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Targeted Nativism: Ethnic Diversity and Radical Right Parties in Europe

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Abstract
Radical right parties are commonly associated with nativism and opposition to ethnic diversity, but there have been few systematic attempts to investigate this connection further. Noting that radical right parties in Europe do not express hostility towards all minorities or all immigrants, I investigate possible explanations for the difference in targeted hostility. I introduce the concept of targeted nativism, distinguishing between ethnic minorities that are excluded using the nativist cleavage, and those that are implicitly included in 'the nation'. I propose three explanations for the targeted nativism, identifying minority outgroups based on: (1) ethnocultural differences, (2) minority political empowerment, or (3) ethnocultural minority accommodation. I examine these explanations using the examples of radical right parties in Sweden and Bulgaria, and further test these hypotheses with a new dataset that identifies targeted minorities. My findings indicate that more distinctive minorities are significantly more likely to be targeted by the radical right.

In the last few decades radical right parties have gained prominence in Europe, moving from the fringes of the political system to become a regular presence in many European democracies, provoking a great deal of academic attention. Scholars have focused especially on two dimensions: establishing a clear definition of this new type of political party, and examining the conditions for their success. From the start one aspect of these parties was undisputed: they were characterized by nativism, animosity towards ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, and xenophobia.[1]

Initially, the investigation of the radical right focused on Western Europe, and on parties expressing hostility towards immigrants. Later on, scholars expanded the scope of their analysis to include post-communist Europe where the radical right usually targets local historical minorities. While targets differ depending on the context, the rhetoric used and claims made are often strikingly similar. The targeted minorities are usually portrayed as culturally incompatible, criminally inclined, and/or as ungrateful disproportionate beneficiaries of public welfare programmes and other policy arrangements. Depending on the context, local

radical right politicians target specific groups – for example, Russians in Estonia, Moroccans in the Netherlands, or Turks in Greece.

At the same time, some minorities, both historical and immigrant, are left unscathed. The Finnish minority in Sweden is not seen as problematic, nor is the Turkish minority in North Macedonia, or Brazilian immigrants in Portugal. These examples point to a relatively unexplored topic: whether some characteristics of ethnic minorities make them more likely to be scapegoats for the radical right. This topic has received some academic attention. Looking at the Netherlands, Paul Sniderman et al. (2004) examined differences in perceived threats and hostility towards several large immigrant groups, but without connecting them to the support for the radical right. Jens Rydgren (2008) analysed anti-immigration attitudes among voters for radical right parties in Western Europe, distinguishing between those based on immigration scepticism, xenophobia, and racism, but without connecting them to specific immigrant groups. Examining post-communist Europe, Lenka Bustikova (2014, 2020) found that the success of radical right parties is tied to the backlash against politically successful minorities. Still, her compelling analysis does not explain why radical right parties mobilize not only against politically successful minorities, but also against marginalized ones.[2]

This article focuses on the concept of nativism, which is widely accepted as a defining characteristic of radical right parties.[3] Recognizing that one can identify which minority groups are defined as outgroups by different radical right parties, I conceptualize targeted nativism, distinguishing between ethnic minorities that are presented as fundamentally threatening to the nation state and those that are not. I recognize that targeting is already implied in the concept of nativism, but it is not operationalized in a way that allows an investigation of which minorities get targeted by the radical right. In this article I examine logic behind the radical right's choice of targeted minority outgroups, distinguishing between minorities that are targeted and those that are not. I outline and test three distinctive rationales behind animosity towards ethnic minorities, based on degree of ethnocultural distinctiveness, minority political empowerment, and multiculturalist minority accommodation. While I recognize that voters do not support radical right parties only due to their nativism, this approach allows me to identify which ethnic minorities are most likely to be targeted as outgroups. I find evidence that successful radical right parties in Europe tend to focus on minorities that are more distinctive from local ethnic majorities. This finding points at the continuing importance of ethnocultural identification, indicating that perceived ethnocultural proximity or difference still plays an important role in European politics.

My approach moves beyond a simplified notion that all immigrants or all minorities are seen the same way by the radical right. While it is often taken for granted that radical right parties focus their attention on specific minorities, the logic behind such differential treatment of minorities is rarely empirically investigated across larger numbers of cases. I develop an approach that focuses on ethnic minorities in individual countries (both historical and immigrant), identifying the patterns in targeting ethnic minorities through mobilized nativism. This approach allows me to include countries across the East–West divide in Europe, since a focus on immigration (adapted from well-known cases in Western Europe) has clear limitations for the post-communist countries that have relatively modest experience with immigration and immigrants.

I briefly review the existing literature on radical right parties in Europe, focusing on ethnic diversity. I then discuss the logic of targeted nativism as a way to distinguish empirically between ethnic minorities that are actively ostracized or quietly ignored by radical right parties. I apply the logic of targeted nativism to ethnic minorities in Sweden and Bulgaria, providing the first proof of its explanatory value in widely different contexts in Europe. I then present a new dataset that tests the exposure of ethnic minorities to targeted nativism by the radical right and analyse it using hierarchical statistical models. I discuss the findings and contributions of this project and propose avenues for future research.

Radical right parties and ethnic diversity

The study of radical right parties emerged gradually as scholars struggled to understand the new political parties gaining prominence in several European democracies. The early work on these parties was primarily conceptual (Eatwell 2000; Fennema 1997; Ignazi 1992; Kitschelt 1995; Mudde 1996), focusing on Western Europe, with rarer attempts to theorize this phenomenon in the emerging party systems in post-communist Europe (Minkenberg 2002; Mudde 2005; Pirro 2015; Ramet 1999). The initial regional division in the study of the European radical right mostly persisted despite attempts by some prominent scholars to bridge it (cf. Mudde 2007; Norris 2005). Looking at both regions, nativism, authoritarianism, xenophobia, and anti-establishment sentiments are identified as key characteristics of radical right parties. There is an agreement that these parties exploit divisions between different groups living in the same country, using them as a basis for exclusion and scapegoating, which implicitly ties this research agenda to the study of nationalism and ethnic politics (cf. Bonikowski et al. 2019; Halikipoulou and Vlandas 2019; Lubbers 2019; Stroschein 2019). Yet this link has not been fully explored. Many scholars noted that the stigmatized 'other' differs across Europe. In Western Europe, immigrant groups are usually targeted, whereas in post-communist Europe the targets are more commonly long-settled local historical minorities. Empirically, the lack of comparable cross-national data capturing ethnic diversity across Europe (Simon 2012) has led many scholars to use available data and focus on fewer cases. This article addresses both of these issues, defining targeted groups in a way that allows comparison, and utilizing new data that identify the main ethnic groups in a much broader cross-section of countries over an extended period of time.

The extensive scholarship on radical right parties has examined their success as a product of the sociodemographic profile of their voters, characteristics of party systems, political institutions, economic performance, and the presence of immigrant populations, to mention the most prominent explanatory factors.[4] Increasingly, scholars use sophisticated multilevel statistical models to understand which factors explain this success. Here I summarize the literature on how ethnic diversity and the presence of minorities/immigrants explain the rise of radical right parties. While a focus on hostility towards some group(s) is not the only reason behind the support for these parties (Erlingsson et al. 2014; Mudde 1999), grievances about diversity are an important predictor of their success (Ivarsflaten 2008).

At the state level, ethnic diversity is commonly equated with the presence of immigrant minorities, accounting for the hostility of radical right parties

(in Western Europe) towards immigrants. The effect of immigration is assessed in several ways. Many studies operationalize immigration as the number of new applications for asylum status per capita (Arzheimer 2009; Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Swank and Betz 2003; van der Brug et al. 2005), the immigration rate (Knigge 1998), the size of the foreign-born population (Spies and Franzmann 2011), the proportion of non-EU citizens (Lubbers et al. 2002), or the percentage of foreigners in the population (Givens 2005; Golder 2003). Almost all these studies find that immigration is significantly associated with success for radical right parties.[5] While these authors acknowledge the problem of limited data availability, the chosen proxies focus on newer immigrants, often coming from outside Europe. The focus on the influx of new immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers ignores those already present in the country. Indicators of the number of foreign citizens living in the country do not account for naturalized citizens of immigrant origin, or the second generation of immigrants, who often have citizenship. Studying post-communist Europe, Lenka Bustikova and Herbert Kitschelt (2009: 477) use a measure of ethnic heterogeneity at the country level (HET), akin to the ethnic fractionalization index, which also accounts for relative group sizes. This approach works well for countries that do not experience extensive migration, which is increasingly rare in Europe.

Another approach uses individual-level data from cross-national surveys. Scholars working with these data make demand-side arguments that emphasize grievances related to ethnic diversity that make voting for the radical right more likely. They commonly include indicators of anti-immigrant attitudes, assessed through agreement with statements about presumed negative effects of immigrants (on the economy, culture, safety, or life in general) or a preference for restrictive immigration/asylum policies (Ivarsflaten 2008; Lubbers et al. 2002; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012; Steenvoorden and Harteveld 2018). Unsurprisingly, these variables confirm that individuals expressing anti-immigrant preferences are more likely to support the radical right. Unpacking this connection, Rydgren (2008) showed that a preference for restrictive immigration can be justified in different ways, and that parties often mobilize using frames linking immigration to criminality and social unrest rather than xenophobia and racism. While this work expands our understanding of how anti-immigrant mobilization works, it does not examine which immigrant groups are more likely to be targeted in a negative way.[6] Finally, Trevor Allen (2017) measured anti-immigrant attitudes in Western and post-communist Europe, finding a weaker connection between anti-immigrant sentiments and radical right support in post-communist countries. Given the relative absence of large-scale immigration in these countries, his finding is not surprising.[7] Instead, it reveals the need for a more comprehensive measure of ethnic diversity to understand the appeal of nativism across Europe.

Different scholars have also examined the reaction of mainstream parties to the presence and message of radical right parties in the political sphere. They mostly agree that a move to the right by a mainstream right party can legitimize a radical right party and boost its support (Arzheimer and Carter 2006) and that increased attention to typical radical right issues such as immigration and national identity in the programmes of other parties also helps the radical right (Arzheimer 2009; Habersack and Werner 2022). Dennis Spies and Simon Franzmann (2011) find

that both the convergence of mainstream parties and a high level of party-system polarization on cultural issues increase support for radical right parties. Michael Minkenberg (2013) concludes that taming the radical right is more common in Western Europe, while in Eastern Europe mainstream parties tend to become radicalized. Lenka Bustikova (2014) explains the radical right's success in post-communist Europe as a form of political backlash against the previous electoral achievements of liberal ethnic minority parties.

The logic of targeted nativism

The studies of the radical right account for nativist mobilization, but they do not explicitly examine the profile of ethnic minorities depicted as prototypical out-groups, excluding them from the 'nation' and presenting them in negative or hostile ways. I aim to contribute to the literature by putting implicit assumptions about 'ostracized outsider minorities' at the centre of the investigation. Building on the existing work on the nativism of radical right parties, I develop a concept of targeted nativism that allows us to distinguish between minorities that are directly targeted by the radical right and those that are ignored.

Scholars define nativism through its focus on a demarcation between 'native' and 'foreign' (Betz 2017, 2019; Guia 2016; Mudde 2007). Non-natives are presented as threatening to the 'homogenous nation-state' (Mudde 2007: 19), 'nation' (Guia 2016: 11), or 'national cohesion' (Betz 2017: 335).[8] Such demarcation has negative consequences for those defined as foreign/outsiders. Some authors talk more explicitly about hostility towards foreign group(s) as central characteristics of nativism (Guia 2016; Mudde 2007), while others highlight how nativism prioritizes natives (Betz 2019).[9] Nevertheless, the shared notion is that distinguishing between native and foreign should lead to positive effects for the native group (e.g. their culture is protected, they have preferential access to jobs and public services), while the position of those identified as foreign is made more precarious (they are presented as less deserving members of society thus endangering their societal position). The preservation of national cohesion and some essential (usually cultural) characteristics of the state thus requires exclusion and justifies the underlying hostility towards those seen as foreign.

In practice, the radical right tends to portray society as consisting of distinct, incompatible, and potentially hostile groups, using the logic of demarcation. The radical right's mobilization then uses simplified essentialist frames to label and antagonize some minority groups. I adapt the concept of nativism used in the literature to emphasize that the demarcation between native and foreign is followed by the exclusion of specific ethnic groups/minorities. Therefore, I aim to clarify what is already implicitly present in the definitions of nativism: the fact that nativism identifies and targets specific groups deemed foreign. The radical right actors use nativist language that questions belonging to the political space for some minorities, while it is silent about others. An ethnic minority singled out by the negative nativist rhetoric is put in a more precarious situation than minorities left out of such narratives.

I address some immediate critiques. First, I recognize that nativism is not the only reason for supporting the radical right. However, given the prominence of

anti-minority/anti-immigrant rhetoric associated with these parties (cf. Ivarsflaten 2008), it can be used to further examine patterns of nativist exclusion, while keeping in mind that nativism does not fully explain their appeal. In other words, while some individuals might vote for a specific radical right party for a number of reasons other than nativism, given the popular identification of these parties as anti-diversity parties (as they are commonly framed by the media), we can assume that their voters are aware that nativism is a part of such a party's identity and appeal. Second, I recognize that mainstream parties can also use nativist exclusionary rhetoric (cf. Habersack and Werner 2022). I focus on the radical right parties since they have first propagated anti-minority positions and uniquely 'own' this issue. Finally, I recognize that outgroup rhetoric is not limited to ethnic minorities only. The nativist rhetoric at times targets the LGBTQ+ community, feminists, or progressive elites as 'the enemies of the nation', but ethnic minorities still remain the most common and visible target.

I define targeted nativism as the selection and exclusion of targeted minorities from 'the nation' by presenting them as fundamentally alien and threatening to the nation state. Radical right politicians select ethnic minorities and rhetorically place them outside the ethnically defined nation. Therefore, I approach targeted nativism from the point of view of minorities that are either targeted or not by these parties; targeted nativism refers to minority 'targets'. Radical right parties use nativism to target (select and exclude) some group(s); targeted nativism allows us to distinguish between targeted and ignored minorities. Nativist rhetoric describes a targeted minority in a stereotypical negative way, encompassing the entire ethnic minority. For example, in order to rally support among its voters, a radical right party can portray all Turkish immigrants in a country as threatening Muslims, disregarding the fact that some (or many) among them are not practising Muslims. Targeted nativism distinguishes between minorities that are explicitly defined as outsiders and those that are (implicitly) included in 'the nation'. This way I recognize that the success of the radical right does not have the same importance for all minority groups. Some radical right parties focus their attention on specific groups (e.g. the Hungarian Jobbik focuses on Roma and Jews, but not on German and Serb minorities), while others take a broad approach (e.g. Vlaams Belang in Belgium targets historical Walloons and immigrant minorities). Examining which minorities are the object of targeted nativism in practice, we can discern the patterns of nativist exclusion and arrive at a profile of ethnic minorities that are most likely to be collective victims of the radical right.

To examine empirically the logic of targeted nativism, one needs to know which radical right parties target which minorities. While these parties are rarely explicit about targeted groups in the party documents, overall party rhetoric captured by media and experts on radical right parties (especially during political campaigns) allows us to identify minorities marked as outsiders and potential threats. In this project, I merely link targeted ethnic minorities to corresponding radical right parties, confirming the presence of targeted nativism towards some minorities, without examining the content of exclusionary nativist rhetoric. This approach allows us to start to understand the logic behind the variation in who gets targeted by the radical right parties. To examine the logic in variation in targeted nativism, I focus on characteristics of ethnic minorities, aiming to understand what makes a minority

more likely to be exposed to radical right nativism. I present three plausible rationales.

One way in which radical right parties attack minorities is through perceived cultural threat based on the minorities' ethnocultural distinctiveness from the majority group. Studies have shown that more visibly distinctive immigrant groups are more likely to be considered threats to the national culture, provoking hostility (Schneider 2008; Sides and Citrin 2007; Sniderman et al. 2004). Furthermore, perceived cultural threat is a significant predictor of radical right support (e.g. Lucassen and Lubbers 2012). Distinctiveness is essentially a relational concept, requiring a comparison between different groups on a number of ascriptive ethnocultural characteristics (such as race, religion, and language, which are commonly used collective identifiers). I formulate the hypothesis of cultural threat, based on distinctiveness between ethnic minorities and local ethnic majority.

Hypothesis 1: *Minorities that are more distinctive from the ethnic majority are more likely to be targeted by radical right parties.*

Another rationale for targeting specific minority groups is their political empowerment. This logic is clearly described by Bustikova (2014, 2020), focusing on empowerment through minority ethnoliberal parties. While the presence of ethnic parties cannot be applied to immigrant minorities, the work of Rafaela Dancygier (2010, 2017) illustrates possible negative responses that political inclusion of immigrant minorities can provoke. Additionally, the example of Denk, the first immigrant ethnic party represented in the Dutch parliament, illustrates that immigrant minorities can create a successful political party (Aktürk and Katliarou 2020). However, I keep in mind that minority descriptive representation might also improve mutual trust between groups (Mansbridge 1999). Given the problems of measuring ethnic minority political empowerment through mainstream parties,[10] I formulate a hypothesis of political backlash based on ethnic party representation.

Hypothesis 2: *Ethnic minorities with political representation through an ethnic party are more likely to be targeted by radical right parties.*

Intergroup animosities targeting minorities could also be tied to multiculturalism – that is, the provision of collective ethnic rights that acknowledge and protect ethnocultural difference (Kymlicka 1995). This logic is congruent with the tendency to denounce multiculturalism and blame it for its supposed failure to integrate minorities (e.g. described in Banting and Kymlicka 2013; Joppke 2017). Political statements against multiculturalism contrast with the academic literature, which generally finds that multiculturalism promotes minority integration (Bloemraad and Wright 2014; Breton 2019; Wright and Bloemraad 2012). Whether multiculturalism promotes a backlash is less examined, though Jack Citrin et al. (2014) warn that multiculturalism may fuel discontent and support for the radical right. In contrast to the existing work, I test whether a backlash effect is more pronounced towards ethnic minorities that are accommodated through some form of collective ethnic rights, rather than looking at aggregate country-level measures.

Hypothesis 3: *Minorities that benefit from collective ethnic rights are more likely to be targeted by the radical right.*

Targeted nativism replaces a simple dichotomy of ethnic minorities facing hostility from the radical right (immigrants/West vs historical minorities/East) with a more nuanced examination of characteristics of ethnic groups and the extent of their political and cultural empowerment. In this way I account for the fact that radical right parties in Western Europe do not target all immigrant groups and that their counterparts in post-communist Europe do not target all historical minorities. I theorize three alternative grievance-based mechanisms linking the presence of minority groups to the nativism of the radical right. Radical right parties label some minorities as outgroups and present them as threatening due to: (1) ethnocultural differences, (2) political success, or (3) ethnocultural accommodation.

Qualitative evidence: targeted nativism in Sweden and Bulgaria

How to identify targeted nativism? I begin with an examination of two cases of successful radical right mobilization in the widely different contexts of Sweden and Bulgaria (I provide more details on the logic behind case selection and analysis in Appendix A in the Supplementary Material). I aim to understand whether the theorized targeted nativism towards some minorities can be observed in practice, testing its logic, and comparing expressions of targeted nativism against the stated hypotheses. The cases allow me to compare the theorized and proposed operationalization of targeted nativism against social reality in different conditions for radical right mobilization in Europe. I rely on fieldwork conducted in 2016/2017, including semi-structured interviews with the representatives of radical right parties and other stakeholders on issues related to ethnic diversity, party documents, and secondary literature.[11] For each country, I briefly outline the political context, identify targets of radical right nativism, and explain how targeted nativism is framed and justified. I end with a few observations comparing these cases.

Sweden is a latecomer when it comes to radical right politics since its radical right party, the Sweden Democrats (SD), achieved parliamentary representation only in 2010, and is currently the third largest party. The SD worked hard to dissociate from its origins tied to neo-Nazi subculture, constructing a modern party that emphasizes issues of immigration and ethno-nationalism, but goes beyond them (cf. Erlingsson et al. 2014; Hellström and Nilsson 2010; Widfeldt 2008). The party consistently criticizes the Swedish liberal approach to immigration, developing a profile as an anti-immigration party critical of multiculturalism and the lack of immigrant integration. The SD does not explicitly focus on any specific immigrant groups,[12] instead making distinctions between immigrants and ethnic Swedes (e.g. Koning 2019: 98–99; Widfeldt 2008: 272), so its nativism in principle targets all immigrants (but not historical minorities such as Finns).

The targeted nativism is commonly expressed through the frames of welfare chauvinism and law and order. The SD emphasizes the high costs of immigration, especially related to refugees/asylum seekers who cannot easily 'integrate' economically (i.e. support themselves financially) and require long-term state support. The interviewed SD representative pointed out that many newer immigrants lack the

education that would make them employable in Sweden (which was also recognized by the respondent from the Swedish Public Employment Service), further arguing that generous Swedish welfare deters immigrants from looking for jobs. Lack of immigrant employment is tied to the lack of exposure and integration into Swedish culture, the failure of personal responsibility, and it is a basis for exclusion, implying that immigrants from distant countries fail to understand the meaning of integration.[13] These arguments distinguish between 'old' work migrants (mostly from other European countries) and newer refugees and asylum seekers (usually coming from outside Europe). Another approach to target immigrants is through a law-and-order framework, referring to immigrant criminality. The SD party programme emphasizes crimes committed by foreigners, and comments on extremism and Islamism together, thus providing some hints about potential outgroups without being explicit about them.[14] Despite its deliberately vague language, one can conclude that more distinctive immigrant minorities are the primary target: their integration is more costly, takes a long time and is more likely to fail;[15] they are more likely to create social problems (i.e. increase criminality); and they have little to contribute to Sweden (these immigrants are portrayed as a permanent underclass unwilling to work and adapt to life in Sweden). When assessing the lack of more explicit nativist targeting, we should keep in mind that the explicit discussion of ethnicity is considered taboo.[16]

Bulgaria exemplifies a very different context. Articles 36.1 and 13.3 of the Bulgarian constitution explicitly refer to ethnic elements, including language and religion, while issues pertaining to ethnic minorities are commonly dismissed by the mainstream parties, despite the presence of several sizeable historical minorities. Radical right parties entered the political scene in 2005 with the success of the radical Ataka, later followed by the Bulgarian National Movement (VMRO) and the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (the electoral alliance of the latter two was the third-largest group in the parliament until the elections in 2021). They are widely recognized for strong ethno-nationalism and nativist rhetoric explicitly targeting Turkish and Roma minorities (Cholakov 2018; Genov 2010; Krasteva 2016), at times including hate speech.[17] The Bulgarian radical right openly uses anti-Turkish and anti-Roma language. Other minorities, such as Armenians and Macedonians, are left out of focus.

All radical right parties in Bulgaria provide similar rationales for the nativist hostility and exclusion of Bulgarian Turks and Roma, distinguishing two 'justifications' for targeted nativism (this was confirmed during the interviews with the representatives of Ataka, VMRO, and several local experts). The Turkish minority is targeted under the rationale that they exclude themselves from Bulgarian society. Politically, Bulgarian Turks are often seen through their ethnic party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, which is blamed for the close ties with Turkey, propagating a separate Turkish identity (also through the use of the Turkish language) and thus excluding Bulgarian Turks from the Bulgarian nation. This narrative goes together with the underlying claim that Turks in Bulgaria are Islamized Bulgarians – a painful remainder of extreme assimilationist policies forcibly denying Turkish identity during the Communist period.[18] The logic for the nativist targeting of Roma is markedly different, but also explicit. Roma are portrayed in extremely negative terms, claiming they have a criminal predisposition,

that they disproportionately use state resources (with the popular claim that Roma women have children in order to obtain child support, combining demographic anxieties with nativism), and that they are averse to work. Roma ghettos are portrayed as lawless spaces that threaten Bulgarians living in their vicinity. Visible expressions of targeted nativism include sections of the VMRO website dedicated to Turks (focusing on alarmist stories about Turkish foreign policy) and Roma (using the derogatory term 'Gypsy' and focusing on crime),[19] infamous proposals in the Patriotic Front alliance programme that Roma should be relocated in 'reservations' isolating them from the rest of population (Vaksberg 2017), and physical attacks of Muslim worshippers (mostly Bulgarian Turks) in front of the mosque in downtown Sofia by the supporters of Ataka in 2011 (BalkanInsight 2011). Exclusion based on distinctiveness is especially visible for Roma, while the Turkish minority is seen both as clearly different (especially due to Islam) but also as possible Bulgarians (in the case of assimilation). Both minorities are seen as a danger to the Bulgarian nation due to their distinctiveness, while for the Turkish minority there is some evidence of political backlash due to very negative attitudes towards their successful ethnic minority party.

These illustrations confirm the existence and diversity of concrete expressions of targeted nativism, which can be more or less explicit, belligerent, and framed in different ways (the cases indicate that framing is done in ways that resonate with the overall saliency of economic and cultural cleavages in local politics). These examples confirm that radical right parties choose their minority targets, rather than antagonizing everyone. The interviews with the representatives of targeted minorities showed that they are well aware of being a 'nativist target' and that they see it as a threat.

Cross-national data and hypothesis testing

To further examine targeted nativism and test the proposed hypotheses, I use a new dataset mapping ethnic groups and radical right parties in Europe since the Cold War.[20] The unit of observation is an ethnic minority within a country in a given year, including only minorities that pass a threshold of 1% of the population. I exclude smaller minorities because of theoretical considerations and limited data availability. Smaller minorities rarely achieve political representation or cultural accommodation. Data on small minorities are not available for many countries, which often lump them into a heterogenous category 'other'. I recognize that some very small minorities still face hostility: an obvious example is the persistence of anti-Semitic rhetoric among some radical right parties (cf. Mudde 2007; Wodak 2015). Another example of hostility towards absent minorities became visible during the Syrian refugee crisis, as the vilification of Syrian refugees was common in countries without a significant presence of refugees.[21] Therefore, one should keep in mind that targeted nativism can have additional targets not identified in the dataset. The data on ethnic composition of populations come from the Composition of Religious and Ethnic Groups dataset (CREG) (Nardulli et al. 2012), which disaggregates the resident population of each country into respective ethnic groups (including historical and immigrant groups) and estimates their relative sizes on a yearly basis. The CREG is chosen over other 'ethnic' datasets for its

declared comprehensiveness. Among other widely used datasets, Minorities-at-Risk (MAR) focuses on contentious interethnic relations (which should lead to the underreporting of minorities unnoticed by the radical right parties), while Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) explicitly excludes immigrant minorities. The main drawback of the CREG is its time coverage (its last year is 2013). The CREG includes countries with a total population over 500,000 inhabitants, therefore excluding smaller European states, and also France, where it is illegal to collect information about the ethnic composition of the population (Blum 2002). Additionally, I exclude transcontinental states, such as the Russian Federation or Turkey. I focus on Europe since the end of the Cold War, 1993–2013 (see Appendix B in the Supplementary Material for details).

While the CREG includes both historical and immigrant minorities, the ethnic categories used to classify the resident population vary by country. For example, the United Kingdom classifies its immigrant population into racial categories in a deliberate attempt to curb racial discrimination, while Bulgaria does not allow Pomaks (a Bulgarian-speaking Muslim group) to identify as an ethnic group, classifying them as ethnic Bulgarians. Additionally, several countries use a generic category 'other' without further classifying populations with immigrant backgrounds (see Appendix C in the Supplementary Material). My dataset relies on ethnic categories reported in the CREG, even though I am aware that they oversimplify the ethnic make-up of the population. I also exaggerate the degree of similarity among the members of the same ethnic groups. The key assumption built into the dataset that examines ethnic composition of population is that ethnic groups exist as clearly defined entities, have specific characteristics that distinguish them from other groups, and clear boundaries, which matches the view of radical right parties.

The dependent variable measures the presence of targeted nativism, identifying ethnic minorities singled out by the radical right parties through politicized nativism. The study of targeted nativism requires data disaggregated at the ethnic group level. I adapt common variables measuring success of radical right parties (at country level) to match their success to the ethnic minorities that are negatively targeted by such parties. To detect targeted nativism, one needs to use individual minorities as the unit of analysis: this allows us to make a distinction between minorities targeted by the radical right and those that are not.[22]

I construct the dependent variable in three steps. First, I construct the list of radical right parties active in different European countries. I use the list developed by Cas Mudde (2007), extending it to cover the whole period under investigation and comparing it against other sources. In order to be included in the analysis, a radical right party had to be present in the national parliament, signalling that its nativist rhetoric receives electoral support and visibility. Using the Manifesto Project Database (MPD) (Volkens et al. 2015) and cross-checking it with national electoral commissions, I code the electoral performance of radical right parties through their parliamentary presence and the percentage of votes received. Second, for each radical right party I determine which minorities are singled out by targeted nativism. In this process, I consulted the websites of individual parties, party documents, reports by organizations focused on the protection of minorities (such as the Council of Europe and Minorities Rights Group International), and extensive

secondary literature, to determine which minorities are depicted by radical right parties as outgroups.[23] In the third step, I connect these pieces of information. Targeted nativism of radical right parties is coded for each ethnic minority that is singled out by these parties, whenever such a party is represented in the national parliament (see Appendix E in the Supplementary Material). For example, the targeted nativism of the Slovak National Party (SNS) in Slovakia affects historical minorities (Hungarians and Roma), while for the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) it impacts immigrant minorities, such as Turks and Moroccans. I identify targeted nativism when the radical right party has political representation at the state level. One could object that my measure of targeted nativism is too blunt since radical right parties are not merely vehicles of nativism (they address other issues as well), and they can get visibility beyond the formal state-level politics. An alternative measure of targeted nativism could focus on the frequency with which ethnic minorities are singled out by nativist news stories, or violent incidents targeting specific minorities. However, my approach recognizes the link between nativism and radical right parties, which cannot be equated with a diffused presence of hostility towards immigrants/minorities at the societal level. The political positions and rhetoric critical of ethnic minorities are commonly perceived as the defining feature of the radical right.

The first independent variable tests the cultural threat hypothesis based on differences between ethnic groups in the country. I create a *distinctiveness index*, which measures whether ethnic minorities differ from the majority group in terms of race, language, and religion (which are commonly used collective identity markers). This index compares the collective identity markers of each ethnic minority to the local majority, creating a group-specific score by translating stronger distinctiveness into a larger number. I use the numerically largest group in the country (ethnic majority) as the reference category. For example, the Turkish immigrant minority in Austria is distinguished from the Austrian majority by its religion and language. In Lithuania, the Russian minority is distinguished from the Lithuanian majority by its different religion and language, while the Polish minority is distinguished (only) by language. Using this strategy produces individual scores for the distinctiveness of each minority from the ethnic majority in each European country. The index is created by summing distinctiveness on each characteristic to arrive at a single number that varies between 0 (for the most similar groups) and 3 (for the most distinctive groups). I coded racial, religious, and linguistic difference in binary terms referring to the Minorities at Risk (MAR) (2009) dataset, extending it and cross-checking it with additional sources (see Appendix F in the Supplementary Material for details and examples).

Potential political backlash is tested using the information about ethnic parties in national parliaments in a given year, from the MPD.

To test the possibility of multicultural backlash I collected information about the extent to which different minorities enjoy collective ethnic rights protection. To operationalize collective ethnic rights, I applied the typology developed by Will Kymlicka (1995), who distinguishes between special representation rights, self-government rights, and polyethnic rights. I use the presence of prescribed ethnic quotas in the national legislature as an indicator of special ethnic representation rights (Htun 2004; Krook and O'Brien 2010). Self-government rights refer to the

devolution along ethnic lines benefiting particular ethnic groups, assuming ethnic groups' territorial concentration (thus this is not applicable for dispersed groups). I use state constitutions to identify whether the state allows self-government for a particular ethnic minority. Polyethnic rights indicate collective rights that acknowledge and protect cultural specificity. I focus on accommodation in the linguistic sphere as the most typical expression of cultural accommodation in Europe. I search for the presence of language instruction of an ethnic minority's mother tongue in primary public schools (see Appendix G in the Supplementary Material for details; the data come from different reports, the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) dataset (Huddleston et al. 2015), and extensive secondary literature and reports on these issues). Unlike other collective rights, this one is widely used both for historical and immigrant minorities across Europe. I create a binary variable *presence of collective ethnic rights*, measuring whether an ethnic minority benefits from at least one type of these rights, and *degree of ethnic rights*, which sums up the total collective ethnic rights for a minority.

Key independent variables vary among ethnic minorities in the same country. I expect that targeted nativism should also be influenced by other factors commonly used to explain the success of radical right parties (cf. Arzheimer 2009, 2018; Golder 2016). Therefore, I account for well-known contextual factors (affecting all minorities in the same country) used in the study of radical right parties. I include data on *unemployment* (World Bank 2018) in individual countries, following arguments that the radical right electoral success might be a product of scapegoating of minorities in times of poor economic performance.[24] I account for the institutional design choices, recognizing that the success of political parties (including those of the radical right) can be influenced by political institutions. I assess the effect of the electoral system's proportionality by using the *mean district magnitude* (Edgell 2019). Using the information from the state constitutions, I code whether a country has a *parliamentary regime*, and I include a variable *decentralization* extending the measure for federalism and decentralization developed by Lijphart (1999: 178). I also control for the level of democracy using the *polyarchy* variable from the V-Dem Project (Coppedge et al. 2018). Finally, I account for the possibility that the results might differ between post-communist countries and the rest of Europe by creating a binary variable *former communist country*. Its significance would indicate a meaningful difference between the two groups of countries, revealing that the targeted nativism of radical right parties differs significantly between the two regions.

I conduct the analysis using the multilevel statistical models, accounting for the fact that states contain several ethnic groups. This means that some variables (the dependent variable and key independent variables) vary at the ethnic minority level, with the observations clustered at the state level. I use random-intercept models with country random effects, creating state-specific intercepts to account for unobserved heterogeneity at the state level. To account for the effect of time, I include year dummies to control for the factors that might affect all states in a given year (a preliminary analysis modelled time using time trend, producing similar results). Since the dependent variable measures the presence of targeted nativism for individual minorities, I conduct the analysis using logit models.

Results

I examine which factors are associated with minorities being exposed to targeted nativism when radical right parties are represented in national parliaments. In Table 1, I first consider each hypothesis separately. Model 1 tests the cultural threat hypothesis, finding that more distinctive minorities are more likely to be exposed to targeted nativism. Model 2 tests the hypothesis that targeted nativism is based on a backlash against politically successful minorities; I also find support for this. Model 3 considers targeted nativism as a backlash against ethnocultural minority accommodation. Here, I find the opposite relationship, as accommodated minorities are significantly less likely to be exposed to the nativism of the radical right. Looking at Model 3, we can conclude that ethnic minorities that are accommodated through some form of collective rights overall provoke less animosity from the radical right compared to those that are not. Model 1 performs significantly better according to the fit statistics. Model 4 further probes into the logic of different hypotheses. In the expanded model that puts different explanatory variables next to each other the only remaining significant predictor for targeted nativism is the *distinctiveness index*, remaining significant at the 0.1% level. Model 5 adds controls for other factors that might explain nativism and the overall success of radical right parties. The *distinctiveness index* remains significant. Among controls, higher unemployment is associated with a higher probability of the presence of targeted nativism, the same as a less proportional electoral system.[25] Other controls do not reach the conventional levels of statistical significance. Finally, the variable *former communist country* is insignificant, indicating that there is no significant difference between post-communist countries and the rest of Europe.

The intraclass correlation is high in all the models, confirming the appropriateness of hierarchical statistical models, and signalling that much of the total variance is explained by characteristics of individual states. This validates the comments in the literature that the choice of countries used in the analysis influences the results (Golder 2003: 434; Lucassen and Lubbers 2012: 548) and supports the decision to include the largest available sample.

Overall, the analysis gives the strongest support for the hypothesis of cultural threat rooted in collective ethnocultural distinctiveness, which remains significant across different specifications. While initial tests give support to the hypothesis of political backlash, its significance disappears with the inclusion of additional variables. However, I remain cautious about fully discounting the existence of political backlash, given the difficulty of measuring this phenomenon for ethnic minorities politically included through mainstream parties.[26] I also confirm that ethnic accommodation through collective ethnic rights does not increase the exposure of ethnic minorities to exclusionary nativism.

Some things should be kept in mind when examining the results. This analysis is limited to identifying which ethnic minorities are more likely to be targeted as outgroups by successful radical right parties. To fully understand mobilization against ethnic minorities through these parties, one would need to focus on the content of radical right campaigns and their hostile messages. In this project, I do not distinguish between the different rhetorics used for nativist exclusion, but merely point out that radical right parties use nativism against specific minorities. We should

Table 1. Explaining the Presence of Targeted Nativism of Radical Right Parties in Europe

	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
Ethnic group size (%)	0.004	−0.008	0.010	0.016	0.014
	(0.013)	(0.008)	(0.007)	(0.014)	(0.015)
Distinctiveness index	0.935***			0.885***	0.786***
	(0.208)			(0.214)	(0.224)
Vote for ethnic party (%)		0.039*		−0.039	−0.048
		(0.019)		(0.029)	(0.032)
Collective ethnic rights			−0.674***	−0.226	−0.162
			(0.177)	(0.227)	(0.240)
Unemployment					0.073*
					(0.030)
Parliamentary regime					−0.549
					(0.937)
Mean district magnitude					−0.016**
					(0.005)
Decentralization					0.717
					(0.508)
Polyarchy					−3.104
					(2.634)
Former communist country					3.447
					(2.073)
Constant	−1.860	−0.608	−0.210	−1.911	−4.199
	(0.982)	(0.762)	(0.743)	(0.979)	(3.478)
Observations	1,609	2,034	2,125	1,551	1,537
Clusters/countries	30	33	34	29	29
Year fixed effects	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Rho	0.8487	0.8065	0.8009	0.8362	0.8360
AIC	1054.555	1499.158	1560.157	1045.427	972.089
BIC	1183.756	1633.984	1696.034	1184.440	1142.892

Note: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

also acknowledge that the *distinctiveness index* is a structural variable that does not vary over time. This implies that minorities exposed to targeted nativism have a limited capacity to prevent it, since they are targeted based on their ascriptive characteristics (typical characteristics ascribed to them), rather than their actions. For ethnic minorities, higher distinctiveness indicates an overall higher likelihood of being exposed to targeted nativism rather than explaining variations in their

exposure to targeted nativism over time. Given that the success of radical right parties (and therefore targeted nativism) varies over time, I recognize that other time-varying variables should explain changes in exposure to targeted nativism for individual ethnic minorities: my findings do not imply mono-causality. We are dealing with probabilities, and the study does not determine whether more distinctive ethnic minorities are automatically doomed to be excluded using nativist appeals. Overall, more distinctive minorities are more at risk of being identified as potentially threatening outgroups by the radical right.

To further confirm the robustness of these findings, I run the models using multiple alternative specifications. The results (reported and discussed in Appendix H in the Supplementary Material) remain substantively unchanged.

Conclusion

This article presented an alternative approach to the study of radical right parties in Europe, focusing on nativism as their defining characteristic and aiming to understand which minorities are most endangered by the rise of the radical right. Starting with implicit assumptions in the literature on nativism, I conceptualize targeted nativism and identify the profile of ethnic minorities that are more likely to be targeted through nativist demarcation (native/foreign). While scholars of the radical right implicitly assume that these parties focus on specific minorities (such as (newer) immigrants), I add to the scholarship by explicitly studying which profiles of minorities are most likely targeted by the radical right. My empirical approach takes account of the widely different characteristics of ethnic minorities in Europe. This article contributes to a fuller understanding of nativism and the exclusion associated with it, moving the focus from 'native majority' to ethnic minorities that are included or excluded in the 'nation' through nativist demarcation. Given that political competition in Europe moves from economic/class politics towards an integration/demarcation cleavage (cf. Kriesi et al. 2012), it is increasingly important to understand parties' non-economic appeal, including nativism, and to identify minorities that are most likely to be threatened by these political developments.

The examination of two cases of radical right nativism in Sweden and Bulgaria indicates that radical right parties target specific groups, also showing that nativist targeting can be framed and rationalized in different ways. These examples indicate that the language of targeted nativism is not necessarily explicit about the distinctiveness of minorities: the nativist hostility and exclusion can be framed through economic self-support and success as well as cultural incompatibility and remoteness (as indicated by Betz 2019). In other words, I show that nativist targeting (which generally tends to focus on the most distinctive groups) can be framed without (overtly) referencing ethnocultural difference.

The quantitative analysis confirms that successful radical right parties most consistently focus their attention on ethnic minorities that are more distinctive from the majority population. This distinctiveness is contextual, which indicates that there is no single profile of targeted 'other', but that the overall degree of local ethnocultural distinctiveness is a successful radical right mobilizer across the continent. I show that animosity to ethnocultural difference is an undertheorized

mechanism explaining why radical right parties choose to focus on some ethnic minorities rather than others. Distinctiveness of the targeted groups, rather than their political or multicultural empowerment, is a better predictor for hostile radical right mobilization and targeting. However, I acknowledge that the available data do not allow us to fully measure political empowerment of minorities through the mainstream parties. I interpret a lack of support for the multiculturalist backlash hypothesis by speculating that minorities that gain collective ethnocultural protections are already accepted as distinctive groups (at least to some degree), compared to those minorities that do not benefit from such rights. Additionally, it seems that the relatively meagre collective rights given to minorities (limited to minority language classes in many cases) cannot easily fuel strong popular discontent. Finally, the analysis suggests that one can integrate insights from both Western and post-communist Europe.

Some findings of this article might have policy implications. I find little evidence that minority empowerment (both in political and multicultural terms) increases the probability of their exposure to nativist targeting. This is a hopeful finding for advocates of multiculturalism and minority empowerment in general. Consistent association between greater distinctiveness and targeted nativism indicates the importance of paying attention to diversity. One could speculate that a greater focus on policies fighting xenophobia and promoting the value of diversity might work to protect the ethnic minorities that are most at risk of being targeted by the radical right. However, one should also recognize that societal perceptions of diversity are difficult to change, especially in the short run. More explicit recognition of ethnic diversity and open discussion about it might be the first step to prevent the targeting of some minorities as incompatible outgroups threatening the nation, using the nativist cleavage.

The empirical work conducted in this article reveals the need for more refined data on ethnic diversity in Europe. First, there is an obvious need for more disaggregated data on the ethnic composition of resident populations. Another area in which better data are needed concerns the political empowerment of ethnic minorities. The best available proxy for ethnic political empowerment today is the presence and strength of ethnic parties. While there is some work on political participation by minority populations, especially immigrants (Aktürk and Katliarou 2020; Dancygier 2010, 2017; Ruedin 2009), the situation could be much improved by a cross-national measure of minority participation and representation through all parties. Given the rising importance of the ethnic dimension in contemporary European politics, it is important to focus on collecting new data, allowing us to more directly address the questions raised by this literature.

Finally, this article is only a small step towards understanding how targeted nativism works. One obvious direction for future research should focus on the content of nativist messages targeting different minorities, aiming to understand which nativist appeals are directed to which minorities, and which messages mobilize more support from the voters. I hope that this work will inspire more research on how radical right parties use nativism to target ethnic minorities, which messages they use, and how those messages resonate among their voters. In particular, I hope that such work (mine included) will provoke debate on how better to protect the most vulnerable groups in contemporary societies.

Notes

1 Scholars use different labels to describe these parties (including extreme, far, populist, and radical right).

2 For example, Bulgarian radical 'patriots' target both politically empowered Turkish and marginalized Roma minorities.

3 Clearly, this is not the *only* defining characteristic of the radical right. However, nativism is an *essential* trait of these parties: Mudde (2007: 22) recognizes nativism as one of their core ideological features, holding 'that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group', while Rydgren (2018: 1) emphasizes their ethnonationalism, with 'programs directed toward strengthening the nation by making it more ethnically homogeneous'. Therefore, acknowledging the hostility of radical right parties towards (some) ethnic minorities is uncontroversial.

4 For excellent literature overviews see Arzheimer (2009, 2018), Golder (2016), and Mudde (2007).

5 For Arzheimer and Carter (2006) diversity variables (level and change in asylum-seeker rate) do not reach statistical significance.

6 He does not find an association between voting for the radical right and anti-Muslim attitudes (confirmed by Lucassen and Lubbers 2012).

7 Pytlas (2018: 5) comments on this issue, comparing radical right parties in Western and Eastern Europe.

8 Betz (2017: 335) defines nativism as 'an intense hostility to anything deemed alien and threatening to national cohesion'; Guia (2016: 11) as 'a philosophical position, sometimes translated into a movement, whose primary goal is to restrict immigration in order to maintain some deemed essential characteristics of a given political unit' – recognizing that these characteristics are contingent on time and place; and Mudde (2007: 22), as 'an ideology, which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ("the nation") and that nonnative elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state'.

9 Betz (2019: 112) connects nativism to 'priority of, and preference for, the native-born exclusively on the grounds of "being native"'.

10 Bloemraad and Schönwälder (2013) outline significant limitations for the study of minority political representation, where the lack of cross-national data remains a problem.

11 This research project received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. All respondents provided informed consent.

12 In the Swedish context, the direct discussion of ethnocultural differences is seen as taboo (cf. Koning 2019; Pred 2000).

13 Such framing does not address other reasons for lower employment among immigrants, essentially blaming the victim.

14 SD party programme: https://sd.se/vad-vi-vill/ (last consulted 15 August 2021).

15 Integration into Swedish culture is primarily seen through employment, which was discussed in connection to Swedish-language acquisition and education compatible with the Swedish job market; most respondents emphasized these points.

16 Interviews consistently confirmed this; cf. Koning (2019), Schall (2016).

17 Several respondents from civil society underlined hate speech targeting these minorities, especially Roma.

18 Respondents from Ataka and VMRO mentioned this even without being explicitly asked.

19 www.vmro.bg (last accessed 7 September 2021).

20 The dataset is available at Harvard Dataverse: https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/DSBHLX.

21 Practically, the data used here circumvent this problem since they cover the period 1993–2013, while the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe intensified only after 2015.

22 For example, the Croatian Party of the Rights disquiets the Serb minority (the target of its nativism) but it does not alarm Hungarian or Italian minorities (not targeted).

23 For the list of radical right parties, see Appendix D. I list secondary sources in Appendix I.

24 Empirical results regarding unemployment and success of the radical right are mixed, with some studies finding a positive relationship (Jackman and Volpert 1996), some negative (Arzheimer and Carter 2006; Knigge 1998), and some no significant relationship (Lubbers et al. 2002).

25 This confirms the findings of Carter (2005: 211), and Arzheimer and Carter (2006: 432), who speculated that these results might be due to the absence of strategic voting among supporters of these parties. This effect is substantively quite small.

26 One should keep in mind that immigrant minorities reported in the dataset (or large part of their members) are established and have citizenship (and thus the potential to be politically active). The dataset excludes some smaller and newer ethnic minorities that might not have voting rights.

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