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A Pink Slip for the Blue Reform:

Is Selection, Experience, or Ideology the Elixir of Populists' Survival?*

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Abstract

Why do some populist parties thrive while others fail or split? Is it possible for populists to maintain anti-establishment nature while being in a coalition with the mainstream parties? We study the populist Finns Party that split while being part of a coalition government. The splinter party Blue Reform retained its part in government and most of the experienced political personnel, yet it failed in the next election while the rump party remained popular. Leveraging rich data on electoral candidates and voters, we explore various potential drivers of the electoral persistence of populist parties: candidate quality, selection, office perks, and ideological motivations. Our results indicate that ideological proximity with voters and their demand for descriptive representation are keys for the electoral success of populist parties. This has implications for the political and policy consequences of including populists in government. In particular, our work highlights that there are limits on the electoral returns to ideological moderation, and that political experience and the perks of office alone do not guarantee populists' survival.

Keywords: populists, party splits, selection, ideology, office motives, experience, political survival

Introduction

Recent years have witnessed a sharp rise in the number and electoral support of populist parties in many countries around the world (see [Guriev and Papaioannou 2020](#) for a review). Their success has brought many of them to the doorsteps of government and some even in, the consequences of which remain widely uncharted. Can populist parties survive assuming responsibilities while maintaining their anti-establishment nature and rhetoric? Or, if they split, which faction dominates: the moderate or the extremist? What determines their relative success, and what are the overall electoral and political repercussions? Answers to these questions matter for issues such as cabinet stability, party-system fragmentation, and the efficacy of policy-making.

We touch on these matters in a quantitative case study of the split—similar to [Kato \(1998\)](#)—of the Finnish populist party the *Finns Party* (formerly the *True Finns*). The party break-up occurred in July 2017 in the aftermath of an unexpected change in the party’s leadership. At that time, the Finns Party was part of the governing center-right coalition. The other coalition parties, however, refused to collaborate with its new, extremist leadership. As a result, the more moderate former leadership and their supporters left the party to form the *Blue Reform*. It remained part of the governing coalition that barely maintained its parliamentary majority.

About half of the Finns Party MPs, including all cabinet ministers of the party, defected to the Blue Reform. Despite this, the Blue Reform failed to get any seats in the parliamentary election following the party split. On the contrary, the Finns Party remained highly popular. This observation contrasts recent findings of [Ibenskas \(2020\)](#), who documents that the vote shares of rump and splinter parties in the first post-fission election are strongly related to their membership strength and the share of splinter legislators. Why did the *ex ante* stronger splinter fail in our case, despite attracting the more experienced politicians and having access to power and the ability to provide political rents? Could it be that voters instead rewarded party loyalty ([Chou et al. 2021](#)) and ideological purity? To reconcile this puzzle, we use detailed candidate-level data from the parliamentary elections held two years before and two years after the Finns Party break-up, in combination with survey data on voters’ ideology and voting intentions. We identify four mechanisms that could explain the failure of the Blue Reform.

The first possibility is that, by staying in government, the splinter party Blue Reform lost its populist anti-establishment credentials and was subsumed by the mainstream political elite (Heinisch 2003). Although high-frequency polling data and data from Finnish local governments lend some support for the idea that populists face a cost of governing, this mechanism is unlikely to fully explain the dramatic failure of the Blue Reform in the 2019 election.

Second, we examine the role of candidate selection. We find that Finns Party and Blue Reform candidates were clearly different from each other, and the Finns Party separated itself also from other parties in terms of candidate characteristics. The Blue Reform captured more experienced candidates at the time of the split, but the Finns Party was able to nominate new candidates who were more likely to be local politicians or to have run for parliamentary election in the past. Finns Party candidates also had ideological and occupational traits that are typically associated with voters of populist right-wing parties, unlike candidates from the Blue Reform or other parties. These results further illuminate the electoral fall of the Blue Reform and add to the scholarship on what kind of individuals become populist right-wing party candidates (Dal Bó et al. 2021).

The third potential reason for the failure of the Blue Reform is that it tried to occupy a policy space that was already crowded (Rydgren 2007). This may have presented the Finns Party with an opportunity to strategically take more extreme policy positions away from the mainstream parties. Analyzing a candidate survey reveals that in the GAL-TAN axis (where GAL stands for green-alternative-liberal and TAN stands for traditional-authoritarian-nationalist), the ideological distribution of the Blue Reform was almost identical to that of the (large) conservative party—and the Blue Reform was certainly more moderate than the Finns Party in both 2015 and 2019. The latter became even more extreme after the split, with striking differences to the Blue Reform in central populist policy areas such as immigration. On the demand side, we see that (i) the propensity to vote for the Finns Party was the higher the more extreme a voter was in GAL-TAN dimension, (ii) the respective regression slope is similar in 2015 and 2019, and (iii) ideological extremism did not predict voting for the Blue Reform. That is to say, the demand for ideology did not change between the elections, and the Finns Party was able to attract the radical votes. This evidence hints that spatial considerations played a key role in the failure of the Blue Reform. It also corroborates the idea that there are limits to electoral gains from spatial moderation (see, e.g., Konstantinidis, Matakos, and Mutlu-Eren 2019).

Lastly, we investigate whether Finnish voters punished candidates for party switching. We find that the Blue Reform candidates who ran in 2015 and 2019 lost some of their votes relative to rerunning candidates whose party affiliation remained unchanged, but the same is not true for any other party switchers. Although we cannot rule out that populist party voters reacted to party disloyalty in a different way than others, this finding does cast a doubt on the cost of party switching being the main driver of the Blue Reform's demise.

The overall implication of our work is that, when it comes to populist parties, the “radicals” have an electoral advantage over the “mainstream” ones. While we focus on a specific case, our study has broader relevance. First, populist-party splits are not rare. Some examples include Syriza in Greece, the National Rally (*Front national*) in France, the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*), and the Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*) in Germany. Second, in many countries, there has recently been speculation of major establishment parties splitting into moderate and extreme factions. The most prominent example may be the Republican Party in the United States that has been torn after the events following the 2020 presidential election, with rumors of the former president Donald Trump planning to start a new party with his loyalists. Thus, our work points to a frequently committed fallacy which stipulates that “doing business as usual” (such as participating in government) will eventually “tame” and normalize anti-establishment voters and candidates, a case in point being Trump. Simply put, this paper suggests that the populist narrative is appealing to such voters.

More broadly, our work sheds light on the boundaries of political parties. There are electoral and other returns to scale to bigger parties. However, the bigger a political party, the less homogeneous it becomes, and its members might need to compromise too much in policy and rents ([Hortala-Vallve and Mueller 2015](#)). We can conjecture based on our results that voter ideology creates natural boundaries for political parties ([Grofman 2008](#)). Voters of populist parties appear to be ideological instead of being candidate-oriented. The lessons from our case study can more broadly reflect the difficulties and risks involved when parties recruit extreme candidates to attract votes.

Background and Data

Institutional Background

We study the electoral repercussions of the break-up of the Finns Party in the context of national elections in Finland. Finnish parliamentary elections are held every four years. The electoral system is a pure open-list proportional representation, meaning that voters have to cast a single vote to a single individual candidate (who is affiliated with a party or an independent group). The number of seats that a party acquires is determined by the number of votes to its candidates and the number of votes that other parties get. The between-party seat allocation is based on the D'Hondt method, and personal votes determine who gets elected within the party.¹ The country is divided in thirteen electoral districts that together elect two hundred members of the parliament.

The Finnish elections were traditionally dominated by three parties from the political left, center, and right: the Social Democratic Party, the Center Party, and the National Coalition Party, respectively. Typical ruling coalition has included two of these three parties (including coalitions between the left and right). More recently, the Finns Party has been increasing its popularity dramatically, breaking the past three-party dominance.

The Finns Party and Its Rise

The Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset* in Finnish) is a Finnish right-wing populist party that was founded in 1995 after the Finnish Rural Party (*Suomen Maaseudun Puolue*) was dissolved. While the Finnish Rural Party had gained important positions in the government in the 1990s, it took until 2010s until the Finns Party started gaining any considerable popularity. The Finns Party won around 19% of votes (making it the third largest party represented in the Finnish parliament) in 2011. The popularity of the Finns Party decreased slightly in 2015 when it won almost 18% of the vote. We graph the popularity and electoral success of the party over time in Figure 1.

From the very beginning, the Finns Party profiled itself as the (only) challenger to the mainstream parties ([Arter 2010](#)). Together with their opposition to immigration, globalization and the EU, the party's ideological features are characterized by a distrust towards political elites. The

¹Pre-election rankings in the party lists are almost always alphabetical, so the list order does not signal parties' preferences.

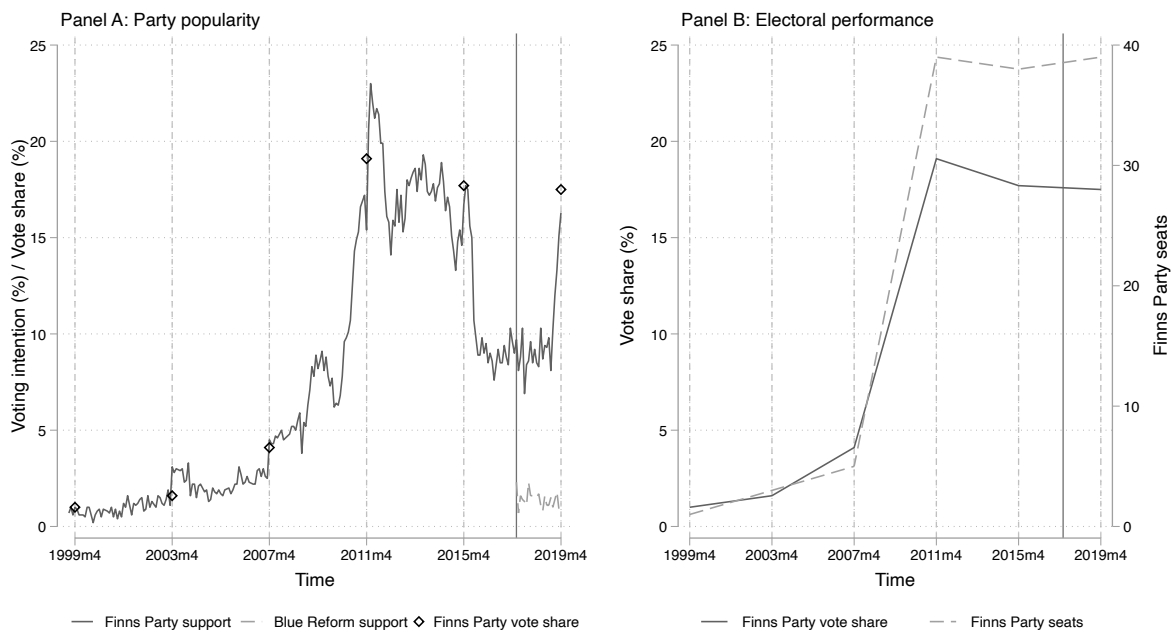


Figure 1. Popularity and representation of the Finns Party and the Blue Reform.

Notes: Panel A shows popularity of the Finns Party and the Blue Reform over time. The data come from opinion polls conducted by *Taloustutkimus* and published by *YLE*. In Panel B, the left-hand-side axis shows vote shares of the Finns Party, and the right-hand-side axis shows the number of seats that the Finns Party acquired. The total number of seats is 200. The dashed vertical lines mark election months, and the solid vertical lines mark the timing of the Finns Party split.

party is often classified as socio-economically centrist and socio-culturally authoritarian (Jungar and Jupskås 2014; Arter 2010). In this sense, the party resembles other populist radical right parties in Western Europe (Rydgren 2007). There exists a vast literature on the determinants of the emergence and rise of populist parties, and the topic has received a substantial amount of attention for the past two decades. Although populist parties come in shades of the political left and the right, the latter has received the most attention, as such parties have gained electoral support in a large number of European countries. The two main categories of explanations put forward by scholars are related to either (i) issues concerning the visibility of minorities, and (ii) changes to the economic environment.

The theories related to the first category submit that natives oppose immigration as they perceive that their social status is under threat by ethnic minorities. The fear that the culture and traditions of the natives are under attack is highlighted when minorities, especially immigrants

and refugees from distant cultures, become visible in natives' neighborhoods or in the public space. As the opposition to immigration increases, so does support for anti-immigration parties, such as the Finns Party. This explanation has some merit in the Finnish case: [Matakos, Savolainen, and Tukiainen \(2020\)](#) document that asylum centers established during the 2015 refugee crisis led to a larger electoral support to the Finns Party. On the other hand, [Lonsky \(2021\)](#) shows that the immigration spurred by the eastern enlargement of the European Union *decreased* the Finns Party vote share.

The other class of explanations highlights the importance of economic factors in explaining the electoral success of populist parties. These include wage cuts, job loss, and insecure employment on an individual level, and austerity-induced welfare reforms and increased income and wealth inequality on a local, regional, or national level ([Colantone and Stanig 2018](#); [Fetzer 2019](#); [Dehdari 2021](#)). While global economic shocks, such as the financial crisis in 2008 and the following Great Recession, or occasional trade shocks, have resulted in swift changes to the economic environment in many countries, scholars have also pointed to more slowly-moving global developments like changes in trade patterns and technological progress ([Rodrik 2018](#)). As domestic firms face competition from low-wage countries, or as plants are located abroad or being refitted to make space for robots and machines, workers in vulnerable sectors are seeing their wages decrease or, even worse, their employment being terminated. In most cases, the economic losers are low-wage or low-educated workers. Indeed, these groups are over-represented among voters of right-wing populist parties in many European countries ([Rydgren 2004](#); [Kitschelt 2007](#)). This is also true in Finland, where the Finns Party has primarily attracted working-class voters ([Borg, Kestilä-Kekkonen, and Wass 2020](#)), who are more likely to work in sectors that are more exposed to trade shocks and the threat of automation.

Break-Up of the Party

After the 2015 election, the Finns Party became part of the governing center-right coalition. However, in June 2017, there was an unexpected change in the party leadership of the Finns Party. The heads of its government partners refused to collaborate with the party with its newly selected,

ideologically more extreme leadership.² Subsequently, the party split in two. Around twenty parliamentary representatives of the Finns Party formed a new, populist but ideologically less extreme group. This party was initially called the New Alternative (*Uusi Vaihtoehto*), but it later changed its name to the Blue Reform (*Sininen Tulevaisuus*). Among the defecting politicians were all the cabinet ministers. The Blue Reform was allowed to stay in the government, and the Finns Party became part of the opposition.

Even though the most prominent politicians from the Finns Party defected to the Blue Reform after the party split, the latter never reached much popularity among the voters. Popularity of the Finns Party, on the contrary, barely changed around the party split. The Blue Reform also did not attract as many candidates in the 2019 election as the Finns Party did. In total, the Finns Party nominated 213 candidates and gained 39 seats in the election (also see Panel B of Figure 1). The Blue Reform had 152 candidates, none of whom got elected; the candidates merely attracted slightly less than one percent of the votes. Around half of the 2015 candidates for the Finns Party reran in the 2019 election, but only 30% of the rerunners ran for the Blue Reform.³

Hypotheses

What could explain the electoral aftermath of the split of the Finns Party? We propose that there are (at least) four possible reasons behind the failure of the Blue Reform and put these hypotheses to a test.

First, the importance of anti-establishment sentiment in explaining the success of populist radical right parties has been discussed extensively in the literature. Guiso et al. (2018) note that a key feature of populist parties is their claim to be “on the side of the people against the elites.” The elites, both economic and political, are accused of disregarding the interest of the nation and its people in favor of their own self-interest (Rydgren 2007). Thus, to be considered a part of the establishment, and working together with the political elites, can be devastating for populist parties. By staying in government, the splinter party Blue Reform possibly lost its populist anti-establishment credentials and was subsumed by the mainstream political elite (Heinisch

²See, for instance, a news article at <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9664786> (accessed February 24, 2021).

³In total, there were 2,146 candidates in the 2015 election. The number of candidates increased to 2,468 in 2019.

2003; Spanje 2011). Subsequently, it could have lost its appeal to its (former) anti-establishment voters who valued more descriptive representation. These arguments can be summarized in our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *The Blue Reform faced a cost of governing.*

Earlier research has documented that populist right-wing party politicians are different from those from the mainstream parties (Dal Bó et al. 2021). Similarly, voters of such parties are different from voters of traditional parties, also in our context (Borg, Kestilä-Kekkonen, and Wass 2020). It is possible that the Blue Reform nominated candidates who did not attract votes from those voters who had voted for the Finns Party before the split. Although we do not postulate any stark predictions on how the parties' candidates could have differed from each other, we will explore the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. *The Blue Reform and the Finns Party selected candidates with different valence.*

Candidate ideology also has electoral value just like other candidate traits. The policy positions that the Blue Reform and the Finns Party candidates took relative to each other and other parties may have had important political consequences. As argued by Rydgren (2007), the convergence in political space between established parties presents an opportunity for populist parties to attract voters by strategically positioning themselves on either side of the crowded center. This leads to the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *The Blue Reform occupied a crowded policy space, while the Finns Party candidates took more extreme policy positions.*

Lastly, notice that all Blue Reform candidates who did not newly enter into politics were party switchers by default. The fourth explanation that we examine in this paper is that the electorate punished party switchers for their disloyalty (see, e.g., Grose and Yoshinaka 2003), which could have contributed to the poor electoral performance of the Blue Reform. In other words, our final hypothesis is:

Hypothesis 4. *There was an electoral cost of switching parties.*

Data

Our paper analyzes why the Blue Reform failed using quantitative analysis of a data set that combines information on election results with survey data on parties' and voters' ideology.

Election Results. Our election data come from the Finnish Ministry of Justice. They contain diverse candidate-level information for two parliamentary elections held in 2015 and 2019. Importantly, we observe the electoral performance (vote share and election status) of each candidate, the party that they run for, and the political positions that they currently hold.

Data on Candidate Ideology. To measure party ideology, we use unique survey data from a so-called voting aid application provided by the Finnish Public Broadcasting Company (YLE). Voting aid applications are interactive online surveys that are intended to help voters with finding ideologically proximate candidates. Candidates fill out the survey before elections, after which voters can take the same survey to find a suitable candidate. In the 2015 election, around 87% of candidates gave their responses to the voting aid application, and in the 2019 election, the share was as high as 98%. Likewise, voting aid applications are very popular among the Finnish voters. For instance, a survey found that 40% of Finnish voters used a voting aid application prior to the 2007 parliamentary election ([Wagner and Ruusuvirta 2012](#)).

For both elections that we observe, the voting aid application contains around thirty questions that we compress into two metrics of ideology using a principal component analysis ([Heckman and Snyder 1997](#); [Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001](#)).⁴ The first principal component captures the traditional left-right dimension of ideology, while the second principal component measures candidate positions on the GAL-TAN axis. One example of a claim strongly associated with the left-right dimension is “Social and health care services should be primarily provided by the public sector” and, for instance, the claim “Hate speech should be defined and made punishable in the law” is associated with the GAL-TAN component. The candidates would give their answers on a 1-5 Likert scale.⁵

⁴For a detailed list of the questions included, see Appendix Tables [SI1](#) and [SI2](#).

⁵The answering options thus range from “completely disagree” to “completely agree”. In the 2015 version of the survey, the candidates were offered a middle option “I do not agree or disagree”—however, this option was not available in the 2019 voting aid application.

Note that we are able to estimate these ideology scores only for those politicians who responded to all claims in the voting aid application, meaning that we observe the ideology scores for 77% of the candidates in the 2019 election and 85% of the candidates in the 2015 election. We standardize the resulting measures by deducting the mean and dividing this by the standard deviation.

Other Candidate Information. The 2019 voting aid application data also contain some other candidate-level information that we utilize in our analyses. In particular, the data include information on self-reported education. We use these information to construct an indicator for having a university degree. For a few candidates who did not respond to the voting aid application question on their level of education, we infer whether they have a university degree or not from self-reported occupation available from the Ministry of Justice election data. We further use these information to construct an indicator for being a blue-collar worker to measure candidates' social status. Although we take no normative stance on this, it is worth noting that some researchers have treated university education as a proxy for quality while others have argued that it is also an indication of elite background (see, for instance, [Carnes and Lupu 2016](#) and [Dal Bó et al. 2018](#) for discussion).

Furthermore, the survey contains two questions (or claims) which are related to candidate personality. We do not include these questions in the principal component analysis that we use to generate one-dimensional estimates of ideology, but we do use the variables individually in some of our analyses. First, candidate responses to the claim "It is right to make the effort not to hurt other people, not even by accident" may be informative about the *agreeableness* of a candidate. Second, the candidates were represented with the claim "The main responsibility of a politician is to be responsive to his or her voters". Attitudes towards this claim may reflect candidates' sense of *loyalty* or *responsiveness*.

Data on Voter Ideology. We use extensive survey data on ordinary citizens to study the demand side of electoral politics. The voter surveys were conducted by the Finnish Business and Policy Forum (EVA) in 2015 and 2019 before the elections. The survey data comprise a sample of 18-70-year-olds that is representative of the full population in terms of age, gender, region, education, and occupational status.

These data allow us to measure voter ideology and correlate it with voting intentions, also captured in the survey. We exploit voter responses to around fifty questions on policy preferences

and compress the data into two metrics of ideology (left-right and GAL-TAN) using a principal component analysis. Again, we standardize the resulting principal components.

Why Did the Blue Reform Fail?

Electoral Cost of Governing

We start by analyzing whether there is a cost of governing for populist parties, finding some evidence that is in line with Hypothesis 1. As Panel A of Figure 1 shows, the Finns Party saw their popularity take a dive immediately after entering into the coalition government following the 2015 national election. Its support was cut to around half of what it was before the election.

The phenomenon can be observed even more broadly in Finnish politics. Namely, the party's popularity was hit harder in municipalities where it gained the control over local political leadership. After the local elections in 2012, the party became the leading party (measured by holding the position of mayor) in 7 out of around 300 municipalities. In the 2017 election, the party lost, on average, almost 7% of its vote share in these municipalities, as opposed to an average decline of 3.5% in municipalities where it did not govern. This is slightly more than half of the mean vote share that the Finns Party gained in the 2012 municipal election. We quantify this loss and illustrate its statistical significance in a regression framework in Appendix Table S13.

It is thus plausible that the electoral cost of governing would be part of the story. However, given the stable 10% support of the Finns Party even while in government and the stability of the party support right after the split, it is unlikely that this mechanism alone would explain why the splinter lost all of its seats.

Selection to the Finns Party and the Blue Reform

Were Finns Party and Blue Reform politicians different from each other and from other parties? We explore Hypothesis 2 in Figure 2. Our comparison is divided in two parts. We first study candidates who ran in both the 2015 and the 2019 election in Panel A of the figure. This allows us to focus on individuals who were initially Finns Party politicians but then, in the election following the party split, faced the choice between exiting politics or rerunning for the Finns Party (the rump party), the Blue Reform (the splinter party), or some other party (other outside options). Panel B of the figure then uses data on all candidates. This allows us to analyze what kind of new candidates

the parties were able to attract. To quantify the average differences (and the significance of them) between candidates from different parties, we use OLS to estimate simple bivariate specifications. More precisely, we regress different candidate characteristics on indicators for running as a Finns Party or a Blue Reform candidate.⁶

The left-hand-side figures in both panels of Figure 2 investigate how Finns Party and Blue Reform candidates differed in their characteristics. From Panel A, we can see that Blue Reform candidates were more likely to be incumbent MPs (on top of the party attracting all cabinet ministers). However, we do not detect any statistically significant differences in terms of background in local politics, education, occupation or prior electoral success.

The comparisons in Panel B suggest that Finns Party candidates were more likely to be elected local politicians or re-runners in the parliamentary election than Blue Reform candidates.⁷ These can be important vote-earning attributes in the Finnish open-list system (Shugart, Valdini, and Suominen 2005). Moreover, they were more likely to have a blue-collar occupation, indicating that the party attracted candidates who had a similar social background as its core supporters (Borg, Kestilä-Kekkonen, and Wass 2020).

Finns Party and Blue Reform candidates differed strikingly in terms of their attitudes. Finns Party candidates expressed a greater agreement with the voting aid application claim on the importance of staying loyal to ones voters than Blue Reform candidates. This is in line with the anti-elite sentiment of the Finns Party, and it echoes a popular narrative among the Finns Party politicians that the Blue Reform betrayed its voters and rather remained loyal to its government coalition partners. Candidates running for the Finns Party were less agreeable than Blue Reform candidates. In that, they reflect typical supporters of populist parties (Bakker, Schumacher, and Rooduijn 2021). Ideological differences are apparent as well: Finns Party candidates were more left-wing in terms of their economic ideology and more right-wing in terms of their social ideology than Blue Reform candidates.

⁶We explore the correlates of party choice using multivariate regression analyses in Appendix Table SI4. These results are in line with the simple comparisons that we present here.

⁷The former result is in line with the observation that the Finns Party had stronger local party organizations after the party split than the Blue Reform. This, in turn, could have mattered for the relative electoral performance of the parties (Frendreis, Gibson, and Vertz 1990).

Many similar differences show up when comparing Finns Party candidates with candidates from other parties. Now we also see that candidates who ran for the Finns Party were less likely to have higher education than candidates running for other parties. These descriptive findings echo those that [Dal Bó et al. \(2021\)](#) report in their study on political selection to the Swedish radical right party, the Sweden Democrats. Furthermore, the findings on ideology and party choice rhyme with Sartori's assertion that extreme parties "[...] neither desire nor have much to gain in competing centripetally. Their goals are best furthered by tearing the system apart." ([Sartori 1976](#), p. 350).

For the sake of completeness, the right-hand-side graphs compare candidates who ran for the Blue Reform with candidates from other parties. Panel A shows that Blue Reform candidates were clearly less ideologically extreme than Finns Party candidates in terms of their GAL-TAN ideology but still more extreme than candidates from other parties. In Panel B, we see also other differences. Blue Reform candidates were less likely to be local politicians or rerunning candidates and less likely to have a university degree than candidates from other parties, on average.

Supply and Demand of Ideology

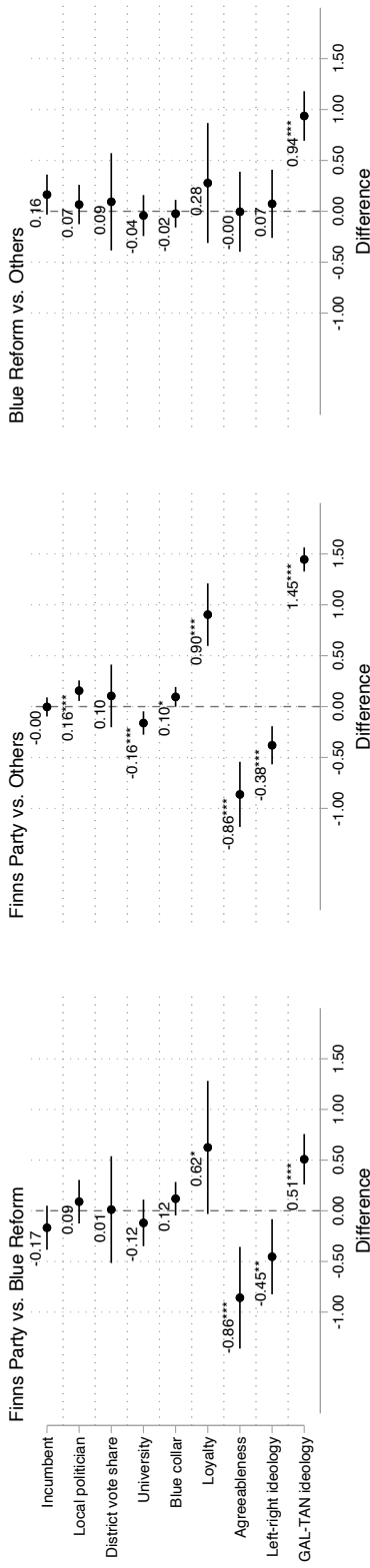
We next analyze the supply of ideology in detail and also consider the demand side to evaluate the empirical support of Hypothesis 3.

Party Ideology. We use the voting aid application data to map the distribution of party ideology in [Figure 3](#). Panel A first compares the distribution of ideologies of the Finns Party and the three major parties: the National Coalition Party, the Center Party, and the Social Democratic Party.⁸ The graph reveals that the distribution of the economic left-right ideology of the Finns Party candidates was not different from that of the Center Party candidates. However, there is a clear difference between the Finns Party and the (center-right) National Coalition Party, or the (center-left) Social Democratic Party. In the GAL-TAN dimension, the three major parties were fairly similar to each other, while the Finns Party was clearly more extreme.

Panel B then looks at party ideology among the candidates running in 2019. Now, the Finns Party, the Blue Reform, and the Center Party candidates were fairly similar in terms of their economic ideology—at least in terms of the overlap in the ideology distributions. Blue Reform

⁸Appendix [Figure SII](#) shows average policy positions of all parties that gained representation in the national parliament.

Panel A: Rerunning candidates



Panel B: All candidates

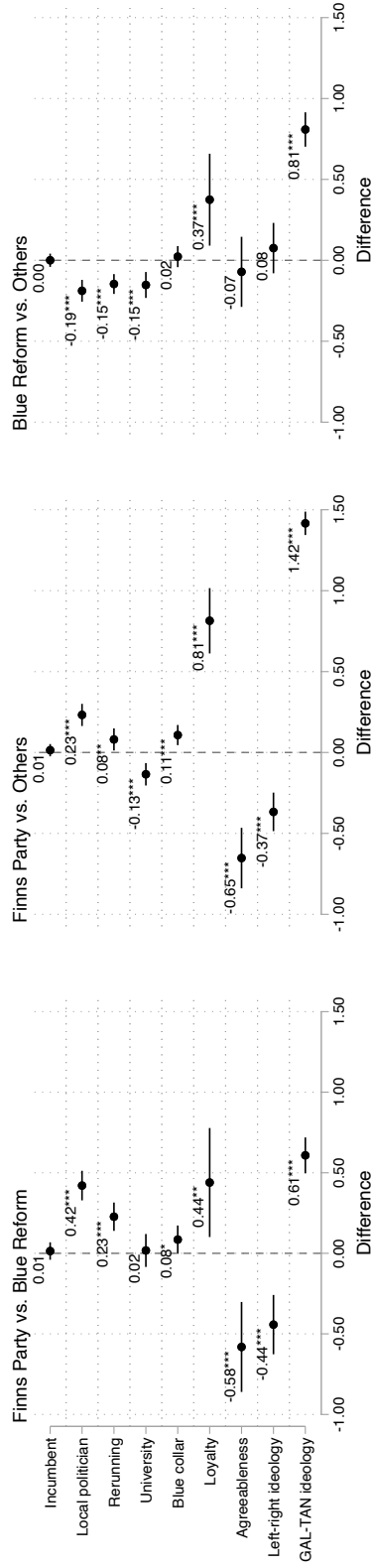


Figure 2. Differences between Finns Party, Blue Reform, and other party candidates in 2019.

Notes: The figure shows differences between Finns Party and Blue Reform candidates in the left-hand-side graphs, Finns Party and other party candidates in the middle graphs, and Blue Reform and other party candidates in the right-hand-side graphs. To acquire the differences, we estimate the following specification using OLS: $y_i = \alpha + \beta Party_i + \varepsilon_i$. Here, y_i is the trait of interest for candidate i , α is a constant, $Party_i$ is an indicator for running as a Finns Party or a Blue Reform candidate depending on the specification, and ε_i is the error term. The figure reports the estimated β s. We also show 95% confidence intervals constructed using robust standard errors. Panel A uses data on rerunning candidates and Panel B uses data on all candidates. ***, **, * and * denote statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10% levels, respectively.

shared a somewhat similar policy space with the National Coalition Party and the Center Party also in the GAL-TAN axis. But, the Finns Party has a very distinct ideological distribution, the party again being in the right extreme of the x -axis.

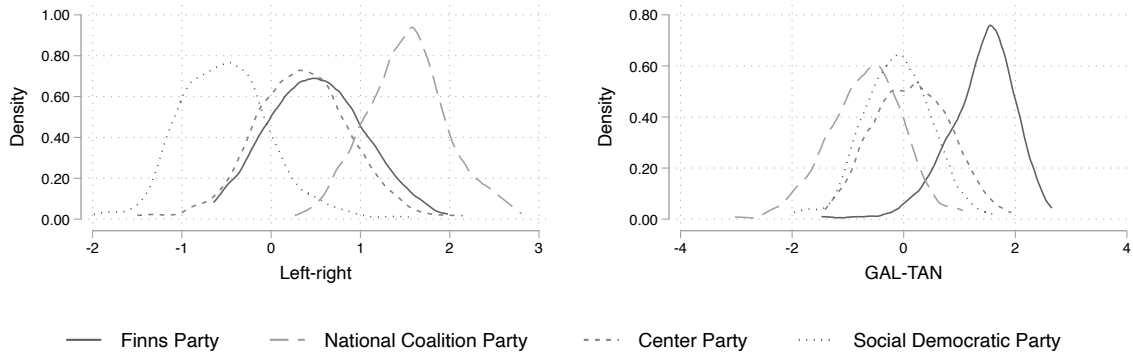
The graphical analysis of the ideology distributions hints that the Blue Reform tried to enter a policy space that was already occupied by large parties. What is more, the Finns Party remained the sole extreme party in the GAL-TAN axis in the 2019 election.

Rydgren (2007) notes that convergence on one particular cleavage dimension could depoliticize said dimension by “making it less engaging and vivid for the voters and the media.” This depoliticization favors other cleavage dimensions. In particular, the convergence on the left-right ideology dimension favors the GAL-TAN dimension, on which the Blue Reform candidates positioned themselves closer to the other parties than the Finns Party candidates.

Voter Ideology and Voting Intentions. Data on voter ideology and voting intentions allow us to provide complementary evidence on our hypothesis. To first understand how ideology shaped party choice before the Finns Party split (that is to say, in the 2015 election), we correlate left-right and GAL-TAN ideology scores with an indicator for intending to vote for the Finns Party (versus any other party) in Panel A of Figure 4 ($N = 2,056$). There is a positive correlation with both the economic (the left-hand-side figure) and social ideology (the right-hand-side figure) and positive voting intention. The slope coefficient is greater for the GAL-TAN dimension of ideology, suggesting that the potential voters of the Finns Party cared more about such aspects in the 2015 election. For further details on the underlying regression, see the figure notes.

Panels B and C of Figure 4 then look at the relationship between ideology and voting intentions for the Finns Party and the Blue Reform, respectively, in the 2019 election ($N = 2,059$). There is a positive and statistically significant association between economic ideology and intention to vote for the Finns Party, although the slope coefficient is relatively small. The correlation between GAL-TAN ideology and voting for the Finns Party is striking. While there are almost no voters below the mean ideology score who stated that they intend to vote for the Finns Party, the positive gradient is apparent in the right extreme of the x -axis. Moreover, the slope coefficients in Panels A and B are in the same ballpark, indicating that voter opinion did not change much between the years. Consequently, it is an unlikely confounder in the observed electoral consequences. If anything, there is some evidence of increased curvature in voter preferences. This indicates that in

Panel A: Party ideology in 2015



Panel B: Party ideology in 2019

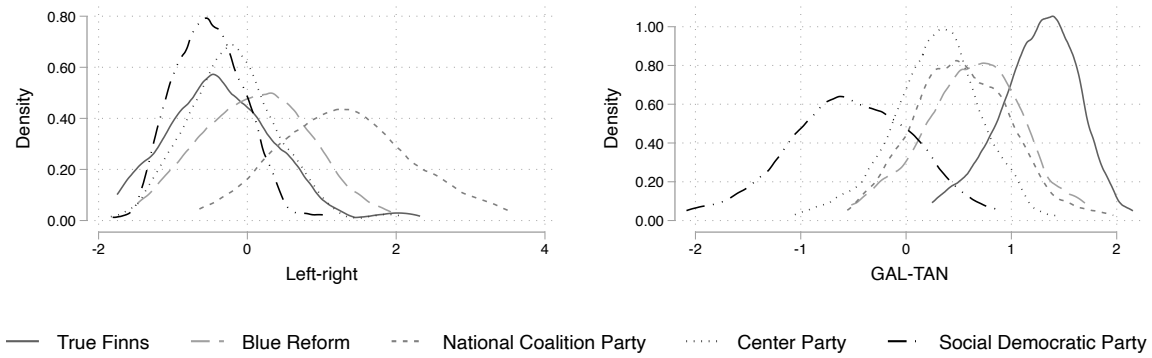


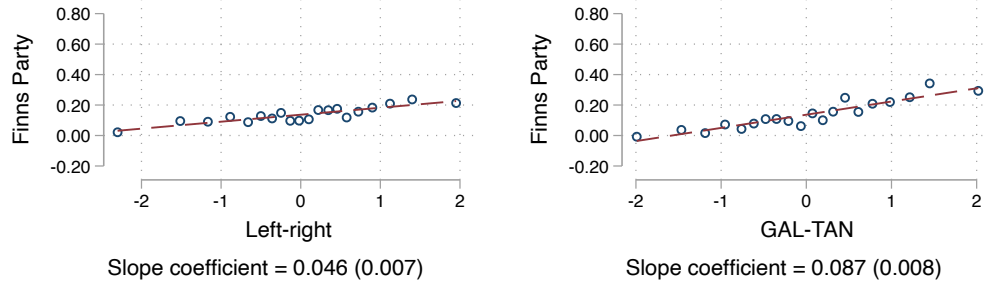
Figure 3. Distributions of candidate ideology in 2015 and 2019.

Notes: The figure shows distributions of policy positions of the main parties in the 2015 and 2019 parliamentary elections.

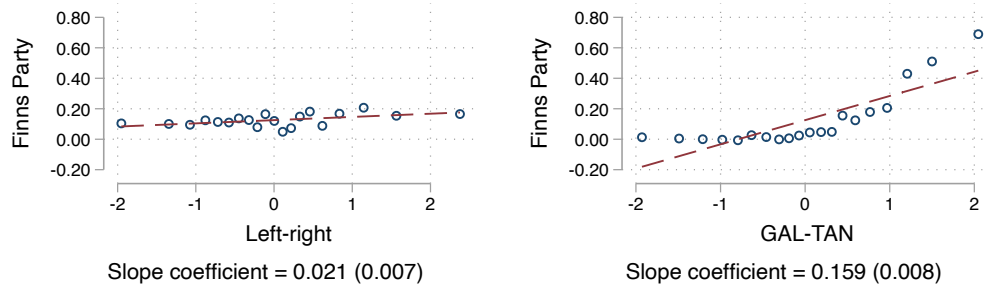
2019, the Finns Party was favored by even more extreme elements than the pre-split party in 2015. This further explains why Blue Reform was unable to attract voters. Overall, we can infer that the Finns Party voters cared more about the GAL-TAN dimension of ideology—in which the Finns Party clearly catered voters something different than any other major party.

We see a stark contrast between these notions and the graphs in Panel C that look at the intention to vote for the Blue Reform. Both figures reveal a positive association, but it is much weaker in terms of the size of the slope coefficient than what we saw for the Finns Party. The Blue Reform simply lacked popularity, and more extreme voters in particular preferred the Finns Party.

Panel A: Ideology and intention to vote for the Finns Party in 2015



Panel B: Ideology and intention to vote for the Finns Party in 2019



Panel C: Ideology and intention to vote for the Blue Reform in 2019

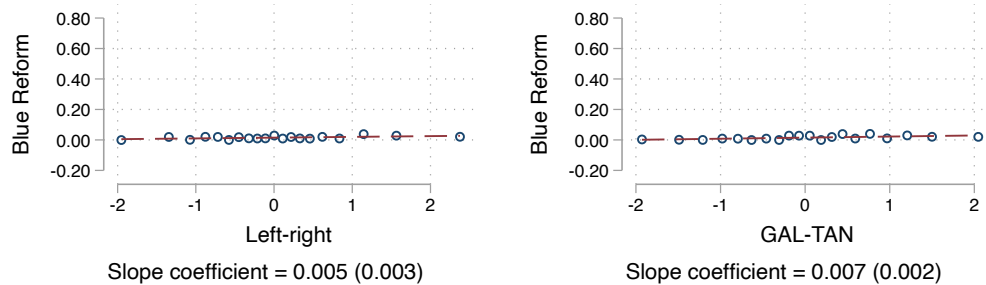


Figure 4. Ideology and voting for the Finns Party or Blue Reform in 2015 and 2019.

Notes: The figure shows the association between two dimensions of ideology and the intention to vote for the Finns Party (Panels A and B) or the Blue Reform (Panel C). Dots are binned averages constructed within twenty bins with an equal number of observations. The slope coefficients ($\hat{\beta}$) can be interpreted as marginal effects, and they come from the following regression that we estimate using OLS: $1[Vote]_i = \alpha + \beta Ideology_i + \varepsilon_i$. Here, $1[Vote]_i$ is an indicator for voting intention for the Finns Party or the Blue Reform (depending on the specification), α is a constant, $Ideology_i$ is either the left-right or GAL-TAN ideology score (depending on the specification), and ε_i is the error term. Robust standard errors of the slope coefficients are shown in parentheses.

Did Voters Punish Party Switchers?

The last potential explanation for the electoral loss of the Blue Reform that we examine in this paper is that the electorate punished party switchers for their disloyalty (Hypothesis 4). To understand whether this force could have been at play also in our case, we compare the change in vote shares (between the elections in 2015 and 2019) for party-switching candidates and rerunners whose party affiliation remained stable.

We quantify the impact of switching parties on electoral performance by regressing district vote share on an indicator for party switching between 2015 and 2019 and an indicator for running as a Blue Reform candidate in the 2019 election, while controlling for candidate and year fixed effects. The estimation results suggest that, in general, party-switchers may have even gained slightly more votes relative to other rerunners, although this difference in changes is far from being statistically significant ($\hat{\beta} = 0.19$, $p = 0.67$). Those Blue Reform candidates who had also run in the 2015 election—all of whom were party switchers by default, as the Blue Reform did not exist in the 2015 election—lost 1.14% ($p < 0.05$) of their vote share, on average, compared to non-party-switching rerunners (see Appendix Table S15 for detailed regression results).⁹ This vote loss is as much as the average vote share of the rerunning candidates in the 2019 election.

Of course, we cannot rule out the possibility that part of the decline in vote shares of Blue Reform candidates was due the candidates facing a punishment for switching parties. But, the relationship that we see does raise a question: Why would Blue Reform candidates have been punished for party switching so much more than candidates who switched to other parties?

Concluding Remarks

This paper presents a case study of the Finns Party—a populist party that split into two parties while taking part in the Finnish coalition government. The split allows us to examine the importance of a series of factors as determinants of populist parties' electoral success. In particular, we consider four channels: (i) candidate selection (and experience), (ii) the perks and costs of holding office, (iii) ideological motivations in the form of voters' demand for descriptive representation and politicians' supply of such ideology, and (iv) party loyalty.

⁹Within the Blue Reform, candidates who reran earned moderately more votes than candidates who were newcomers. This difference was around 0.15% ($p < 0.01$).

Detailed administrative and survey data on electoral candidates and voters reveal that ideology plays a fundamental role in the survival and consolidation of populist and extremist parties. In our case, the faction with the relatively more experienced and higher-quality politicians, the Blue Reform, failed miserably in the election that followed the party split. Voters opted for the more ideologically purist candidates. These candidates were also more likely to share similar traits with their supporters than the Blue Reform. We argue that the cost of governing that populist parties typically face as well as voter punishment for party-switching are less likely to be decisive for the destiny of the Blue Reform. Overall, our results thus identify ideology and *descriptive representation* as the driving forces behind populists' electoral success and survival.

Our findings have straightforward implications for the political and policy consequences of including populists in government. In particular, we show that electoral returns to ideological moderation and spatial re-positioning have clear limits whenever voter-driven demand for descriptive representation and ideological purity is a significant constraint that parties face (Konstantinidis, Matakos, and Mutlu-Eren 2019), and that political experience and the benefits of holding office are not sufficient *on their own* in order to ensure the political survival of populists. Put differently, our work highlights how important feature ideology is for the success and consolidation of populist and radical parties.

Based on these findings, one may presume that attempts to incorporate populist parties into the political “mainstream” are possibly of little value or success. If voter-driven demand for ideological (and expressive) representation is responsible for populists' wide electoral success, then office motives and the perks of being in power will prove to be weak incentives to lure such political formations into the moderate mainstream.

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A Pink Slip for the Blue Reform:
Is Selection, Experience, or Ideology the Elixir of
Populists' Survival?
Supplementary Information

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Data

This appendix provides additional information on the data that we use.

Data Sources

We combine data from a number of sources. All of the data are publicly available. First, we use candidate-level election data from the Finnish Ministry of Justice. These data are available on their website at <https://tulospalvelu.vaalit.fi/> (accessed March 13, 2020). These data can be merged with the voting aid application data from *YLE* based on candidate IDs. For the 2019 data, see <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10725384>, and for the 2015 data, see <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-7869597> (accessed March 13, 2021).

We also use survey data on voter ideology. The voter surveys were conducted by conducted by the Finnish Business and Policy Forum in 2015 and 2019 before the elections (EVA 2015, 2019). Researchers can acquire the data from the Finnish Social Science Data Archive after registering. The 2019 data can be found at https://services.fsd.tuni.fi/catalogue/FSD3330?study_language=en, and the 2015 data can be found at https://services.fsd.tuni.fi/catalogue/FSD3001?study_language=fi (accessed March 13, 2021).

Measuring Candidate Ideology

The voting aid application data allow us to measure candidate ideology. For some examples of papers using these data in the Finnish context, see Matakos et al. (2018), Meriläinen (2020), and Isotalo, Mattila, and von Schoultz (2020). The voting aid application data contain a number of questions that we compress into two metrics of ideology using a principal component analysis. One component captures the traditional left-right dimension of ideology, while the other component measures candidate positions in the GAL-TAN axis. Principal component analysis is commonly used to construct more compact measures of ideology from survey data (Ansolabehere, Snyder, and Stewart 2001; Heckman and Snyder 1997).

2019 Voting Aid Application. The 2019 voting aid application contains 26 claims. We present these claims in Table SII. The candidates responded to these claims with “completely disagree” (value 1), “disagree” (value 2), “agree” (value 4), or “completely agree” (value 5). Note that an intermediate option was not offered.

Once we run the principal component analysis, we see that claims that are associated with the GAL-TAN dimension of ideology get a stronger loading to the first principal component. This component explains 27% of the variation in the data. We multiply the predicted component value by minus one so that smaller values of the resulting ideology score would reflect a stronger leaning towards GAL. For example, the claim that “the growing number of immigrants has increased insecurity in Finland” is associated with this ideology score. Claims that are associated with the economic left-right ideology get a stronger loading to the second principal component which explains 12% of the variation in the data. One example of a claim that gets a higher loading to this principal component is that “public expenditures and revenues should be balanced rather by cutting down spending than increasing taxes”.

2015 Voting Aid Application. The 2019 voting aid application contains 32 claims. We present these claims in Table [SI2](#). The candidates responded to these claims with “completely disagree” (value 1), “disagree” (value 2), “do not agree or disagree” (value 3), “agree” (value 4), or “completely agree” (value 5).

The principal component analysis suggests that claims that are associated with economic ideology get a stronger loading to the first principal component. One example of a voting aid application claim associated with this component is “It is too easy to live on welfare benefits”. Now this component explains 20% of the variation in the data. The second component captures claims that are associated with social ideology, and this component explains 11% of the variation in the data. Again, we multiply the resulting score by minus one so that smaller values of the resulting ideology score would reflect a stronger leaning towards GAL. For example, the claim that “immigration should be restricted due to the threat of terrorism” gets a higher loading for this principal component.

Measuring Voter Ideology

We use the survey data on voters in a similar manner as the voting aid application data on politicians’ policy positions. To construct the voter ideology scores for 2019, we exploit 50 questions to which citizens would respond in a similar 1-5 scale (ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”).¹ We compress these responses to two proxies of voter ideology using a principal component analysis. The first two principal components capture voters’ left-right and GAL-TAN ideology. More precisely, the inverse of the first principal component informs us about the survey respondents’ GAL-TAN ideology and the inverse of the second principal component

¹We use all questions in the Q1 category; see the codebook available at <https://services.fsd.tuni.fi/catalogue/FSD3330/PIP/cbF3330e.pdf> (accessed March 13, 2021).

captures their left-right ideology. The components explain 26% and 10% of the variation in the survey responses, respectively.

In the 2015 survey, we observe 48 similar questions to which survey respondents would respond in a five-point scale.² Now, the first principal component measures economic left-right ideology (explaining 14% of the variation) and the second principal component measures social GAL-TAN ideology (explaining 8% of the variation).

²We again use all questions in the Q1 category; see the codebook available at <https://services.fsd.tuni.fi/catalogue/FSD3001/PIP/cbF3001e.pdf> (accessed March 13, 2021).

Differences in Policy Positions

Table [SI1](#) presents differences in policy positions for the Finns Party and the Blue Reform in the 2019 election. We see differences in the parties' policy positions that are both large and statistically significant. Table [SI2](#) focuses on candidates who ran in both 2015 and 2019. We split the sample in two: candidates who ran for the Finns Party in both elections, and candidates who ran for the Finns Party in 2015 but the Blue Reform in 2019. Now, the differences are less obvious, although one claim that stands out is "Finland should take a greater responsibility of the refugees arriving in the EU".

We also report the (average) policy positions of all major parties in Figure [SI1](#). Panel A shows parties' policy positions using data from the 2015 voting aid application, and Panel B uses data from the 2019 election.

Table SI1. Differences in policy positions, 2019 election.

	True Finns	Blue Reform	Difference	p-value
<i>Climate and environment</i>				
Finland must become a front runner in the battle against climate change even if it meant extra costs.	1.373	2.676	1.302	0.000
Finland should not hurry with banning the sales of new cars running on gasoline.	4.828	4.607	-0.221	0.005
The state should steer Finns towards eating less meat, for example, with the means of taxation.	1.236	1.688	0.452	0.000
Forests are harvested too much in Finland.	1.580	1.836	0.257	0.017
<i>Economy</i>				
Public expenditures and revenues should be balanced rather by cutting down spending than increasing taxes.	4.249	3.712	-0.537	0.000
Social welfare should be developed such that part of current welfare benefits would be replaced with a universal basic income.	2.091	2.477	0.386	0.009
Finland would be better off outside of the Euro Zone.	4.167	2.545	-1.621	0.000
<i>Health</i>				
Social and health care services should be primarily provided by the public sector.	4.335	3.902	-0.433	0.000
We should increase privatization in elderly care.	1.536	2.036	0.500	0.000
Terminally ill should be allowed to have euthanasia.	3.790	3.491	-0.300	0.078
Gender reassignment should be possible for individuals younger than 18 years.	1.370	1.709	0.339	0.002
Grocery stores should be allowed to sell wine and strong beers.	4.120	3.991	-0.129	0.396
Selling energy drinks to below-15-year-olds should be banned.	4.101	4.270	0.169	0.201
The maximum limit for passenger import of snuff and chewing tobacco should be reduced to one kilogram.	2.297	3.073	0.776	0.000
<i>Family and education</i>				
Parental leave should be reformed such that the leave would be more equally distributed among the parents.	2.082	2.450	0.369	0.024
High school or vocational education should be made compulsory.	2.641	3.125	0.484	0.005
Summer holidays in school should start and end two weeks later.	3.360	3.459	0.099	0.539
The number of higher education institutions should be reduced and the savings should be used to pursue excellence in teaching and research.	2.000	2.056	0.056	0.651
<i>Immigration</i>				
The growing number of immigrants has increased insecurity in Finland.	4.952	4.312	-0.640	0.000
Financing social and health care services requires having more work-related immigration.	1.476	2.649	1.173	0.000
<i>Security</i>				
Joining the NATO would improve national security in Finland.	1.932	2.299	0.367	0.009
Hate speech should be defined and made punishable in the law.	1.551	3.676	2.124	0.000
<i>Values</i>				
Traditional values provide a basis for a good life.	4.742	4.598	-0.143	0.037
Even drastic measures are needed to defend public safety and normal people in Finland.	4.411	3.748	-0.663	0.000
It is justified that some groups are better off than others in society.	2.510	2.273	-0.237	0.134
Finnish laws should let people make their own choices more freely as well as bear the consequences.	3.182	2.889	-0.293	0.071

Table SI2. Differences in 2015 policy positions for the rerunning True Finns candidates.

	True Finns	Blue Reform	Difference	p-value
<i>Employment</i>				
It is too easy to live on welfare benefits	3.132	2.955	-0.177	0.510
Stores should be allowed to choose their opening hours freely	4.237	3.818	-0.419	0.111
We should adopt universal basic income that would replace the current social welfare system.	3.133	3.318	0.185	0.505
Workers should be guaranteed a minimum number of working hours.	3.816	3.545	-0.270	0.372
The duration of earnings-related unemployment insurance should be shortened.	2.237	2.227	-0.010	0.974
<i>Economy</i>				
Finland would be better off outside of the Euro Zone.	4.276	4.182	-0.094	0.618
Food could be taxed more heavily.	1.132	1.091	-0.041	0.613
Municipal and national budgets should primarily be balances with spending cuts.	4.053	3.818	-0.235	0.302
Child benefits should be increased and taxed.	2.747	2.455	-0.292	0.336
We cannot afford the current social and health care services.	2.737	2.500	-0.237	0.430
<i>Public safety</i>				
Joining the NATO would improve national security in Finland.	2.027	2.000	-0.027	0.914
Finland needs more policemen.	4.632	4.455	-0.177	0.243
Immigration should be restricted due to the threat of terrorism.	4.618	3.682	-0.937	0.000
Russia's sphere of influence politics is a threat to Finland.	3.560	3.571	0.011	0.969
Security of the nation is more important than citizens' privacy when it comes to monitoring the Internet.	3.520	3.591	0.071	0.790
Finland should participate in the war against ISIS by training Iraqi troops.	2.307	2.545	0.239	0.455
<i>Health</i>				
Terminally ill should be allowed to have euthanasia.	3.711	3.545	-0.165	0.564
Social and health care services should be provided predominantly by the public sector.	4.211	4.091	-0.120	0.591
Public authorities should intervene more often when families with children have problems.	3.946	3.909	-0.037	0.877
Elderly people and their families should cover a greater share of the costs of elderly care.	1.959	2.045	0.086	0.698
Citizens' right to health care services is more important than municipal autonomy.	4.145	3.818	-0.327	0.109
<i>Future</i>				
Preventing the climate change is more important than competitiveness of the industry.	1.920	2.091	0.171	0.488
Gene-manipulated food is safe for people and the environment.	2.027	2.000	-0.027	0.919
Finland should take a greater responsibility of the refugees arriving in the EU.	1.092	1.545	0.453	0.000
We need to abandon the idea that whole Finland should be kept populated	1.763	1.455	-0.309	0.169
Class sizes should be capped at 20 students, for example.	3.474	3.364	-0.110	0.713
<i>Other topics</i>				
There should be a referendum about NATO membership.	2.934	2.864	-0.071	0.435
We should agree in principle to build a new nuclear power plant.	2.360	2.182	-0.178	0.432
Income taxation should be lowered for all income groups to stimulate the economy.	2.213	1.545	-0.668	0.005
Last Parliament's decision to allow same-sex marriage should be called off.	2.333	2.238	-0.095	0.652
Grocery stores should be allowed to sell mild wines and strong beers.	2.645	2.500	-0.145	0.439
Studying Swedish should be voluntary.	2.947	2.864	-0.084	0.338

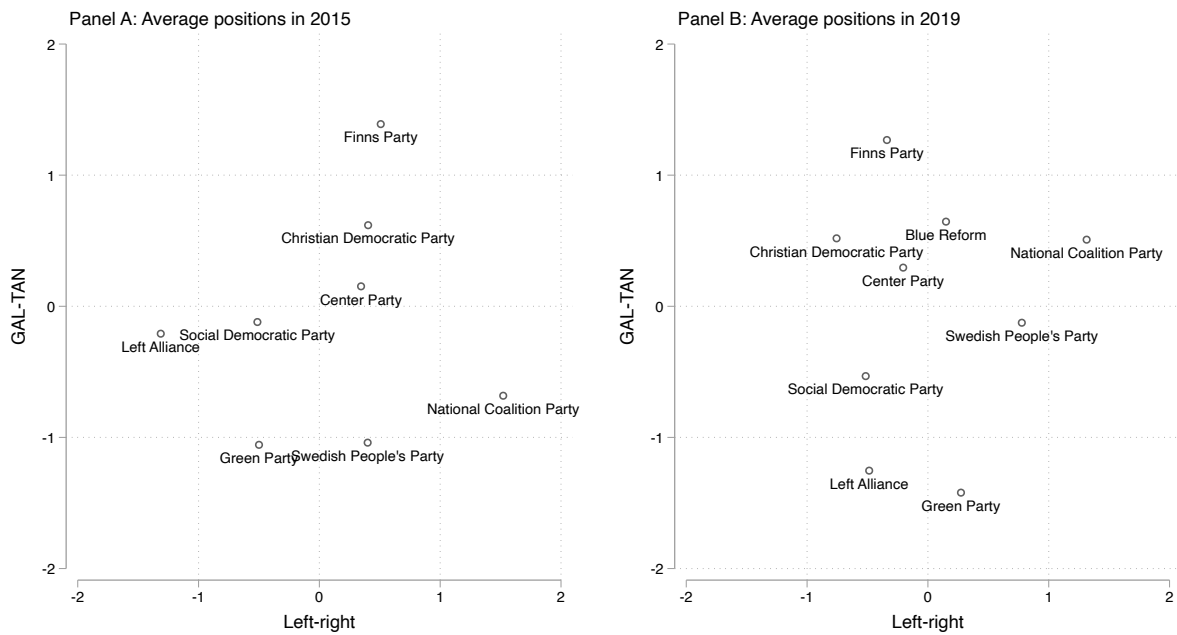


Figure SI1. Average ideological positions of parties in 2015 and 2019.

Notes: The figure shows average policy positions of Finnish political parties in the 2015 and 2019 parliamentary elections.

Additional Regression Results

In this appendix, we present additional regression results.

Cost of Governing

To quantify the cost of governing in municipal politics we use data on the Finns Party from the 2012 and 2017 municipal elections and estimate a fixed effects specification of the following form:

$$Vote\ share_{pt} = \alpha Govern_{p,2012} + \beta 1[Year = 2017] + \gamma_p + \varepsilon_{pt}. \quad (1)$$

Here $Govern_{p,2012}$ is an indicator variable for party p holding the chairmanship of the municipal board, $1[Year = 2017]$ is an indicator for the 2017 election. δ_p are the party-municipality fixed effects and ε_{pt} is the error term.

Results from this specification are presented in column (1) of Table [SI3](#). We see that the Finns Party lost around 3.5% of its vote share between 2012 and 2017, but the loss was larger if the party had a governing position: the sum of the coefficients implies a loss of around 7%. This loss is large also compared with the mean and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). However, note that the impact of governing is identified from a very small number of municipalities: the Finns Party governed only seven municipalities after the 2012 municipal election.

Using data on all parties and including additional interactions in the regression model yields a similar result. These regression results are reported in column (2) of Table [SI3](#). Other parties do not appear to face a cost of governing. The coefficient for being the governing party is small in magnitude and statistically insignificant, but the coefficient for its interaction with the Finns Party indicator is considerably larger. The regression results also demonstrate the general decline in the Finns Party vote share between the 2012 and 2017 municipal elections.

Determinants of Party Choice

Table [SI4](#) presents multivariate regression results trying to understand the correlates of party choice. We study two samples separately. In Panel A, we only use data on candidates who ran in both 2015 and 2019. In Panel B, we use data on all candidates.

We first limit our attention to candidates who ran for either the Finns Party and Blue Reform and try to understand the party choice in this subsample. The regression results for rerunners (Panel A) and all candidates (Panel B) are mostly similar. Column (1) shows that incumbency is inversely associated with running as a Finns Party candidate. But, Finns Party candidates were seemingly not complete political outsiders. The estimation results suggest that they were more

Table SI3. Electoral cost of governing.

	Finns Party	All parties
	(1)	(2)
Govern (<i>t-1</i>)	-3.428** (1.721)	-0.279 (0.393)
1[Year = 2017]	-3.522*** (0.240)	0.620*** (0.091)
Govern (<i>t-1</i>) × Finns Party		-2.351 (1.759)
1[Year = 2017] × Finns Party		-4.142*** (0.256)
<i>N</i>	509	3689
<i>R</i> ²	0.52	0.14
Mean of dependent variable	11.51	15.57

Notes: The dependent variable is party vote share. Column (1) uses data on the Finns Party only, and column (2) uses data on all parties. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. ***, ** and * denote statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10% levels, respectively.

likely to be local politicians (although the point estimate in Panel A is not statistically significant) and also more likely to have run in the previous election. There are no apparent differences in terms of social background of the candidates, as university education or blue-collar background do not appear to be statistically significant determinants of the choice between the Finns Party and the Blue Reform. Column (2) then regresses the indicator for choosing the Finns Party instead of the Blue Reform on measures of loyalty and agreeableness, confirming the findings we already saw in the bivariate comparisons. In column (3), we look at the role of ideology in party choice. Overall, the Finns Party candidates were more left-wing than Blue Reform candidates. What is more, GAL-TAN ideology appears to be a very strong predictor of choosing the Finns Party.

The comparisons of Finns Party candidates and candidates from parties other than the Blue Reform echo these findings to some extent (columns 4-6). Being a local politician is associated with a 9% higher probability of running for the Finns Party instead of some other party, suggesting that the Finns Party had strong local roots also compared with other political parties. We also see that university education and having a blue-collar occupation is negatively associated with the probability of choosing the Finns Party. In terms of ideology, we see that a one-standard-deviation change in economic ideology makes it around 4% less likely that a candidate would run

for the Finns Party. The relationship is the opposite for the GAL-TAN dimension of ideology: a one-standard-deviation increase in the GAL-TAN ideology score is associated with a 15% higher probability of running for the Finns Party.

The last three columns study the choice between Blue Reform and parties other than the Finns Party. Blue Reform candidates were more likely to be incumbents than candidates from other parties, but the opposite is true for being a local politician or a rerunning candidate (suggesting that less non-elected candidates decided to run again for the Blue Reform). Similar to the selection to the Finns Party, university education is negatively associated with the propensity of running as a Blue Reform candidate as opposed to another party candidate, but having a blue-collar occupation does not seem to matter. The economic left-right ideology does not appear to be a major predictor of party choice in this subsample. However, the regression results hint that the GAL-TAN axis also played a role in choosing the Blue Reform, although the relationship is less nuanced than it is for the Finns Party.

Cost of Party Switching

We estimate the cost of party switching by using data on candidates who ran both in the 2015 and the 2019 parliamentary election. These data allow us to estimate the following fixed effects specification:

$$Vote\ share_{it} = \zeta Switch_{i,2019} + \eta Blue\ Reform_{i,2019} + \theta 1[Year = 2019] + \lambda_i + \mu_{it}. \quad (2)$$

Here $Switch_{i,2019}$ is an indicator variable for candidate i running for different parties in 2015 and 2019, $Blue\ Reform_{i,2019}$ is an indicator for running as a Blue Reform candidate, and $1[Year = 2019]$ is an indicator for the 2019 election that captures the general trend in vote shares. λ_i are the candidate fixed effects and μ_{it} is the error term.

Table [S15](#) reports the regression results. We can see that, on average, party switchers for parties other than the Blue Reform did not lose any more votes than other rerunners. In contrast, candidates from the Blue Reform—all of whom were party switchers—did worse in the 2019 election.

Table SI4. Determinants of party choice in 2019.

	Finns Party vs. Blue Reform			Finns Party vs. Others			Blue Reform vs. Others		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Panel A: Rerunning candidates									
Incumbent	-0.255** [0.127]			-0.018 [0.036]			0.042* [0.024]		
Local politician	0.077 [0.102]			0.091*** [0.027]			0.005 [0.014]		
District vote share	0.063* [0.036]			0.005 [0.005]			-0.003 [0.002]		
University	-0.034 [0.084]			-0.076** [0.032]			-0.014 [0.018]		
Blue collar	0.060 [0.096]			0.044 [0.043]			-0.006 [0.023]		
Loyalty		0.055* [0.030]			0.043*** [0.009]			0.005 [0.005]	
Agreeableness		-0.074*** [0.024]			-0.067*** [0.014]			-0.000 [0.006]	
Left-right ideology			-0.159*** [0.051]			-0.043*** [0.010]			0.000 [0.006]
GAL-TAN ideology			0.460*** [0.082]			0.150*** [0.015]			0.036*** [0.009]
<i>N</i>	106	99	84	721	661	556	663	602	508
<i>R</i> ²	0.06	0.10	0.31	0.03	0.10	0.23	0.01	0.00	0.03
Mean of dependent variable	0.77	0.80	0.79	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.04	0.03	0.04
Panel B: All candidates									
Incumbent	-0.227** [0.114]			-0.011 [0.029]			0.058** [0.022]		
Local politician	0.376*** [0.051]			0.088*** [0.014]			-0.041*** [0.009]		
Rerunning	0.168*** [0.055]			0.015 [0.015]			-0.039*** [0.010]		
University	0.023 [0.052]			-0.047*** [0.014]			-0.032*** [0.012]		
Blue collar	0.065 [0.056]			0.045** [0.019]			-0.009 [0.016]		
Loyalty		0.043** [0.019]			0.030*** [0.005]			0.009** [0.004]	
Agreeableness		-0.078*** [0.019]			-0.041*** [0.007]			-0.003 [0.005]	
Left-right ideology			-0.172*** [0.028]			-0.032*** [0.005]			0.002 [0.004]
GAL-TAN ideology			0.541*** [0.037]			0.124*** [0.008]			0.045*** [0.005]
<i>N</i>	364	316	273	2310	2110	1817	2248	2014	1730
<i>R</i> ²	0.20	0.06	0.40	0.03	0.05	0.19	0.02	0.00	0.04
Mean of dependent variable	0.59	0.65	0.66	0.09	0.10	0.10	0.07	0.05	0.05

Notes: The dependent variable is an indicator for running for the Finns Party in columns (1)-(4) and an indicator for running for the Blue Reform in column (5)-(6). The estimation sample includes candidates running for the Finns Party and the Blue Reform in columns (1) and (2), candidates running for the Finns Party and other parties in (3) and (4), and candidates running for the Blue Reform and other parties in columns (5) and (6). We report results separately for rerunning candidates (Panel A) and all candidates (Panel B). Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. ***, ** and * denote statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10% levels, respectively.

Table SI5. Electoral cost of party switching.

	(1)
Switch party	0.189 (0.441)
Blue Reform	-1.142** (0.478)
1[Year = 2019]	0.065** (0.028)
<i>N</i>	1492
<i>R</i> ²	0.01
Mean of dependent variable	1.03

Notes: The dependent variable is (district) vote share. Robust standard errors are reported in parentheses. ***, ** and * denote statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10% levels, respectively.

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