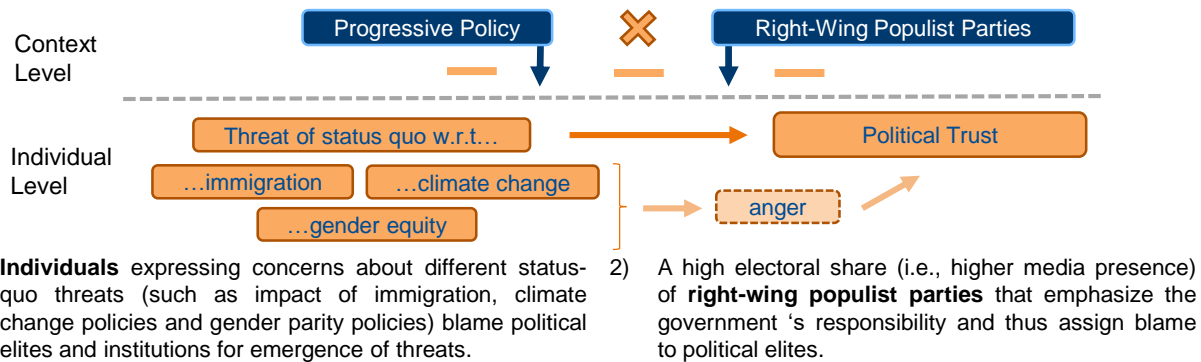


Background & Research Question

- In the context of sudden threats such as terrorist attacks or the COVID-19 pandemic, **rally-round-the-flag** effects are well-documented
 - Rally-round-the-flag effects:** sharp increase in political support for the incumbent government
- However, threatened social segments respond in reverse way, e.g., with decreased support levels
- We argue that the political context determines the effect's salience and shape.

→ We ask: To what extent does the political context influence the individual association between perceived threat and trust in political institutions?

Theoretical Framework



We argue, the co-presence of two **contextual** conditions amplify this effect:

- The existence of **progressive policies** that tend to reinforce the perceived threat (pro-immigrant policy, ambitious climate change policy, or legal gender parity)

Underlying mechanism: liberal policies provide a fertile ground for the anti-elite rhetoric of populist parties. This type of challenging political communication is particularly effective at threatened social segments.

Variables

Individual Level

Independent Variable: Trust in political institutions, Range 0-10; 0 no trust at all to 10 complete trust

Dependent Variables:

- Threat of immigration (3-item index); Range 1-5
- Threat of climate change (2-item index); Range 1-10
- Threat of gender equity (1 item); Range 1-5
- higher value indicate higher level of perceived threat

Contextual Level

- Share of votes for right-wing populists (TIMBRO data)
- Immigrant integration policy (MIPEX)
- Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)
- Gender Gap Index Political Subdimension (GGGI)
- Using Median Splits:
 - High MIPEX vs. Low MIPEX
 - High CCPI vs. Low CCPI
 - High GGGI vs. Low GGGI

Data & Method

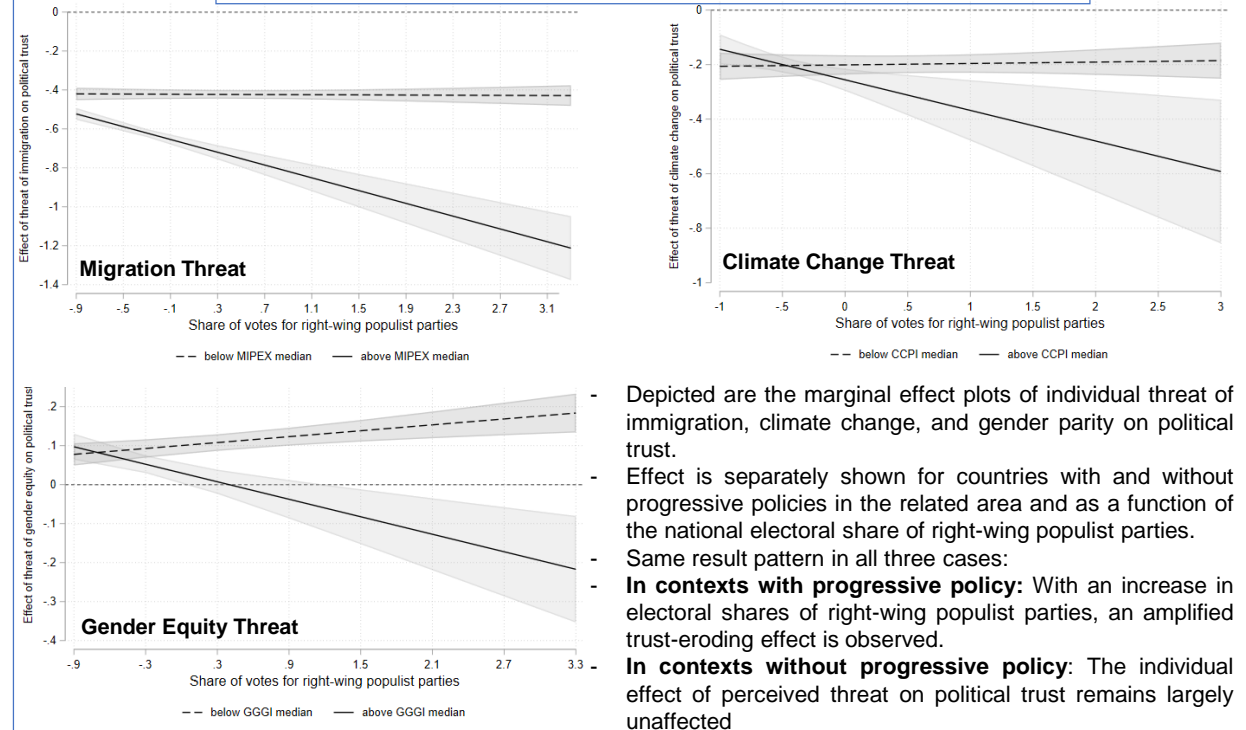
Data:

- Threat of immigration: European Social Survey 5 (2010) & 7 (2014)
- Threat of climate change: ESS Round 8 (2016)
- Threat of gender equity ESS Round 5 (2010) & 8 (2016)

Method

- Multilevel regression with 3 levels
- Country-fixed effects to control for unobserved heterogeneity on contextual level
- Z-standardized predictor variables for improved comparability

Results



- Depicted are the marginal effect plots of individual threat of immigration, climate change, and gender parity on political trust.
- Effect is separately shown for countries with and without progressive policies in the related area and as a function of the national electoral share of right-wing populist parties.
- Same result pattern in all three cases:
- In contexts with progressive policy:** With an increase in electoral shares of right-wing populist parties, an amplified trust-eroding effect is observed.
- In contexts without progressive policy:** The individual effect of perceived threat on political trust remains largely unaffected

Conclusion

It is observable that in countries with a progressive policy, a trust-eroding effect emerges as the electoral share of right-wing populist parties increase. In contrast, in countries without progressive policies, this amplified effect is not examined.

The findings suggest that in countries with progressive policies, the right-wing populist presence undermines trust in political elites and institutions. Importantly, threatened individuals need to be considered when implementing progressive and challenging policies.