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Do Anti-Elitist Parties Use Their Parliamentary Tools Differently?

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Populist parties have become an important factor in opposition politics all over Europe. While we know a lot about the behaviour of populist parties in the electoral arena and even in the governmental arena, we know surprisingly little about their behaviour in parliament. This article studies the behaviour of populist opposition parties in parliament. We hypothesise that it is the anti-elitism of populism that is the 'active' element that shapes their parliamentary behaviour. Anti-elitist parties are more likely to be 'responsive' parties, using parliament as a bully pulpit to amplify citizens' objections to policy and less likely to be 'responsible' parties, using the legislature as a place to find support for policy alternatives. We hypothesise anti-elitist parties to use parliamentary scrutiny tools more often than other parties. We make use of recently collected cross-national data on parliamentary behaviour in seven European democracies to test this hypothesis. Our results indicate that parties that have been characterised as anti-elitist tend to vote more against legislation, but they do not ask more parliamentary questions.

Keywords: Parliamentary Questions, Parliamentary Voting, Anti-elitism, Populism, Opposition

1. Introduction

Since the mid-1990s most European countries have seen the rise of populist politics: populist parties appeared on the right, like the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*, DF), and on the left, like The Left (*Die Linke*) in Germany. Populist parties have become a mainstay of European parliamentary politics. In most countries, there is a populist party in the opposition. At its core populism focuses on the political realm: populism is a set of beliefs about the relationship between citizens and the political elite and the control that 'the people' have over this elite. The study of populism and populists has grown immensely over the last two

decades. We know a lot about populist parties in the electoral arena (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Hakhverdian and Koop, 2007; Oesch, 2008; Pauwels, 2010; Schumacher and Rooduijn, 2013; van Kessel, 2013; Bakker *et al.*, 2016; Rooduijn, 2018). We also know how populist parties behave in government (Heinisch, 2003; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2005, 2015; Albertazzi and Mueller, 2013; Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017). Yet, we know surprisingly little about how populist parties behave in parliament, even though these parties are more often in opposition than in government. The sparing studies that do exist are single-country analyses (Church and Vatter, 2009; Bobba and McDonnell, 2016; Louwerse and Otjes, 2019). We lack comparative research examining whether the promise of populist parties to offer a different kind of politics is reflected in their actual work in parliament.

In order to understand populist parliamentary opposition behaviour, we depart from Mair's (2011) distinction between responsive and responsible politics. Central in this classification is the distinction 'between parties that claim to represent, but don't deliver and those which deliver, but are no longer seen to represent' (Mair, 2011, p. 14). Building on earlier work by Louwerse and Otjes (2019), we propose that there are opposition parties that approach parliament primarily as a bully pulpit to express their dissatisfaction with the government (responsive politics), while other opposition parties approach parliament as a market place to build majorities to influence policy (responsible politics). This leads to a preference for different parliamentary tools. The aspect of populism that makes them more critical of the government is likely to be their anti-elite attitudes more than their pro-people views. Therefore, our analysis is directed primarily at the relationship between anti-elitism and parliamentary behaviour. Our research question is *to what extent are higher levels of anti-elitism of political parties related to the use of parliamentary scrutiny instruments?*

This article builds on the comparative volume by De Giorgi and Ilonszki (2018), where opposition party behaviour in parliament is studied in a mix of old and new democracies. We use the comparative data about opposition behaviour available from this volume to test our expectations regarding opposition behaviour of populist parties.

Our findings indeed suggest that parties that have been classified as more anti-elitist are more likely to vote against government bills in parliament. They also ask more parliamentary questions, but this relationship is no longer significant if we include control variables. We also show that these relationships do not hold when using a classification of 'populist' parties, which suggests that it is indeed the anti-elitism of parties that translates into a higher use of scrutiny instruments in parliaments.

In what follows, we will first discuss our theoretical approach to opposition party behaviour distinguishing between responsive and responsible politics. Next,

we will examine what our country selection means for the external validity of our research. Subsequently, we will discuss our method of data collection and analysis, in particular the operationalisation of the concepts 'populism', 'anti-elitism' and 'political scrutiny'. We will then outline the results of our analysis, before presenting some conclusions about the link between populism, anti-elitism and opposition party behaviour in European parliaments.

2. Responsive politics, anti-elitism and parliamentary scrutiny

Parliamentary opposition parties have multiple tools at their disposal to influence legislation and check the government. Building on the work of Mair (2011) we conceive of two different opposition styles. Mair (2011) distinguishes between 'responsive politics' and 'responsible politics'. While Mair's distinction initially focused on governments, Louwerse and Otjes (2019) argue that the distinction and tension between responsive and responsible politics also extends to opposition parties. Opposition parties can voice their opposition to the government and its policies. This means that parties focus on criticising government policy as well as on responding to and amplifying societal dissatisfaction with government policy. This is 'responsive' opposition politics, highlighting the representative link between citizens and politicians. Alternatively, opposition parties can attempt to use the parliamentary arena to change policy. Policy-making parties focus on compromise and cooperation with other parties in order to affect legislation. These parties want to take responsibility for policy. Historically, parties have been occupied with both responsive politics and responsible politics, and as Mair (2011) argues, this is preferable from a normative perspective. Increasingly, however, it seems to have become more difficult to fulfil both these roles, which means that opposition parties seem to have to prioritise one over the other.

If parties choose to focus on 'responsive' opposition, we expect them to focus their parliamentary behaviour on political scrutiny: that is the 'assessment of and political judgement on the appropriateness of [government action]' (Auel, 2007, p. 500). By using scrutiny tools, such as asking parliamentary questions and voting against government legislation, parties will seek to express public dissatisfaction with government policy. This function of opposition is likely to be taken up by parties that avoid responsibility and focus on responsiveness to voters' demands (Mair, 2011; Louwerse and Otjes, 2019). This will reflect itself in using parliament's right to obtain information, which parties can use to focus attention on government mistakes or on issues the government is neglecting. In this way, opposition MPs focus on parliament as a *talking parliament* (Polsby, 1975), a bully pulpit where politicians can attempt to direct attention on issues that they believe matter. Yet scrutiny tools can also be used in the legislative process. Parties can choose to vote against legislation to signal their opposition to the

government and the policies it pursues. Of course, one can expect opposition parties to regularly vote against government bills, but previous research suggests that in many countries a substantial share of government bills are in fact supported by opposition parties (De Giorgi and Ilonszki, 2018). While it may be true that a vote against a bill could be the consequence of the government's unwillingness to seriously consider any of the opposition parties' amendments, still we would argue that voting against government bills more often is a sign of more critical opposition style. Responsible opposition parties, in contrast, are expected to focus on policy making (Louwerse and Otjes, 2019).

Louwerse and Otjes (2019) propose that populist opposition parties use their parliamentary instruments in a different way than other opposition parties. In order to understand why we have to delve in the meaning of the concept 'populism'. Within the study of populism, a consensus has developed around the ideational approach to populism: populism as a thin ideology that revolves around four claims (Taggart, 2000; Mudde, 2007). First, that the will of the people should be the basis for government action. Second, that the people are virtuous and homogeneous. Third, that the current elite is corrupt and acts *en bloc* to deprive the people from their right to rule. Finally, the populist politicians seek to remedy this by giving back the power to rule to government. The terms 'elite' and 'people' are empty vessels that can be imbued with different meanings drawn from different ideological traditions. For a left-wing populist party 'the people' can be 'the 99 per cent' and the elite the '1 per cent' that have a disproportional amount of economic power. In contrast for a right-wing populist party, the people can be the 'hard-working common man' and the elite can be 'the left-wing elite' that in their eyes controls cultural institutions such as universities and the media.

Populism draws a distinction between the elite that it opposes and the people it seeks to give voice to. These two tendencies come together in populism. Simply put, populism is anti-elite and pro-people. While some populist parties may emphasise one element somewhat more than the other, for a party to be characterised as 'populist' it should emphasise both. One can be anti-elitist without supporting more direct influence for the people: a green party, which criticises the power of the agribusiness complex over political decision-makers but wants to give voice to the interest of future generations and non-human life, is anti-elite but not populist. Anti-elite attitudes and a commitment to greater influence of citizens over political decision-making coincide in populism, but they are conceptually and to a certain extent empirically, distinct. While anti-elitism is not limited to populist parties, this stance is often particularly strong among them.

Louwerse and Otjes (2019) propose that it is populists' anti-elitism that fuels their opposition style. It is that element of populism, which sets them against the ruling elites, including the government of the day. Using scrutiny tools matches

well with the goals of anti-elitism. They can use these tools to mark clearly that they are opposed to the ruling elite and their policies. By using these tools, they seek to expose the supposedly corrupt practices of the elite. They can use them to direct attention to issues that the elite ignores. They can use them to give voice to segments of society that the elite supposedly wants to silence. This leads to the following hypothesis:

> *Scrutiny Hypothesis:* The more anti-elitist an opposition party is, the more it will make use of scrutiny tools.

While we expect a higher use of all scrutiny tools by anti-elitist parties, we acknowledge that asking written and oral questions and voting in parliament are distinct tools. Voting is more or less unavoidable for parties. Parties therefore have to choose, but this also means that the direct cost of voting against the government is relatively low, particularly for parties that do not have high hopes of joining one of the current government parties in a future government (Louwerse *et al.*, 2017). Asking written questions requires some more effort on behalf of the MP, but in most parliaments there are few limitations on asking written questions (Russo and Wiberg, 2010). More limitations usually apply for oral questions, if only because of limited floor time in the chamber. Still, parties can use the instruments that are available to them to a higher or lower degree. Apart from the cost of using these tools, their function is also different. Voting against legislation, while often inconsequential, provides a clear confrontational signal. Parliamentary questions, on the other hand, can be used for a variety of purposes, such as gathering information, agenda setting and highlighting mistakes of scandals, which vary in the extent to which they can be seen as confrontational. Therefore, we would expect to see the strongest relationship between anti-elitism and voting behaviour.

If we want to study the effect of anti-elitism on the use of scrutiny tools, we need to consider a number of confounding factors. We include a number of control variables in the analysis. The first control variable is the ideological distance between and opposition party and the government (Hix and Noury, 2016; Louwerse *et al.*, 2017; Louwerse and Otjes, 2019). A left-wing opposition party is likely to behave differently when dealing with a right-wing government than dealing with a left-wing government. Given that it is more likely to agree with the left-wing government, they are less likely to offer criticism in that case. In general, we expect that the greater the distance between the government and an opposition party, the more likely that the opposition party will use scrutiny tools.

Secondly, we expect that the extent to which parties have experience in government will inform their likelihood to use opposition tools. Where it comes to the use of scrutiny tools, one would expect that a party that has tasted government power will likely want to return to it (Louwerse and Otjes, 2019). In a coalition system, a return to power depends on the willingness of other parties.

Therefore, keeping cordial relations with the government is a good idea under those circumstances. Thus, parties that aspire to return to government will refrain from overusing scrutiny tools. Moreover, compared with an opposition party that has just been in government, permanent opposition parties are probably more proficient at employing scrutiny tools and will therefore use them more. All in all, we expect that the longer an opposition party has been in government previously, the less likely it is to use scrutiny tools.

The final control variable is capacity (Louwerse and Otjes, 2019). There is a limit to how many issues a party can have a position on. That limits the number of issues a party scrutinises the government on. We expect that as opposition parties become larger, the use of parliamentary questions, expressed as an average per Member of Parliament, declines.

3. Case selection: parliamentary tools, countries and parties

This study uses the data that were collected as part of the 'Opposition parties in European legislatures'-project (De Giorgi and Ilonszki, 2018). This study is an important landmark in the study of parliamentary opposition, because it is the first effort to bring together data about how parliamentary parties use their parliamentary tools beyond parliamentary voting. We examine three scrutiny tools that are covered in that volume: asking oral and written questions in parliament and voting against legislation. These belong to the most prominent scrutiny tools parties have: parties that are critical of the government can vote against the bills the government proposes or they can use parliament as a bully pulpit to make their criticism heard. They reflect scrutiny in two different aspects of parliament: its legislative and its oversight function. We limit our case selection to the countries that were part of that volume and where data on at least one of the tools we examine are available.[1] It is important to understand what effect this selection has on the generalisability of the result of the analyses.

Table 1 provides a number of characteristics of the party systems of included and excluded country cases in Europe. The first is the number of parties, which may influence the opposition strategies by affecting the likelihood of forming coalitions in the future and by increasing the number of parties in opposition. The average in both the included and the excluded set out countries is four. The minima of the number of parties (just above 2.5) are similar. Only one country (Belgium) has more parties than the maximum of the sampled countries. Experience with democracy may also influence the nature of the opposition, as

[1]Out of the cases covered in the volume Switzerland and Italy fall out because the relevant data are not in the volume.

Table 1 Party system characteristics of the included and the excluded countries

Country	ENPP	CEE-west	Anti-elitist[a]	
			Right	Left
Included				
Czech Republic	5.81	CEE	Yes	Yes
Denmark	5.86	West	Yes	No
Spain	2.60	West	No	Yes
Germany	3.51	West	Yes	Yes
Hungary	2.62	CEE	Yes	No
Italy	3.48	West	Yes	No
Netherlands	5.71	West	Yes	Yes
Poland	3.00	CEE	Yes	No
Portugal	2.93	West	No	Yes
Romania	4.47	CEE	No	No
Average	*4.00*	40% CEE	70%	50%
Excluded				
Austria	4.59	West	Yes	No
Belgium	7.83	West	Yes	No
Bulgaria	5.40	CEE	Yes	No
Croatia	4.03	CEE	Yes	Yes
Cyprus	3.60	West	No	Yes
Estonia	3.84	CEE	Yes	No
Finland	5.83	West	Yes	No
France	2.86	West	Yes	Yes
Greece	3.76	West	Yes	Yes
Ireland	3.53	West	No	Yes
Latvia	5.13	CEE	Yes	No
Lithuania	5.47	CEE	Yes	Yes
Luxembourg	3.93	West	Yes	No
Malta	1.97	West	No	No
Norway	4.40	West	Yes	No
Slovenia	4.16	CEE	Yes	Yes
Slovakia	2.88	CEE	Yes	Yes
Sweden	4.99	West	Yes	No
Switzerland	5.58	West	Yes	No
United Kingdom	2.58	West	Yes	No
Average	*4.31*	*35% CEE*	*85%*	*40%*

ENPP data based on election results closest to but before 2014. [a]Based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, with parties scoring five or higher on the anti-elitism measure.

opposition styles may be learned over time. The selection includes a similar share of established West European democracies and more recently democratised Central and Eastern European countries as the other countries. At the party level, two variables are key: populism and ideology. We look at the presence of left-wing and right-wing populist parties. Seventy per cent of countries in our sample have a right-wing populist party. This is 85% outside of the sample. Half of the

countries in the sample had a left-wing populist party. This is 40% of countries outside of the sample. All in all, we can argue that the set of countries included in this article is roughly representative for the population of European countries.

The selection of countries implies a selection of parties. What parties constitute as populist is the subject of a lively debate in political science (Rooduijn, 2019). In our analysis, we use two different indicators: the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) and the PopuList (Rooduijn *et al.*, 2019). The CHES represents an assessment of about a dozen political scientists (on the average) working on party politics per country (Polk *et al.*, 2017). The PopuList is the collaborative work of prominent populism experts. The CHES measure specifically concerns anti-elitism, which we believe is the 'active component' of populism that underlies their opposition behaviour. The PopuList concerns the full ideational approach to populism. In our analysis, we will focus primarily on the CHES anti-elitism indicator, but we will replicate all of the analysis with the PopuList indicator to check to what extents there is a difference between the impacts of the two variables.

Table 2 show how these two classifications match. In this illustration, we use a cut-off of five to split anti-elitist and other parties in the CHES. Nine parties can be classified as both populist (according to the PopuList) and anti-elitist (according to the CHES). This includes the *Partij voor de Vrijheid, Lega Nord* and *Jobbik* on the right, as well as the German and Dutch left-wing populist parties *Socialistische Partij* and *Die Linke* and the Italian *Movimento 5 Stelle* that defies left-right classification. Forty-two parties are neither populist nor anti-elitist. These are mainstream parties of the left and right, as well as many Green and regionalist parties. The PopuList and the CHES differ in their description of 13 parties. For instance, the Hungarian *Fidesz* and *Forza Italia* score below 5 on the CHES anti-elitism scale but are populist according to the PopuList. The anti-establishment rhetoric of these parties is likely tempered by the fact that they have been government parties. The PopuList and the CHES also differ where it comes to communist and left-socialist parties, such as *Izquierda Unida*. These parties may criticise the elite, but do not necessary treat the people as unified; they subscribe to a Marxist analysis that sees the people stratified in a working and an owning class. The Czech and Hungarian Green parties, Dutch advocacy parties for pensioners and animals and the Czech conservative party and the Spanish social-liberal party fall in the same category. All in all, populism and anti-elitism are not just theoretically distinct concepts but also empirically: there is a strong but far from perfect correlation between the PopuList and the CHES anti-elitism measure ($r = 0.60$, $p < 0.01$).

4. Data and methods

To measure opposition party behaviour in parliament we use the data collected by country experts who contributed to the volume edited by De Giorgi and

Table 2 Populist and anti-elitist parties in nine countries

		PopuList rating	
		No	**Yes**
CHES Anti-elitism	<5	All others	*Forza Italia* (FI, IT) *Fidesz* (HU)
	≥5	*Komunistická strana Čech a Moravy* (KSČM, CZ) *Enhedslisten* (Enhl., DK) *Coligação Democrática Unitária* (CDU, PO) *Bloco de Esquerda* (BE, PO) *Izquierda Unida* (IU, ES) *Strana Zelených* (SZ, SK) *Lehet Más a Politika* (LMP, HU) *50PLUS* (NL) *Partij voor de Dieren* (PvdD, NL) *Občanská Demokratická Strana* (ODS, CZ) *Unión Progreso y Democracia* (UPyD, ES)	*Dansk Folkeparti* (DF, DK) *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS, PL) *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV, NL) *Fratelli d'Italia* (FdI, IT) *Jobbik* (HU) *Lega Nord* (LN, IT) *Movimento 5 Stelle* (M5S, IT) *Die Linke* (DL, DE) *Socialistische Partij* (SP, NL)

Note: Party abbreviations and country codes in brackets.

Ilonszki (2018). Our unit of analysis is an opposition party during a government's term. The exact periodisation is dependent on the data for the various countries included in the De Giorgi and Ilonszki (2018) volume. For each country data are available for at least two parliamentary terms in the period 1991–2017.

We look at three dependent variables: the *share of votes in favour of government bills*, the *number of oral questions asked by a party* and *the number of written questions asked*.[2] The number of oral and written questions is calculated as the average number of the questions that that MPs of a party ask, per MP per year. The share of favourable votes is recorded on the party level in De Giorgi and Ilonszki (2018), because voting unity in parties is usually very high in all countries.[3],[4] Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics and the country selection of the dependent variable as not every variable is available for every country Table 4 shows the

[2]All these variables are available at the party-government level except for written questions in the Czech Republic; there data are only available for the entire parliamentary term, but we still use these data nevertheless.

[3]Note that some countries treat abstentions (a relatively rare phenomenon) differently. In Italy and Germany, these are counted as voted 'Yes'. In the other countries, they are counted as voted 'No'. In the Netherlands such votes are impossible.

[4]A fractional logit model would have been more appropriate, but the data reported in De Giorgi and Ilonszki (2018) only report the percentage of favourable votes, not the total number of votes.

Table 3 Descriptives of dependent variables

	Share of government bills supported	Number of oral questions	Number of written questions
Mean	67.60	2.16	17.64
Median	75.05	1.28	9.21
S.D.	26.27	2.81	23.68
Min.	0	0	0
Max.	100.00	24.82	122.80
N	253	134	104
Countries	CZ, DK, DE, HU, IT, NL, PL, PT, RO, ES	CZ, DE, HU, NL, RO, ES	CZ, NL, PT, RO

CZ, Czech Republic; DK, Denmark; DE, Germany; HU, Hungary; NL, Netherlands; PL, Poland; PT, Portugal; RO, Romania; ES, Spain.

Table 4 Pearson's correlations between the dependent variables

	Oral questions	Written questions
Vote	–0.16*	–0.21**
Oral questions		0.10

*$p < 0.1$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

correlations between the measures. This indicates that the measures are not identical.

Anti-elitism is our key independent variable. We operationalise this variable by means of the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES)'s measure of anti-elitism, which we discuss earlier.[5] This item is a scale, which allows us to distinguish between parties that offer a mild form of anti-establishment critique from those parties that are vehemently poised against incumbents. It is available in the 2014 CHES, but we use the measure for the 1991–2017 period.[6] Unfortunately, the CHES 2017 round, which includes a number of additional measures of populism, does not cover all our countries. It is crucial to note that our expectation explicitly concerns anti-elitism and not populism in a broader sense. We will use the binary

[5]The anti-elitism scale is based on the survey question 'Salience of anti-establishment and anti-elite rhetoric' with an answer scale ranging from 0 (No important at all) to 10 (Extremely important).

[6]In the case of mergers (like CDU/CSU in Germany) we use a weighted average. In the case of joint lists, we assign them the same value (like CDU for the PCP and PEV in Portugal).

PopuList measure, mentioned above, to check this. We explicitly expect that this measure has a weaker relation to parliamentary behaviour.

To measure the *ideological distance to the government*, we use the left-right positions from expert surveys, specifically the CHES (before 1999 also the Huber and Inglehart [1995] survey). We use the left-right dimension because this is still the universal dimension, which reflects the ideological conflict in European democracies (Mair, 2007). We use the general left–right dimension, which can tap into economic, moral and migration issues depending on which issues are most salient in political systems. We assign a party-per-government the CHES value that closest to the year the parliament was elected. If two years are equally close, we chose the more recent year. We assume that the data are applicable for a 10-year period.[7] We then calculate the seat-weighted average of all the cabinet parties to measure its position. For each opposition party, we then calculated the absolute distance to the cabinet.[8]

To measure *government history*, we use the ParlGov database and calculate the share of days a party was in existence since the Second World War and it also was in government (Döring and Manow, 2018). Finally, we also measure the *share of seats a party has in parliament* (from the ParlGov data base).[9] To ease interpretation all independent variables have been recalculated so their minimum is zero and their maximum is one. Table 5 provides descriptive statistics for our independent variables.

We ran a number of regression models, two for each dependent variable. In order to exclude any unobserved between-country differences from the analysis, we ran country fixed-effects regression models. In those models, the values of the dependent variable are divided by the average value in the country. This completely removes inter-country differences and focuses on the analysis on the intra-country differences, which are the focus of our theory. This is important because there may be country-specific institutional rules concerning how MPs can use their instruments. We ran negative binomial regression models for the question data as these are either based on counts or clearly skewed; we ran a fixed-effects least-squares regression for the voting data. The Online Appendix provides a number of alternative model specifications.

[7]If data for a specific party are missing from CHES wave but present in an earlier or later wave, we use the data that are available, even though the year from which the data were obtained differs between parties.

[8]There is only a moderate correlation between anti-elitism and left-right distance ($r = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$).

[9]Except for periods when a government was not formed after elections, but after a cabinet crisis, then we relied on the country chapters in De Giorgi and Ilonszki (2018).

Table 5 Descriptive statistics of independent variables

Variable	Mean	Median	SD	Min.	Max.	*N*	Higher
Seat share (logged)	0.54	0.51	0.27	0.00	1.00	280	A high share of seats
Left-right distance	0.35	0.34	0.19	0.00	1.00	283	Distant from the government
Government experience	0.21	0.00	0.26	0.00	1.00	288	Long government experience
PopuList rating	0.22	–	–	0.00	1.00	289	Populist
CHES anti-elite	0.36	0.25	0.27	0.00	1.00	248	Anti-elite

5. Results

Before turning to our analyses, we will look at the average scores of different groups on parliamentary tool use. We distinguish between the four groups in Table 6: parties that are anti-elitist and populist according to the CHES *and* the PopuList, parties that are either one of these things and parties that are neither. Table 6 shows how often they use their parliamentary instruments. We start by looking at parties that both the PopuList marks as populist and the CHES as anti-elitist. This group does not score exceptionally in its use of parliamentary tools: they score lowest in asking oral questions and support almost two-thirds of bills. There is a higher use of opposition tools in the group that is anti-elitist according to the CHES but not populist according to the PopuList. This group asks most written and oral questions and supports half of all government bills. *Fidesz* and *Forza Italia*, the parties that the PopuList scores as populist but which are not anti-elitist according to the CHES, support the lowest share of government legislation. All these three groups differ from the fourth group of non-populist parties in particular in their lower support for legislation.

To assess the effect of anti-elitism on parliamentary behaviour, we ran a number of analyses: a bivariate regression and subsequently a multivariate regression for each dependent variable (see Table 7). In the three bivariate regressions (models 1, 3 and 5), we can see that CHES anti-elitism is significantly associated with the usage of scrutiny tools in parliament: anti-elitist ask more oral and written questions and vote against legislation more often. The multivariate regressions (models 2, 4 and 6) add the control variables. In the regression of bill support the significant effect of anti-elitism remains: on average the most anti-elitist support 20% less legislation than a party that does not use any anti-elite rhetoric. The relationship between anti-elitism and both types of questions is not significant, however, if we include control variables. This implies that the difference in questioning behaviour of anti-elitist parties is likely to be the result of other factors such as their left-right position.

Table 6 Average scores for four groups

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
CHES anti-elite	≥5	≥5	<5	<5
PopuList rating	Yes	No	Yes	No
Share of government legislation supported	66.6	50.9	37.71	78.3
	(28.4)	(25.9)	(9.9)	(19.9)
Oral questions	1.9	3.2	2.3	2.0
	(2.3)	(5.4)	(0.8)	(2.1)
Written questions	17.9	21.4	–	16.2
	(17.7)	(31.4)	–	(22.0)
N	53	74	10	149

The Online Appendix includes a number of alternative model specifications, 14 for the share of government bills supported (Tables A1 and A2 in the Online Appendix) and 10 for the number of oral questions (Table A3 in the Online Appendix) and 10 for the number of written questions (Table A4 in the Online Appendix). We look at applying linear models analysing the questions and binomial models to the government bills, as well as multilevel models instead of fixed-effects models. Four models employ beta regression with clustered standard errors to look at the proportion of votes supported. Twenty of 34 models employ the PopuList rating as an alternative for the CHES anti-elitism scale. This rating is only a significant predictor of supporting government bills in multilevel regressions and not for models asking questions. This supports the findings presented above.

Concerning the control variables included in the models, we find a strong relationship between the opposition party's left-right distance to the government and both opposing the government in votes and asking it questions. This is significant in each of the models. This supports the notion that politics in Europe's parliaments still very much reflects left–right differences. Moreover, parties that have less government experience tend to oppose the current government more in votes. For the other variable (seat share) we do not find significant results.

6. Discussion and conclusion

Our article offers the first comparative quantitative analysis of opposition party behaviour of anti-elitist and other parties. Based on earlier work focussing on the Dutch case, we expected to find that anti-elitist parties were more likely to engage in scrutinising behaviour, such as asking written and oral questions and voting against legislation. Anti-elitism, more than populism in general, appears strongly associated with voting against government legislation but where it comes to

Table 7 Regression models of the use of parliamentary scrutiny tools by opposition parties

Dependent variable	**Share of government bills supported**		**Number of oral questions**		**Number of written questions**	
Number	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Model	FE linear	FE linear	FE negative binomial	FE negative binomial	FE negative binomial	FE negative binomial
CHES anti-elite	–21.16***	–22.19***	0.67**	0.16	0.68**	0.47
	(3.40)	(3.82)	(0.34)	(0.39)	(0.27)	(0.32)
Seat share (logged)	–	2.45	–	–0.57	–	–0.46
		(3.72)		(0.36)		(0.41)
Left-right distance	–	–21.63***	–	0.84**	–	0.85*
		(4.75)		(0.40)		(0.45)
Government experience	–	–9.10***	–	–0.48	–	–0.01
		(4.26)		(0.44)		(0.50)
Constant	75.59***	83.73***	4.86	15.61	0.17	0.27
	(1.48)	(2.86)	(7.44)	(667.93)	(0.18)	(0.26)
Log-likelihood	–	–	–160.82	–154.48	–313.72	–311.22
R-squared within	0.14	0.22	–	–	–	–
R-squared between	0.70	0.75	–	–	–	–
R-squared overall	0.22	0.33	–	–	–	–
$N_{observations}$	246	243	120	120	99	99
$N_{countries}$	10	10	6	6	4	4

*$p < 0.1$, **$p < 0.05$, ***$p < 0.01$.

asking written and oral parliamentary questions, ideological distance to the government is a better predictor.

It is a relevant question why anti-elite parties are more likely to prefer using one scrutiny tool in their toolbox but not others. Perhaps the best explanation is that voting against legislation does not involve any meaningful costs, while asking written or oral questions requires more 'work'. If something requires effort parties are more inclined to do it when they are motivated not just by their distaste of the elite but also by substantial differences to the government.

We draw three conclusions from these findings. First, this article shows that we can fruitfully study opposition party behaviour in a comparative, quantitative analysis. Even more than anti-elitism, ideological distance plays a major role in understanding opposition party behaviour. In this sense, this article reflects earlier findings by Hix and Noury (2016) and Louwerse *et al.* (2017): ideological differences, operationalised as distances on the left–right dimension still are the key variable for understanding parliamentary behaviour. Future research may want to explore in greater detail how ideological differences affect parliamentary behaviour, in particular the use of parliamentary tools beyond voting.

The second conclusion concerns the comparative analysis of parliamentary behaviour: the statistical models employed completely removed inter-country differences and focused on the analysis on the intra-country differences, which were the focus of our theory. Still there also appears to be considerable relevant variation between countries as to what scrutiny tools are used. We have left this variation unexplored, but this could be fruitful to look more closely at this in future analyses. At the same time, we need to make sure that the data obtained for different countries are truly comparable. This requires increased data sharing efforts within the political science community. The comparative volume by De Giorgi and Ilonszki (2018) provides a very important step in this process, but we hope that this will be a first step towards a more comparative approach of parliamentary (opposition) behaviour.

Finally, where it comes to the concept of populism: the ideational approach to populism that conceives of it as combining anti-elite and pro-people attitudes has become dominant in the literature. We found that disaggregating populism is useful, at least where it comes to understanding parliamentary behaviour. We found that while measures of populism that combine these two elements are only weakly related to parliamentary behaviour, anti-elitism has a strong, significant and positive relationship to the use of opposition tools, in particular to parliamentary voting. Left-wing anti-elitist opposition parties that still employ a class-based schema to understand society score very high on their use of opposition tools. This makes sense from a theoretical perspective: the unwillingness to cooperate with the sitting government is conceptually more closely related to anti-elite attitudes than to pro-people attitudes. This provides evidence for the assumption

of Louwerse and Otjes (2019) that the working element of populism where it comes to parliamentary behaviour is anti-elitism. Future research about opposition strategy could be focused more on anti-elitism instead of the broader concept of populism. More in general, the growing attention to populism in the literature on political science is warranted given the growth of these political currents all over Europe; however, the exclusive focus on populism as a broad concept may obscure the importance of the underlying concepts, in particular anti-elitism.

Supplementary data

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Conflict of interest

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