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**Climate Finance in the Age of Populism:
Understanding the Allocation Patterns
of Right-Wing Governments**

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Abstract

As the impacts of climate change intensify, providing effective adaptation support to low-income countries is becoming more urgent than ever. Climate finance is central to this effort, yet its allocation is increasingly shaped by shifting political dynamics within provider countries. In recent years, right-wing populist parties have gained influence across many of these countries, while openly questioning the scientific consensus on climate change and emphasizing national sovereignty over international cooperation. In light of these developments, this thesis explores how right-wing populist governments in provider countries influence the allocation of climate adaptation finance. Building on the targeted development framework, it investigates whether these governments adopt a self-interested approach, directing funds in a way that reduces climate-related challenges abroad from spilling over into their own territories. Based on a mixed-methods analysis of 14 European provider countries and 111 recipient countries from 2015 to 2022, the findings reveal limited evidence for such strategic behavior. Rather, the results suggest that right-wing populists' failure to recognize climate change as a source of risk in developing nations plays a central role in shaping their climate finance decisions. Despite not using climate adaptation finance in a targeted way, the thesis thus concludes that right-wing populist parties risk undermining global efforts to fight climate change by failing to acknowledge it as a serious threat.

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1. Introduction

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges of our time, requiring global cooperation on an unprecedented scale (Zhang & Liang, 2020). Around the world, policymakers have increasingly recognized that only unified, collective action can effectively address this crisis (Zhang & Liang, 2020; Kumari & Pande, 2023; Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, 2023). With the entry into force of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on March 21, 1994, a first major step was taken by the international community towards a coordinated response. Central to this convention was the acknowledgement that while climate action is a shared responsibility, countries differ in their historical contributions and capacities to respond. In Article 4.1 of the UNFCCC, the signatory parties thus recognized their “common but differentiated responsibilities”. As part of this acknowledgement, developed¹ countries included in Annex II of the agreement pledged to support climate efforts in the developing world (United Nations, 1992, Art 4.3). This financial assistance should ensure that developing countries can pursue both climate mitigation, which aims to address the root causes of climate change (UNFCCC, n.d.-c), and climate adaptation, which focuses on adjusting to its unavoidable consequences (UNFCCC, n.d.-b).

Yet, despite this acknowledgment of needing to support developing countries, progress in implementing climate finance commitments has been slow. Scholars, civil society, and policymakers alike have criticized the lack of concrete action and insufficient financial contributions from developed nations (Zagema et al., 2023; Naran et al., 2024; Paul, 2022). With a lack of strict enforcement mechanisms and competing global crises diverting attention from climate change, many governments choose to address more immediate political and economic concerns in their own countries (Kaur et al., 2023).

The recent surge of populism has sparked concerns that this behavior may only be exacerbated in the coming years. Although populism is not a new phenomenon, it has experienced unprecedented growth in many Western democracies, where right-wing populist parties,² in particular, have emerged as the primary beneficiaries of this trend (Mudde, 2016; Ruth-Lovell et al., 2019; Balfour et al., 2016). These parties persistently prioritize national interests over international cooperation and openly challenge the reality of climate change (Hammerschmidt et al., 2022; Fiorino, 2022; Buzogány & Mohamad-Klotzbach, 2021). Recent research highlights how populists strategically employ discourse, using “alternative” facts, emotive storytelling and anti-elitist rhetoric to erode public trust – not only in

¹ The classification of countries into “developed” and “developing” is a widely used but controversial practice, as there is no universally accepted definition. These categories are often based on economic indicators and measures of the standard of living (Khokhar & Serajuddin, 2015). Despite the oversimplifications inherent in this approach, this study uses this classification for the purposes of consistency and comparability with existing literature.

² A wide range of definitions exist for the concept of populism, including right-wing populism more specifically. The definition adopted in this thesis can be found in Chapter 2.2.

domestic institutions, but also in global frameworks like the UNFCCC (Boecher et al., 2022; Buzogány & Mohamad-Klotzbach, 2021; Nordensvard & Ketola, 2022; Plagemann & Destradi, 2019; Wajner et al., 2024). In the Netherlands, the far-right populist Party for Freedom is calling climate policy an “[...] unaffordable madness for which our entire way of life must be scrapped” (PVV, 2023, p. 22, author’s translation), while the German party Alternative for Germany denounces climate protection as a “political battle term” because “the climate cannot be protected” (German Bundestag, 2023, p. 1, author’s translation) and demands the termination of all international climate agreements (German Bundestag, 2023).

Today, these parties have entered mainstream politics in most democratic countries (Mudde, 2016; Ruth-Lovell et al., 2019; Silver, 2022). In Sweden, for example, the right-wing populist Sweden Democrats emerged as the second-most popular party in the country’s most recent general election. In Spain, populist parties were able to nearly double their vote share from 13% in 2015 to nearly 25% in 2019. And in Italy’s 2022 national elections, around 40% of votes went to one of the country’s three right-wing populist parties Brothers of Italy, Forward Italy and League, allowing them to form a ruling coalition (Silver, 2022).

As right-wing populists assume positions of political power, they not only shape the discourse and sentiments around climate change and multilateral institutions, but also directly influence budgetary decisions. A small but growing body of research has therefore begun to examine how their nationalist agendas affect foreign aid spending (Hammerschmidt et al., 2022; Heinrich et al., 2021; Bayram & Thomson, 2022; Lazell, 2024; Plagemann & Destradi, 2019). Heinrich et al. (2021) observe that an increase in right-wing populist sentiments like anti-elitism and nativism in a donor country leads to a reduction in foreign aid spending. Similarly, Hammerschmidt et al. (2022) show that foreign aid levels decrease with the share of populist radical right parties in government. While existing research thus finds that right-wing populist parties tend to translate their nationalist ideology into lower levels of development assistance, this insight has not yet been extended to the domain of climate finance. However, given their documented opposition to climate change action (Boecher et al., 2022; Buzogány & Mohamad-Klotzbach, 2021; Nordensvard & Ketola, 2022; Plagemann & Destradi), it becomes important to examine whether, and how, right-wing populist positions get translated into concrete climate policy decisions, including climate-related aid. This is a gap this thesis tries to fill by asking: *How do right-wing populist governments in provider countries influence the allocation of climate finance?*

To answer this question, I draw on Bermeo’s (2017, 2018) “targeted development” framework. The framework suggests that provider countries are interested in allocating climate finance in a targeted way to ensure it serves their own interests. Specifically, they aim to prevent climate-related challenges abroad from “spilling over” into their own territories, such as through increased migration flows or trade disruptions. Building on this, I argue that right-wing populist parties, whose core narrative centers

around national protection, will allocate more climate finance to countries seen as posing a higher risk of such spillover effects. To test this hypothesis, I analyze the climate adaptation finance allocation patterns between 14 European contributor and 111 recipient countries for the period 2015-2022. To capture both broad patterns and underlying mechanisms, I employ a mixed-method, nested approach, combining a two-stage fixed effects Cragg Model with a process tracing case study analysis.

My empirical results show that, on average, provider countries governed by right-wing populist parties allocate less adaptation finance than their non-populist counterparts, and that they are more likely to direct funds towards countries from which they import, while deprioritizing countries to which they export. However, there is little evidence to suggest that this pattern reflects an intentional strategy. On the contrary – climate change does not seem to be of great concern to these parties. Overall, the results do not provide sufficient support for the hypothesis of a deliberate, targeted adaptation aid allocation strategy by right-wing populist governments, but raise important questions about how populist rhetoric is translated into policy outcomes.

The results of this thesis contribute to a better understanding of the broader implications of populism on global climate action. Given that many of the largest climate finance contributors, such as the United States (US) and Germany, are witnessing a rise in populism, it is surprising that this phenomenon has so far received little attention in climate policy and foreign aid research. Taking a deeper look at the strategies behind right-wing populist parties' actions provides valuable insights into how their rise to power risks further complicating international efforts for effective climate cooperation.

The thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework, beginning with a discussion of existing theories of foreign aid allocation strategies, followed by an explanation of the theory used in the analysis of this study and how it applies to right-wing populist parties. Next, the hypothesis and corresponding empirical expectations are derived. Chapter 3 then specifies the research design, with the first section focusing on the regression analysis, including the choice of model and measurement of variables, and the second section detailing the presumed causal mechanism guiding the process tracing analysis. Chapter 4 reports the empirical findings, starting with the descriptive and regression results, before delving into a step-by-step tracing of the causal mechanism. Chapter 5 discusses the results and their implications against the background of the hypothesis, while Chapter 6 reflects on the study's limitations. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with a summary of the main findings.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the following sections of this chapter, I present the theoretical framework that underpins the analysis of this thesis. I begin with a review of the literature on climate finance allocation, differentiating between the various theories put forward by scholars and highlighting gaps in the existing research. Then, I explain the targeted development framework, outline its application to this study, and derive the corresponding hypothesis for the empirical analysis.

2.1 Theories of Climate Finance Allocation

The patterns and motivations behind foreign aid distribution have been occupying scholars for decades. In the 1970s, McKinlay and Little (1977) and Dudley and Montmarquette (1976) were the first to propose two opposing models of aid allocation: the recipient need model and the donor interest model. The recipient need model suggests that aid is provided to reduce poverty in recipient countries, driven mainly by donors' altruistic and selfless motives (Dudley & Montmarquette, 1976). In contrast, the donor interest model posits that aid is strategically used to advance donors' economic, political, or security interests (Hoeffler & Outram, 2011; Harrigan & Wang, 2011).

The Recipient Need Model

In the context of climate-related development aid, a recipient country's need plays a significant role. Within both policy and academic discourse, there is widespread agreement that climate finance should be allocated to those countries where it is most needed (United Nations, 1992; United Nations, 2009; Duus-Otterström, 2015; Barr et al., 2010; Islam, 2022). In this regard, the concept of recipient need is closely tied to vulnerability. The UNFCCC explicitly calls on developed nations to consider the "particularly vulnerable" in their adaptation funding efforts (United Nations, 1992, Article 4.4). The question of whether provider countries actually follow this principle in their allocation of financial resources is therefore much studied (Betzold & Weiler, 2017; Hourcade et al., 2021; Robertsen et al., 2015; Halimanya, 2014). What remains controversial, however, is whether this is being accomplished.

Some scholars, such as Betzold & Weiler (2017), find that countries that are more vulnerable to climate change risks receive more adaptation aid, both on a per capita basis and as a percentage of all adaptation aid. Similarly, Mori et al. (2019) conclude that higher levels of vulnerability in a country are positively correlated with both the accessibility to and volume of funding from the Adaptation Fund.³

Other researchers, however, suggest that the distribution of climate finance is not based on vulnerability criteria (Hourcade et al., 2021; Donner et al., 2016; Islam, 2022; Barrett, 2014; Betzold, 2015;

³ Established in 2001, the Adaptation Fund finances climate adaptation projects in developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to climate change effects (UNFCCC, n.d.-a).

Robertson et al., 2015; Incerti & Barnett, 2024; Lewis, 2003). For instance, in their study of adaptation flows going to Small Island Developing States, Donner et al. (2016) reveal that countries facing similar climate change-related challenges and vulnerabilities do not necessarily receive the same level of adaptation aid. Even on a subnational level, the distribution of funds appears to be uneven and fails to reach those most vulnerable to climate change risks (Incerti & Barnett, 2024; Barrett, 2014; Alberola, 2024) – which is increasingly eroding recipient countries’ confidence in the ability and willingness of donors to provide effective climate finance (Debeuf, 2024).

The Donor Interest Model

The literature using the donor interest model to explain climate finance distribution patterns is far less extensive (Klöck et al., 2018; Weiler et al., 2018; Lewis, 2003). As the model posits that donors⁴ will use aid to advance their own geostrategic, economic, or political interests, this branch of research usually examines bilateral adaptation flows, which allow benefits to be directed more precisely than both multilateral and mitigation aid (Lewis, 2003; Bermeo, 2018). In these studies, donor interest is typically captured using measures such as exports from the donor to the recipient country, similarities in voting preferences at the United Nations General Assembly, or the amount of arms trade between a donor-recipient-pair. The findings remain inconclusive: While Weiler et al. (2018) and Klöck et al. (2018) find no link between bilateral aid flows and donor interests, Lewis (2003) suggests that donor interests influence both multilateral and bilateral environmental aid allocation.

Only few scholars have applied the donor interest model to mitigation finance. Halimanjaya (2016) uncovers that major donors such as Japan and France follow a self-interested mitigation finance allocation strategy by prioritizing recipients that are of geostrategic importance to them. Qian et al. (2023) observe that mitigation finance providers aim to increase their exports through so-called “tied aid”, “[...] indicating that the economic benefit surpasses green ideology as a more significant driver for providing climate finance” (Qian et al., 2023, p. 56).

Importantly, it must be noted that the literature focusing on donor interests features significant gaps. For one, previous research in this field mostly conducts statistical analyses, which fail to address the intent and strategy behind correlations (Bermeo, 2018; Betzold & Weiler, 2017; Mori et al., 2019). Relatedly, these studies largely neglect the decision processes within a donor country. Even as new research underscores the importance of intra-governmental factors and bureaucratic politics in the

⁴ While the foreign aid literature typically refers to countries that give financial assistance as “donors”, many scholars prefer to use the term “provider” or “contributor” in the context of climate finance. This is because “donor” implies voluntary generosity and obscures the historic responsibilities of industrialized nations for the climate crisis. Additionally, the majority of climate finance is provided in the form of loans instead of grants, often generating economic benefits for the contributor country (Román et al., 2019; Bolton & Kleinnijenhuis, 2024; Naran et al., 2024). This thesis uses the terms interchangeably.

allocation of climate finance (Peterson & Skovgaard, 2019; Pickering et al., 2015), these distinctions remain rare.

Going Beyond the Dichotomy

Due to the inconsistencies in findings related to theories of either donor interest or recipient need, a large and growing literature looks for alternative explanations for funding allocation decisions. Explanatory variables range from good governance in recipient countries (Halimanjaya, 2014; Doku et al., 2021; Robinson & Dornan, 2017; Weiler et al., 2018), path dependency and existing aid relationships (Islam, 2022; Robertsen et al., 2015; Scoville-Simonds, 2016; Lewis, 2003; Nakhooda et al., 2013; Weiler et al., 2018), to variables such as wealth, administrative capacity, and population of the receiving nation (Hook, 2021; Doku et al., 2021; Robinson & Dornan, 2017; Halimanjaya, 2014).

Bermeo (2017, 2018) makes another push to go beyond the traditional theories of recipient need and donor interest in climate finance allocation. In her 2017 paper, she argues that foreign aid allocation can best be understood through a “targeted development” framework. As previously noted, studies drawing on the donor interest model typically look at variables such as the alignment of priorities, intensity of trade, or arms transfers between the donor and recipient country (Klöck et al., 2018; Weiler et al., 2018; Lewis, 2003). Bermeo (2017), on the other hand, suggests that an increase in the interconnectedness of donor and recipient countries has prompted a shift in donor countries’ priorities, necessitating additional variables to be considered in the analysis of self-interested aid distribution. The following section further develops this perspective and outlines its application to the domain of populist climate finance allocation.

2.2 Right-wing Populists and the Targeted Development

Framework

The effects of “underdevelopment”⁵ (Bermeo, 2017, p. 737) on a country’s population have been widely studied: Increases in gang violence and civil conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004), higher vulnerability to diseases and pandemics (Bloom et al., 1998; WHO & WBG, 2023), and limited education among a nation’s residents (Barro & Lee, 2013; Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2015) are just some of the outcomes that have been linked to low development levels. In contrast, the consequences of a country’s underdevelopment for other nations remain relatively underexplored. Bermeo (2017) stands out as one of the few scholars to focus on these cross-border spillover effects.

⁵ While used in Bermeo’s (2017) explanation of the targeted development framework, “underdevelopment” is a widely criticized term. Generally, it refers to a condition in which a country features a lower economic, social, and political development compared to other countries (Moellendorf, 2012). As this thesis builds on Bermeo’s framework, it also adopts its terminology.

In her study of aid allocation patterns, she argues that globalization has made it increasingly difficult for wealthy countries to shield themselves from the negative spillovers associated with low development levels in other countries. With rising global interdependence, challenges such as disease outbreaks, political instability, and economic disruptions are no longer contained within national borders. Fearing impacts on their own territories, the targeted development framework suggests that developed countries employ foreign aid as a tool to decrease these risks from underdevelopment abroad, prioritizing aid to countries that are most likely to generate negative spillovers. As Bermeo (2017, p. 738) observes, “aid flows disproportionately to poor, large, proximate states and to those with ties to the donor through trade and migration.”

Many of the challenges faced by developing countries are expected to be exacerbated by climate change in the coming decades (Moore & Diaz, 2015). Research indicates that rising temperatures and frequent extreme weather events will likely contribute to resource scarcity, political disputes, and displacement (McLeman, 2013; Abdi et al., 2023; Hsiang & Burke, 2014). For example, Black et al. (2011) find that environmental changes drive individuals to migrate to safer areas, not only due to greater exposure to climate hazards, but also as a result of disrupted livelihoods and heightened conflict potential. What is more, developing countries are expected to be disproportionately affected by climate change impacts, further increasing the likelihood of spillovers to wealthier nations (Abdi et al., 2023; Daraz et al., 2024; Bermeo, 2018). Due to this, Bermeo (2018) argues that developed countries should be interested in mitigating these risks through climate-related development aid, following the same rationale that guides their broader, self-interested development aid strategies.

She tests this assumption in her 2018 book, analyzing bilateral mitigation and adaptation flows from 2010 to 2012. As expected, she finds that neither adaptation nor mitigation finance are allocated in a way that indicates that provider countries base decisions on classic donor interest factors or the relative need of recipient countries. Instead, the results point towards a targeted use of climate finance by industrialized states to maximize their own wellbeing – much like the trend she observes for foreign aid more generally. This suggests that providers of climate finance are not interested in combatting climate change in the most efficient way possible; they are interested in using the funds to their own benefit (Bermeo, 2017; 2018).

Despite her unique angle in explaining climate finance allocation patterns, Bermeo’s study has several limitations. For one, her analysis is restricted to the period 2010-2012, leaving the question of whether these patterns persist in more recent years unanswered. Moreover, while she identifies broad trends in donor countries’ climate finance allocation, she does not differentiate between the diverse base of providers. In foreign aid distribution research, studies have shown that, for instance, “new” donors respond less to recipient need than “old” donors (Dreher et al., 2011), that the US and the United Kingdom favor recipients with similar voting patterns at the United Nations (Hoeffler & Outram, 2011), and that some donor groups act more “egoistically” than others (Berthélemy, 2006; Hoeffler & Outram,

2011). By neglecting these differences in the behavior of climate finance contributors, Bermeo fails to provide a more in-depth explanation as to why the shift towards a targeted allocation practice is taking place.

One promising explanation for this shift lies in the political motivations of donor governments themselves – particularly with the rise of populist leaders in many industrialized countries. While populism is a contested concept, political scientists generally define it as a political approach that emphasizes a division between "the people" and "the elite" and argues that politics should reflect the "general will" of the people (Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Populists construct society as two opposing, seemingly homogeneous groups: an "us" they claim to represent and protect, and a "them," portrayed as corrupt and threatening to the interests of the people (Mudde, 2004; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Funke et al., 2023; Rodrik, 2021). Notably, the individuals assigned to these categories vary depending on the specific form of populism. As populism is a "thin-centered ideology" (Mudde, 2004, p. 544), it must be used in combination with other ideologies to present a complete worldview. In the case of right-wing populism, this means incorporating elements of nativism (Mudde, 2004). Nativism says that "states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (the nation) and that non-native (or "alien") elements, whether persons or ideas, are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state" (Mudde, 2019). Consequently, right-wing populist narratives tend to emphasize cultural divisions, often targeting foreigners and ethnic or religious minorities as the threatening "other" in contrast to the virtuous "us" (Funke et al., 2023; Rodrik, 2021).

Due to the right-wing populist claim of foreigners constituting a dangerous threat, representatives of this political movement should be particularly interested in highlighting potential spillover effects from abroad as harmful to their country's internal population (Balfour et al., 2016). Emerging evidence suggests that right-wing populist actors have already recognized the potential of using development aid as a tool for national self-protection to shield their populations from these perceived threats. For example, Germany's Alternative for Germany party has proposed conditioning aid on political criteria aligned with domestic priorities, including the repatriation of migrants and enhanced cooperation in addressing cross-border crime and terrorism (German Bundestag, 2024).

Hence, despite foreign aid cuts having become a common tool in the right-wing populist playbook to make more money available for their own populations (Balfour et al., 2016; Hammerschmidt et al., 2022; Heinrich et al., 2021), it is reasonable to expect this nationalist approach to resource allocation will shift as climate-related events intensify underdevelopment abroad. Right-wing populists will grow more inclined to support preventative measures abroad through climate finance in order to safeguard their own populations (Bermeo, 2018; Balfour et al., 2016).

In this context, the distinction between climate mitigation and adaptation becomes crucial. When considering the influence of right-wing populism within donor governments, it is likely that support for

climate mitigation will be limited. Given that right-wing populists often question the existence of climate change and oppose mitigation strategies such as transitioning away from fossil fuels in their own countries, they are less inclined to invest in mitigation efforts abroad (Balfour et al., 2016; Mohamad-Klotzbach, 2021). Adaptation, however, is primarily directed toward disaster prevention and relief, where the potential for negative spillovers is more immediate and visible (UNFCCC, n.d.-b). As a result, populist actors are more likely to endorse adaptation measures, which they perceive as directly aligned with the goal of protecting their domestic populations from external risks (Bayram & Thomson, 2022).

For example, in Britain, the United Kingdom's Independence Party stated in its 2019 manifesto that it would "scrap the target of 0.7% [gross national income (GNI)] for Overseas Aid" (UKIP, 2019, p. 16) to make more money available for British citizens (UKIP, 2019). At the same time, it promised to continue providing "disaster relief on an 'as and when' basis" (UKIP, 2019, p. 16). In 2025, it reaffirmed its opposition to "arbitrary aid spending targets," (UKIP, 2025, p. 66) but stated that "[...] where mass displacement of people is likely from wars or natural disasters, it is in the direct national interest to assist" (UKIP, 2025, p. 66). This shows that, while these parties regard development aid as a strain for the national budget, they are willing to make exceptions for disaster relief – also in the face of climate change.

2.3 Empirical Expectations

While right-wing populist parties may advocate for specific policy positions, their ability to implement these policies is limited unless they hold some degree of power within a country's political system. Their influence on policies, including spending decisions, is expected to become significantly greater when they are part of a ruling government. Contrary to when they are part of the opposition or in legislature, parties represented in cabinet are in an agenda-setting position and potentially also control the ministries that decide on climate finance spending, enabling them to shift the status quo towards their preferred policy position (Hammerschmidt et al., 2022; Peterson & Skovgaard, 2019; Minkenberg 2001; Röth et al., 2018). Based on this consideration, I test the following hypothesis:

When a right-wing populist party is in government, it will direct climate adaptation finance towards countries from which negative spillovers are more likely.

While assessing the probability of negative spillovers may prove to be difficult, there exist a number of indicators that can guide a government's expectation in this regard. I argue that right-wing populist governments, motivated by a desire to protect domestic interests, will consider several key factors when making their allocation decisions.

Firstly, climatological disasters frequently serve as triggers for spillover effects. Such events can contribute to challenges associated with underdevelopment by straining resources, damaging

infrastructure and causing deaths among a country's population (Moore & Diaz, 2015; Daraz et al., 2024). Consequently, the higher the severity of a disaster and the broader its reach, the more inclined right-wing populist governments will be to allocate adaptation aid to contain potential transnational consequences.

Secondly, these disasters create spillovers of both political and economic nature. On the economic front, climate change can disrupt trade relations. With the world more globalized than ever and supply chains spanning a multitude of countries, countries are increasingly vulnerable to climate disruptions in their trade partners (Sun et al., 2024; Moore & Diaz, 2015). For instance, in 2024, climate change-induced drought conditions in Brazil led to worldwide shortages in the supply of coffee beans, causing coffee prices to jump to a nearly 50-year high in places such as the US and Europe (Pessoa & Durbin, 2024). The stronger the trade ties between donor and recipient countries, the more inclined I thus expect right-wing populists to be to allocate adaptation aid to safeguard their economic interests.

Apart from economic consequences, climate disasters can also undermine political stability in affected regions. Studies show that climate change can weaken governance structures and increase the likelihood of civil unrest, which, in turn, raises the risk of transnational terrorism and organized crime (Black et al., 2021; Abdi et al., 2023; Hsiang & Burke, 2014; Almulhim et al., 2024). This does not necessarily mean that governments aiming to reduce these cross-border effects will direct aid toward highly corrupt or fragile states. Instead, I argue that governments will direct more funds towards politically stable states. In this way, they can reinforce existing political institutions and prevent the spread of instability, all while ensuring that aid is less likely to be lost to corruption or inefficiency. Subsequently, the higher the level of governance in a recipient country, the higher the incentive of donors to send adaptation finance.

As a result of climate change-induced disasters and their economic and political implications, some of the affected individuals will be forced to migrate to countries in search of better economic opportunities and safety from climate hazards (Almulhim et al., 2024; McLeman, 2013; Black et al., 2021; Daraz et al., 2024). The threat of migration plays a key role in right-wing populist narratives (Balfour et al., 2016; Funke et al., 2023; Rodrik, 2021), which is why they should be interested in limiting this climate-induced migration to their own countries with the help of adaptation aid.

Beyond these immediate drivers, there are several factors that can shape how provider governments assess the likelihood and severity of spillover effects. One such factor is the size of the population in the recipient country. In sparsely populated regions, even severe weather events may not lead to large-scale displacement or trade disruption (Almulhim et al., 2024). Therefore, population size can serve as a key reference point for contributor governments seeking to estimate the magnitude of possible spillovers.

Another such indication is the wealth of a recipient nation. Countries with a low per capita gross domestic product (GDP) are often ill equipped to deal with environmental stress due to weak infrastructure, underfunded public services, and limited financial means. This means that climate-related disaster events can quickly escalate into broader economic and social crises (Abdi et al., 2023; Black et al., 2021), increasing the risk of spillovers to wealthier nations – thus acting as another factor guiding a provider government’s expectation.

Additionally, historic relationships between the donor and recipient country play a critical role. Former colonial powers tend to maintain stronger trade relations and are frequent destinations for migrants from their former colonies (Bermeo, 2017; Weiler et al., 2018). These enduring postcolonial links can therefore act as another reference point for a government’s estimation of spillover effects.

Finally, geographic proximity further amplifies the risk of spillovers. Neighboring countries are not only more likely to be economically interconnected; they are also more exposed to the direct effects of cross-border migration (Bermeo, 2017). Right-wing populist governments, concerned with both economic stability and border control, are therefore expected to prioritize aid to countries closer to them.

In short, then, right-wing populist governments aiming to direct funds towards countries from which negative spillovers are more likely are expected to target countries that experience climatological disasters, are geographically close, densely populated, politically stable, and tied to the provider country through trade, migration, or colonial history.

These characteristics vary in terms of which country they primarily concern, making it useful to distinguish whether they apply to the recipient, the provider, or the relationship between them. An overview of the factors expected to drive provider countries’ climate finance allocation, as well as the level on which they apply, can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of factors expected to influence adaptation aid allocation, by level

Level	Factor	Expected Relationship with Adaptation Aid
Recipient	Political stability	Positive
	Climatological disaster events	Positive
	Population size	Positive
	Economic prosperity	Negative
Dyad	Trade ties	Positive
	Migration flows	Positive
	Past colonial history	Positive
	Geographic distance	Negative

3. Research Design

To test my hypothesis, I adopt a mixed-method, nested design. The majority of studies on climate finance allocation rely exclusively on quantitative data,⁶ which, while valuable for identifying broad patterns, cannot capture the motivations and intent behind providers' decisions (Baydag & Klingebiel, 2023; Lieberman, 2005; Collier, 2011). As I aim to analyze whether climate adaptation patterns follow a targeted allocation strategy, I combine both quantitative and qualitative elements in my research.

First, I conduct a panel data regression analysis to examine climate finance allocation trends when a right-wing populist party is in government, seeing whether they follow a targeted pattern aimed at containing spillovers from abroad. Second, I complement the regression analysis with a process tracing case study to trace the underlying mechanism behind the quantitative results.

3.1 Regression Analysis

In the following sections, I first outline the empirical specification of my model. Then, I explain the construction and measurement of all variables used in the analysis.

3.1.1 Model Specification

The econometric modeling of aid allocation is heavily debated among scholars – mostly because aid variables tend to showcase a large number of zero values, as not all donors provide aid to every developing country in every year. A common solution to this problem involves separating the process into two distinct stages: a selection stage and an allocation stage (e.g., Berthélemy, 2006; Clist, 2011; Weiler et al., 2018). In the first stage, a binary outcome indicating whether any adaptation aid is allocated is modeled using a probit or logit specification. Here, the dependent variable takes the value of 1 if aid is provided, and 0 otherwise. This is followed by a second stage, which estimates the level of aid using ordinary least squares, conditional on the aid amount being strictly positive. Dividing the decision-making process into two separate stages also helps reveal different rationales that might guide the provider's behavior when selecting recipients versus determining the amount of aid to be allocated. Following the literature, I therefore opt for a two-stage Cragg Model with fixed effects.

Equation 1 outlines the baseline equation used for the first stage of the model:

$$\text{logit}(\pi_{ijt}) = \beta_0 + \sum_{k=1}^9 \beta_k x_{kijt} + \delta RWPG_{it} + \sum_{k=1}^9 \gamma_k (x_{kijt} RWPG_{it}) + \alpha_i + \lambda_t \quad (1)$$
$$\pi_{ijt} = \Pr (y_{ijt} = 1 \mid x_{kijt}, RWPG_{it}, x_{kijt} RWPG_{it}, \alpha_i, \lambda_t)$$

⁶ See, for example, Betzold & Weiler (2017), Weiler et al. (2018), Robertsen et al. (2015), Halimanjaya (2014), Donner et al. (2016), Islam (2022), Barrett (2014), Bermeo (2018), Betzold (2015), Incerti & Barnett (2024).

Where y_{ijt} represents the binary decision of a provider j to allocate adaptation aid to a recipient i in year t . x_{kijt} represents the independent variables, ranging from $k = 1, \dots, 9$, and $RWPG_{it}$ is a binary indicator for whether the provider government is right-wing populist in year t . The additional effect of this interaction is captured by coefficient γ_k . Finally, α_i and λ_t represent the donor and year fixed effects, respectively.

For those countries where $y_{ijt} = 1$, meaning the ones receiving adaptation aid, the second stage of the model then estimates the amount of adaptation aid received according to Equation 2:

$$y2_{ijt} = \beta_0 + \sum_{k=1}^9 \beta_k x_{kijt} + \delta RWPG_{it} + \sum_{k=1}^9 \gamma_k (x_{kijt} RWPG_{it}) + \alpha_i + \lambda_t + \epsilon_{ijt} \quad (2)$$

Where $y2_{ijt}$ represents the adaptation finance allocated from provider country i to recipient country j in year t . The range x_{1ijt} to x_{9ijt} represents the independent variables, $RWPG_{it}$ the right-wing populist provider government in year t , and α_i and λ_t capture the donor country and year fixed effects. The remaining unobserved factors are captured by the error term ϵ_{ijt} .⁷

3.1.2 Variables and Measurement

The following section outlines the variables included in the regression analysis, detailing their construction and corresponding data sources. I begin with the dependent variable, followed by the independent, moderating, and control variables. An overview of all variables, including their definition and data sources, can be found in Table A1 of Appendix A. The summary statistics and correlation matrices for all numerical variables are displayed in Tables A2 to A5 of Appendix A.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable *Adaptation* is the amount of bilateral climate adaptation finance committed by a provider to a recipient country in a given year. To measure this, I compile a dataset of dyadic data on adaptation commitments from 14 European countries^{8,9} included in Annex II of the UNFCCC to 111 recipient countries for the period 2015-2022. While the choice of time frame and recipient countries is based on data availability, the focus on European contributor countries is chosen for multiple reasons: Firstly, European countries constitute the largest group of climate finance providers and have high reporting standards (OECD, 2024a; Hammerschmidt et al., 2022). Secondly, right-wing populism has

⁷ In the full model, control variables are added to account for potential confounders, though they are not shown in the equation above for the sake of simplicity.

⁸ Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.

⁹ Four countries had to be dropped from the analysis due to data availability issues: the United Kingdom, Portugal, Ireland, and Greece.

seen a particularly significant growth on the European continent (Stanley, 2017), while it plays little to no role in leading contributor countries like Japan (Steel & Kohama, 2022; Yoshida, 2020). Lastly, datasets categorizing parties according to their populist tendencies only exist comprehensively for European countries.

The data for the dependent variable is derived from the Development Assistance Committee Creditor Reporting System (CRS) database provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Under the CRS, donors self-report whether their aid activities have a “principal,” a “significant” or no objective of targeting the environment and the Rio Conventions (OECD, 2024a). In line with previous scholars, I choose to only measure flows that record the environment as their principal goal and focus on commitments rather than disbursements, as the latter may lag behind policy decisions by several years (Bermeo, 2017; Betzold & Weiler, 2017; Clist, 2011; Robertsen et al., 2015). Moreover, I log-transform the dependent variable to address the issue of highly skewed data.

Independent Variables

In line with the empirical expectations outlined in Chapter 2.3, I include nine independent variables presumed to be relevant to a provider country’s allocation decision: *Disaster*, *Donor imports*, *Donor exports*, *Governance*, *Migration*, *Population*, *GDP*, *Colony*, and *Distance*. As standard in the literature, most time-variant variables are lagged by one year¹⁰ to account for the delayed effect of external conditions on policy decisions (Islam, 2022; Robertsen et al., 2015; Weiler et al., 2018; Betzold & Weiler, 2017; Hammerschmidt et al., 2022). This also helps reduce concerns about reverse causality, by ensuring that the explanatory variables temporally precede the adaptation allocation decision. Furthermore, the continuous independent variables are log-transformed to reduce skewness and facilitate interpretation.¹¹ For variables containing zero values, a small constant equal to 1% of the smallest positive value is added before log-transformation.

Moderating Variable

The moderating variable, *RWPG*, captures whether a right-wing populist party formed part of the government in a donor country in a given year. *RWPG* constitutes a dummy variable, taking on the value of 1 if such a party was part of the ruling cabinet for more than half of the year in question, and 0 otherwise. To identify whether a party was right-wing populist in a given year, I refer to the PopuList

¹⁰ *Disaster* is the only time-variant variable that is not lagged by one year. This decision is based on the expectation that bilateral adaptation commitments typically increase immediately in the wake of a disaster event.

¹¹ The variable *Governance* is not log-transformed, as it is already measured on an index scale. The only non-continuous independent variable is *Colony*, which constitutes a dummy variable, making log-transformation meaningless.

dataset, counting the criterion as fulfilled if the party is considered both “populist”¹² and “far-right” (Rooduijn et al., 2023). I then combine this with data from the ParlGov database, verifying whether the identified party was member of a provider country’s cabinet in a given year (Döring & Manow, 2024).

Control Variables

Several control variables are included in the analysis to avoid omitted variable bias. One such variable is the total level of bilateral official development assistance (ODA) committed to a recipient by a donor, as donors may follow similar distribution logics across both general development aid and climate-specific funding (Betzold & Weiler, 2017; Weiler et al., 2018; Bermeo, 2018).

I furthermore control for the level of democracy in a recipient country. Donors have been shown to distribute higher levels of aid to democratic countries, which might also apply to adaptation aid (Betzold & Weiler, 2017).

Finally, in consideration of previous results on foreign aid distribution (Hammerschmidt et al., 2022; Brech & Potrafke, 2014), I control for the general political ideology of a government’s executive branch, expecting lower adaptation aid commitments to be made by governments considered center- or right-wing, regardless of populist characteristics.

3.2 Process Tracing Analysis

After establishing whether the inclusion of right-wing populist parties in a donor country’s government impacts climate finance allocation patterns, I follow the regression with a process tracing analysis. In social science research, process tracing is a qualitative method used to understand the causal mechanism between an independent and dependent variable by reconstructing the chain of events leading to the observed outcome (Bennett & Checkel, 2015; Collier, 2011; Lieberman, 2005). As my research aims to understand the importance of political shifts happening within a provider country, taking an in-depth look at the mechanisms driving these patterns helps to underpin the findings of the regression analysis (Collier, 2011; Lieberman, 2005).

While the core objective of the process tracing analysis – understanding how a particular outcome materializes – remains consistent, its specific focus will depend on the results obtained in the quantitative analysis (Lieberman, 2005). If the results align with theoretical expectations and show that right-wing populist parties influence climate finance allocation patterns, process tracing will be used to explore whether these parties deliberately redirect funds to mitigate potential spillover effects from abroad, or whether other, unrelated factors are driving the observed pattern. Conversely, if the expected

¹² As previously noted, populism is a contested concept, with various definitions and interpretations. As the definition used by the PopuList project aligns with the one adopted in this study, its categorization is however easily applicable.

effect does not materialize, process tracing will be used inductively to uncover why the anticipated influence of right-wing populists on allocation decisions fails to emerge. More precisely, I investigate whether, and at which stage of the theorized causal mechanism, the expected relationship breaks down.

As decisions on bilateral adaptation aid are taken on a national level, I narrow down the scope of the process tracing analysis to a “typical” case (Lieberman, 2005). According to Lieberman’s logic for model-testing small-N analysis, cases selected for qualitative follow-up should be well predicted by the statistical model, meaning they lie near the 45-degree line when plotting predicted versus actual outcomes. The selection of the provider country serving as the case study for the process tracing analysis is therefore chosen on the basis of its alignment with key patterns identified in the quantitative analysis, while also paying attention to data availability and language issues that might hinder the execution of my qualitative analysis.

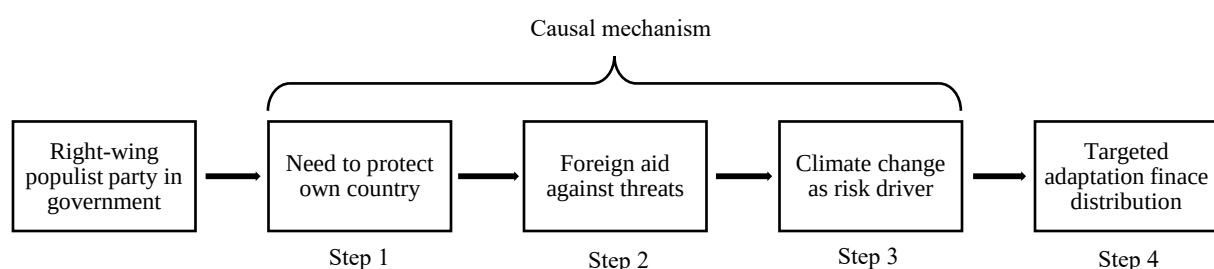
The following sections introduce the causal mechanism used in the process tracing analysis and detail how each step is operationalized and measured.

3.2.1 Presumed Causal Mechanism

In line with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2.2, the qualitative analysis traces the mechanism behind a right-wing populist government’s adaptation finance allocation strategy based on the following assumption: The presence of a right-wing populist party in government leads to a targeted distribution of climate finance because (1) the right-wing populist party identifies the need to protect its own country, which is why it (2) redefines foreign aid as a tool for managing external threats and (3) frames climate change as a driver of risk, so it ultimately (4) distributes adaptation finance to reduce these risks in a targeted manner.

An illustration of this presumed link can be found in Figure 1.

Figure 1: How right-wing populist parties lead to a targeted allocation outcome



The question of whether a targeted allocation of adaptation aid took place is not separately addressed as the fourth event in the causal chain of the process tracing analysis. Since the regression analysis results already confirm or refute this outcome, the process tracing analysis instead focuses on examining Steps 1 to 3 of the causal mechanisms that link right-wing populist parties to the targeted use of adaptation distribution.

3.2.2 Empirical Strategy

The tracing of the causal mechanism is carried out sequentially. First, I determine whether the right-wing party in question explicitly identifies the need to protect the provider country's domestic population, which represents the so-called "us" category in right-wing populist discourse. Since party manifestos serve as the clearest expression of a party's policy priorities (Eder et al., 2017; Bara, 2005), I examine whether the corresponding document released prior to the party's entry into government includes keywords related to four pre-defined categories – domestic security, threat, sovereignty, and culture and identity – with the help of the software MAXQDA. While these keywords are based on a predetermined catalog, the content analysis is open to the revealment of additional keywords by paying attention to recurring words that do not fit the predetermined ones. The complete list of keywords used in this stage of the analysis is provided in Table C1 of Appendix C.

After establishing whether the party emphasizes this need for domestic protection, I then verify whether it sees foreign aid as a tool to manage security concerns. To do so, I analyze whether the party creates a discursive link between the two issues. This analysis is based on speeches delivered by the party's members on the topic of foreign aid during its time in government. Parliamentary speeches are especially important for understanding the discursive linkage of certain issues, as the debates in parliament provide its members with a platform to communicate and justify their policy decisions to both the public and other political actors (Ilie, 2016; Slothuus & Vreese, 2010; Veen, 2011). As parties try to convince as many people as possible of their foreign aid policy, it is likely that they do not only link the issue of foreign aid to security, but also to other frames, such as moral obligation (Veen, 2011). Due to this diversity of narratives, I take on a broad definition of discursive linking, recognizing the link as established when any explicit references are made to national security and foreign threats, even if other frames are also present.

To draw the line back from foreign aid in general to climate finance in particular, the analysis then focuses on determining whether the party also recognizes climate change as a driver of underdevelopment, which increases the likelihood of negative spillovers. This step in the causal chain is only considered fulfilled if these references consistently frame climate change as a source of external, spillover-related risk, rather than focusing solely on its domestic impacts within the donor country. Data for this search is sourced from parliamentary speeches during the right-wing populist party's time in government that detail the party's position on climate change, for the reasons cited above.

To ensure the reliability of coding results, each document used in the process tracing analysis goes through two rounds of coding. While this does not resolve coder bias, it ensures consistency in the application of codes over time and helps to identify any missed provisions in the first round of coding.

After coding all three steps, I assess whether the evidence is strong enough to support the hypothesized causal mechanism. Only when the results form a coherent and internally consistent narrative linking

right-wing populist parties to shifts in climate finance allocation, do I view the hypothesized mechanism as fulfilled. While not every step must be equally robust, the overall chain must hold together without major contradictions or compelling counterfactual evidence that disrupts this coherence. To this end, I also refer back to the variables identified as important to right-wing populist governments in the quantitative part of the analysis and compare them to the themes qualitatively identified in the documents.

4. Analysis

In this chapter, I systematically test the hypothesis of right-wing populist governments' influence on adaptation finance allocation decisions. As outlined above, the analysis starts with a quantitative analysis, identifying whether the allocation patterns point towards a targeted use of adaptation funds. These results are presented in Chapter 4.1. Building on these findings, Chapter 4.2 shifts the focus of the analysis to a single provider country, which serves as a case for a qualitative process tracing analysis. Each step of the proposed causal mechanism is thoroughly examined to identify the underlying dynamics driving the quantitative results.

4.1 Regression Analysis

The statistical analysis begins with descriptive results to illustrate key trends in adaptation aid allocation. These serve as a foundation for the subsequent regression results, which test the influence of the independent variables on climate adaptation. The chapter concludes with a series of robustness checks.

4.1.1 Descriptive Results

From 2015 to 2022, the OECD recorded a total of 14.7 trillion USD in bilateral adaptation aid commitments marked as “principally” targeting the environment and the Rio Conventions. However, these commitments were not evenly distributed among both contributor and recipient countries.

Figure 2 displays the disparities among provider countries. On average, climate finance contributor countries committed approximately 1.1 billion USD in bilateral adaptation aid between 2015 and 2022. Interestingly, just two countries – France and Germany – accounted for around 83% of all adaptation commitments made during the eight-year period. France stands out as a particularly large donor, with nearly 8 billion USD in total adaptation commitments, representing nearly 0.044% of its GDP. In contrast, Iceland committed only 5 million USD during the same period, or 0.0021% of its GDP – the lowest amount of adaptation aid of all 14 provider countries.

These disparities can also be observed on a recipient level: While each recipient received an average of 132 million USD in bilateral adaptation aid from 2015 to 2022, these funds are not evenly distributed among countries. As Figure 3 shows, over half of the recipient countries received less than 50 million USD in total adaptation aid. Two countries, Papua New Guinea and São Tomé und Príncipe, received no bilateral adaptation at all over the entire time period. On the other end of the distribution, around 8% of countries received more than 450 million USD, with India emerging as a clear donor favorite. From 2015 to 2022, the country received approximately 1.8 billion USD in bilateral adaptation commitments, nearly 14 times higher than the average.

Figure 2: Total amount of adaptation aid (in billion USD) committed by providers (2015-2022)

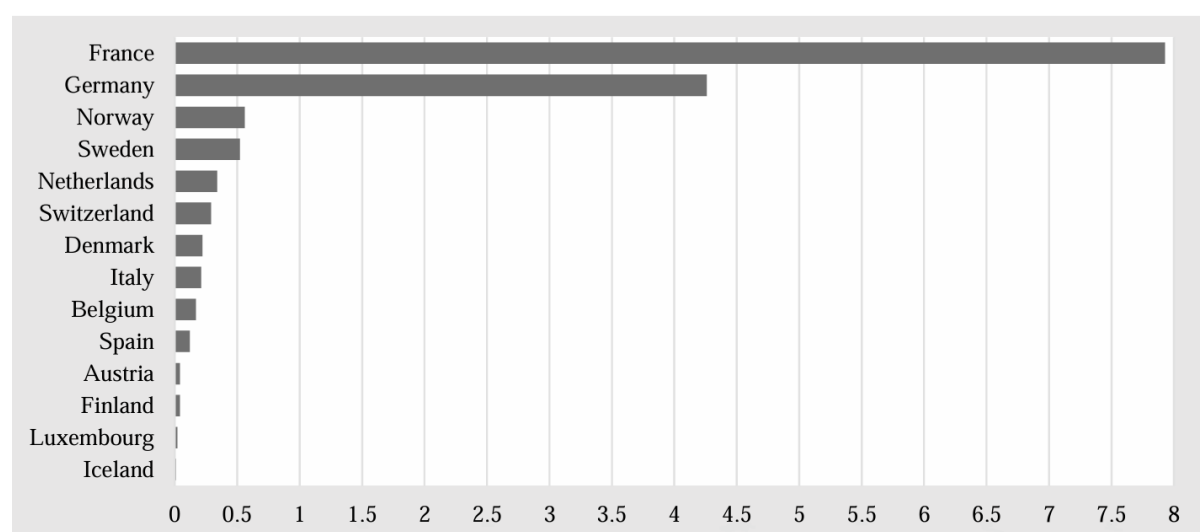
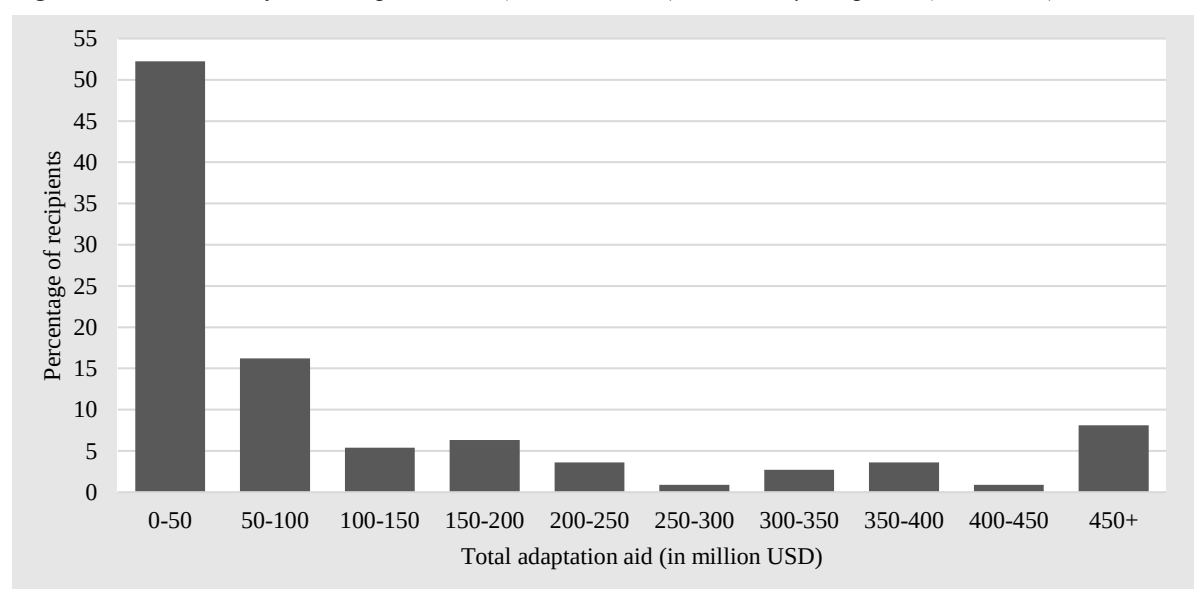


Figure 3: Distribution of total adaptation aid (in million USD) received by recipients (2015-2022)



Shifting the focus back to the domestic political factors of provider countries, I now turn to the descriptive results for right-wing populist governments. Between 2015 and 2022, a total of 26 right-wing populist parties held positions in ruling cabinets across contributor countries for at least six months. The year 2018 saw the highest participation of right-wing populist parties across European governments, with Austria, Norway, Switzerland, Belgium, and Italy all featuring such parties in their executive.

Their participation had a clear impact on adaptation outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 4. Countries led by right-wing populist governments consistently committed less adaptation aid than their non-populist counterparts over the eight-year period. While the annual average commitment level between the years 2015 to 2022 ranged from 65 to 223 million USD for provider countries without a right-wing populist

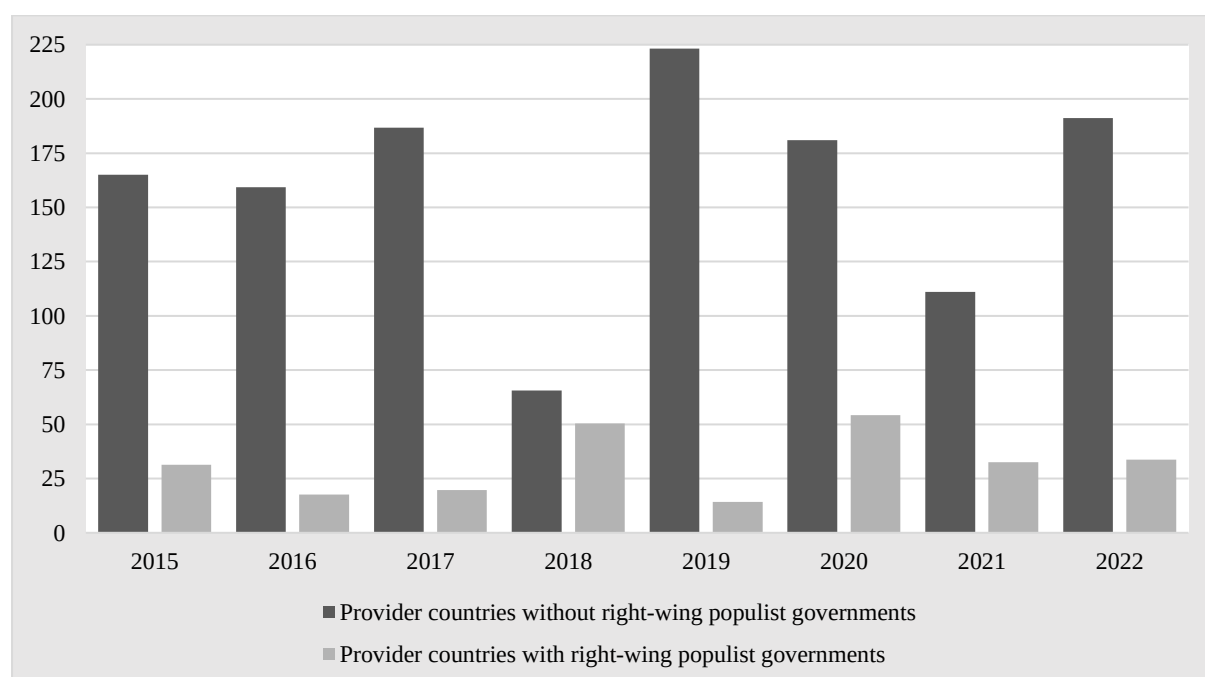
party in government, commitments made by right-wing populist governments only averaged an annual 14 to 54 million USD for the same time period.

Interestingly, 2018 – the year with the highest number of right-wing populist governments – saw the smallest gap in average adaptation aid between the two types of governments. Right-wing populist providers committed only 15 million USD less than non-populist governments that year, compared to a staggering 209 million USD difference the year after. However, the small difference in total bilateral adaptation spending between the two types of government can mostly be attributed to the behavior of non-populist governments in 2018, whose unusually low adaptation spending that year appears to be an outlier.

Most notably, amid the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, right-wing populist governments committed their highest level of adaptation aid across the entire time period, averaging 54 million USD. This is especially surprising given expectations of inward-looking policy during crises, where political and fiscal pressure typically shifts focus to domestic priorities (Sawbridge, 2023). This unexpected spike thus warrants further investigation in future research.

With the context of the descriptive results in mind, the analysis now turns to the regression results.

Figure 4: Average annual amount of adaptation aid (in million USD) committed by providers with and without right-wing populist governments



4.1.2 Regression Results

The results of the regression analysis are summarized in the tables below. Table 2 displays the results for the selection stage, showing how right-wing populist governments are associated with changes in the decision whether to allocate any adaptation aid to a certain country. Table 3 focuses on the allocation

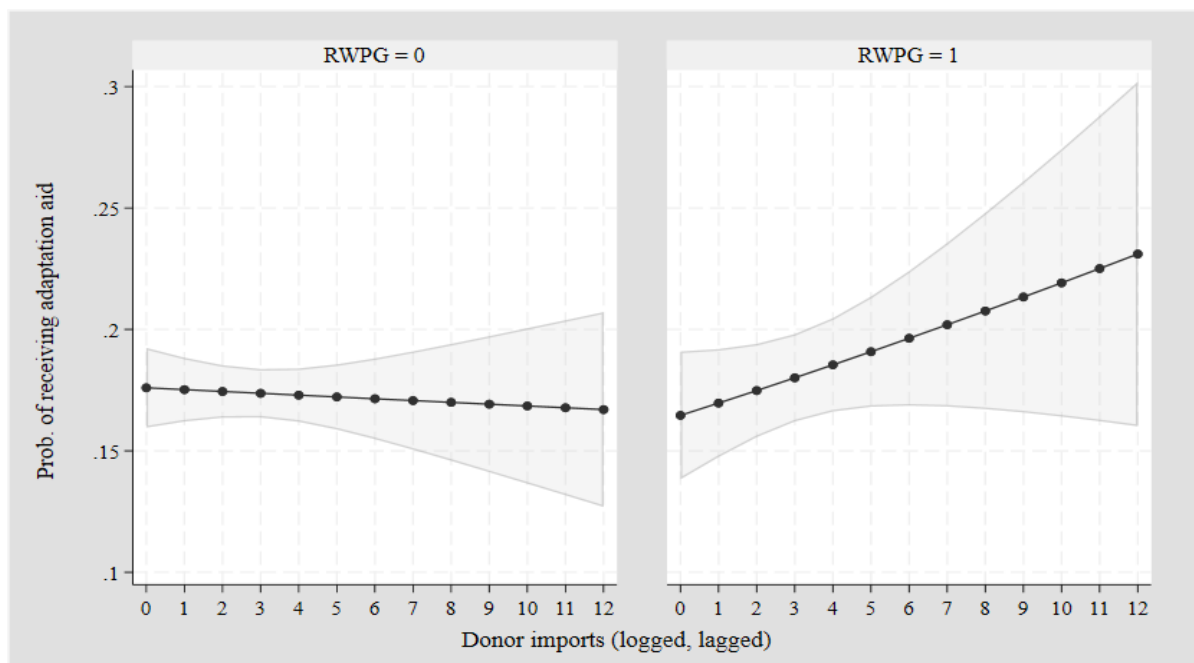
stage, illustrating the effect of right-wing populist governments on the amount of aid received by a certain country, in the case that it has been selected as a recipient in the first stage. Both tables report the results for five models, each building on the previous one. Model 1 introduces the baseline model. This is followed by the stepwise addition of the main independent variable, *RWPG*, in Model 2, as well as its interaction with the remaining independent variables in Model 3 and 4. Finally, Model 5 extends the analysis to include the control variables, displaying the results for the full model. The findings are discussed in the following section.

4.1.2.1 Selection Stage

For the selection stage, the results provide partial support for the hypothesis that right-wing populist governments direct adaptation aid based on spillover concerns. As expected, recipient countries with higher levels of disaster exposure, stronger export ties to the donor, greater migration flows, and lower GDP per capita are generally more likely to receive adaptation aid. This is also partially in line with findings from previous climate finance studies (Weiler et al., 2018; Lewis, 2003; Hook, 2021; Doku et al., 2021; Robinson & Dornan, 2017; Mori et al., 2019). However, right-wing populist governments exhibit distinct selection behavior for the following two variables:

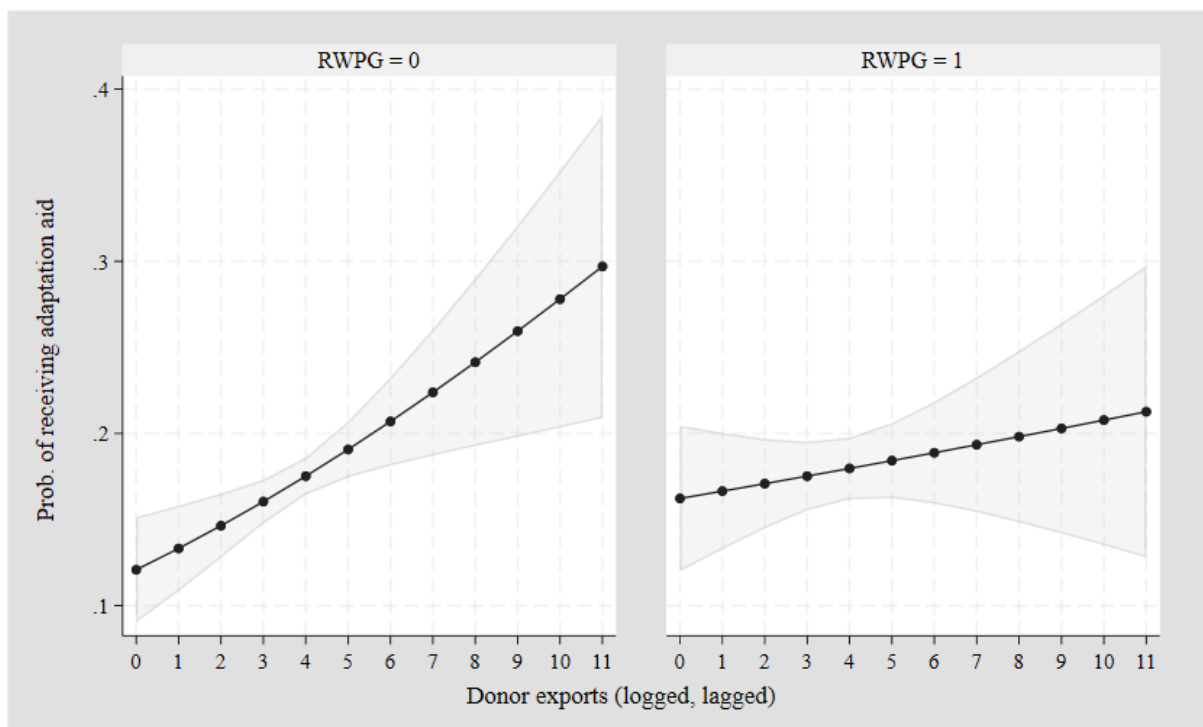
Firstly, the interaction between right-wing populist governments and donor imports is positive and statistically significant, suggesting that these donors are more likely to choose countries as recipients of adaptation aid from which they import goods. Based on the computation of marginal effects of this relationship, a one-unit increase in the log of donor imports, which is roughly equivalent to a 2.7-fold increase in imports, is associated with a 0.52 percentage point increase in the probability of selecting the country as a recipient for adaptation aid, *ceteris paribus*.

Figure 5: Marginal effect of donor imports on selection probability by *RWPG* status



Secondly, the interaction between right-wing populist governments and donor exports is negative and significant, indicating that right-wing populist governments are less responsive to export-related economic spillovers than their non-populist counterparts. The marginal effects reveal that a one-unit increase in the log of donor exports, corresponding to a 2.7-fold increase in the original variable, is associated with a decrease by 0.44 percentage points in the probability of being selected as a recipient under right-wing populist governments, holding all other variables constant. The negative correlation between this interaction term and the selection decision is especially striking, as this is both in opposition to the theoretical expectations and the main effect of the donor export variable, which remains positive throughout all models.

Figure 6: Marginal effect of donor exports on selection probability by RWPG status



Other hypothesized spillover variables, including climate-related disaster events, governance quality, migration flows, and population size, remain relevant to aid allocation overall, but right-wing populist governments do not differ significantly from other donors in how they respond to these factors. The lack of significant interaction effects for these variables suggests that right-wing populist governments broadly conform to existing allocation norms in these areas, rather than radically diverging from them. Thus, while right-wing populist providers seem to place greater emphasis on trade dependencies when selecting recipient countries of adaptation aid, their broader behavior in this first stage remains relatively aligned with conventional donor norms.

4.1.2.2 Allocation Stage

The results of the allocation stage also do not point towards major differences in the logic of right-wing populist providers and their non-populist counterparts. As with the selection of recipient countries, the occurrence of climate-related disasters, a low GDP per capita, and the presence of colonial ties are associated with a higher adaptation amount regardless of regime type, conditional on having been selected in the first stage. The coefficients for all three of these variables remain significant throughout the models, as shown in Table 3.

However, once these variables are interacted with right-wing populist governments, their coefficients become insignificant. In total, only one interaction term reaches statistical significance: In Model 4, an increase in a recipient country's population of 1% is associated with a 0.297% decrease in the amount of adaptation aid allocated, compared to non-populist donors. Yet, once the control variables are added, this correlation also becomes insignificant. Notably, though, the results for the interacted population variable in Model 4 also stand in opposition to the theoretical expectations, which assumed that right-wing populist donors would direct more adaptation aid towards more populous countries. All other interaction terms, including those with disaster exposure, trade, governance, and migration, remain statistically insignificant. Moreover, the main effect of right-wing populist governments themselves is not significant in any model.

Overall, these patterns imply that donors with right-wing populist parties in government do not systematically alter the volume of adaptation aid in response to the hypothesized spillover indicators, even if they differ in trade-related terms in the selection stage.

4.1.2.3 Robustness Checks

To test the robustness of my results, I apply several alternative specifications of the right-wing populist government variable. For one, I choose not to lag the variable by one year, in case changes in allocation commitments are immediately reflected rather than time-delayed. Furthermore, I drop the six-month threshold for the *RWPG* variable, verifying whether the results remain robust if a right-wing populist party was part of a ruling government for any amount of time in a given year. Lastly, I check whether the association between right-wing populist parties and adaptation aid allocation also holds if they are part of the legislative branch. As Hammerschmidt et al. (2022) argue, right-wing populist parties may also influence foreign aid allocation through the indirect power they exert on mainstream parties, even without being part of the cabinet. Thus, the higher the seat share of right-wing populist parties in a contributor country's legislature, the higher the effect on aid patterns is assumed to be. Lastly, examining whether right-wing populist parties held the prime minister position was considered but ultimately

discarded. As only one country-year met this condition,¹³ using this direct executive control as a robustness check does not make sense.

Across these different measurements of the *RWPG* variable, the results remain largely consistent. However, two notable differences emerge. First, when accounting for right-wing populist governments in the legislative branch of a provider country, the interaction effect for colony becomes negative and statistically significant in both the selection and allocation stage model. This suggests that, compared to their non-populist counterparts, right-wing populist legislators are less inclined to select former colonies as recipients of adaptation finance or to allocate higher levels of funding to them. Consequently, right-wing populist parties may exert distinct types of influence depending on whether they hold legislative or executive power – an important distinction that merits closer attention in future research.

Secondly, the allocation stage reveals positive and significant effects for the interaction of all operationalizations of the *RWPG* variable with *GDP*. This implies that, once a recipient country has been chosen, right-wing populist providers are associated with allocating higher levels of adaptation finance to relatively wealthier recipients – a preference that is both in opposition to the main effect of the *GDP* variable and the theorized expectations. This result could thus also benefit from further investigation in future research. Importantly, these two findings underscore the need for careful consideration in how right-wing populist governments are operationalized, as different specifications may yield varying results.

As a further robustness check, I drop the largest donor countries, France and Germany, from the analysis to see whether they are driving the results. Finally, I run alternative models, including a probit instead of a logit model for the first stage of the two-part model, and include random effects instead of the fixed effects specification. In the random effects model, the selection stage showcases a negative and significant coefficient for *Distance*, while the allocation stage sees a negative and significant *Donor exports* coefficient. These changes might reflect differences in how between-country variation is treated in random effects models. Apart from these slight differences, the results remain largely consistent for both the reduced sample size and alternate model specifications.

The results for all robustness checks can be found in Appendix B.

¹³ Giorgia Meloni as Prime Minister of Italy in 2022.

Table 2: Selection stage – Determinants of climate adaptation aid by right-wing populist donors

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Disaster	0.009** (0.005)	0.009** (0.005)	0.013** (0.006)	0.012** (0.006)	0.012** (0.005)
Donor imports	0.031 (0.022)	0.031 (0.022)	0.002 (0.024)	-0.001 (0.024)	-0.008 (0.024)
Donor exports	0.168*** (0.044)	0.168*** (0.044)	0.234*** (0.051)	0.233*** (0.052)	0.152*** (0.048)
Governance	0.505*** (0.125)	0.505*** (0.125)	0.523*** (0.134)	0.487*** (0.137)	0.371*** (0.133)
Migration	0.124*** (0.032)	0.124*** (0.032)	0.117*** (0.034)	0.121*** (0.034)	-0.014 (0.030)
Population	0.123** (0.060)	0.123** (0.060)	0.113* (0.060)	0.108* (0.063)	0.018 (0.062)
GDP	-0.970*** (0.083)	-0.970*** (0.083)	-0.979*** (0.083)	-0.947*** (0.093)	-0.636*** (0.086)
Colony	1.565*** (0.256)	1.565*** (0.256)	1.551*** (0.253)	1.532*** (0.264)	1.082*** (0.230)
Distance	0.483*** (0.129)	0.483*** (0.129)	0.503*** (0.129)	0.536*** (0.143)	0.639*** (0.131)
RWPG		0.066 (0.094)	0.276 (0.217)	2.045 (2.245)	1.397 (2.144)
RWPG × Disaster			-0.012 (0.010)	-0.011 (0.010)	-0.009 (0.010)
RWPG × Donor imports			0.093*** (0.035)	0.100*** (0.037)	0.061 (0.038)
RWPG × Donor exports			-0.167*** (0.057)	-0.160** (0.063)	-0.107* (0.060)
RWPG × Governance			-0.123 (0.173)	0.009 (0.229)	0.145 (0.214)
RWPG × Migration			0.026 (0.054)	0.016 (0.060)	0.019 (0.061)
RWPG × Population				0.018 (0.092)	0.039 (0.092)
RWPG × GDP				-0.125 (0.132)	-0.058 (0.128)
RWPG × Colony				-0.016 (0.389)	-0.100 (0.349)
RWPG × Distance				-0.121 (0.216)	-0.148 (0.191)
ODA					0.406*** (0.033)
Democracy					0.144*** (0.037)
Cabinet ideology					-0.070* (0.039)
Constant	-2.065 (1.520)	-2.088 (1.523)	-2.168 (1.519)	-2.640 (1.683)	-3.584** (1.555)
Donor FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	10,481	10,481	10,481	10,481	10,481

Clustered standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table 3: Allocation stage – Determinants of climate adaptation aid by right-wing populist donors

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Disaster	0.015** (0.007)	0.015** (0.007)	0.016** (0.008)	0.014* (0.008)	0.015** (0.008)
Donor imports	0.032 (0.033)	0.033 (0.033)	0.017 (0.036)	0.014 (0.036)	0.012 (0.037)
Donor exports	0.090 (0.062)	0.088 (0.062)	0.138** (0.070)	0.129* (0.069)	0.091 (0.066)
Governance	-0.115 (0.193)	-0.115 (0.193)	-0.158 (0.207)	-0.039 (0.210)	0.044 (0.223)
Migration	0.056 (0.047)	0.055 (0.047)	0.062 (0.055)	0.051 (0.056)	-0.029 (0.054)
Population	-0.014 (0.097)	-0.014 (0.097)	-0.022 (0.096)	0.050 (0.103)	-0.001 (0.099)
GDP	-0.582*** (0.133)	-0.582*** (0.133)	-0.592*** (0.133)	-0.672*** (0.140)	-0.528*** (0.136)
Colony	0.729** (0.333)	0.736** (0.334)	0.717** (0.332)	0.806** (0.356)	0.678* (0.347)
Distance	-0.060 (0.200)	-0.065 (0.200)	-0.043 (0.199)	-0.099 (0.230)	-0.046 (0.219)
RWPG		-0.263 (0.183)	0.440 (0.539)	0.059 (3.754)	-1.036 (3.532)
RWPG × Disaster			-0.004 (0.017)	0.004 (0.017)	0.002 (0.017)
RWPG × Donor imports			0.039 (0.067)	0.030 (0.070)	0.009 (0.068)
RWPG × Donor exports			-0.113 (0.090)	-0.084 (0.100)	-0.069 (0.097)
RWPG × Governance			0.229 (0.438)	-0.208 (0.454)	-0.083 (0.431)
RWPG × Migration			-0.041 (0.080)	0.014 (0.085)	0.036 (0.084)
RWPG × Population				-0.297* (0.157)	-0.245 (0.155)
RWPG × GDP				0.380 (0.267)	0.420 (0.259)
RWPG × Colony				-0.904 (0.878)	-0.982 (0.866)
RWPG × Distance				0.235 (0.346)	0.221 (0.332)
ODA					0.229*** (0.040)
Democracy					-0.044 (0.061)
Cabinet ideology					0.009 (0.071)
Constant	1.956 (1.951)	2.066 (1.955)	1.869 (1.970)	1.844 (2.132)	1.564 (2.133)
Donor FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1,850	1,850	1,850	1,850	1,850

Clustered standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

4.2 Process Tracing Analysis

The analysis now turns to tracing the mechanism behind the results of the regression analysis. To this end, the chapter first explains the selection and characteristics of the “typical” donor country serving as a case study, laying the foundation for the subsequent process tracing analysis. Next, each step of the presumed causal link is examined in the way outlined above, aiming to understand how the allocation outcome materializes. The final subchapter will assess whether the evidence from Steps 1 to 3 paints a coherent picture supporting the hypothesized causal link or whether any counterfactual evidence significantly undermines the presumed chain.

4.2.1 Case Selection

To identify a “typical” donor country, I calculated the prediction error for each donor across all dyads for both the selection and allocation models. These errors show how much each donor’s actual decision differs from what the models predict. When averaging these errors per donor, the country whose adaptation aid behavior is most accurately captured by both stages of the model and who fulfills the necessary criterion of having had a right-wing populist party in government during the observed time frame is Belgium.

Nevertheless, Belgium was not chosen as a typical case due to the nature of the right-wing populist party that formed part of a ruling cabinet from 2014 to 2018: the New Flemish Alliance. As the New Flemish Alliance is a regional party that pursues greater autonomy for the Belgian region of Flanders, many of its political demands are linked to this autonomy claim. While this study defines right-wing populism as a combination of populist and nativist ideologies, the New Flemish Alliance combines its populist demands with sub-state nationalism, questioning the legitimacy of the Belgian state to adequately represent its regions. In this way, the party’s populist rhetoric mainly characterizes the “we” group as the Flemish population, while the opposing “them” comprises the Walloons or the mainstream parties in Brussels – not other countries (van Haute et al., 2018).

Due to these specific party characteristics, another country, which was also well explained by the statistical model, was chosen as a case for the process tracing analysis: Austria.

Austria is a federal semi-presidential republic, though in practice it operates as a parliamentary democracy. Its legislature consists of two chambers, the National Council and the Federal Council, with the former holding the most influence in lawmaking and government oversight (Müller, 1999). Five parties are currently represented in the National Council: The Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), which is a center-right party with a Christian-democratic worldview, and the Social Democratic Party of Austria (SPÖ), which pursues a social democratic political agenda, are among the country’s oldest and most influential parties. While more recently founded, the parties the New Austria and Liberal Forum (NEOS) and the Greens – The Green Alternative have also maintained a consistent presence in the

National Council, advocating for topics such as social justice, environmental protection, and progress (PolitPro, n.d.). But also right-wing populist parties have a longstanding tradition within the Austrian political system. The country's oldest such party, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), was founded in 1956 as a national liberal party with close ties to the Nazis. That same year, it got elected to the National Council, where it has been continuously represented ever since (Mcintosh, 2019). In fact, the party has become so popular that, for the first time in history, it emerged as the strongest political force in the 2024 national elections (BMI, 2024).

This growing electoral support has also enabled the FPÖ to enter Austria's executive. In December 2017, the FPÖ entered a coalition government with the ÖVP under Federal Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, marking its second participation in the federal executive. After securing approximately 26% of the popular vote, the FPÖ not only assumed the office of Vice Chancellor but also held several key ministries in the so-called "Kurz I cabinet", including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection (Bundeskanzleramt, n.d.). In May 2019, the coalition government collapsed following a corruption scandal that involved two prominent FPÖ politicians (Al-Serori et al., 2022).¹⁴

Despite being in power for only 1.5 years, the Kurz I cabinet left notable imprints on Austria's foreign aid and climate finance budgets. Shortly after the coalition government took office, Austria's foreign aid spending saw a steep decline, with development assistance making up only 0.26% of the country's GNI in 2018 – its lowest level since 2004. Although Sebastian Kurz had promised to double bilateral aid before taking office, Austria continued to fall short of the United Nations' target of 0.7% ODA spending of GNI, which was a significant point of contention between the governing and opposition parties ("Ausgaben für Entwicklungshilfe", 2019). While the cabinet had initially also planned to cut funding for the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund¹⁵ from 20 to 15 million EUR, continued criticism by opposition and civil society groups pushed the government to reverse the decision in March 2018 ("Budget – Regierung nimmt", 2018). The government's climate finance spending, on the other hand, received far less attention: The year after rising to power, the Kurz I cabinet nearly doubled its "principal" bilateral adaptation aid to developing countries, from 7.4 million USD in 2017 to 13.5 million USD in 2018 (OECD, 2024a). The question of whether this development was also an intentional, targeted strategy pushed by the FPÖ is examined in the following sections.

¹⁴ The political scandal, also known as the Ibiza affair, was triggered by a secretly filmed video showing FPÖ leader and Vice Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache and FPÖ parliamentary group leader Johann Gudenus offering government contracts in exchange for political support (Al-Serori et al., 2022).

¹⁵ The Foreign Disaster Relief Fund, administered by the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs, provides financial relief to developing countries following humanitarian crises and natural disasters, especially for rehabilitation and reconstruction measures (ADA, n.d.).

4.2.2 Step 1: Domestic Protection

Step 1 of the presumed causal mechanism postulates that the right-wing populist party identified the need to protect its “core” population from foreign threats. Under the Kurz I cabinet, the FPÖ mainly pushed for stricter immigration policies, the preservation of Austrian culture and sovereignty, and the expansion of surveillance measures by the police (Bundeskanzleramt, 2017). In a 2018 interview with the German news portal Stern.de, the FPÖ-affiliated Minister of the Interior Herbert Kickl reasoned that it was the government’s responsibility to answer the people’s call for greater security and stability among growing migratory pressure from abroad (Baum, 2018).

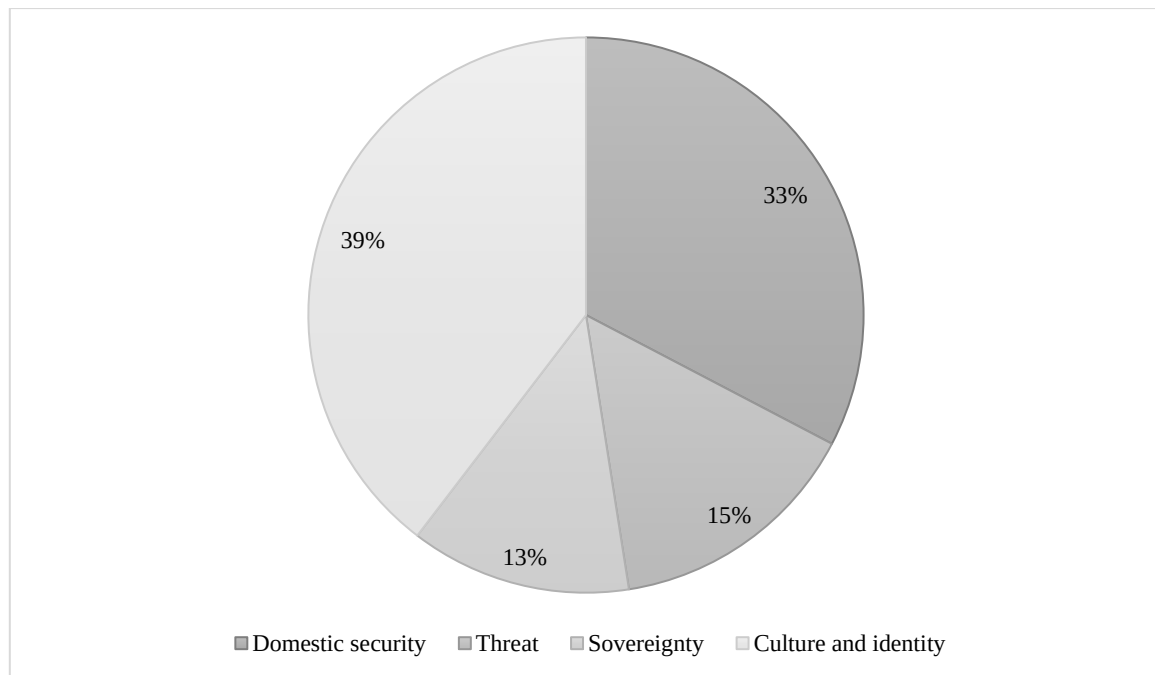
An examination of the party’s 2017 election manifesto reveals that this emphasis on increased security and sovereignty was already firmly embedded in the FPÖ’s political demands prior to entering executive office. In the document, the party declares a “crisis of fairness” (FPÖ, 2017, p. 2, author’s translation), which it pledges to address during its time in government through the implementation of 100 specific policies outlined in the manifesto. As anticipated, these demands are closely tied to themes of cultural preservation, national sovereignty, and protection from perceived threats posed by foreign-born individuals and other countries, including the European Union (EU).

For one, this emphasis is reflected in the structure of the manifesto itself: Seven out of 25 chapters focus explicitly on Austrian identity and domestic security, with titles such as “Protecting our sovereignty and self-determination” and “Defending our country - Yes to neutrality and compulsory military service” (FPÖ, 2017, p. 2, author’s translation). Even beyond these directly relevant chapters, the FPÖ’s political demands are consistently tied to security themes. In total, only 32% of the chapters show no mention of any keywords related to these categories.

In the initial round of computer-assisted coding, a total of 223 keywords was coded, pertaining to the four pre-defined categories of domestic security, threat, sovereignty, and culture and identity.¹⁶ Given the context-dependent nature of speech, a subsequent round of manual refinement was conducted, reducing the outcome to 101 coded keywords. As illustrated in Figure 7, two categories were particularly prominent in the FPÖ’s party manifesto: Over two-thirds of all coded keywords were related to either domestic security or issues of culture and identity. Among them, the words “security” and “culture” show up the most frequently, with 16 mentions each, which is closely followed by “protection” (10 mentions), “homeland” (7 mentions), and “defense” (7 mentions).

¹⁶ Despite allowing for new code categories to be revealed during the coding process, no additional categories were identified that went beyond the pre-defined set.

Figure 7: Share of total keywords coded by category



Previous research has shown that right-wing populist parties frequently link their security agendas to perceived threats posed by non-nationals (Mudde, 2004; Mudde, 2016; Ruth-Lovell et al., 2019). This pattern is also evident in the FPÖ's 2017 manifesto. For instance, in the chapter on public security and order, the party claims that "public faith in security has been declining for years and has been massively worsened by the uncontrolled admission of countless migrants" (FPÖ, 2017, p. 12, author's translation). It further calls for the systematic deportation of foreign-born criminals, arguing that they "[...] continue to be a burden on the taxpayer and endanger the safety of citizens" (FPÖ, 2017, p. 12, author's translation). Beyond associating migrants with threats to physical security, the FPÖ also frames them as a danger to economic fairness. The manifesto demands protection for domestic workers against competition from EU citizens and third-country nationals, advocating for their selective exclusion from the Austrian labor market (FPÖ, 2017, p. 28).

The party also frames entire countries and institutions as a threat to the Austrian population. It explicitly names Turkey, which it views as a danger to Western culture, and describes the EU as a threat to national sovereignty whose "[...] ultimate goal is a centralized bureaucratic monstrosity" (FPÖ, 2017, p. 27, author's translation).

Interestingly, the chapter on environmental protection also ties ecological and energy policy to broader themes of national security and autonomy. However, instead of highlighting the immediate risks posed by climate-related disasters, the FPÖ argues that transitioning away from fossil fuels can enhance Austria's independence from foreign energy sources, reinforce national sovereignty, improve quality of life, and stimulate economic growth through the creation of new jobs (FPÖ, 2017, p. 21).

Thus, the FPÖ clearly identified the need to protect the Austrian population and culture, which is not only evident in its direct security- and defense-related demands, but also in its arguments for environmental and labor protection. Most importantly, the source of threat is consistently portrayed as external, most notably in the form of migrants. The first step of the presumed causal mechanism is therefore fulfilled.

4.2.3 Step 2: Foreign Aid Linking

Step 2 of the presumed causal mechanism theorizes that right-wing populist parties also identify the potential of foreign aid to be used as a tool for managing perceived risks. During the plenary sessions of the National Council, the topics of foreign policy and development aid were widely debated. Throughout the duration of the Kurz I cabinet, members of the opposition criticized the government's lack of attention to foreign policy, including its development spending. Specifically, they called for the expansion of the Foreign Disaster Relief Fund, a statutory roadmap to achieve the goal of increasing ODA to 0.7% of GNI, and enhanced transparency for development funds. These issues were most frequently raised during the first budgetary debate of the Kurz I cabinet in April 2018.

The FPÖ never put the topic of foreign aid on the agenda on its own accord, but repeatedly responded to the motions and enquiries put forward by opposition groups. In this respect, foreign policy spokesperson Roman Haider was the most prominent FPÖ voice defending the government's foreign aid and development policy. In his speeches, he argued in favor of a restrictive foreign aid budget, as reducing taxes, cutting debt, and introducing reforms were in favor of the Austrian people: "This is working for Austria, this is working for the citizens, ladies and gentlemen, this is the liberal¹⁷ signature in government work!" (Parlament Österreich, 2018b, p. 185, author's translation). More importantly, he promised that the government planned to meet the 0.7% ODA target, but urged that it must be coupled with readmission agreements for asylum seekers:

Of course, [expanding the budget for development cooperation] must also be linked to efficient readmission agreements for rejected asylum seekers and rejected economic migrants. I am sure that Austria's interests will also be placed at the center of foreign policy. (Parlament Österreich, 2017, p. 97, author's translation)

As previously noted, the FPÖ's manifesto mostly portrayed migrant groups as a threat to Austria's "core" population. Haider's suggestion to use foreign aid as a means to return these groups to their countries of origin thus reveals the party's recognition of its potential as a strategic tool for threat management.

¹⁷ In the original quote, Haider uses the term "*freiheitlich*", which can be translated to both "*liberal*" and "*free*". The term not only reflects the ideological stance he attributes to the FPÖ's political achievements, but also echoes the party's own name, which includes "*freiheitlich*".

Yet, the FPÖ not only acknowledges the use of foreign aid as a means of sending asylum seekers back to their countries of origin; it also recognizes that aid can prevent migrants from coming to Austria by contributing to stability in migrants' countries of origin. In this context, FPÖ members Christian Ries (Parlament Österreich, 2018f, p. 87) and Susanne Fürst (Parlament Österreich, 2018a, p. 153) both advocate for using foreign aid to promote gender equality, the rule of law, and the development of peace and mediation mechanisms abroad.

Another important factor was brought up by the Federal Minister for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs Karin Kneissl¹⁸ during the National Council's 45th session in October 2018. In the debate, she argued that the main goal of the government's development aid was "the fight against absolute poverty" (Parlament Österreich, 2018f, p. 22, author's translation), because "as long as there is a bit of electricity, as long as there is a bit of drinking water supply, people stay in their places of origin" (Parlament Österreich, 2018f, p. 22, author's translation). To reduce migration flows to Austria, she thus called for linking developmental and economic goals: "[...] it is very clear to me that I cannot do development cooperation without trade policy" (Parlament Österreich, 2018f, p. 23, author's translation).

The parliamentary speeches of the FPÖ during its time in executive power thus reveal a clear recognition of foreign aid as a strategic instrument for managing perceived security threats, especially in the form of migration. While no evidence points towards the FPÖ regarding foreign aid as a tool of solidarity, the party members' speeches reveal that development assistance is mainly linked to stabilization and leverage. The following section of the analysis now examines whether climate change was also acknowledged as an explicit driver of identified risks.

4.2.4 Step 3: Climate Change Risks

In contrast to foreign aid, climate change played a relatively minor role in plenary debates of the National Council during the Kurz I cabinet. The issue was most prominently discussed in debates on agricultural and energy policy, in aftermath of the 24th Conference of the Parties in December 2018, and at the start of the Austrian presidency of the Council of the EU in July 2018.

In total, representatives of the FPÖ mentioned climate change on a mere six occasions during their 1.5 years in government – never as a central topic, but only when talking about other issues. In particular, the party's members address climate change in connection with energy policy. For instance, during the first budgetary debate of the Kurz I cabinet in April 2018, Axel Kassegger argued that

[...] climate and energy policy should not be viewed in isolation [...]. However, we must not forget the security of energy supply for our country and we must not forget the creation of

¹⁸ While Kneissl was formally independent, her appointment as foreign minister was made at the suggestion of the FPÖ within the framework of the coalition agreement and is widely regarded as being ideologically aligned with the party's policy positions (FBI, n.d.).

framework conditions that allow our economy and industry to be competitive, comparative and sustainable. (Parlament Österreich, 2018b, p. 162, author's translation)

Similarly, during a debate on renewable energy sources during the 45th plenary debate in October 2018, FPÖ representative Robert Lugar acknowledged that wind parks and dams might not be in the interest of the rural population, “but the question is not whether we as individuals are happy with it, the question is whether we are making any progress in climate protection policy” (Parlament Österreich, 2018f, p. 181, author's translation).

Furthermore, FPÖ members addressed climate change in discussions about the spread of diseases affecting both humans and plants. During a debate on the Plant Protection Act 2018,¹⁹ where ÖVP representatives emphasized the law's relevance in light of climate change, Josef Riemer (FPÖ) countered that invasive parasites have existed for centuries and that climate change alone cannot always be held responsible (Parlament Österreich, 2018c, p. 214). His colleague, Brigitte Povysil (FPÖ), however, briefly warned that Austria will struggle to deal with new and old infectious diseases due to climate change in September 2019 (Parlament Österreich, 2019a, p. 286).

The party links climate change to security concerns in two further regards: Once, briefly, when talking about how it can fuel conflict events in Africa (Parlament Österreich, 2019b, p. 44), and once when addressing the unequal distribution of disaster relief funds among Austrian states: “In the coming years, the Austrian population will have to prepare for increasingly frequent, unpredictable extreme weather events. This is why disaster relief is becoming increasingly important” (Parlament Österreich, 2018d, p. 229).

Importantly, however, the FPÖ mainly focuses on the domestic consequences of climate change – with the exemption of the above-mentioned comment regarding African conflicts. This is not the case for other parties, who express their concerns about the effects of climate change abroad much more vocally. Opposition members of both Jetzt – Liste Pilz²⁰ and the SPÖ strongly advocate for a more stringent and ambitious climate policy to prevent negative climate change impacts in other countries. In this regard, Martha Bißman (Jetzt – Liste Pilz; independent) stands out as a particularly prominent critic. In a speech at the National Council's 39th plenary debate in September 2018, she detailed how climate migration necessitates prompt action on the part of the Minister of the Interior, Herbert Kickl (FPÖ):

Climate refugees add a security policy dimension to climate change in addition to the economic and environmental policy dimension, and that is why this area is also your responsibility, Mr. Minister of the Interior. [...] Dare to think intersectorally [...], and don't just rely on short-term

¹⁹ The Plant Protection Act 2018 regulates the movement of harmful plant organisms and products in Austria (BMLRT, n.d.)

²⁰ Jetzt – Liste Pilz was an Austrian political party active from 2017 to 2020, that advocated for social equality, European integration, environmental protection, and governmental oversight (“Liste Jetzt”, 2019).

solutions such as asylum centers outside the EU and tens of thousands of border police at the EU's borders, which will no longer be able to stop millions of climate refugees in the future. (Parlament Österreich, 2018e, p. 73-74, author's translation)

In the council's 49th debate in November 2018, she even speculates that "[...] if [the government was] aware of the dangers of climate change and the effects of climate change on migration pressure, [it] would incorporate this awareness into [its] policies [...]" (Parlament Österreich, 2018g, p. 38, author's translation).

In sum, then, climate change was not a topic the FPÖ engaged with independently. Rather, the party addressed it only when it emerged in connection with other issues. Its focus remained largely on domestic implications, with minimal attention to global or cross-border security effects. Still, opposition parties made it a point to remind the FPÖ and its coalition partner of the interconnectedness of climate change and security risks from abroad, especially in the form of migration, and repeatedly urged the government to act accordingly.

4.2.5 Process Tracing Results

Overall, the process tracing analysis reveals mixed results. Before entering government in December 2017, the right-wing populist party FPÖ clearly highlighted external threats to the Austrian population, calling for increased security measures throughout its manifesto. This focus on protection was present in both directly security-related demands, such as compulsory military service, but also when talking about topics that are not traditionally linked to security, such as energy policy.

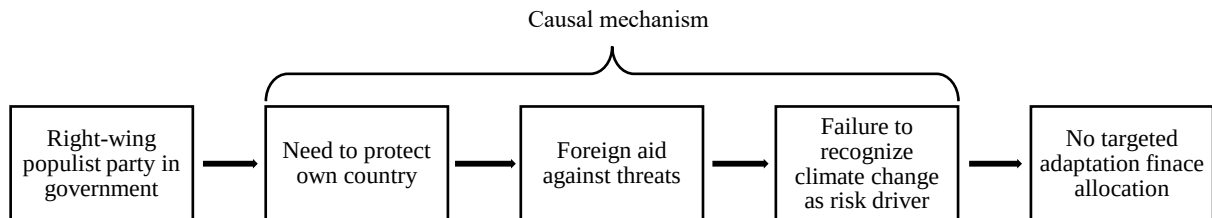
Even after entering government, this emphasis on security remained a central theme for the FPÖ. In parliament, its members highlighted how foreign policy should be used to advance Austria's interests. Particularly, they suggested using foreign aid as a leveraging tool by tying it to readmission agreements and the enforcement of human rights in migrant origin countries to ultimately reduce migratory pressures. In this way, the evidence from the analyzed documents largely supports the first two steps of the hypothesized causal link during the FPÖ's time in government from 2017 to 2019.

However, despite identifying the need to protect Austrian citizens and framing foreign aid as a potential means to manage threats stemming from underdevelopment abroad, the FPÖ largely overlooked the role of climate change in intensifying such threats. Overall, the issue appeared only peripherally in the FPÖ's discourse, with some party members even casting doubt on the reality of climate change itself. Furthermore, when climate change was acknowledged as a driver of perceived risk by FPÖ representatives, their focus remained on its domestic implications, with minimal acknowledgement of global or transnational effects.

This suggests a breakdown of the presumed link between right-wing populist governments and the targeted allocation of climate finance at this stage. With the failure of the FPÖ to integrate climate

change as a multiplying risk factor in its policy considerations, Step 3 of the presumed causal link is not sufficiently supported by the evidence, thereby undermining the hypothesized mechanism as a whole. Instead, the results of the process tracing analysis suggest that no targeted allocation practice is taking place precisely due to this failure to recognize climate change as a driver of perceived risks. The revised causal link is illustrated below.

Figure 8: Revised causal link for right-wing populist adaptation finance allocation



5. Discussion

This chapter synthesizes the main empirical findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analysis, drawing connections between them and discussing their broader implications. It assesses to what extent the evidence supports the proposed hypothesis and considers what the results reveal about the behavior of right-wing populist governments in the context of climate adaptation finance.

To reiterate, the quantitative analysis revealed that, in the selection stage, right-wing populist governments appear to behave differently from their non-populist counterparts in the case of trade-related variables, which link the recipient to the provider through exports and imports. The allocation stage saw no statistically significant difference in the behavior of right-wing populist governments.

In contrast, the qualitative part of the analysis showed that Austria's right-wing populist party, the FPÖ, heavily voiced concerns over migration, while the economic variables driving the selection of recipient countries in the statistical analysis were much less prominent. In fact, economic factors were primarily cited by FPÖ representatives for their potential to reduce migration, rather than as direct threats to the provider country's economic interests, as initially hypothesized. Moreover, the expected recognition of climate change as a driver of risk is notably absent in the party's discourse, undermining a key step in the presumed causal mechanism.

Thus, two interesting results emerge: Firstly, while their selection decision is to a certain extent influenced by trade-related factors, this cannot be explained by the theorized causal mechanism. Secondly, right-wing populist parties prioritize different factors in their party manifesto and plenary speeches than in their final selection of recipient countries. This discrepancy between the results of the quantitative and qualitative analysis could be explained by a number of reasons.

One possibility is that right-wing populist parties might not consciously select adaptation aid recipient countries based on export and import criteria. The disconnect between their discourse, in which they focus on migration matters, and observed selection behavior, in which they focus on exports and imports, suggests a lack of explicit political intent. This logic is furthermore supported by the breakdown of the presumed causal mechanism in the process tracing analysis.

The process tracing analysis also revealed that the FPÖ failed to link climate change to an increase in trade disruptions. This means that Bermeo's (2017, 2018) theoretical framework, which suggests a targeted use of climate finance by provider countries to counteract trade-related challenges, cannot explain right-wing populist governments' recipient selection based on imports. Instead, a different logic might drive the selection process: Rather than using adaptation aid to manage external threats to their own economy, right-wing populist governments might use it to maintain import partners. This interpretation would also be in line with patterns observed in the foreign aid literature (Hühne et al., 2014; Pettersson & Johansson, 2013). For instance, in their gravity model of 184 countries from 1990

to 2000, Pettersson & Johansson (2013) find that bilateral aid is not only positively associated with donor exports, but also with recipient exports to donors.

If the disconnect between the variables emerging in the quantitative and qualitative analysis is not explained by a lack of intent but rather by alternative motivations behind the trade-driven selection of recipient countries, this would mean that right-wing populist parties deliberately refrain from communicating their selection strategy to the public. This calculated concealment might stem from the nature of populist rhetoric, which often relies on emotionally charged storytelling (Caiani & Di Cocco, 2023; Nordensvard & Ketola, 2022). Trade considerations, while influential in practice, may simply lack the emotional and polarizing appeal necessary for populist mobilization, causing such parties to stick to highlighting issues like migration. Alternatively, right-wing populist parties could avoid naming import-related considerations as an explicit strategy for adaptation allocation as this could clash with their narrative of national independence and anti-globalist sentiment – narratives that could clearly be observed in the FPÖ's party manifesto. Studies have shown that populists often oppose globalization in their discourse to attract voters, but rarely pursue a withdrawal from economic integration and trade once in power, as their opposition is grounded in cultural rather than economic motivations (Dannerhäll, 2023; Church & Findlay, 2022). Either way, a deliberate concealment of allocation strategies would point towards a symbolic instead of instrumental use of migration discourse in plenary discussions on foreign aid.

Another potential explanation for the disconnect between the results of the quantitative and qualitative findings is that right-wing populist parties might indeed want to allocate adaptation aid based on migration-related considerations – regardless of whether they explicitly acknowledge climate change as a contributing factor to this perceived threat – but are ultimately unable to act on these preferences. Instead, another, unexplored factor might prevent them from translating rhetoric into action. For instance, their inability to allocate adaptation aid in a targeted manner could possibly be related to their position within a coalition government, where decisions are based on compromise between different party positions (Martin & Vanberg, 2014). It could also indicate that their adaptation aid preferences might be slow to materialize due to path dependency or bureaucratic inertia, which lead adaptation finance to follow established patterns in foreign aid allocation in general (Munck af Rosenschöld et al., 2014; Harries & Penning-Rowsell, 2011; Peterson & Skovgaard, 2019). Importantly, it would signify that populist rhetoric does not always translate into policy, especially when constrained by external political or institutional factors.

All of these potential explanations require further, detailed examination, which goes beyond the scope of this study. While the combined evidence of both the quantitative and qualitative analysis does not provide sufficient support for the hypothesis of targeted climate adaptation aid allocation by right-wing populist governments, the insights from the empirical investigation raise important new questions. In particular, they challenge the assumption that right-wing populist parties consistently translate their

ideological rhetoric into concrete policy actions, potentially hindered by institutional constraints, coalition dynamics, or economic pragmatism. Additionally, the results point towards a failure of right-wing parties to recognize the role of climate change in amplifying perceived risk to developed countries. Understanding what prevents the implementation of their rhetorical positions, and whether mounting pressure from climate-related disasters, opposition parties, or scientific and societal advocacy groups might eventually lead to a shift in adaptation aid allocation, thus present promising avenues for future research.

6. Limitations

Although the results of this study make an important contribution to understanding the impact of right-wing populist governments on climate adaptation allocation decisions, several limitations need to be addressed.

First, the database used to measure the adaptation aid flows between providers and recipients relies on data self-reporting by donor countries (OECD, 2024a). Studies have shown that donors tend to exaggerate the share of funds dedicated to climate-specific use, making the system prone to overreporting (Toetzke et al., 2022; Alberola, 2025; Borst, 2023; Weiler et al., 2018; Donner et al., 2016). This concern was in part addressed by limiting the analysis to only include those flows that were marked as having a “principal” climate component. However, as with other research using the Rio Markers dataset, the results should still be interpreted with some caution.

Second, the analysis remained restricted to 14 European provider countries due to issues with data availability. Especially in the context of right-wing populism, comprehensive datasets spanning a wide range of countries, parties, and years remain largely missing. Similarly, several key providers and recipients needed to be excluded due to systematically missing data. As new and updated data for these variables becomes available, research should thus aim to integrate a broader range of donor and recipient countries to extend the scope of the analysis beyond Europe, address omitted variable bias concerns, and improve the generalizability of findings.

Additionally, the selection of the case study for the process tracing analysis may have shaped the observed findings, especially with regards to the observed divergence between the quantitative and qualitative results. While the case was selected with careful methodological and feasibility considerations in mind, the choice was still constrained by factors such as data availability and language barriers. As a result, the generalizability of the findings may be limited, necessitating further case studies across different political and institutional settings.

Finally, it is important to discuss the conceptualization of populism. While this study relied on a definition proposed by Mudde (2004), which is the definition most commonly used in social science research, it is still important to acknowledge that populism remains a contested concept. With no universally agreed upon definition of populism, including its right-wing variant, its measurement equally varies across studies. Consequently, different definitions and measurement approaches to right-wing populism across studies may lead to varying empirical outcomes.

7. Conclusion

This research aimed to uncover how right-wing populist governments in provider countries influence the allocation of climate finance. Drawing on Bermeo's (2017, 2018) targeted development framework, I theorized that, upon entering government, right-wing populist parties would adopt a self-interested strategy in an effort to protect their self-defined "core" populations, directing adaptation aid towards countries from which they expect negative spillover effects due to climate change. Based on a mixed-method, nested analysis of adaptation finance flows from 14 European provider countries to 111 recipients between 2015 and 2022, the study produced several key findings.

First, provider countries with right-wing populist parties in government consistently allocated less adaptation finance than non-populist providers during the observed time frame. They also exhibited distinct recipient selection behavior, favoring recipient countries from which they imported goods and showing a lower likelihood of selecting those countries to which they exported.

Second, the right-wing populist party used to trace the presumed causal mechanism did identify the need to protect its citizens from external threats and regarded foreign aid as a tool to achieve this, yet failed to recognize climate change as a risk multiplier in its considerations. Furthermore, its rhetoric centered predominantly on migration-related threats, with little attention given to trade-based risks.

Taken together, the empirical findings thus do not provide sufficient support for the hypothesis of a deliberate, targeted adaptation aid allocation strategy by right-wing populist governments. They do, however, give rise to a variety of implications for how populist rhetoric translates into policy. Especially the identified gap between allocation considerations, which prioritized migration, and the allocation outcome, which reacted to trade-related matters, suggests that symbolic politics or institutional constraints may shape allocation decisions more than stated ideological priorities.

Despite its mixed results, the study raises considerable concerns about the impact of right-wing populist parties on the global fight against climate change. Not only did it become evident that these parties do not recognize climate change as a real threat – at least in countries other than their own – they also consistently distribute less money than their non-populist counterparts when in government. As right-wing populist parties become increasingly influential in provider countries, they therefore risk undermining international efforts for climate adaptation all over the world. Ultimately, the question of whether right-wing populist parties will translate their words into action, and whether external pressure from opposition parties, civil society, and the scientific community can meaningfully influence this trajectory, remains to be seen.

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Appendix A

Table A1: Summary of all variables and datasets used in the regression analysis

Variable	Description	Source
Dependent variable		
Adaptation	Bilateral “principal” climate adaptation commitments in constant USD from a donor to a recipient in a given year	OECD DAC database: “RioMarkers: Aid (ODA) activities targeting global environmental objectives”
Independent variables		
Disaster	Sum of total number of people injured, killed or affected by climatological disasters or extreme weather events in a recipient country in a given year	EM-DAT: The OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database
Donor imports	Value of merchandise imports in constant USD from a recipient to a donor in a given year	IMF International Trade in Goods (by partner country) (IMTS)
Donor exports	Value of merchandise exports in constant USD from a donor to a recipient in a given year	IMF International Trade in Goods (by partner country) (IMTS)
Governance	Average of political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption in a recipient country in a given year	Worldwide Governance Indicators
Migration	Migrant flows from recipient to donor in a given year	OECD International Migration database
Population	Total number of inhabitants residing in a recipient country in a given year	World Development Indicators
GDP	Per capita gross domestic product in a recipient country in a given year	World Development Indicators
Colony	Historical colonial ties between the donor and recipient	GeoDist Database (CEPII)
Distance	Distance in km between a donor and a recipient	GeoDist Database (CEPII)
Moderating variable		
RWPG	A cabinet including a party that is both “populist” and “far-right” for more than half of the year in question	PopuList and ParlGov databases
Control variables		
ODA	Official bilateral development assistance in USD committed by a donor to a recipient in a given year	OECD “CRS: Creditor Reporting System (flows)”
Democracy	Average of political rights and civil liberties in a recipient country in a given year on a scale of 0 to 7 (scale inversed so that higher values indicate higher levels of freedom)	Freedom House Index
Cabinet ideology	General political ideology of a donor’s executive branch on a left–right scale (from 1 to 10) in a given year. If two or more cabinets were in power in a single year due to elections or reshuffles, I include all parties that governed at any time during that year to determine the ideology of the cabinet-year.	ParlGov

Table A2: Summary statistics for all numerical variables used in the statistical models

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Adaptation*	12,432	-13.02	5.56	-15.48	6.43
Disaster*	12,432	1.09	7.83	-4.61	19.62
Donor imports**	12,376	1.30	4.45	-4.61	11.89
Donor exports**	12,320	2.55	3.64	-4.61	11.73
Governance ⁺	12,432	-0.53	0.58	-2.18	0.86
Migration**	11,970	3.40	3.54	-4.61	13.89
Population**	12,432	16.15	2.00	9.22	21.08
GDP**	12,432	7.85	0.95	5.54	9.68
Distance*	12,432	8.70	0.58	6.24	9.77
ODA**	12,432	-3.64	7.59	-15.78	7.72
Democracy ⁺	12,432	2.90	1.74	0.00	6.00
Cabinet ideology ⁺	12,432	5.24	1.33	1.93	8.33

* variable log-transformed in regression analysis; ⁺ variable lagged by one year in regression analysis

Table A3: Summary statistics for all numerical variables used in the statistical models (positive values only)

Variable	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Adaptation*	1,850	-0.90	2.64	-10.86	6.43
Disaster*	1,850	2.87	8.59	-4.61	17.00
Donor imports**	1,850	3.59	3.74	-4.61	11.66
Donor exports**	1,850	4.53	2.75	-4.61	11.73
Governance ⁺	1,850	-0.63	0.47	-2.18	0.80
Migration**	1,826	5.63	2.52	-4.61	13.89
Population**	1,850	17.12	1.43	10.66	21.08
GDP**	1,850	7.57	0.92	5.54	9.68
Distance*	1,850	8.69	0.55	6.29	9.75
ODA**	1,850	2.87	1.92	-5.22	7.72
Democracy ⁺	1,850	2.76	1.45	0.00	6.00
Cabinet ideology ⁺	1,850	5.12	1.30	1.93	8.33

* variable log-transformed in regression analysis; ⁺ variable lagged by one year in regression analysis

Table A4: Correlation matrix for all numerical variables used in the statistical models

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(1) Adaptation*	1.00											
(2) Disaster*	0.11	1.00										
(3) Donor imports* ⁺	0.23	0.15	1.00									
(4) Donor exports* ⁺	0.24	0.10	0.77	1.00								
(5) Governance ⁺	-0.07	-0.03	0.05	-0.01	1.00							
(6) Migration* ⁺	0.28	0.12	0.64	0.72	-0.17	1.00						
(7) Population* ⁺	0.21	0.27	0.52	0.54	-0.34	0.58	1.00					
(8) GDP* ⁺	-0.14	-0.01	0.30	0.26	0.54	0.08	-0.10	1.00				
(9) Distance*	0.01	0.20	-0.14	-0.27	0.23	-0.39	-0.09	0.02	1.00			
(10) ODA* ⁺	0.38	0.11	0.43	0.51	-0.25	0.62	0.46	-0.16	-0.27	1.00		
(11) Democracy ⁺	-0.03	-0.01	-0.06	-0.12	0.66	-0.22	-0.38	0.29	0.30	-0.23	1.00	
(12) Cabinet ideology ⁺	-0.04	-0.03	0.04	-0.00	0.00	-0.05	-0.02	-0.01	0.02	-0.05	0.01	1.00

* variable log-transformed in regression analysis; ⁺ variable lagged by one year in regression analysis

Table A5: Correlation matrix for all numerical variables used in the statistical models (positive values only)

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(1) Adaptation*	1.00											
(2) Disaster*	0.08	1.00										
(3) Donor imports* ⁺	0.03	0.13	1.0									
(4) Donor exports* ⁺	0.05	0.06	0.78	1.00								
(5) Governance ⁺	-0.12	-0.08	0.30	0.32	1.00							
(6) Migration* ⁺	0.04	0.05	0.60	0.69	0.12	1.00						
(7) Population* ⁺	0.08	0.28	0.44	0.42	-0.02	0.33	1.00					
(8) GDP* ⁺	-0.17	-0.03	0.51	0.53	0.55	0.36	0.03	1.00				
(9) Distance*	0.01	0.20	-0.03	-0.17	0.05	-0.26	0.17	0.07	1.00			
(10) ODA* ⁺	0.47	0.04	0.26	0.31	-0.11	0.40	0.26	-0.07	-0.11	1.00		
(11) Democracy ⁺	-0.11	-0.08	0.11	0.14	0.54	0.04	-0.09	0.32	0.12	-0.10	1.00	
(12) Cabinet ideology ⁺	0.01	-0.04	-0.04	-0.10	-0.02	-0.13	0.02	-0.05	0.06	0.06	0.01	1.00

* variable log-transformed in regression analysis; ⁺ variable lagged by one year in regression analysis

Appendix B

Table B1: Selection stage – Robustness checks with alternative RWPG specifications

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
RWPG (any)	1.214 (2.171)		
RWPG (legislature)		0.438 (0.576)	
RWPG (unlagged)			-1.708 (2.124)
Disaster	0.014** (0.005)	0.004 (0.007)	0.012** (0.005)
Donor imports	-0.002 (0.024)	0.039 (0.032)	0.009 (0.023)
Donor exports	0.143*** (0.052)	0.138** (0.062)	0.149*** (0.046)
Governance	0.377*** (0.134)	0.454** (0.179)	0.366*** (0.131)
Migration	-0.015 (0.031)	-0.058 (0.043)	-0.015 (0.030)
Population	0.022 (0.064)	0.010 (0.086)	-0.001 (0.061)
GDP	-0.627*** (0.089)	-0.737*** (0.115)	-0.683*** (0.086)
Colony	1.095*** (0.231)	0.573* (0.336)	1.103*** (0.232)
Distance	0.615*** (0.130)	0.558*** (0.173)	0.618*** (0.126)
RWPG × Disaster	-0.014 (0.009)	-0.002 (0.002)	-0.009 (0.010)
RWPG × Donor imports	0.040 (0.037)	0.012 (0.010)	0.007 (0.037)
RWPG × Donor exports	-0.066 (0.065)	0.009 (0.020)	-0.119** (0.057)
RWPG × Governance	0.109 (0.217)	0.016 (0.048)	0.190 (0.219)
RWPG × Migration	0.018 (0.061)	-0.018 (0.012)	0.013 (0.060)
RWPG × Population	0.014 (0.094)	-0.010 (0.026)	0.115 (0.089)
RWPG × GDP	-0.095 (0.130)	-0.033 (0.036)	0.142 (0.124)
RWPG × Colony	-0.226 (0.369)	-0.126* (0.073)	-0.413 (0.378)
RWPG × Distance	-0.056 (0.190)	-0.010 (0.052)	-0.097 (0.187)
ODA	0.406*** (0.033)	0.406*** (0.033)	0.408*** (0.033)
Democracy	0.145*** (0.037)	0.144*** (0.037)	0.145*** (0.037)
Cabinet ideology	-0.070* (0.039)	-0.109*** (0.037)	-0.067* (0.038)
Constant	-3.502** (1.536)	-1.755 (2.095)	-2.766* (1.480)
Donor FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	10,481	10,481	10,481

Clustered standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table B2: Allocation stage – Robustness checks with alternative RWPG specifications

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)
RWPG (any)	-0.289 (3.520)		
RWPG (legislature)		0.237 (0.734)	
RWPG (unlagged)			-1.398 (3.323)
Disaster	0.015* (0.008)	0.015 (0.011)	0.016** (0.008)
Donor imports	0.017 (0.037)	-0.005 (0.048)	0.008 (0.037)
Donor exports	0.121* (0.072)	0.064 (0.085)	0.076 (0.065)
Governance	0.010 (0.227)	-0.298 (0.273)	0.098 (0.221)
Migration	-0.029 (0.056)	-0.073 (0.064)	-0.012 (0.052)
Population	-0.028 (0.102)	-0.152 (0.130)	-0.017 (0.101)
GDP	-0.545*** (0.138)	-0.068 (0.191)	-0.538*** (0.135)
Colony	0.646* (0.345)	-0.138 (0.413)	0.603* (0.343)
Distance	0.015 (0.220)	-0.131 (0.246)	0.020 (0.220)
RWPG × Disaster	0.005 (0.015)	-0.000 (0.003)	0.002 (0.017)
RWPG × Donor imports	-0.007 (0.063)	-0.009 (0.017)	0.030 (0.061)
RWPG × Donor exports	-0.135 (0.106)	0.003 (0.021)	-0.067 (0.095)
RWPG × Governance	0.022 (0.403)	-0.131 (0.090)	-0.389 (0.392)
RWPG × Migration	0.029 (0.084)	-0.021 (0.019)	-0.035 (0.088)
RWPG × Population	-0.153 (0.162)	-0.037 (0.035)	-0.111 (0.155)
RWPG × GDP	0.442* (0.261)	0.130** (0.051)	0.558** (0.263)
RWPG × Colony	-0.954 (0.854)	-0.170* (0.098)	-0.261 (0.722)
RWPG × Distance	0.000 (0.331)	-0.055 (0.077)	-0.117 (0.329)
ODA	0.227*** (0.040)	0.231*** (0.040)	0.230*** (0.041)
Democracy	-0.047 (0.061)	-0.057 (0.061)	-0.040 (0.061)
Cabinet ideology	-0.004 (0.071)	-0.003 (0.074)	0.006 (0.068)
Constant	1.502 (2.149)	1.715 (2.683)	1.366 (2.157)
Donor FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year FE	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	1,850	1,850	1,850

Clustered standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table B3: Selection stage – Robustness checks without major donors, with random effects, and probit model

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Disaster	0.006 (0.007)	0.012* (0.006)	0.007** (0.003)
Donor imports	-0.001 (0.027)	0.026 (0.024)	-0.006 (0.014)
Donor exports	0.149*** (0.051)	0.211*** (0.045)	0.084*** (0.026)
Governance	0.473*** (0.155)	0.494*** (0.163)	0.207*** (0.075)
Migration	-0.006 (0.031)	0.071** (0.034)	-0.005 (0.017)
Population	-0.052 (0.071)	-0.049 (0.054)	0.029 (0.035)
GDP	-0.739*** (0.106)	-0.936*** (0.095)	-0.378*** (0.050)
Colony	1.269*** (0.309)	1.883*** (0.304)	0.739*** (0.141)
Distance	0.612*** (0.159)	0.884*** (0.149)	0.314*** (0.072)
RWPG ⁺	-0.776 (2.268)	2.257 (2.306)	0.516 (1.183)
RWPG × Disaster	-0.003 (0.010)	-0.007 (0.011)	-0.005 (0.005)
RWPG × Donor imports	0.058 (0.039)	0.060 (0.041)	0.036* (0.021)
RWPG × Donor exports	-0.104* (0.061)	-0.156** (0.068)	-0.059* (0.034)
RWPG × Governance	0.072 (0.215)	0.066 (0.232)	0.062 (0.121)
RWPG × Migration	0.010 (0.061)	0.019 (0.071)	0.005 (0.034)
RWPG × Population total	0.101 (0.096)	0.105 (0.102)	0.018 (0.054)
RWPG × GDP	0.032 (0.135)	0.051 (0.155)	-0.026 (0.076)
RWPG × Colony	-0.306 (0.373)	-0.259 (0.550)	-0.009 (0.210)
RWPG × Distance	-0.095 (0.201)	-0.456** (0.202)	-0.049 (0.107)
ODA	0.419*** (0.041)	0.330*** (0.038)	0.171*** (0.020)
Democracy	0.131*** (0.046)	0.112** (0.045)	0.081*** (0.021)
Cabinet ideology	-0.009 (0.051)	-0.202*** (0.043)	-0.044** (0.022)
Constant	-1.767 (1.976)	0.688*** (0.107)	-1.797** (0.879)
Donor FE	Yes	No	Yes
Year FE	Yes	No	Yes
N	8,945	10,481	10,481

Clustered standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Table B4: Allocation stage – Robustness checks without major donors and with random effects

	(1)	(2)
Disaster	-0.001 (0.017)	0.156 (0.115)
Donor imports	-0.036 (0.097)	0.021 (0.360)
Donor exports	0.112 (0.134)	1.003** (0.484)
Governance	-0.293 (0.447)	5.374 (3.294)
Migration	-0.120 (0.120)	-0.241 (0.637)
Population	0.055 (0.145)	1.974 (1.445)
GDP	-0.494** (0.225)	-1.241 (1.781)
Colony	0.001 (0.532)	1.444 (2.743)
Distance	0.152 (0.248)	-2.669 (2.261)
RWPG	1.598 (3.702)	-10.880 (26.112)
RWPG × Disaster	-0.021 (0.049)	-0.185 (0.121)
RWPG × Donor imports	0.024 (0.124)	-0.231 (0.370)
RWPG × Donor exports	-0.177 (0.146)	-1.278** (0.565)
RWPG × Governance	0.672 (0.480)	-4.971 (3.774)
RWPG × Migration	0.231 (0.219)	-0.081 (0.743)
RWPG × Population total	-0.078 (0.199)	-1.691 (1.435)
RWPG × GDP	0.248 (0.458)	2.407 (1.997)
RWPG × Colony	-1.277 (1.103)	-2.140 (3.831)
RWPG × Distance	-0.233 (0.377)	2.430 (2.312)
ODA	0.257*** (0.046)	1.709*** (0.364)
Democracy	-0.161 (0.170)	0.347 (0.795)
Cabinet ideology	-0.098 (0.114)	-0.638 (0.448)
Constant	2.605 (3.426)	4.058 (26.489)
Donor FE	Yes	No
Year FE	Yes	No
N	1,174	1,850

Clustered standard errors in parentheses. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$

Appendix C

Table C1: Codebook of keywords used in analysis of party manifesto

Theme	German term	Code (word stem*)
Domestic Security	Sicherheit	sicher*
	Schutz	schutz*
	Verteidigung	verteidig*
	<i>Stabilität</i>	<i>stabil*</i>
Threat	Bedrohung	bedroh*
	Gefahr	gefahr*
	<i>Abwehr</i>	<i>abwehr*</i>
	Kriminalität	kriminal*
	Terrorismus	terror*
	<i>Extremismus</i>	<i>extremis*</i>
	<i>Radikalisierung</i>	<i>radikal*</i>
	Kontrolle	kontroll*
Sovereignty	Souveränität	souverän*
	Autonomie	autonom*
	Selbstbestimmung	selbstbestimm*
	Unabhängigkeit	unabhängig*
	<i>Einmischung</i>	<i>einmisch*</i>
	Einfluss	einfluss*
Culture and Identity	Identität	identitä*
	Werte	wert*
	Tradition	traditio*
	Heimat	heimat*
	<i>Patriotismus</i>	<i>patriot*</i>
	Kultur	kultur*
	Volk	volk*

Note: Asterisks (*) indicate word stems for capturing related terms in text analysis (e.g., sicher* → Sicherheit, sicherer). Words in *italics* were not mobilized in the analysis.

AI Declaration Form

All the writing in this assignment is mine	Yes/No
I have refrained from the use of AI	Yes/No
I have used AI to copy-edit my text	Yes/No
I have used AI with the following prompts	My prompts:

Amsterdam, 05.06.2025