Comments on

Twist: "The far right in government: mainstream or extreme?"
Curtis: "Neutered or Normalized? How coalition government participation affects voter evaluations of the far right"
Álvarez-Benjumea and Valentim: "The social costs of showing far-right political preferences"

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Overview

► Does government participation help mainstream the far right?
► What is mainstreaming and how can we measure it?
► Preliminary data (AUT + NED) suggests no mainstreaming

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- ▶ What is mainstreaming and how can we measure it?
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- ▶ Important theoretical, conceptual, and measurement work
- ▶ Obvious real world importance
- ▶ Some interesting preliminary findings

Comments

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  ▶ Makes it sound fairly similar, mainstream ≡ "broadly/relatively moderate"?
  ▶ Music analogy might suggest mainstream ≡ popular, but...

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    ▶ Yes, but why would that be problematic? Would a techno or gangster rap song topping the charts be mainstream?

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  - ▶ Yes, but why would that be problematic? Would a techno or gangster rap song topping the charts be mainstream?
- ▶ Some of the discussion (e.g., on backlash) sounds like it might be mostly about norms → Vicente
- ▶ Analysis suggests it's about LR placement (i.e., policy moderation?), likelihood of voting (i.e., popularity/social acceptability/norms?), coalition preferences (i.e., gov't stability, policy maximization, ...)
  ↑ lots of different things

⇒ Crucially important to get definition + connection to empirics right & *tight*

Comments

Preliminary analysis

▶ Tables 3-4 (5-6 to lesser extent) show some very interesting variation across parties: CDA voters perceive PVV as most moderate (not more common partner VVD); VVD voters put PVV furthest to the right (further than PVV voters!) but also have highest likelihood of voting

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Voters	2013	2017	2019	2024
ÖVP-SPÖ	6.3	3.41	2.12	5.12
	(6.02, 6.58)	(2.97, 3.85)	(1.82, 2.42)	(4.71, 5.54)
ÖVP-FPÖ	3.81	5.83	5.61	3.59
	(3.53, 4.09)	(5.38, 6.27)	(5.19, 6.04)	(3.08, 4.1)
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	(1.57, 1.98)	(1.88, 2.49)	(0.89, 1.33)	(0.98, 1.57)

Table 8: Austrian ÖVP voters' coalition preferences, 2013-24

▶ Changes over time: SPÖ-ÖVP in power 2007-2017: first popular but then drop, ÖVP-FPÖ in power 2017-2019: popular throughout, ÖVP-Green in power since 2020: suddenly SPÖ becomes more popular again...
  ▶ 2019 survey before or after Ibiza scandal?

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▶ →Lots of things to further explore
  →Cases to study unfortunately likely to grow

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- ▶ Government participation *does not* help; if anything, seems to *hurt*

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- Does government participation help ~~mainstream~~ the far right?
- Focus on perceived ideology, leader favorability, vote intention
- Government participation *does not* help; if anything, seems to *hurt*

- Very clear question, well linked to the empirics
- Obvious real world importance
- Very strong design with respondent FEs and 3+3 periods pre/post
- Super important findings! Encouraging or discouraging?

Comments

Findings could have pretty dramatic implications

▶ Viewed as more centrist, but leader less liked and vote intention ↓

▶ Even good economic performance is not beneficial (but it is for ÖVP)!

▶ ⇒ So strategy seems to work? Would you recommend it?

    ▶ Interesting to repeat analysis for ÖVP and see how/if/where they benefit

    ▶ Adams, Böhmelt, Ezrow, Schleiter (2022) PLOS One could be fitting cite

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▶ Counterfactual analysis of other elections (GER/AUT) sounds great

▶ Vox idea also sounds great and would be very interesting addition

Comments

More minor comments

▶ Currently 9 hypotheses: perhaps a bit too much, if they all stay, lay out more of a roadmap

▶ H2: Out-partisans of far-right parties will like far-right parties less after they join coalition governments [because they are less competent in gov't than opposition]. – Did not find this fully convincing. Could they not also benefit from the professionalism of the coalition partner? And how fast would voters be able to assess this anyway?

▶ H6 (dependent on economy) is the only hypothesis that explicitly mentions performance, but others seem to make implied assumptions about it. Could perhaps be interesting to give performance a more prominent place in all this

▶ What is the exact timing of the different waves?

▶ Does closest to ÖVP=0 include closest to FPÖ, and closest to FPÖ=0 include closest to ÖVP?

▶ Is economic performance measured in every wave? Could the coalition formation affect my view of the economy (in a partisan way)?

▶ Tables 2+3: Would be interesting to see a "fully-specified" model that includes the different explanations at the same time

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- ▶ Are some political preferences more costly to express?
- ▶ Field experiment with confederates wearing political t-shirts
- ▶ People avoid interacting with Vox t-shirt wearers

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▶ Are some political preferences more costly to express?
▶ Field experiment with confederates wearing political t-shirts
▶ People avoid interacting with Vox t-shirt wearers

▶ Really clever and exciting, yet simple (not in implementation!), experiment
▶ Intuitive and interesting results
▶ Now truly norms "in the wild"

Comments

Super polished, clear, and concise, so very specific comments

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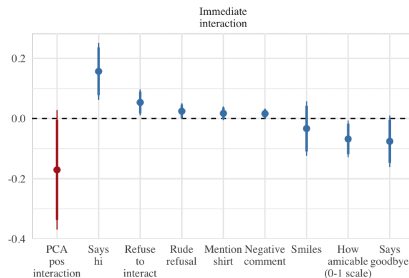Super polished, clear, and concise, so very specific comments

▶ Benchmarking of effects: really amazing would be comparison to other looks (metal band, skull and bones, Barcelona jersey, cute cats, ripped jeans, unwashed, ...); also: what effect sizes did you expect?

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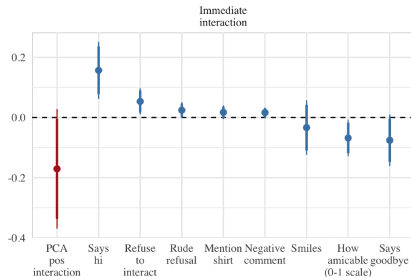A: Effect of far-right shirt vs. neutral shirt

▶ Fig C3: Biggest effect for "saying hi" is fascinating! Surprise (before norms kick in)? Do "hi sayers" turn rude?

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A: Effect of far-right shirt vs. neutral shirt

▶ Fig C3: Biggest effect for "saying hi" is fascinating! Surprise (before norms kick in)? Do "hi sayers" turn rude?
▶ Mention specific interaction/conversation opener in main text (figure caption mentions asking for streets)
▶ Also mention: overall N + placebo analysis (i.e., balance tests)

Comments

More minor comments

▶ Main text mentions "as per pre-registration" A LOT. Once or twice might be fine?

▶ Could you control for weather/temperature/rain?

▶ Figure 4 and interaction models: Should p-values be adjusted for multiple comparisons (would most likely still be significant)?

▶ Tables C3-C10: Clarify outcome variable, ideally in table title (refusal to interact?)

▶ Tables C5-C10: Does comparison vs all other parties exclude Vox?

▶ Abstract: "Our results highlight that the expression of political views is not a direct translation of one's private preferences, since the social costs of showing those preferences differ depending on one's ideology." – Sounds off to me, first part does not seem to follow from the second. Perhaps the translation is just not the same/equal for everyone?