in exchange for policy gains (Giorgi and Cancela, 2021). Moreover, radical left parties likely find sharing policy stances with the radical right troubling in principle. We thus suspect that, in defense policy, many radical left parties will react similarly to RRPPs as center-left parties.

Our argument builds on the assumption of low electoral salience, but might also hold if the electoral salience of defense increased. Even then, left parties might still opt for the adversarial strategy. First, the available evidence increasingly challenges the electoral benefit of accommodation, at least for left parties (Abou-Chadi and Wagner, 2020), which might gradually affect the choices of party strategists. Second, many left parties are intrinsically sympathetic towards certain multilateral defense commitments (e.g., policies with a UN Security Council mandate, within European Union structures, or focused on human security) (Wagner et al., 2018, p. 541). Third, center-left parties in government have proven willing to vote for military engagements, indicating willingness to uphold commitments and governing responsibilities even in difficult situations (Haesebrouck and Mello, 2020, p. 578-582).

In sum, we expect that the success of RRPPs creates pressure to change positions for left parties that face a threat to their credibility as coalition and international partners. That center-right parties, as the non-proximal actors, are likely to stand their ground and criticize defense policy proximity between left and radical right populist parties adds pressure. Adopting an adversarial strategy, left party leaders are thus likely to shift positions away from RRPPs and towards more assertive defense policies. We assume, in line with the evidence, that electoral salience is low in defense and electoral considerations secondary. Yet, even under salience, the

characteristics of this domain would be conducive to an adversarial strategy. The overall result of the positioning that we envisage is greater mainstream consensus in defense policy.

Research Strategy

We examine the argument based on the fuzzy Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD). The RDD is a quasi-experimental method that has been widely used in the social sciences since [Thistlewaite and Campbell \(1960\)](#) first introduced it (e.g., [Caughey and Sekhon, 2011](#); [Lee and Lemieux, 2010](#)). A key idea behind RDD is that a series of treatment observations that exceed an assigned threshold would have substantively different effects from observations in a control group. In this paper, we consider the entrance into the national parliament as the threshold ([Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020](#); [Valentim, 2021](#); [Bischof and Wagner, 2019](#); [Dinas, Riera and Roussias, 2015](#)). As [Abou-Chadi and Krause \(2020\)](#) note, participation in the national parliament means that parties receive attention, participate in debates, committees, and decisions, and become difficult to ignore for political elites. Parliamentary representation also demonstrates to existing parties that RRPPs are serious competitors.

We make use of a standard fuzzy RD design that introduces an IV in addition to the treatment status ([Valentim, 2021](#); [Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020](#); [Imbens and Kalyanaraman, 2012](#); [Dinas, Riera and Roussias, 2015](#)). Since we cannot exclude entirely that, for various reasons, parties enter the parliament even if they are below the threshold, the fuzzy design is more appropriate than the standard sharp RDD because if the estimation considers samples far from the cutoff point, it is more likely to rely on extrapolation. To avoid this, the non-parametric RDD looks at observations around the cutoff point; hence potential bias caused by outliers is minimized. Since the change of policy positions is presumably clearer around the cutoff point, we primarily calculated optimal bandwidths by the Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik (CCT) method ([Calonico, Cattaneo and Titiunik, 2014](#)). While the non-parametric fuzzy RD design offers better convergence and bias properties, we also perform parametric fuzzy RD estimation to ascertain that the results do not rely on a particular approach. The method is also a suitable strategy since we have a relatively large sample ($N = 1097$). Following [Valentim, Núñez and Dinas \(2021\)](#), we first predict a treatment status (D).

$$D_i = \alpha + \beta(X_i - c) + \delta Z_i + \epsilon_i$$

Where D_i is a treatment status of each country (i). $D_i = 1$ if subject i received treatment and $D_i = 0$ otherwise. Here, $D_i = 1(X_i \geq c)$ and Z_i is a dummy variable. c is a cutoff point. In the first stage, δ should not be 0 and thus, a value over the threshold has non-zero change in the probability of receiving the treatment (Valentim, Núñez and Dinas, 2021).

$$Y_i = \alpha + \tau \hat{D} + \beta_1(x - c) + \epsilon_i$$

In the second stage, Y_i in the left-hand side of the equation stands for a potential shift in defense policy of established parties. Because our goal is to look at the shifts of party positions in response to RRPP success, we drop RRPPs from the analysis. On the right-hand side of the equation, x is a running variable that denotes a percentage of the vote given to RRPPs. In our model, x meets assumptions of continuity and as-if randomness. The range of x is expressed as $c - h \leq x \leq c + h$, where c is a cutoff and h is an optimal bandwidth. D denotes a binary treatment status. We assigned zero to D when the vote given to RRPPs is below the electoral threshold, $x \leq c$. Whereas when RRPP votes exceed the electoral threshold ($x \geq c$), we gave one. Here, the cutoff point equals zero because it represents a borderline whether an RRPP joins in the national assembly or not. The running variable is lagged for one election term since we are interested in whether the establishment of RRPPs in parliament in a given election affects established parties' subsequent national defense policy stances. α represents an intercept, and ϵ is an error term. The equation contains country fixed effect (i) to reduce sample variance among different countries. As discussed by Valentim, Núñez and Dinas (2021), the assumption of exclusion that "the only way in which crossing the threshold can affect the outcome is via the change in the probability of treatment status" is applied to the fuzzy RD that employs IV approach.

Our parametric fuzzy RD models set the polynomial order as one and the non-parametric fuzzy RD models set the polynomial order as two, since high-order polynomials causes noise

(Gelman and Imbens, 2019). We scrutinize the robustness of the model with different polynomial orders and covariates to control for East and West Europe, participation in militarized conflict, and parties' participation in a cabinet.⁶

The RD design relies on two critical assumptions: continuity and as-if-randomization (no manipulation) of the running variable. We performed sorting test to check the continuity assumption of the running variable. The T value is -1.125 and it is not statistically significant ($P > 0.260$). It shows that observations of the running variables do not have discontinuity around the cut-off point. The second assumption is "no-manipulation-with-precision" where the running variable should be randomized around the cutoff point. The as-if random assumption is violated if a running variable is arbitrarily manipulated (McCrary, 2008). In this regard, Abou-Chadi and Krause (2020) stress that, while exerting control over the electoral results of RRPPs is possible under electoral fraud and through manipulation of the legal electoral threshold, these techniques are unavailable to political actors in consolidated European democracies. Moreover, Valentim (2021, p.14) points out: "Electoral thresholds vary from country to country and RRPPs cannot self-select into countries with lower electoral thresholds, nor can they manipulate their vote share to be just below or just above the threshold." Thus, importantly, while the fuzzy nature of the electoral threshold makes it difficult to maintain continuity around the cut-off, it does not automatically mean that it fails to meet the assumption of RD design. Crespo (2020) notes that standard literature on the RD design overlooked 'administrative sorting' where administrative procedures which individuals cannot control or manipulate affect the running variables near the cut-off and confuses as-if-random assumption. In fact, electoral threshold and results cannot be manipulated in advanced democracies unless elections are rigged. Thus, while a part of density test does not ensure continuity and randomization of the running variable, we think that the continuity assumption also holds. Yet, to ensure further that the cutoff of the running variable is not caused by factors other than the treatment variable, we also estimated models with additional control variables and dropped observations without legal thresholds, respectively.

⁶We made use of dichotomous control variables. We assign one if a country belonged to Warsaw Pact Organization during the cold war, and zero otherwise. Participation in military intervention and parties' status on cabinet are also binary variables. Data of militarized conflict participation is retrieved from UCDP data and cabinet participation is from ParlGov.

Data

Our RD model consists of three critical elements: we employ established parties' policy shifts in defense policy as the outcome variable, votes given to RRPPs in general elections as a running variable, and the nationwide electoral threshold as a cutoff point.

We use the legal, nationwide electoral threshold as the cutoff point, but some European countries do not have a legal threshold in electoral law. When a legal electoral threshold was missing, we manually calculated it. Following a similar strategy as [Abou-Chadi and Krause \(2020\)](#), we calculated the electoral threshold based on [Taagepera \(2002\)](#):

$$T = \frac{75\%}{\left(\frac{S}{E} + 1\right) \times \sqrt{E}}$$

where T denotes the electoral threshold, S is the total number of obtained seats, and E is the number of electoral districts. [Taagepera \(2002, p.383-384\)](#) asserted that "most often the combined effect of electoral rules and other factors brings about a zone of nationwide vote shares where parties sometimes succeed and sometimes fail in gaining representation. Within this zone, an average threshold of representation can be defined where parties have a 50–50 chance of winning their first seat." We made use of *Democratic Electoral Systems Around the World, 1946-2011 (DES Version 2.0)* ([Golder and Bormann, 2013](#)) to obtain data of the number of electoral districts. Since DES only covers years up to 2011, we manually extended the data to 2013.

Electoral outcome data for the running variable, *Vote given to RRPPs*, was retrieved from MARPOR ([Volkens et al., 2020](#)). We identify RRPPs based on PopuList ([Rooduijn et al., 2019](#)). PopuList codes parties from 31 European countries as, amongst others, populist and far-right.⁷ The inclusion criteria are that parties have won more than a single seat or 2% votes in general elections since 1989 ([Rooduijn et al., 2019](#)).

Our core outcome variable is the party *position* on defense policy. We benefited from MARPOR ([Volkens et al., 2020](#)) to identify positions and salience. MARPOR has collected party

⁷Based on their data, our analysis includes 27 countries such as Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

manifestos from 424 parties and 172 elections between 1990 and 2013 to measure party policy stances. We do not include elections before 1990 because debates concerning defense issue have fundamentally changed since the fall of the Soviet Union. We also dropped observations after 2013 since Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014 changed the European security situation, and might thus have affected party positions on defense policy. To make sure that the result is isolated from this paradigmatic event, we focus on the period between 1990 and 2013. Drawing on this cross-national quasi-panel data, we created the defense *position* variable by subtracting Military Negative (Per105) from Military Positive (Per104).⁸ This approach follows [Ishiyama, Pace and Stewart \(2018, p.328\)](#), who elaborate that "smaller values indicate less importance in military preparedness and national defense, while higher values indicate a more militaristic party manifesto." In the appendix, we present further analyses of *saliency* in addition to positions. For these analyses, we measure *saliency* as the overall space parties devote to defense in their manifestos by taking the *sum* of Per104 and Per105 (see also [Gunderson, 2023](#)). The appendix also probes results for a separate measure, which captures a mix of saliency and positions, based on the Chapel Hill expert survey (CHES), which is unfortunately only available for a few time points.

Furthermore, we conduct some analyses with additional outcome variables: the saliency that parties attribute to Russia and the United States, important actors in Europe's security environment towards which RRPPs have a complicated stance. These variables are significant in light of current debates but whether they prove relevant in the period prior to the Russian occupation of Crimea is unclear. We again rely on MARPOR data. Our *Russia Saliency* variable is the *sum* of "Russia/USSR/CIS: Positive (Per1011) (favorable mention to Russia and CIS countries)" and "Russia/USSR/CIS: Negative (Per1021) (negative mention to Russia and CIS countries)". The variable, *US Saliency* sums "Western States: Negative (Per1022)" and "Western States: Positive (Per1012)". Per1012 and Per1022 measure favorable and unfavorable mentions of Western states in party manifestos. This measure can be expected to correlate with mentions of the US, but it is less precise than *Russia Saliency*, which only refers to Russia and

⁸The corresponding MARPOR items are "The importance of external security and defense. May include statements concerning: The need to maintain or increase military expenditure; The need to secure adequate manpower in the military; The need to modernise armed forces and improve military strength; The need for rearmament and self-defense; The need to keep military treaty obligations. (Per 104)" and "Negative references to the military or use of military power to solve conflicts. References to the 'evils of war'. May include references to: Decreasing military expenditures; Disarmament; Reduced or abolished conscription."

closely affiliated countries. A measurement that exclusively focuses on the US is not available in MARPOR.

Results

We start with an analysis of the effect of RRPPs on the defense position of all established parties and then distinguish left and right parties in subsequent analyses. Table 1 presents models with a running variable lagged for one election term. We transformed the outcome variable into a logarithm, as recommended in the literature (Lowe et al., 2011). We focus on fuzzy regression discontinuity design, since the electoral threshold is not sharply defined in some countries (Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020; Valentim, 2021). For that reason, we employ fuzzy non-parametric and parametric estimates.

Turning to the results, the local average treatment effect (LATE) on the main outcome variable, conventional estimates of *position of national defense policy* are 0.465 ($p < 0.01$) in the fuzzy non-parametric RD model with country fixed effects and 0.693 ($p < 0.01$) without country fixed effect. The conventional RD estimate of the parametric model is 0.439 ($p < 0.01$). As the outcome is log-transformed, for a unit increase in RRPP votes, established parties' position of national defense policy increases by approximately 55.1% to 104%. The results kept a similar direction and significance level after we added several covariates including a East Europe dummy variable, a participation of international military intervention, and RRPPs' participation to government. We also tested the results by focusing on the legal threshold only. A7 in the appendix shows the similar direction and significance level. However, while the parametric RDDs with and without country fixed effects consistently maintain statistical significance, the non-parametric model without country fixed effects loses significance. The analyses constitute evidence that established parties adopt a more assertive defense position in response to RRPP entry into the parliament and the effect *within* countries is robust.

Figure 1 visualizes the non-parametric RD models ($polynomial = 2$) that estimate the local average effects on the position on national defense policy. The x-axis shows the difference between RRPP vote and the electoral threshold, the y-axis the position on defense policy. Dots are bin means. In substantive terms, the gap at the threshold of ca. 0.438 (in the share of positive minus the share of negative manifesto sentences) is a moderate but non-trivial effect

Table 1: Position of National Defense Policy: Fuzzy Regression Discontinuity

	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (Conventional)	0.465*** (0.148)	0.693*** (0.238)	0.439*** (0.094)	0.439*** (0.094)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	0.481*** (0.148)	0.713*** (0.238)	-	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	0.481*** (0.161)	0.713*** (0.261)	-	-
N	239	239	835	835
BW est. (h)	2.051	2.051	Global	Global
BW bias (b)	3.763	3.763	-	-
Country FE	✓		✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

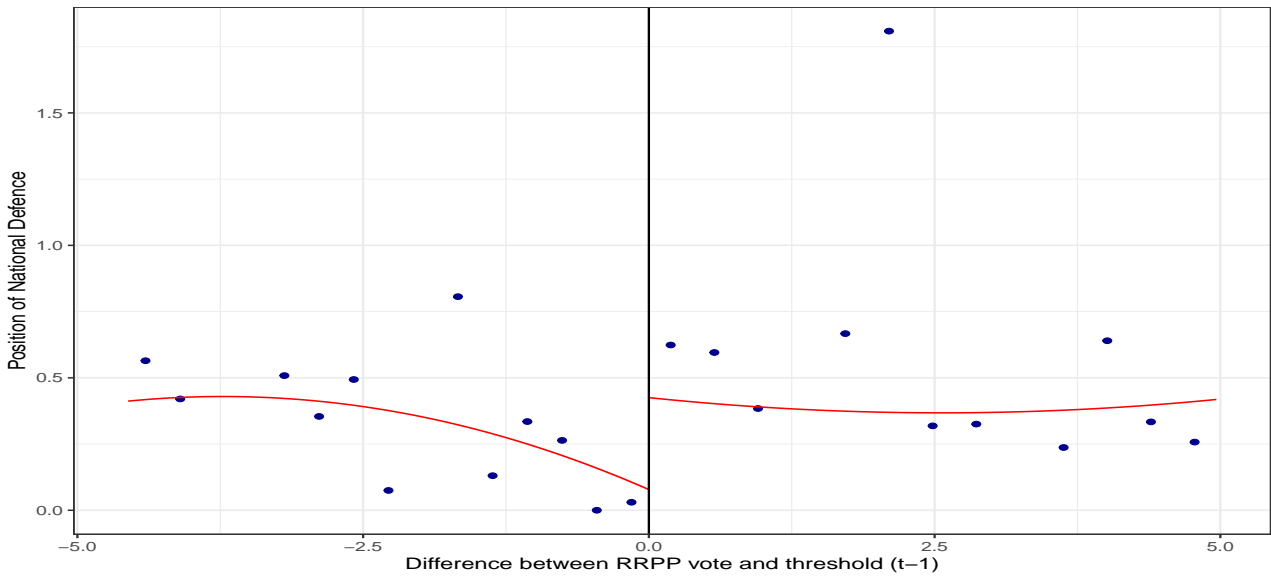
Note: Observational period is between 1990 and 2013 before Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014. We dropped observations after Russia's occupation of Crimea because the incident substantively changed European security framework. Position of national defense policy is calculated with $Per_{104} - Per_{105}$. A running variable is lagged for an election term. Parametric RD is calculated with R package "rddtools" and Non-parametric RD is calculated with "rdrobust" package. Bandwidths are calculated by CCT method. Polynomial order is 2 in non-parametric models and 1 in parametric models.

given the overall range of this variable from ca. 4.423 to 2.743 and keeping in mind the wide range of issues covered in party manifestos.

The results presented above have parties' defense positions as dependent variable. An alternative is to examine the change of a party's defense position from the previous election (for this approach, see, e.g., [Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020](#)). Do we see changes if RRPPs passed the electoral threshold? We re-ran the analysis by making use of the change in defense positions as the dependent variable and checked model robustness with various bandwidths. Table A3 in the appendix is in line with the claim that parties change towards more assertive positions in response to the electoral success of RRPPs. A corresponding parametric fuzzy RD estimate is 0.319 ($p < 0.05$) and non-parametric conventional RD estimate is 0.954 ($p < 0.01$) when we apply CCT optimal bandwidth and lagged the running variable for an election term.

We also run a fuzzy regression discontinuity design to inspect the salience of Russia and the United States (See Table A2 in the appendix). However, we do not see any consistent change in our observational period. Figure A1 in the appendix plots the RD analyses on Russia salience and US salience. As noted, it is possible that between the end of the Cold War and Russia's occupation of Crimea, these variables lacked the relevance they seem to have in

Figure 1: Radical Right Populist Parties and Shift of Defense Position



Note: Vote for RRPPs are lagged for one election term. Data of defense position is calculated as $\text{Per } 104 - \text{Per } 105$. Position of national defense is log.

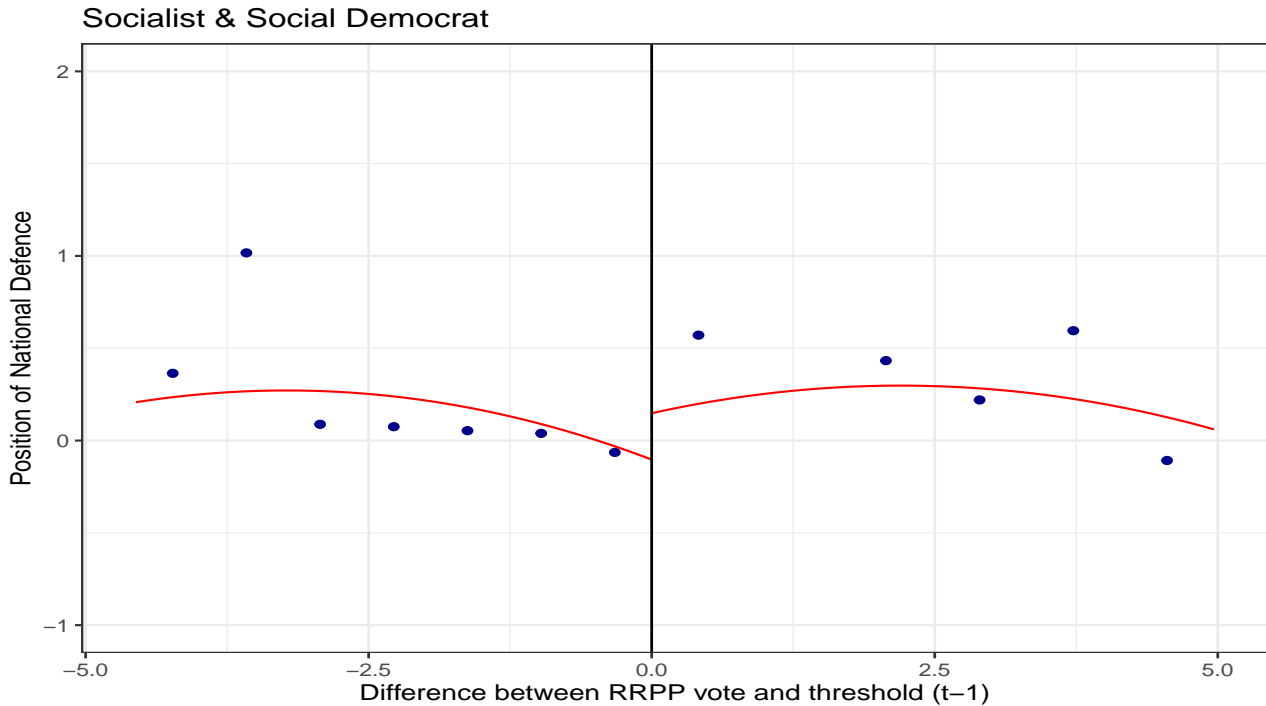
current debates.⁹ We conducted further analyses of these two variables using CHES data (see the appendix).

We checked the robustness of our main findings further with a series of alternative model specifications, such as RDD models with different polynomial order as suggested by Pei et al. (2021) (Table A5 in the appendix) and placebo test (Table A6 in the appendix). Finally, we extended data and tested with different periods. Table A9 in the appendix covers a period between between 1990 and 2021. Additionally, we added covariates such as an East European dummy, interstate war participation, and a government (cabinet) participation dummy (Table A4 in the appendix). All of the results aligned with our main finding that established parties shifted their defense policy by raising assertiveness. Yet, the estimates and significance of the results for defense policy salience are not fully consistent.

In sum, we find evidence that established parties adopt more assertive defense policy positions in response to RRPPs securing parliamentary seats. We also assessed whether established parties might raise the salience of defense policy and key security actors (see Table A8). In this respect, the findings are ambiguous. They do not suggest a significant effect on overall policy salience or the salience of key actors (anecdotal evidence from recent years notwithstanding).

⁹We observe that some parties, mainly in Eastern Europe (e.g., *Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania*, *Civic Democratic Party of Czech Republic*, and *Party of the Democratic Left of Slovak Republic*), draw attention more attention to these two countries than usual since the Russian occupation of Crimea began.

Figure 2: Defense Position of Mainstream Left Parties



It thus seems conservative to conclude that established parties tend to respond to RRPPs by shifting their defense *positions* but not necessarily or consistently by altering the programmatic *salience* of defense policy or paying particular attention to Russia and the USA.

Which parties react to RRPP success?

We found that established parties adopt more assertive defense policy positions in response to RRPP entry into parliament. Which parties drive this effect? We argued that left parties have more reason to respond to RRPPs than right parties. To test this idea, we divide the party families in the Manifesto Project into left and right after having dropped missing values: “Socialist or other left parties (N=133)” and “Social democratic parties (N=190)” are coded as left-wing parties. The mainstream right-wing party family includes “Christian democratic parties (N=167)” and “Conservative parties (N=102)”. Since “Liberal parties (N=173)” can be both mainstream left and right, we do not observe them. As a party family, liberal parties oscillate between center-right and center-left positions and do not fit the left category perfectly. In light of our argument, one could have expected the green parties to respond as well but we cannot test them separately because of small observations. Note that our analysis includes only

Table 2: Mainstream Left Parties' Shift in Defence Policy Position

	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (conventional)	1.005*** (0.193)	1.057** (0.413)	0.468** (0.183)	0.468*** (0.159)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	0.923*** (0.193)	1.093*** (0.413)	-	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	0.923*** (0.258)	1.093** (0.469)	-	-
N	67	67	231	231
BW est. (h)	2.233	2.233	Global	Global
BW bias (b)	3.899	3.899	-	-
Country FE	✓		✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Note: Left-block parties include Socialist and Social Democratic Parties. Since Liberal parties are often classified as right-block party category, we dropped these parties from our observations. Green parties are also excluded since they are niche parties. Optimal bandwidth is calculated by CCT method.

few observations on disaggregated party families, rendering more disaggregated tests difficult in practice. Finally, since the goal is to see the response to the radical right, we exclude RRPPs themselves.

We ran further fuzzy RD models. Figure 2 visualizes the results for mainstream left-wing (Socialist & Social Democrat) parties. Table 2 and Table 3 show that estimates of left-wing but not right-wing parties are statistically significant for national defense position. In the parametric model, the effects are about 0.5 ($p < 0.01$). While in non-parametric models, the effect ranges from 0.923 to 1.093. All estimates are statistically significant. Compared to the estimates for *national defense position* presented in Table 1, the magnitude of the effects is relatively large. There is no effect for mainstream right parties.

In sum, the results suggest that parties on the mainstream left adopt an adversarial strategy by changing their defense positions in response to the electoral success of RRPPs. In contrast, while mainstream *right* parties have adopted accommodation strategies in core policies of the radical right agenda, there is no evidence that they change their defense positions. This finding is consistent with the dismissive as well as adversarial strategy. Considering that center-right parties already have assertive defense stances by European standards and might be prevented from reinforcing assertiveness further by a ceiling effect, standing their ground could be an adversarial attempt to increase the pressure that left parties face from coalition and international partners over proximity to RRPPs' defense positions.

Table 3: Mainstream Right Parties' Shifts in Defense Policy Position

	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (conventional)	0.603 (0.547)	0.547 (0.459)	0.050 (0.150)	0.050 (0.150)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	0.636 (0.547)	0.522 (0.459)	-	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	0.636 (0.589)	0.522 (0.503)	-	-
N	61	61	231	231
BW est. (h)	1.910	1.910	Global	Global
BW bias (b)	3.193	3.193	-	-
Country FE	✓		✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

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

Note: Right-block parties include Christian Democrat and Conservatives. Since Liberal parties are often classified as right-block party category, we dropped these parties from our observations.

Conclusion

This study examined how established parties react to RRPPs in defense policy. Our main contribution is to highlight the relevance of the adversarial strategy suggested by Meguid (2005). The literature frequently stresses that parties accommodate the positions of RRPPs under perceived electoral pressure. However, most studies focus on the electorally salient core domains of RRPPs (see e.g. Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020; Krause and Giebler, 2020; Rovny and Polk, 2020; Zhirkov, 2014; Norocel, 2016; Meijers, 2017; Merrill and Grofman, 2019; Rydgren, 2005). We highlight that, in a highly consequential but electorally less salient domain, another response prevails. Left parties, the proximal parties, follow an adversarial strategies and right parties maintain their already assertive positions. We find no signs of the accommodation strategy so far seen as the dominant mainstream response to successes of the radical right.

Our argument draws attention to the possibility that parties consider their reputation with coalition and international partners when responding to the radical right. This indicates that, at least absent of perceived electoral pressures, party leaders have reason to avoid proximity to RRPPs, reducing the range of policies that could be affected detrimentally by the electoral success of the radical right. Whether this result holds in policy domains other than defense remains to be tested. There are many consequential policy domains in which electoral salience is low. Yet, many of these domains lack the decade-old international commitments that characterise defense policy.

It is currently less likely that the results extend to the electorally most salient domains often studied in the literature. In these domains, the electoral considerations that have motivated the adoption of accommodation strategies are likely to outweigh other factors (Meguid, 2005; Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2020; Meijers, 2017). However, this picture could change. Growing evidence calls into question the electoral calculations of mainstream party strategists as to the electoral success of accommodation (for this debate, see, e.g., Abou-Chadi and Wagner, 2020; Spoon and Klüver, 2020). If this evidence takes hold among party actors, the relevance of other influences on party strategy, including the mechanisms suggested here, might grow.

Finally, our results are crucial for the defense domain in which radical right populist parties have been seen as a detrimental and divisive influence at the EU level (Orenstein and Kelemen, 2017). However, their domestic impact has remained unclear as they have, so far, rarely been in government. Moreover, most literature focuses on variation in defense positions across parties rather than on the impact of the radical right on mainstream parties (e.g., Wagner et al., 2018; Haesebrouck and Mello, 2020). Our results suggest that RRPPs fail to sow divisions among mainstream parties. The success of the radical right rather seems to foster mainstream unity.

We have focused on the effect of RRPP's on mainstream positions, but further research on the underlying mechanisms and consequences would be desirable. One might ask how left party leaders debate RRPP positions in defense policy within their parties and in the parliamentary arena. Another line of inquiry would be to examine more comprehensively how often left parties face the kind of criticism that the example from our introduction illustrates, and whether the adoption of more assertive defense positions in turn averts criticism and enhances reputation with other parties and international partners.

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Supplemental Material
**Strengthening mainstream consensus? The effect of
radical right parties on the defense policies of left parties**

Miku Matsunaga & Thomas Winzen

Contents

Contents	1
A Supplemental Figures & Tables (Main Analysis)	2
A.1 Descriptive Statistics	2
A.2 Saliency of Russia and the US Policy (1990-2013)	3
A.3 Change(Δ) of Defense Policy	4
A.4 RD Robustness check w/ Covariates	5
A.5 Analysis w/ Different Bandwidths	6
A.6 Different polynomial order	8
A.7 Placebo Test	8
A.8 Legal Threshold	9
A.9 Defense Saliency	10
A.10 RD Robustness check with different time period (1990-2021)	10
B Analysis with CHES Data	11
Bibliography	14

A Supplemental Figures & Tables (Main Analysis)

A.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table A1: Descriptive Statistics (MARPOR)

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
Year	1,097	2,000.791	7.254	1,990	2,013
Party	1,097	53,294.120	31,402.830	11,110	97,952
parfam (party family)	1,097	47.485	25.077	10	98
per104 (military positive)	1,097	1.039	1.601	0.000	14.525
per105 (military negative)	1,097	0.501	1.144	0.000	12.108
per1011 (us positive)	1,097	0.061	0.374	0.000	6.931
per1012 (us negative)	1,097	0.044	0.301	0.000	6.364
per1021 (russia positive)	1,097	0.025	0.223	0.000	3.955
per1022 (russia negative)	1,097	0.004	0.108	0.000	3.509
dif_ll (RRPP vote - threshold), t-1	947	3.283	9.185	-5.000	40.720
dif_fixed1 (RRPP vote - legal threshold) t-1	551	2.803	8.516	-5.000	31.350
military (defense position)	1,097	0.538	2.100	-12.108	14.525
military2 (defense salience)	1,097	1.541	1.824	0.000	14.525
russia (Russia salience)	1,097	0.086	0.450	0.000	6.931
us (US salience)	1,097	0.048	0.319	0.000	6.364
military_change (Δ defense position)	707	0.162	1.941	-14.525	10.599

Note: Defense position is the difference between per 104 and per 105. Defense salience is the sum of per 104 and per 105. US salience is the sum of per 1011 and per 1012 and Russia salience is the sum of per 1021 and per 1022.

A.2 Salience of Russia and the US Policy (1990-2013)

Figure A1: Salience of Foreign Powers

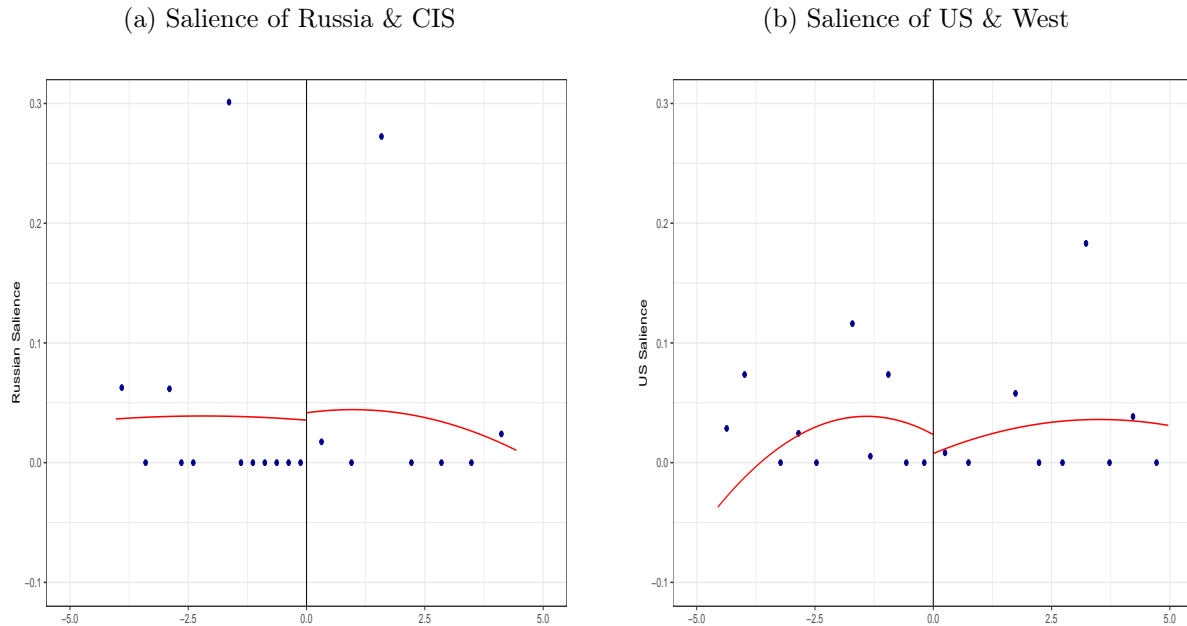


Table A2: Russia & US Salience: Fuzzy RDD

	Russia Salience		US salience	
	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (conventional)	-0.148*** (0.005)	0.033* (0.018)	-0.069*** (0.003)	0.011 (0.011)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	-0.150*** (0.005)	-	-0.073*** (0.003)	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	-0.150*** (0.005)	-	-0.073*** (0.004)	-
N	112	947	179	947
BW est. (h)	1.328	Global	1.383	Global
BW bias (b) 4.130	-	3.036	-	
Country FE	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

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

Note: A running variable is lagged for an election term. Parametric RD is calculated with R package "rddtools" and Non-parametric RD is calculated with "rdrobust" package. Bandwidths are calculated by CCT. Polynomial order of parametric RD is 1 and that of non-parametric RD is 2.

Figure A1 show that the electoral breakthrough of RRPPs do not have substantive effects

on other parties' salience of Russia and the US. Since the relationship between those countries are relatively stable after the end of the Cold War, the results are reasonable. Yet, as mentioned in the main text, the effect has changed after the Russia's occupation of Crimea in 2014. Given the speculation of connection between RRPPs and Kremlin, established parties tended to increase salience of US and Russian relationship since then.

A.3 Change(Δ) of Defense Policy

Table A3: Defense Policy Position (MARPOR): **First Difference**

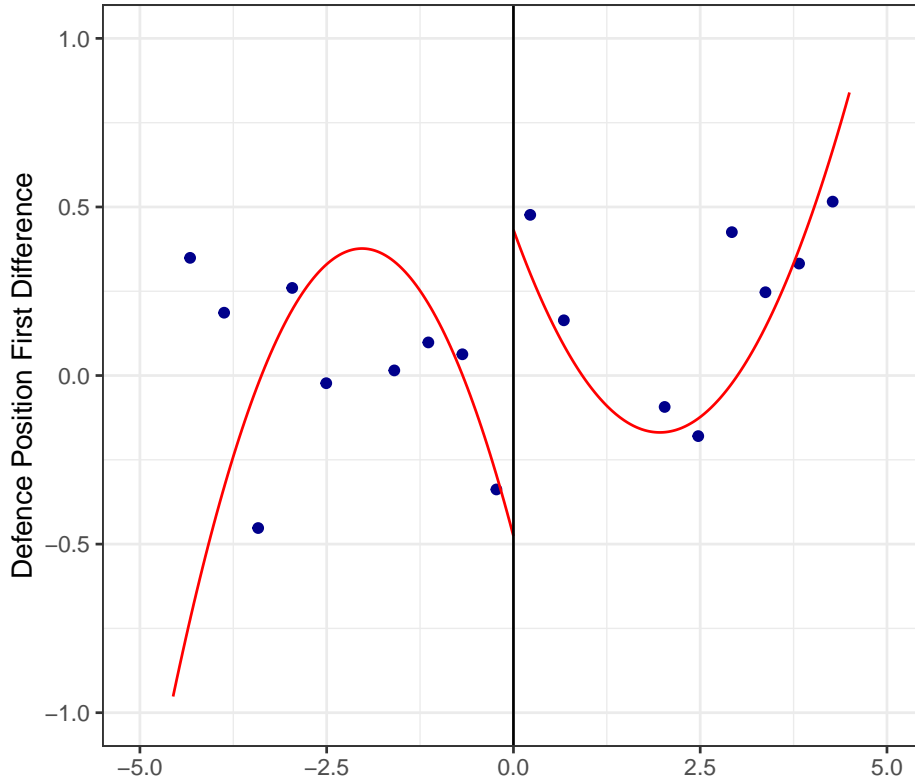
	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (conventional)	0.954*** (0.129)	1.053*** (0.304)	0.319** (0.129)	0.319** (0.129)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	0.958*** (0.129)	1.059*** (0.304)	-	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	0.958*** (0.131)	1.059*** (0.311)	-	-
N	150	150	558	558
BW est. (h)	1.772	1.772	Global	Global
BW bias (b)	2.914	2.914	-	-
Country FE	✓		✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

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

Note: Bandwidths are calculated by Imbens-Kalyanaraman method. Polynomial order is 2 in non-parametric models and 1 in parametric models. The first difference is calculated by subtracting values of period t from values of $t - 1$.

Figure A2 depicts the result when we take a first difference of defense policy. As shown in Table A3, RD estimates are positive and significant in all models. This lends support to our argument.

Figure A2: Change(Δ) of Defense Policy



A.4 RD Robustness check w/ Covariates

Figure A3 illustrates the main result with covariates. Considering country heterogeneity, we added a East Europe dummy variable, a participation of international military intervention, and RRPPs' participation to government. As found in Table A4, the estimates are positive and statistically significant in all models. Note that since some countries formed government several times after the given election, the total number of observation increased after controlling RRPPs' participation to government.

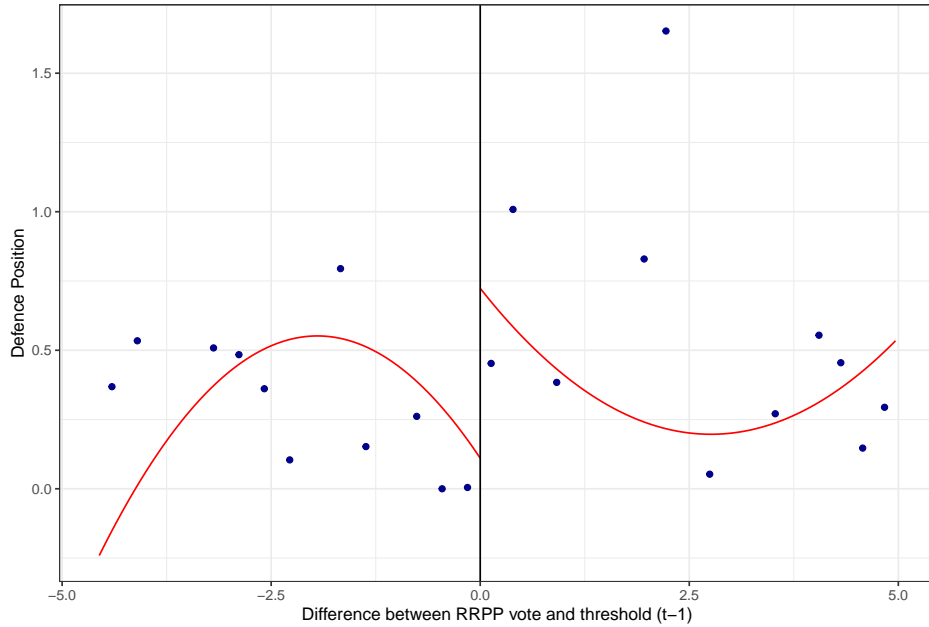
Table A4: Party-level Shifts in Defense Policy (MARPOR): w/ covariates

	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (conventional)	0.530*** (0.055)	0.350*** (0.100)	0.270*** (0.086)	0.270*** (0.086)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	0.588*** (0.055)	0.348*** (0.100)	-	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	0.588*** (0.057)	0.348*** (0.102)	-	-
N	245	245	896	896
BW est. (h)	1.844	1.844	Global	Global
BW bias (b)	4.057	4.057	-	-
Country FE	✓		✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

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

Note: Bandwidths are calculated by CTT. Polynomial order is 2 in non-parametric models and 1 in parametric models. Covariates include East European dummy, war participation, and a dummy variable of whether to participate to government.

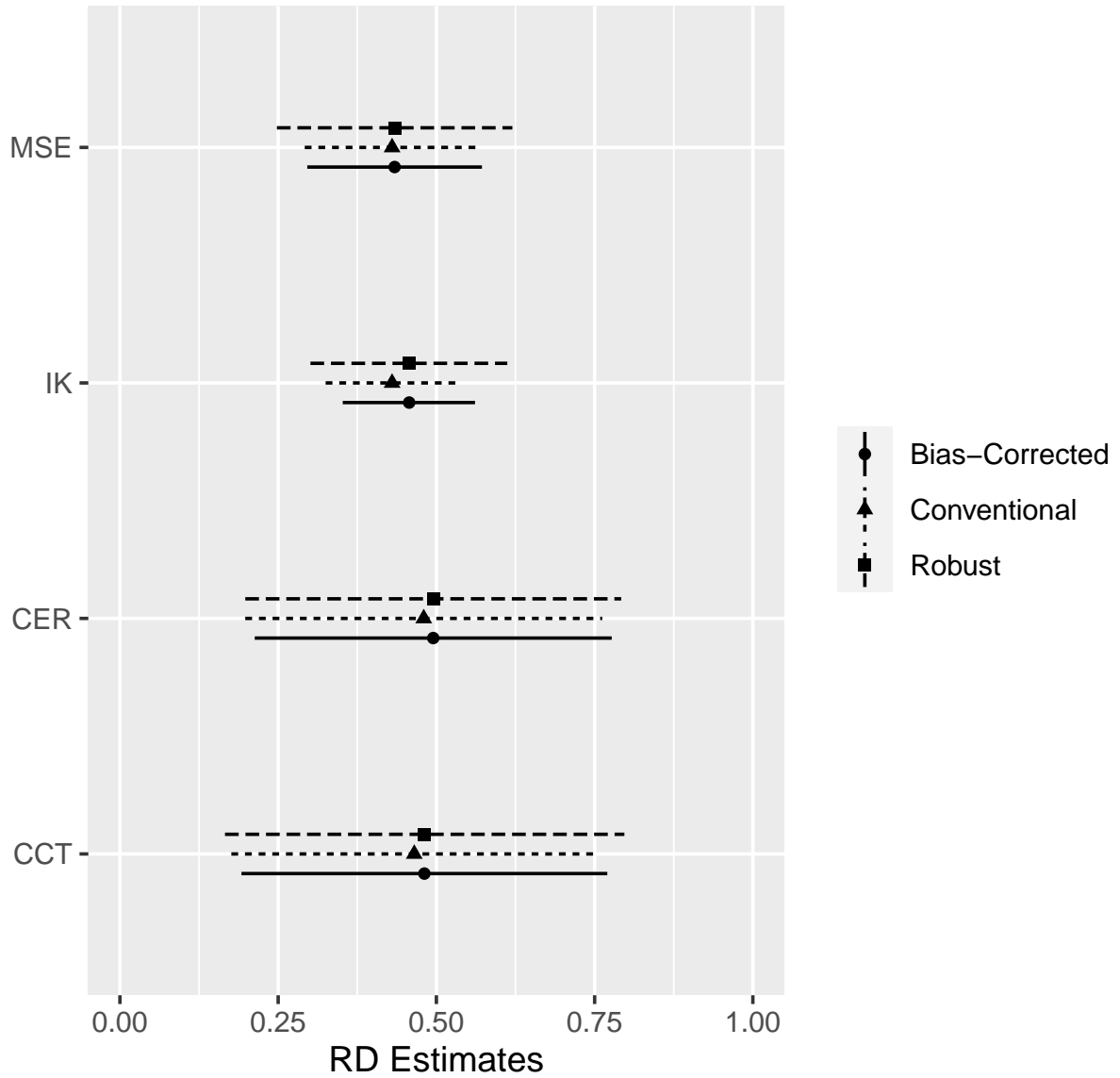
Figure A3: Analysis with Covariates



A.5 Analysis w/ Different Bandwidths

We checked the robustness of our main finding with different bandwidth. While our RD analysis presented in Table 1 in the manuscript employs CCT method calculate the optimal

Figure A4: Analysis w/ Different Bandwidths



bandwidth, we also performed RD models with different optimal bandwidths calculated by MSE, Imbens-Kalyanaraman method (IK), and CER. In all models, estimates are positive and statistically significant at more than the 95% significance level.

A.6 Different polynomial order

We test the robustness of the main models by applying different polynomial orders. Since larger polynomial order confuses the results, we tested 1, 2, 3, and 4 orders for fuzzy parametric and fuzzy non-parametric models, respectively. Throughout the robustness check, results are consistent expect for a model where fuzzy non-parametric model takes polynomial order 4.

Table A5: *F*uzzy Regression Discontinuity with Different Polynomial Order

Polynomial Order #	1	2	3	4
<u>Position of National Defense Policy</u>				
RD estimate (parametric)	0.439*** (0.094)	0.410*** (0.136)	0.631*** (0.172)	0.643*** (0.215)
N	835	835	835	835
Bandwidth	Global	Global	Global	Global
RD estimate (non-parametric)	0.580*** (0.067)	0.693*** (0.238)	0.527*** (0.189)	0.231 (0.227)
N	239	239	239	239
Bandwidth (h)	2.051	2.051	2.051	2.051
Bandwidth (b)	3.763	3.763	3.763	3.763

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

Note: Bandwidths are calculated by CCT. The estimates are clustered at the country level. RD estimates reported in non-parametric RD design are conventional estimates.

A.7 Placebo Test

Although our analyses set the cut-off point as zero, we performed placebo test by introducing different cut-off point. We expect that our results do not hold positive and statistically significant RD estimates when cut-off is not zero. Table A6 shows summarizes fuzzy RD estimates when the cut-off point is five. The results lend support to our expectation - results are not consistently positive nor statistically significant in both parametric and non-parametric models.

Table A6: Placebo Test

	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (conventional)	0.336*** (0.080)	0.051 (0.236)	-0.003 (0.104)	-0.003 (0.104)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	0.323*** (0.080)	0.068 (0.236)	-	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	0.323*** (0.085)	0.068 (0.253)	-	-
N	215	215	835	835
BW est. (h)	4.628	4.628	Global	Global
BW bias (b)	6.646	6.646	-	-
Country FE	✓		✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

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

Note: We experimentally set a placebo cut-off point as 5 instead of 0. Placebo bandwidths are calculated by CCT. Polynomial order is 2 in non-parametric models and 1 in parametric models.

A.8 Legal Threshold

We tested the robustness of our model by dropping observations that do not implement legal electoral thresholds. Table A7 below presents the results. While the fuzzy non-parametric model without country fixed effect lose significance, given cross-national heterogeneity and the consistent direction of RD estimates, we overall find that the results align with our main finding.

Table A7: Position of National Defense Policy (w/ legally-fixed threshold)

	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (conventional)	1.438*** (0.262)	0.313 (0.279)	0.326** (0.134)	0.326** (0.128)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	8.771*** (0.262)	0.259 (0.279)	-	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	8.771*** (0.287)	0.251 (0.301)	-	-
N	74	74	501	501
BW est. (h)	1.395	1.395	Global	Global
BW bias (b)	2.609	2.609	-	-
Country FE	✓		✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

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

A.9 Defense Salience

Table A8: Party-level Shifts in Defense Policy (MARPOR): **Salience**

	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (conventional)	0.048 (0.119)	0.222 (0.184)	0.083 (0.066)	0.083 (0.066)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	0.057 (0.119)	0.231 (0.184)	-	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	0.057 (0.124)	0.231 (0.191)	-	-
N	251	251	947	947
BW est. (h)			Global	Global
BW bias (b)			-	-
Country FE	✓		✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

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

Note: Bandwidths are calculated by CCT. Polynomial order is 2 in non-parametric models and 1 in parametric models.

A.10 RD Robustness check with different time period (1990-2021)

Table A9: Party-level Shifts in Defense Policy (MARPOR): **1990-2021**

	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>non-parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>	<i>parametric</i>
RD Estimate (conventional)	0.322*** (0.094)	0.563** (0.222)	0.493*** (0.085)	0.493*** (0.085)
RD Estimate (Bias-corrected)	0.347*** (0.094)	0.580*** (0.222)	-	-
RD Estimate (Robust)	0.347*** (0.112)	0.580** (0.254)	-	-
N	331	331	1155	1155
BW est. (h)	2.020	2.020	Global	Global
BW bias (b)	3.138	3.138	-	-
Country FE	✓		✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓	✓	✓

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

Note: Bandwidths are calculated by CCT. Polynomial order is 2 in non-parametric models and 1 in parametric models. Sharp results are in the appendix.

B Analysis with CHES Data

To check the robustness of the results to the use of alternative data, we draw on the *Chapel Hill expert survey (CHES)* (Bakker et al., 2020) that consists of survey waves in 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2019. We employ three questions corresponding, albeit not ideally in all cases, to salience of national defense policy, Russia’s salience, and the United States’ salience. While the CHES does not contain questions on defense *positions*, some questions might capture a mix of defense salience and positions (see below). The questions were only asked in selected years as specified below, so that the results depend on only a few cross-sectional observations. We do not distinguish left and right parties in this analysis to avoid splitting the few observations further. Moreover, the CHES data employs different definitions of radical right parties and the measurement of defense policy. However, obtaining similar results would strengthen confidence in the findings obtained so far (See Table A10 for descriptive statistics)

Table A10: Descriptive Statistics (CHES)

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Max
party_id	883	1,562.597	977.832	201	3,807
Election year	883	2,008.196	6.697	1,996	2,019
international_salience	148	4.532	1.530	1.000	8.286
international_security	334	4.854	1.763	1.000	9.333
dif_l1 (RRPP vote - threshold), t-1	883	4.316	9.855	-5.000	65.810
treatment	883	0.484	0.500	0	1

We first implemented the additional sorting for CHES data. The result suggests that the p value of the test is 0.3087 and not statistically significant. Thus, the running variable does not violate the assumption.

Table A11 presents the result of salience of international security and peacekeeping policy. The dependent variable in the first model is the salience of international security and peacekeeping missions, where zero denotes “Not important at all” and ten denotes “Extremely important.” This is mainly a salience measure. However, it seems likely that parties deeming

Table A11: Party-Level Shifts in Security Salience (CHES)

Importance/salience of International Security & Peacekeeping		
RD Estimate	0.339***	0.339***
	(0.082)	(0.082)
N	148	148
BW est. (h)	Global	Global
Country FE	✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓

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

Note: Survey was conducted in 2010. Respondents answered question with 0-10 points scale, where 0 represents "Not important at all" and 10 represents "Extremely important". Polynomial order is 1 in parametric models. Since optimal bandwidth is too small to secure enough observations for non-parametric analysis, we drop non-parametric RD results.

Table A12: Party-Level Shifts in Security Position (CHES)

Position towards International Security & Peacekeeping		
RD Estimate	-0.098*	-0.098*
	(0.058)	(0.058)
N	334	334
BW est. (h)	Global	Global
Country FE	✓	
Cluster error	✓	✓

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

Note: Survey was conducted in 2010 and 2014. Respondents answered question with 0-10 points scale, where 0 equals to "Strongly favors COUNTRY troop deployment" and 10 represents "Strongly opposes COUNTRY troop deployment". Polynomial order is 1 in parametric models. Since optimal bandwidth is too small to secure enough observations for non-parametric analysis, we drop non-parametric RD results.

security and peacekeeping very important might also be more willing than others to contribute assertively to such efforts. The question was asked in 2010 only. We obtain positive and statistically significant estimates in the parametric and parametric fuzzy RD models ($p < 0.01$).

Next, we examine the position towards international security and peacekeeping (International_Security). The likert question was asked in 2010 and 2014. In this variable, experts evaluate parties' position on security and peacekeeping with 0-10 points scale, where 0 equals to "Strongly favors COUNTRY troop deployment" and 10 represents "Strongly op-

poses COUNTRY troop deployment. Table A12 presents the results of parametric fuzzy RD analyses. The RD estimates (with and without country fixed effects) are negative and significant ($p < 0.1$), although the significance level is borderline. The negative estimates mean that established parties adopt more assertive security position after the electoral breakthrough of RRPPs.

Overall, while the CHES data has limits for our purpose in terms of data availability, these results strengthen our confidence in the main expectations. There is some evidence that parties might raise defense policy salience and, given that the questions might have a positional element as well, assertiveness in response to RRPP success. Regarding the salience of Russia and the US, the results remain ambivalent. For Russia, the CHES results are positive and thus in line with the findings from the previous section. In the case of the USA, the findings reinforce the impression of inconsistency from the previous section.

Bibliography

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URL: *<https://www.chesdata.eu>*