Voting for trade protectionist parties: Evidence from nine waves of the European Social Survey

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Abstract
This article empirically investigates the impact of globalization on voting behavior. Specifically, combining individual-level data from the first nine waves of the European Social Survey, party-level information from the Comparative Manifesto Project, and country-level data from Eurostat, we study the individual determinants of the vote for trade protectionist parties. Our findings show, firstly, that protectionist parties mainly receive electoral support from less-educated voters, unemployed individuals and members of labor unions. Secondly, we test the compensation principle using a macro measure of a country's compensation potential and find, contrary to expectations, no significant evidence that a greater potential to mitigate the labor market adjustment costs resulting from economic openness deters the propensity to vote for protectionist parties in national elections.

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Introduction

An academic debate about the relative merits of further trade liberalization versus the need to protect domestic production from foreign competition has been going on since the 17th century (Kindleberger, 1975). This dispute is still relevant today because foreign trade influences the level of employment and the distribution of personal income within each country. Yet, the debate is no longer just academic. In recent times, the discussion about whether it is good or bad for a country to engage in trade protectionism has reached the political arena, with the emergence of parties advocating restrictive trade policies. The purpose of this article is to empirically investigate the determinants of the vote for these protectionist parties in the aftermath of the global shocks that hit the European economies in the first two decades of the 21st century.

Large global shocks hit the European economies in the 2000s, such as China's rise to a trading superpower, the Great Recession of 2008, and the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak in 2020, which caused economic stagnation, and the worldwide expansion of protectionist measures (Kuziemko et al., 2023). These unpredictable events, coupled with some long-term processes such as the liberalization of trade in the late 20th century and the important inflows of migrants and foreign direct investment since the early 1990s, seriously impacted the domestic labor markets of the European Union (EU) economies (Alesina et al., 2021; Algan et al., 2017; Mayda, 2008). Besides, the rapid increase in manufacturing imports from developing countries triggered the decay of traditional import-competing sectors in the advanced industrial economies (Guiso et al., 2017; Hobolt and De Vries, 2016). Workers employed in these sectors suffered from substantial costs in the form of higher unemployment rates or lower wages (Autor et al., 2016). This latter pattern was further reinforced by the transfer of jobs overseas by multinational corporations that shifted production to lower-wage countries through foreign direct investment (Cline, 1997; Mansfield and Mutz, 200; Scheve and Slaughter, 2004). Finally, competition for jobs with immigrants in the domestic labor market heightened feelings of job insecurity among low-skilled workers (Colantone and Stanig, 2018; Kono and Love, 2007).

In this article, we analyze the impact of globalization on voting behavior. More specifically, we focus on citizens' electoral response to the global shocks experienced by the European economies during the 2000s and 2010s. Within this context, we study the individual and contextual determinants of the vote for trade protectionist parties. We classify a party as protectionist resorting to the information provided by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and we then examine the electoral behavior of citizens in EU member states by using data from the first nine waves of the European Social Survey (ESS). Our findings show, firstly, that protectionist parties receive votes from less-educated citizens, the unemployed and members of labor unions. Secondly, and contrary to our theoretical expectations, we find no evidence for support of the compensation principle. Thus, our results suggest that the vote for protectionist parties is not prevented when the public sector increases its potential to mitigate domestic job losses derived from import competition.

Trade protectionism, an academically discredited but popular policy

Raising the price of imports or limiting the access of foreign producers to the home market (i.e. trade protectionism) was portrayed by John Stuart Mill (1871: 784) as 'an organized system of pillage of the many by the few'. Most economists reject trade protectionism as a wasteful and inequitable policy that also fuels international conflict. The classical theory of international trade shows that a country can improve its efficiency by allocating resources to produce and export goods that use its relatively abundant factor and importing goods that are intensive in its scarcer factor. This principle of comparative advantage, enunciated by David Ricardo (Ricardo, 1817) in the first half of the 19th century, makes it possible to increase the volume of goods for consumption in the trading nations by assigning the available resources to their most productive uses. While free trade makes this pattern of specialization welfare-enhancing (that is, it maximizes global output), trade barriers cause substantial deadweight losses (Amiti et al., 2019; Coughlin et al., 1988; Love and Latimore, 2009). The theory of comparative advantage, based on the assumption of full employment, shows the efficiency gains that trading partners can obtain from resource specialization. Yet, it does not claim that free trade creates enough jobs or that the adjustment costs are evenly distributed within each country.

In a globalized economy, restrictive trade policies have a greater negative impact due to the dependence of national output on inputs that come from other countries. Indeed, the trend towards vertical integration of industrial production through global supply chains increases the costs of protectionist policies as limits on imports hinder the access of domestic sectors to the supplies they need (Kee et al., 2013; Lovely and Liang, 2018; Subramanian et al., 2013). Because of these effects, trade protectionism has been discredited by mainstream economists (see Rose et al., 2013). This view, however, has not ended the demands for protection from domestic lobbies based on the need to preserve local jobs.

As for equity, trade restrictions allow import-competing industries to achieve differential returns (i.e. economic rents) that are highly profitable for such firms and their workers. However, such rents are extracted at the expense of reducing the standard of living of consumers by limiting the variety of goods available to them and raising the domestic prices of imports (Baker, 2005; Broda and Weinstein, 2006; European Commission, 2010; Flaaen and Pierce, 2019). These price increases are generally regressive in nature, that is, more burdensome for lower-income families that spend a greater proportion of their income on imported goods such as food, clothing, and footwear (Hickok, 1985). From this point of view, trade liberalization policies can be seen as equity-enhancing for their distributional effects (Kapstein, 2000).

Another consequence of a country introducing protectionism of any type (i.e. import tariffs or quotas, export subsidies, red tape, subsidies to industrial sectors, etc.) is that it incites tit-for-tat retaliatory actions from its trading partners, increasing uncertainty over future trade policies that depress trade and foreign direct investment (Blanchard et al., 2019). As many developing and emerging countries rely on export earnings to service their debts, such uncertainty generates tensions in financial markets that raise the cost of capital and lower investment in developing countries (Viani, 2019). Moreover, trade protectionism has

negative effects on macroeconomic outcomes similar to an external supply-side shock, causing output to fall and inflation to rise (Barattieri et al., 2018).

Bearing in mind these considerations, what makes protectionism appealing to voters? Probably the most important factor is the rent-seeking behavior of import-substituting sectors, which benefit from the imposition of trade barriers and are much better organized and more effective at lobbying for privileges than consumers, the group most damaged by import restrictions (Grossman and Helpman, 1994). Secondly, voters may believe that the welfare gains from trade are outweighed by the losses to workers and producers displaced by imports, in part because these layoffs and business closures often attract media attention and are more visible to the public than the jobs created by export industries (Luttrell, 1978; OECD, 1985). Whatever the transitory gains from protectionist policies may be, this argument ignores their large adverse repercussions in terms of inflicted costs on export-oriented industries by likely retaliatory measures, higher prices paid by consumers, inefficient international allocation of economic activities, slowing down of the economy's growth potential, and the vested interests created by politically well-connected sectors. According to economic research (Acemoglu et al., 2016; Goos et al., 2014; Richardson, 1995), most of the contemporary problems in the labor markets of developed economies are caused by labor-saving technologies and the relocation of production to countries with lower wages rather than resulting from increased imports.[1]

Furthermore, voters' perceptions about the impact of imports on unemployment are strengthened by some political parties' discourse claiming that manufactured imports destroy local jobs. In this way, the negative impact of trade on the labor market can be exaggerated if political parties expect to reap electoral gain. Margalit (2011), for instance, provides evidence that this view of the effect of imports has been embraced by a segment of the electorate as he finds that voters are more responsive to local job losses when they result from the competition of imports than when they originate from domestic factors. That is, political parties might consider that a good strategy to maximize votes is to propose trade restrictions in their campaign platforms, especially during periods of a slowdown in economic growth and rising unemployment when the adjustment costs for workers displaced by imports are a major social problem.

The compensation principle

In a world with two factors of production, low- and high-skilled labor, the Stolper-Samuelson theorem (Stolper and Samuelson, 1941) predicts that the liberalization of trade with developing countries will increase the earnings of the relatively abundant factor of production (high-skilled labor) and decrease the earnings of the relatively scarce factor (low-skilled labor) in advanced economies. Thus, we expect low-skilled workers in advanced economies to bear adjustment costs in the form of increased job insecurity, spells of unemployment, and lower wages, as documented by the literature (Burtless et al., 1998; Dipple et al., 2015; Lawrence and Litan, 1986; Mughan et al., 2003; Mughan and Lacy, 2002). For instance, evidence provided by Burtless et al. (1998) from the United States' (US) economy shows that the wages of long-tenured workers who lost their jobs due to manufacturing imports decreased by about 25% when they were rehired. Other scholars have also found that workers

displaced by trade suffer from physical and mental health problems (MacManus and Schaur, 2016; Pierce and Schott, 2016).

As trade is efficiency-enhancing, the winners of free trade can compensate the losers, and both can end up being better off. According to this principle, government policies can ease the costs borne by import-displaced workers by providing them with income transfers and active labor market policies such as training programs and relocation subsidies to facilitate employability (Cameron, 1978; Hays et al., 2005; Walker, 2010). However, while free trade combined with compensation policies has the potential to generate Pareto improvements, the actual results of compensation programs, such as the Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) established in the US in the 1960s and the European Globalization Adjustment Fund (EFG) started in the EU in 2006, have been rather different. The empirical literature finds that in the US, the compensation attained in practice was disappointing: trade displaced workers experienced prolonged spells of unemployment, earned lower wages, and worked under worse conditions when they were reemployed, especially those who were older and less-educated (Broz et al., 2021; Burtless et al., 1998; Kapstein, 2000; Kono and Love, 2007; Lawrence and Litan, 1986; Wood, 1994).

In the EU, the effect of the EGF on labor markets was more positive, although the number of workers helped was small. The results of the EGF funds in terms of personal assistance in job search for laid-off workers, their vocational training, the improvement in their employability and other benefits for society and individual participants were somewhat more encouraging than in the case of its American counterpart (Weber et al., 2015; Cernat and Mustilli, 2018). Yet, Claeys and Sapir (2020) find that the impact of EGF on European labor markets was poor as the fund affected only a small proportion of the workers who lost their jobs due to foreign (i.e. extra-EU) trade. Claeys and Sapir (2020) attribute the poor performance of the EGF to the program's many shortcomings such as its small budget, narrow eligibility criteria that exclude job losses resulting from intra-EU trade and offshoring from aid, as well as complex implementation rules. In short, low-skilled workers hurt by the liberalization of manufacturing imports from developing countries had to endure labor market adjustment costs. The extant evidence indicates that the policies adopted to alleviate these costs had a small effect, although somewhat different in the US and the EU.

In this article, we are interested in the impact of the compensation principle on voting outcomes. To observe this, we use a country-level proxy to capture the capacity of a country's public sector to help workers who bear the costs of economic adjustments induced by trade flows. We define our compensation potential variable as the proportion of a country's social spending over its gross domestic product (GDP). With this macro variable, a proxy for the size of the public safety net, we attempt to determine whether a country's ability to alleviate the costs imposed by manufacturing imports influences electoral behavior.

Immigration, offshoring, and regional effects

The effects of manufacturing imports on domestic labor markets were amplified by three factors. The first one is the increase in international migration flows. Until recently (Peters, 2014), policymakers and academics alike treated immigration as a domestic policy. Yet,

large-scale labor migration across national borders is part of the deepening of globalization. The rapid influx of migrants and refugees to EU countries from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and South America during the period of our study could have intensified the trade effects (Alesina et al., 2021; Algan et al., 2017; Facchini and Mayda, 2009). Besides, immigration raises concerns among workers (especially, low-skilled) about job security, the quality of public services, and potential cutbacks in the level of social protection of the welfare state (Guiso et al., 2017; Hobolt and De Vries, 2016; Mayda, 2008). To take account of immigration effects, we incorporate the ratio of foreign and foreign-born residents over the total population of each country as a contextual characteristic relevant to explain attitudes towards immigration and voting outcomes (Coenders and Scheepers, 1998; Hopkins, 2010). For instance, Mansfield and Mutz (2009) and Colantone and Stanig (2018b) find evidence that foreign trade policy views are shaped by sociotropic factors (i.e. individuals' beliefs about the impact of trade policy on the national or regional economy).

The second factor is the fast pace of capital market integration in the form of foreign direct investment since the 1990s, which increased the power of firms to move their plants abroad either to gain market access or to take advantage of lower production costs. Capital flows across countries raises the elasticity of labor demand by making it easier for multinational firms to set up foreign subsidiaries to relocate production. Consequently, firms' ability to influence wages and working conditions during collective bargaining is increased by threatening to move operations to lower-wage countries (Cline, 1997; Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Mansfield and Mutz, 20009; Scheve and Slaughter, 2004; Stranger, 2004).

Finally, the negative effects of increased trade openness were geographically concentrated within a country, triggering the long-term decline of entire regions. For example, in the regions most exposed to the impact of Chinese imports, job losses in the low-skilled intensive manufacturing sector were not counterbalanced by similar gains in other activities (Autor et al., 2016). Rather, the observed effects were reduced demand for private services, more company closings, increased unemployment and poverty rates, and the spread of mental health problems (Colantone and Stanig, 2018a). These trends fostered authoritarian values and support for extremist political parties (Ballard-Rosa et al., 2021; Colantone and Stanig, 2018b; Milner, 2021). For instance, Colantone and Stanig (2018a) attribute the victory of the Leave option in the 2016 Brexit referendum to the low-wage workers in the United Kingdom regions more exposed to rising manufacturing imports.

Empirical implications of the literature on trade

Voters' attitudes on international trade policy depend on how trade policy influences their economic interests, and the policy response of political parties also depends on the impact of trade shocks on the income of their constituencies. There is a large literature about how foreign trade preferences are formed. For example, the Stolper-Samuelson theorem (Stolper and Samuelson, 1941) predicts a negative effect of the education variable on the vote for trade protectionist parties; Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006) show that there is a stable correlation between voters' educational attainment and their free-trade preferences; Dutt and Mitra (2002) and Milner and Judkins (2004) provide evidence that in developed economies, left-wing parties adopt more protectionist policies than right-wing parties; and Hobolt and

De Vries (2016) and Guiso et al. (2017) claim that policies favoring trade expansion intensify internal conflicts between winners and losers from international trade.

Based on the literature on trade policy and elections, we put forward four hypotheses about the vote for protectionist parties.

First, the Stolper-Samuelson model of international trade (Stolper and Samuelson, 1941) predicts that the factor of production in scarce supply (i.e. the less educated workforce in advanced industrial economies) will suffer from open trade, while the better-educated are expected to benefit as they are more able to adapt and compete in global markets. Furthermore, the highly educated prefer free trade, according to Hainmueller and Hiscox (2006), as they have a better understanding of the costs of protectionist policies as well as their long-lasting adverse consequences on social welfare and economic growth.

H1 (less-educated labor): Trade protectionist parties will attract the electoral support of less educated voters.

Second, Hays et al. (2005) find that manufacturing imports from less developed countries dislocate the labor markets of advanced industrial economies reducing the employment and wages of workers displaced in the import-competing sectors of the economy. If unemployed workers believe, correctly or not, that restrictive trade policies would reverse those negative effects, they have incentives to vote for parties that propose protectionist measures.

H2 (exposure to unemployment): Unemployed individuals will be more likely to vote for trade protectionist parties.

Third, unemployed voters may, however, react to import competition differently when there are appropriate social policies to mitigate the adjustment costs from trade shocks. The policy analysis literature surveyed in previously accounts for the controversial performance of the active labor market policies adopted so far. Moreover, as documented in the third section, effective compensation requires conditions difficult to find in the real world. Therefore, the extent to which the public sector's potential for compensation influences voter behavior is an empirical question.

H3 (compensation hypothesis): The vote for protectionist parties will be lower the greater the potential of a country's public sector to alleviate the adjustment costs derived from the competition of imports.

Finally, union membership is more prevalent in the sectors more negatively affected by import competition, like textile and steel products. Furthermore, unions typically promote trade protectionist policies in their communications, and union members are therefore more exposed to such views.

H4 (unionized labor): Protectionist parties will be more likely to receive votes from workers who belong to labor unions than from those who do not.

Data and methods

To test the introduced hypotheses, we use individual, party, and country data. Individual data come from the first nine waves of the ESS, collected every two years during the period from 2002 to 2018 (European Social Survey, 2018) Each country-wave survey contains information about 2000 respondents meant to be representative of the country's electorate. The sample of countries and respondents varies from one wave to another. The ESS uses face to face interviews, random probability sampling and a target response rate of 70%.[2] Additionally, we obtain party data from the CMP (Lehmann et al., 2023), while the source for country variables (i.e. unemployment rate, social protection expenditure, and immigration ratio) is the Eurostat dataset (Eurostat, n.d.).

According to Guiso et al. (2017: 46), '[trade] protectionism is difficult to measure empirically'. We construct a dichotomous variable that classifies each party as protectionist or non-protectionist relative to other parties running in the same election. This variable is based on items per406 and per407 from the Manifesto Project dataset (Lehmann et al., 2023). Item per406 exposes a party's 'favorable mentions of extending or maintaining the protection of internal markets (by the manifesto or other countries). Measures may include tariffs, quota restrictions and export subsidies'. Item per407 exposes 'support for the concept of free trade and open markets. Call for abolishing all means of market protection (in the manifesto or any other country)'. Both items reflect prospective policies for each party and election expressed as a percentage over the total programmatic content in the party's manifesto. Since foreign trade policy is the exclusive competence of the EU, for its member states our protectionist party variable reveals pledges to lobby EU institutions to foster activities located in the country where each political party fields candidates or lists.[3]

Following the redistribution literature (i.e. Rueda and Stegmueller, 2019: 203), we compute a score of relative protectionism given by

log ((per406+0.5) / (per407+0.5))

for each party and election in our sample.[4] Positive values of this variable indicate that a party offers relatively protectionist policies in its election platform; on the contrary, negative values indicate relatively outward-oriented policies. The next step in building the dependent variable is to compute the median degree of protectionism across parties competing in each election after excluding parties with less than 5% of the vote. The median has the advantage of being less sensitive to outliers than, for example, the arithmetic mean. Similarly, we exclude small parties to avoid that our measure is influenced by the presence of radical fringe parties that are generally irrelevant from the electoral point of view. Lastly, we code a party as protectionist if its score of relative protectionism is greater than the previously computed median, and as non-protectionist otherwise. If a survey respondent reports voting for a protectionist party so defined in the previous national election, the protectionist party variable takes the value 1, and 0 otherwise. This is our preferred dependent variable. As a robustness check, we also use dependent variables that classify a party as trade protectionist based on different operations. The first alternative is resorting to the arithmetic mean of protectionism rather than the median. The second alternative dependent variable uses the weighted mean

of the scores of all parties in the election covered in the CMP dataset weighted by their vote shares.

To illustrate which types of parties we classify as protectionist, Figure 1 displays word clouds based on English translations of party names as provided by the CMP. As a first check of validity, it is reassuring to see that the word 'communist' appears only in the word cloud of protectionist parties, while the opposite is true for the word 'liberal'. The words 'Christian', 'social', 'people's' and 'union' appear prominently in both clouds, indicating that major centrist parties are variably classified as protectionist or non-protectionist, both across countries and elections. Words like 'socialist', 'left', or 'labor' are, however, more likely to appear in the name of a protectionist party. In contrast, smaller, more extreme parties, both on the left and right, are often consistently classified as protectionist according to our results. This is the case for France's Front National, Germany's Alternative for Deutschland, or Spain's Podemos. According to our measure, protectionism is thus a policy that can be found across the political spectrum, is somewhat more popular in Europe on the left, and is most strongly espoused by radical parties, including the far right.
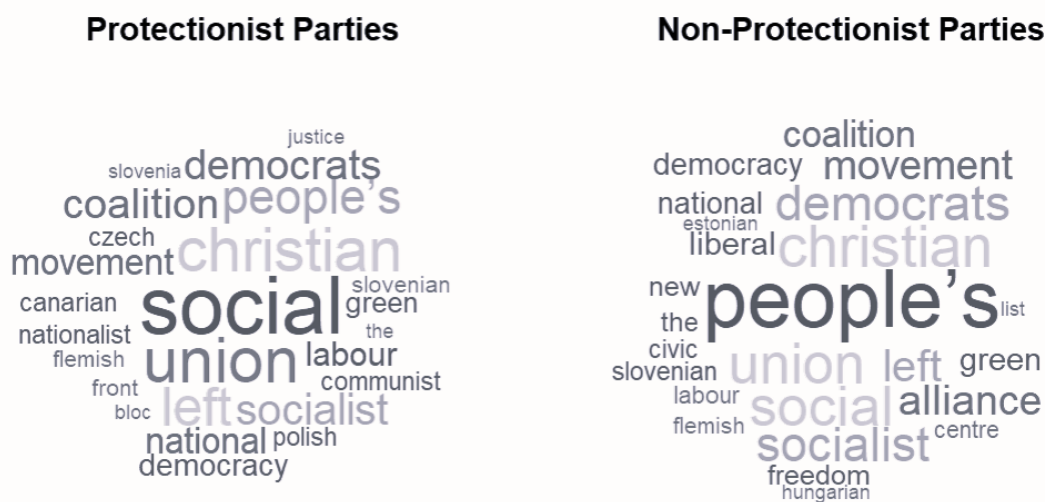
Figure 1. Word clouds based on names of protectionist and non-protectionist parties.

Trade policy preferences inferred from individuals' responses to survey items are likely to be subject to question wording and framing effects (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006; Mayda and Rodrik, 2005; O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2001). Our measure of protectionism based on vote choice instead of attitudes is less subject to such biases. Of course, reported behavior might not reflect actual behavior if respondents misrepresent their vote choice because of recall error or unwillingness to tell the truth. According to our measure, the mean vote for protectionist parties in the EU countries included in the ESS waves increased from 26% in 2002 to 40% in 2018.

ESS surveys contain information about the individual characteristics of respondents

(i.e. age, gender, educational attainment, labor market status, country of birth, and domicile) as well as a wide range of political behaviors and attitudes (i.e. reported vote in national elections, self-identified position on the left-right scale, and union membership). To capture the effect of the compensation principle on voting, we employ a country-level variable showing the proportion of a country's social spending over its GDP and we interact it with unemployment status. With this macro variable, a proxy for the size of the public safety net, we attempt to determine whether a country's ability to alleviate the costs imposed by manufacturing imports influences electoral behavior. Other control variables incorporated into the models at the country level include GDP per capita and the unemployment rate. To take immigration effects into account, we incorporate the ratio of foreign-born residents over the total population of each country as a contextual characteristic relevant to explaining attitudes towards immigration and voting outcomes (Coenders and Scheepers, 1998; Hopkins, 2010). In the Online appendix, the operationalization and descriptive statistics for all the variables used in the analyses are detailed.

While previous research has shown that the independent variables we include are related to voters' attitudes regarding trade (Hainmueller and Hiscox, 2006; Mayda and Rodrik, 2005; O'Rourke and Sinnott, 2001), it is not clear that such attitudes are also a driver of vote choice. Voters may be poorly informed about parties' positions on protectionism or attach more importance to other issues. If this were so, one possibility is that we simply failed to find significant results. A second, more worrying possibility is that our coefficients reflect spurious correlations driven by a close association between parties' positions on trade and other, more salient, issues. Obvious candidates for such issues would be attitudes towards immigration or the EU. While we cannot completely rule out this last possibility, we can check whether the protectionism score underlying our dependent variable is correlated with similar scores for other issues. We thus calculate a score for hostility to immigration[5], a score for nationalism[6], and a score for attitudes towards international cooperation, including the EU[7]. The strongest correlation that we find arises in the last case, but is only equal to 0.12, suggesting the existence of an at most weak association between these different issues.

Method

Gomila (2021) claims that the ordinary least squares (OLS) linear regression model, compared to non-linear models (logit or probit), facilitates the interpretation of the coefficients and the interactions between the variables, in addition to allowing the incorporation of fixed effects. Relying on his work, our analysis is based on pooled OLS regressions. We incorporate country- and year-fixed effects and robust standard errors for 95 country-year clusters. Country-fixed effects control for omitted variables that may differ between countries such as their economic structure, history, cultural traits, and trade policy traditions. Year-fixed effects control for changes undergone in the EU member states landscape affecting all countries in the sample during the years the surveys were collected, such as, for instance, the increase in Chinese imports, the Great Recession after the international financial crisis from 2007 to 2009, or Brexit. In this way we hope to control for unobserved heterogeneity across countries and over time that is likely to be correlated with some of our explanatory variables. We calculate robust standard errors clustered at the

country-year level to account for correlated errors across respondents belonging to the same point in time and space.

To simplify the interpretation of the empirical results, we rescale numerical explanatory variables by subtracting their mean and dividing them by two times their standard deviation. By doing so, the coefficients of the rescaled variables are comparable among themselves and to untransformed categorical variables (Gelman, 2008).

Empirical results

In this section, we evaluate the evidence supporting our hypotheses. Columns 1 and 2 of Table 1 present our main regression results. The specifications, with their results displayed in columns (1) and (2), include only individual-level variables and add country-level contextual variables, respectively.

The level of education is a proxy for the human capital of an individual (i.e. her knowledge and productive skills). We assess the level of education by the highest educational category attained by the respondent (*educational attainment*). The categories are the following five: (a) less than lower secondary; (b) lower secondary; (c) upper secondary; (d) advanced vocational; (e) and tertiary education. The reference category is no more than lower secondary, that is, the first two categories. In line with the expectations included in *H1*, we find negative and significant coefficients for the better educated respondents, especially those with a university degree, meaning that people with a stronger educational background are more reluctant to support protectionist parties.

Unemployment and its rise are crucial determinants of protectionist pressures, particularly in periods of economic slumps when recessions spread throughout the world (Wallerstein, 1987). Our tests identify being a respondent who is currently *unemployed* and actively seeking work as a highly significant and robust determinant of the vote for protectionist parties, as postulated by our second hypothesis. This result makes sense: unemployed voters with low qualifications may vote rationally for protectionist parties to prevent further trade liberalization that would reduce their chances of finding employment or suppress wages at the lower end of the wage distribution. In addition, Rodrik (2018) argues that current free trade agreements are driven by the lobbying efforts of large companies. If voters feel that mainstream parties are captured by special interests, they may decide that such parties do not represent their interests. Moreover, even those voters with preferences based on the long-term effects of protectionist policies as described in the economic literature have short-term incentives to vote for trade protection if they perceive the individual benefits of increased trade as a long shot.

The *unemployment rate* variable, which captures the effect of an increase in unemployment at the country level, has a large positive and significant impact on voting for protectionist parties. That is, if a worker fears losing her current job because the unemployment level has risen, she is more likely to vote for a protectionist party. This finding could be interpreted as if voters used electoral support for protectionism as a means to reduce

job insecurity. Yet, the large significant estimate in column (2) is not robust to alternative definitions of the dependent variable (see columns (3) and (4)).

Table 1. The determinants of vote for protectionist parties (alternative measures).

VARIABLES	(1) DV2_med_excl	(2) DV2_med_excl	(3) DV2_mean_excl	(4) DV2_wmean
Unemployed	0.04***	0.03***	0.03***	0.03***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Upper secondary education	-0.01	-0.01*	-0.01	-0.02**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.02)
Advanced vocational education	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.03**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Tertiary education	-0.05***	-0.51***	-0.04***	-0.05***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Union membership	0.02**	0.01**	0.03***	0.02***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Social_protectiongdp_r		0.02	0.13	0.04
		(0.23)	(0.25)	(0.25)
GDPpercapita_r		-0.06	-0.06	-0.18
		(0.37)	(0.38)	(0.36)
Unemployment_rate_r		0.34***	0.06	-0.01
		(0.13)	(0.18)	(0.19)
Immigration_ratio_r		0.41*	-0.39	-0.13
		(0.22)	(0.30)	(0.28)
Unemployed*Social_protectiongdp_r		-0.02	-0.01	-0.02
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age_r	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Female	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)
Domicile_r	-0.01	-0.01	-0.00	-0.00
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Native	-0.02*	-0.02	-0.03**	-0.03***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Ideology_r	-0.10***	-0.11***	-0.15**	-0.13**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Constant	0.48***	0.35**	0.12	0.10
	(0.11)	(0.14)	(0.28)	(0.25)
Country fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	145,342	143,195	143,195	143,195
R-squared	0.16	0.17	0.16	0.14

Note: Robust standard errors clustered at the country-year level in parentheses. The dependent variable DV2_med_excl indicates that a party is more protectionist than the median degree of protectionism across parties competing in a given election after excluding parties with less than 5% of the vote. DV2_mean_excl instead uses the arithmetic mean of protectionism taking into account only parties in the country that received at least 5% of the vote in the latest national election. DV2_wmean classifies parties as protectionist if their protectionism score falls above the weighted mean of the scores of all parties in the election covered in the CMP dataset with weights given by vote shares.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Unemployed individuals motivated by their economic short-term interest may not vote for protectionist parties if the damage caused by imports on their wages and employment

levels is mitigated by government intervention through public means such as unemployment benefits, skill upgrading, and other active labor market programs. In Table 1, we use the variable *compensation potential* (defined earlier) to evaluate the capacity of the public sector to help workers who endure the costs of economic adjustment from trade openness. The effect of the interaction of unemployed and compensation potential (*unemployed*compensation potential*) on voting for protectionist parties takes the expected negative sign, although the parameter estimate is small and far from statistically significant at traditional levels. Thus, we cannot confirm *H3*, which posits that the public sector potential to facilitate trade adjustment costs prevents voting for protectionism.

As mentioned in the literature review, various researchers find that compensatory policies adopted to alleviate the adjustment costs of import competition leave much to be desired. Yet, scholars such as Cameron (1978), Hays et al. (2005) and Walker (2010) show that post-World War II welfare state policies created support for trade liberalization. Our test of the compensation hypothesis does not confirm such a connection. This result is not without precedent, as it is similar to that reported by Garrett and Mitchell (2001), using aggregated OECD data. These authors defend their result by arguing that in advanced industrial countries, trade patterns tend to be fairly stable, and the efficiency restrictions imposed by globalization on public spending are stronger than the compensation resulting from manufacturing imports from underdeveloped countries. Furthermore, Kuziemko et al. (2023) argue that less educated voters (who are the most threatened by globalization) generally prefer 'predistribution' policies (i.e. labor market interventions such as promoting high employment or increasing the minimum wage) over traditional redistribution based on tax and transfer policies. This provides a parsimonious explanation for why compensation might not increase electoral support for free trade.[8]

Our null result could also be rationalized by our use of a macro measure of a country's welfare policy that might not be a good proxy for welfare effort at the individual level. Unfortunately, the ESS dataset contains no information on workers who receive help for job losses originating from manufacturing imports from low-wage countries. What are the implications of our null result for the EU's foreign trade policy? If a country's compensatory potential is not a relevant factor in achieving actual Pareto improvements, we can expect fewer trade liberalization agreements to come into force, as political parties will find it more difficult to resist political pressure from the sectors that profit from protectionist policies.

As argued earlier, capital market integration in the form of foreign direct investment since the 1990s increased the elasticity of labor demand for many low wage-earners, reducing the bargaining power of unions (Cline, 1997; Facchini and Mayda, 2009; Mansfield and Mutz, 2009; Scheve and Slaughter, 2004; Stranger, 2004). Our results corroborate *H4* that unionized workers are expected to be stronger supporters of trade protectionist parties than the non-unionized as we find positive and highly significant coefficients for the *union membership* variable across all model specifications.[9] These estimates make sense if we assume that the role of organized labor is to preserve future employment prospects and prevent the erosion of real wages.

Additional evidence seems to reinforce this result. In the last two to three decades, we have observed an anti-globalization attitude embraced by the leaders of organized labor

in Western economies. Foreign trade and investment agreements are denounced by unions as contrary to International Labor Organization standards, which ban child labor and defend the right of workers to form independent unions (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organization, 2021; Burtless, 2001). Globalization scholars describe current trade agreements as self-serving for big businesses (Rodrik, 2018). Furthermore, some union leaders refer to compensation for the loss of trade-related jobs as 'burial assistance' introduced by political elites to limit opposition to open markets. Finally, there is a union culture based on the idea that import restrictions are good for local workers. Even public sector unions, whose members are much less affected (if at all) by job insecurity derived from international competition, generally endorse this stance about trade protectionist policies (Mansfield and Mutz, 2009; Wessel, 2015). The positive coefficient we find on the union membership variable may reflect self-selection and/or the effect of being exposed to protectionist ideas after joining.

Trade protectionism requires government's interference in market activities. From the spatial theory of voting (Downs, 1957), we interpret a voter's self-identified position in the left-right ideological scale as an indicator of her preferred degree of government intervention in the economy. The negative, comparatively large and highly significant coefficients we find for the left-right *ideology* variable are stable across models and suggest that the farther to the left a respondent's orientation is, the more likely it is that she votes for parties promising restrictions to foreign trade. This estimate is also consistent with Milner and Judkins' (2004) research, which shows that left-wing parties are more protectionist-oriented than right-wing ones, as well as with Bhagwati's (2000) view that critics of globalization come primarily from left-leaning constituencies. Another reason for these negative coefficients is that, as globalization increases market-driven inequality and economic insecurity in advanced democracies, social differences within each country become more salient in political competition, making voters more receptive to party calls for policies to redistribute income with welfare transfers (Burgoon, 2013; Garrett and Mitchel, 2001; Tavits and Potter, 2015). In any case, controlling for ideology is important since it implies that our results on, for example, union membership and voting for protectionist parties are not driven by a correlation of both variables with ideology.

Finally, the results in Table 1 do not provide support for the expectation that the greater the ratio of immigrants in the population of the respondent's country, the likelier the vote for protectionist parties (Coenders and Scheepers, 1998; Hopkins, 2010). The expectation is based on the idea that workers may feel inclined to vote for trade protectionist parties out of fear of (a) competing with immigrants for jobs in the domestic labor market; (b) the anticipated consequences of immigration on the quality of public services; or (c) the level of social protection of the welfare state. This result suggests that the less educated might not perceive the immigration level as a threat to their job security comparable to rising manufacturing imports, and therefore as a motive to oppose additional arrivals of immigrants. The estimate of the *immigration ratio* shown in the second column of Table 1 is large, positive and significant at the 10% confidence level. Yet, neither its magnitude nor its sign is robust across specifications. So, we find no systematic evidence that immigration levels increase the probability of voting for protectionist parties.

Robustness checks

All the results presented so far are based on OLS regressions with country- and year-fixed effects and robust standard errors clustered by country-year. Are these results robust to alternative specifications? To assess this, we use alternative definitions of the dependent variable in columns (3) and (4) of Table 1, based on the mean protection of the party system or its weighted mean. Main results remain practically identical. Besides, the estimation of the models using country- and wave-fixed effects mostly confirm the findings presented as the main coefficients are correctly signed and continue to be significant at the 5% level or better (see the Online appendix). In the Online appendix, we display the results of a battery of non-linear (logistic) regressions. These additional models show that our results do not depend on the employed method of estimation. Finally, we also present the main results of the article distinguishing between West European and East European countries, and left-wing and right-wing parties, respectively. Overall, splitting the sample makes the results slightly weaker. For example, the probability of voting for a trade protectionist party does not hinge on being unemployed or a union member in post-communist countries. In addition, union members are not more likely to vote for trade protectionist parties when the latter are right-wing. Finally, the coefficient of unemployed loses practically all its statistical significance when distinguishing between left- and right-wing parties, suggesting that a line for further research should be the combined consideration of several party characteristics such as their ideology or the fact of being in government or in opposition.

Conclusion

The large global shocks experienced by European economies in the 2000s and 2010s, the period of our investigation, disrupted the performance of their domestic labor markets. In this article, we study the response of voters to the policies offered by political parties to manage those shocks. Did voters respond by supporting parties that endorse trade policies aimed at reversing globalization? Or did they accept the globalization status quo in the belief that the policies of the welfare state would mitigate the adjustment costs resulting from international competition? We find that voters who responded by supporting trade protectionist parties were the least educated, unemployed, and members of labor unions. Unexpectedly, however, using a macro proxy for a country's compensation potential, we do not find significant evidence that the level of social spending to alleviate the costs from imports influences voting behavior in the direction predicted by the compensation principle (i.e. by deterring the vote for trade protectionist parties).

How do these findings affect our understanding of the domestic politics of international economic integration? Compared to previous studies that looked at the connection between voters' characteristics and attitudes towards trade, we find that the same variables also affect the choice to vote for a protectionist party. As a next step, it would be valuable to gain a deeper understanding of voters' underlying motivations: Do they merely want to put a stop to further liberalization or do they intend to roll back globalization?

While our null result regarding the ability of a country's compensation potential to prevent rising support for protectionism may be a consequence of data limitations, the results

in general indicate that past policies have not been sufficient to prevent a backlash against globalization. Given the welfare gains that can come with increased trade, an important task for future research is to determine which - if any - policies can maintain broad support for openness.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests
The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Supplemental material
Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1 For instance, Acemoglu et al. (2016) estimate the impact of China's import shock on the US during the 2000s to be about a third of the losses in manufactured jobs, while the remainder two thirds could be attributed to automation.
2 For additional information, see European Social Survey (2018).
3 However, despite World Trade Organization and EU rules on subsidies, individual EU members can establish behind the border restrictions with effects on trade flows similar to protectionist barriers. They can create, for instance, subsidies targeted at specific industrial sectors such as green technologies or local production of strategic materials. In addition, national governments can also reinforce their foreign direct investment authorization regime, the so-called anti-foreign takeover shield, which affects all foreign investors, including those from EU countries.
4 Adding a constant to the denominator ensures that the value of the function is defined even if per407 is equal to zero. Adding the same constant to the numerator has the effect that the fraction equals 1 if a party manifesto contains an equal number of statements in favor of protectionism and free trade. Without taking the logarithm, an increase in per406 would have a stronger impact on the value of the variable than an increase in per407.
5 The score for immigration is calculated as $\log((\text{per602\_2}+0.5)/(\text{per601\_2}+0.5))$.
6 Following Colantone and Stanig (2018b), the score for nationalism is calculated as $\log((\text{per601}+\text{per603}+\text{per605}+\text{per608}+0.5)/(\text{per602}+\text{per604}+\text{per607}+0.5))$.

7 The score for attitudes towards international cooperation is calculated as log((per109+per110+0.5)/(per107+per108+0.5)).
8 We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.
9 Similar results using union density as an independent variable are provided by Hays et al. (2005).

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