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Abstract

This paper analyzes how the increased demographic heterogeneity of Western societies is reflected in the policy space of electoral competition between parties. So far, an impressive amount of research efforts have been dedicated to identify the ideological conflicts that structure party behavior in national political arenas as well as to characterize the parties' policy agendas in terms of the left-right dimension. The same is not true, however, of the socio-cultural issues that are becoming increasingly salient in political discourse and public opinion. Immigration remains one of the most neglected issues in the comparative study of the party competition. Using data from the Comparative Manifestos Project, we compare the policy positions of left and right party families towards immigration across 18 West European countries since 1945. We test two main hypotheses: first, that over time the immigration issue has gained saliency in the agendas of both left and right parties; second, that in recent years the policy positions of mainstream left and right parties on this issue have been converging in an anti-immigrant direction, particularly in the face of electorally relevant extreme right parties. More specifically, we dispute the common perception of the right as 'issue owner' of immigration in electoral competition and explore the increasing appropriation of these issues by the mainstream left.

INTRODUCTION

During the last decades, an impressive amount of research efforts have been dedicated to identify the ideological conflicts that structure party behavior in national political arenas (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; more recently: Kriesi *et al.* 2006, 2008; Kitschelt and McGann 1995) as well as to characterize the parties' policy agendas in terms of the left-right dimension (e.g. Laver *et al.* 2003; Budge 2001; Laver and Garry 2000; Budge *et al.* 1987; Castles and Mair 1984; Inglehart and Klingemann 1976). While those concerned with the formation and development of cleavages have repeatedly pointed at the importance of a new socio-cultural dimension (Kriesi *et al.* 2006, 2008) or authoritarian-libertarian dimension (Kitschelt and McGann 1995) of party behavior, those studying the parties' policy agendas have paid remarkably little attention to the socio-cultural issues that over time have become increasingly salient not only in political debates and electoral campaigns but also in the opinions and worries of voters. One of these neglected issues is immigration. Western Europe, in particular, has been exposed to constant flows of immigration throughout the postwar period and has seen rightwing extremism rise in recent years. Comparative research has concentrated much on these 'new' parties and their voters and on their structural effects on party systems, but little on how the mainstream parties¹ reacted to rightwing extremist competition in terms of specific policy issues such as immigration (exceptions include: Meguid 2008; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008; Art 2007; Bale 2003; Downs 2001). The mainstream right parties (Conservatives and Christian Democrats) are commonly seen as the 'issue owners' of immigration in electoral competition, i.e. as the parties able to benefit from 'playing the immigration card'

¹ We follow Meguid's definition of mainstream parties as the "electorally dominant actors in the center-left, center, and center-right blocs on the Left-Right political spectrum" (2005: 348). This categorization excludes left-libertarian and rightwing populist parties from the political mainstream. We include the latter, along with authoritarian to openly xenophobic parties, in our definition of extreme right parties.

in electoral competition, whether or not there is a rightwing extremist competitor in the party system. On the left side of the political spectrum, the small parties (Greens and Communists) benefit from openly favorable positions towards immigration, in contrast to the mainstream parties (Socialists and Social Democrats), which often remain in a nimbus. Ideologically, the latter have good reasons to be pro-immigration but, strategically, they are challenged by the mainstream and extreme right on this issue. Thus, we can expect a high volatility in how the mainstream left deals with immigration from election to election as well as a great cross-national variation.

This paper is an attempt to fill the research gap on immigration as a socio-cultural issue of increased relevance and dispute within the policy agendas of West European parties. Theoretically, it draws on the cleavage literature (Kriesi *et al.* 2006, 2008; Kitschelt and McGann 1995), on the debate between spatial and saliency approaches to issue competition (Petrocik 1996; Budge *et al.* 1987; Downs 1957) as well as on the more recent 'competition between unequals' literature (Meguid 2008; Bale 2003). Empirically, it expands on Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008) who explain the different approaches to immigration in Denmark and Sweden with reference to the different strategic situation of the mainstream right in the two countries. This paper is a comparison of party families across 18 West European countries since 1945. In accordance with the literature on the emergence of a new socio-cultural cleavage that structures party behavior, our first hypothesis is that over time the policy issue of immigration has gained saliency in the agendas of both left and right parties. Based on the competition literature, our second hypothesis is that the mainstream right and left converge towards anti-immigrant positions, particularly when extreme right parties are electorally relevant competitors. More specifically, we dispute the common perception of the right as 'issue owner' of immigration and explore the increasing appropriation of this issue by the left.

There are three main sources of data on the parties' policy agendas that can be used

for the study of the immigration issue: mass and expert surveys and the parties' electoral manifestos. In this paper, we use data from the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP), which includes the electoral manifestos of all parties that have held national political office in Western Europe since 1945.

This paper is structured as follows: We start out by presenting the theoretical background to our study of the immigration issue in electoral competition. This leads us to the formulation of the two hypotheses that will guide our analysis of the parties' policy agendas. In the empirical section, we introduce the CMP dataset, operationalize our variables and present the preliminary results of our analysis. We conclude with a discussion of our main findings and their implications for future research on the strategic behavior of parties along the socio-cultural dimension of electoral competition.

THE IMMIGRATION ISSUE IN PARTY COMPETITION

The Socio-Cultural Cleavage

Kriesi *et al.* (2006, 2008) find that party behavior is structured along two dimensions, a socio-economic and a socio-cultural one. They see this as result of globalization: while open markets lead to increasing economic competition, immigration leads to increasing cultural competition in the national political arena. Both dimensions reflect the same conflict between the 'winners' and the 'losers' of globalization: to the well-educated globalization provides both economic and cultural opportunities, while the less qualified are confronted with the 'double' challenge of seeing their economic sectors displaced to remote countries and foreign workers being hired on the national labor markets. As a result, the 'losers' of globalization are likely to support economic protectionism and restrictive immigration policies. This is in line with Kitschelt and McGann (1995) who, a decade earlier, uncovered a new authoritarian-libertarian dimension of party competition that cut across the long established socialist-capitalist dimension.

Given the emergence of a socio-cultural dimension of party competition and the

growing immigrant populations of globalized societies, our first hypothesis is that, *over time, the electoral issue of immigration has gained saliency in the policy agendas of both left and right parties.*

Contrary to Kriesi *et al.* as well as to Kitschelt and McGann, who see both party and voter behavior as structured along the two dimensions, Van der Brug and Van Spanje (2009) find that party competition is structured by only one, dominant left-right dimension which has absorbed core socio-cultural issues such as immigration. According to them, the latter have not yet been transformed into a separate cleavage that would cut across the left-right dimension. Parties are thus either left and pro-immigrant or right and anti-immigrant. This puts them in an awkward mismatch with the opinions and concerns of voters, which are structured along both dimensions. As a result, voters with leftist positions on economic issues and more Conservative positions on cultural issues (or vice-versa) are left with limited electoral choices. This contributes to the volatility of electoral outcomes, with a large group of voters moving from one side of the political spectrum to the other, depending what type of issues constitutes their main concern at the time of election.

Issue Position, Saliency and Ownership

Which parties are likely to address the voters with 'mixed' left-right preferences on economic and cultural issues? Before we answer this question, it is important to explore the rational motives and strategic options that parties have to appeal to the issue preferences of voters.

Spatial theories of party behavior have been developed around the idea that parties are vote-maximizers, thus choosing issue positions that reduce their distance to the voters to a minimum (Downs 1957). This means that, in electoral competition, parties have the choice between moving their positions towards those of their main competitor (policy convergence) or away from them (policy divergence), depending on where their voters position themselves. While spatial theories implicitly assume a

fixed issue saliency, their critics have shown that parties can manipulate saliency itself. If they can expect to benefit from it, parties will place certain issues more prominently than others on their policy agendas (Budge and Farlie 1983). In particular, they will emphasize issues they 'own', i.e. issues on which they have a better reputation than their opponents and public opinion is on their side (Petrocik 1996). But party competition is not a matter of confrontation over different issue positions *or* selective emphasis of different issues; one type of competition does not preclude the other (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008). In fact, parties can undermine issue ownership by their competitors, if they choose to alter both their position on the issue at stake and its saliency in the electoral context (Meguid 2008).

The Strategic Choices of Left and Right

Van der Brug and Van Spanje find that "[t]here are some parties that are right-leaning on economic issues but 'soft' on immigration, yet there are only two parties that are economically left-wing and tough on immigration: the Danish Social Democrats and the Finish Centre Party (KESK)" (2009: 323). They see a chance that extreme right parties could exploit this vacuum by positioning themselves more to the left on the socio-economic dimension. At the same time, mainstream left parties could win by leaning towards the right on the socio-cultural issue of immigration. Thus, on the anti-immigrant side of the political spectrum, the competition for voters with mixed left-right preferences takes place between the extreme right and the mainstream left.

Let us start out by looking at what is at stake for the mainstream right and why its possibilities to actively participate in this game are only limited. To be sure, the right has long been the indisputable 'owner' of the immigration issue in electoral competition, because its critical stance on the matter is in line with public opinion, i.e. with the views of the average voter (Ivarsflaten 2005). However, promoting the issue in electoral competition may not

always be to the advantage of the *mainstream* right, as it may lose votes to the *extreme* right. According to Bale (2003), in the face of an extreme right threat, the mainstream right is generally better-off than the mainstream left. More than anything, this is because the extreme right is likely to support Conservative and Christian Democratic – and not Socialist and Social Democratic – parties in government formation. This scenario is contested by Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008) who stress that the mainstream right has to keep an eye on the small parties of the centre-right, too, as these are its most likely coalition partners but, in case of an ideological conflict over social-cultural issues, may drift to the left. The mainstream right thus finds itself in a dead-end situation, between the office-seeking interests of the center-right parties and the populist tones of its extreme right competitors. As Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup have shown in the case of Denmark and Sweden, it is with regard to the centre-right parties that the mainstream right defines its strategy on the electoral issue of immigration.

The strategic situation of the mainstream left is different. Under the assumptions of spacial theories of party behavior, if the right emphasizes immigration-related issues, the mainstream left will react by seeking a position that is close to the average voter (convergence). However, for parties, it is more advantageous to highlight issues when they have the electorate on their side. The right being the issue owners of immigration, the mainstream left can seek other options: it may choose to ignore the issue or, put differently, to emphasize its own issues. Meguid (2008) has called the former a 'dismissive strategy', Riker (1996) the latter 'dispersion principle'. These are strategic options that the mainstream left can adopt if its priority is to prevent the defection of voters with strongly liberal socio-cultural preferences to small leftist parties. However, not responding to the extreme right threat puts the large group of voters with mixed left-right preferences at stake for the mainstream left.

In this paper, we focus on the efforts of the mainstream left to offer voters with

mixed preferences an electoral choice. Given the growing competition from a right that capitalizes on its issue ownership of immigration, our second hypothesis is that, *the mainstream left is converging towards the right on the socio-cultural dimension by adopting ever less favorable positions towards immigration, particularly in the presence of an extreme right competitor.*

MEASURING THE IMMIGRATION ISSUE IN PARTY COMPETITION

Data Sources

Three main sources of data can be used to identify left-right issue positions in the policy space of party competition: expert surveys, mass surveys and the parties' electoral manifestos. In the first, country experts of party politics are asked to provide their own estimates of party positions on specific policy issues (Laver *et al.* 2003; Huber and Inglehart 1995; Laver and Hunt 1992; Castles and Mair 1984). Mass surveys, such as the World Values Survey, contain the self-reported position of partisan supporters on the left-right dimension; they have also been used to estimate party positions (Huber 1989; Inglehart and Klingemann 1976). Finally, over the last 20 years, considerable efforts have been made to codify the parties' electoral manifestos. For the content-analysis of the texts, some use human coders (the Comparative Manifestos Project: Budge 2001; Klingemann *et al.* 1994; Budge *et al.* 1987) while others rely on computerized techniques (Slapin and Proksch 2008; Laver *et al.* 2003; Laver and Garry 2000). All three data sources contain policy categories that are not limited to socioeconomic issues typical of the left-right dimension but include a wide range of policy issues, including immigration.

In our analysis, we use data from the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP). On the one hand, the CMP dataset contains the manifestos of all electorally relevant parties in 54 countries since 1945. This is a clear advantage over the datasets of expert surveys which, by contrast, "have been administered infrequently, in different formats, and only over the last fifteen years" (Gabel and Huber 2000: 94). On the

other hand, the CMP dataset not only allows to *position* parties along a left-right scale on a wide range of policy issues but also measures the relevance that each of those issues has for the parties. The original purpose of the CMP was, in fact, to test a theory of electoral competition according to which parties strive to increase the *saliency* of issues that are important for them in a particular election, not so much to emphasize their opposition to the other parties on a variety of issues (Budge *et al.* 1987). The saliency theory was further extended by Petrocik (1996) who defined 'issue ownership' as the repeated saliency of a particular issue in a party's manifestos throughout a number of elections.

The Comparative Manifestos Project Dataset

The text unit of analysis within the CMP dataset is the sentence.² Every sentence of a party's manifesto is coded into one of 56 issue categories that refer to a wide variety of subject matters, including external relations, democracy and the political system, the economy, welfare and quality of life, the fabric of society and social groups. The CMP dataset contains the total number of sentences that a manifesto dedicates to each issue category and is thus able to calculate the percentage of each issue category over the total number of sentences in the manifesto. The *saliency score* of an issue category is, therefore, the rate of mentions that it receives in a given party manifesto.

Despite the emphasis of the CMP dataset on saliency, its issue categories also allow for a positional interpretation (all except 'economic goals'). This is because many categories are split into a positive and a negative formulation. As an example, we find both the category 'multiculturalism: positive' and 'multiculturalism: negative'. In other cases, the position is captured in the very definition of the issue category: 'free enterprise', for example, is defined as "favorable mentions of free enterprise capitalism; superiority of individual

² The text unit is, in fact, the quasi-sentence but, for simplicity, we shall refer to it as 'sentence'. For an explanation, see Volkens (2001).

enterprise over state and control systems (...)" (Volkens 2001: 32).

The CMP categories make it possible to analyze a variety of issue dimensions, from the left-right dimension with its 25 issue categories to a single-issue dimension. The use of two opposite issue categories or the combination of several categories that refer to one particular issue or dimension makes it possible to create *positional scales* that order the parties' issue positions along a continuum from positive to negative or favorable to unfavorable.

In order to construct a saliency score and a positional scale of 'immigration', we need to identify the CMP categories that refer to the issue. For that purpose, it is useful to look at the way immigration has traditionally been 'framed' in the political discourse³ and to use the electoral rhetoric of the extreme right as a reference point for what is to be considered as an anti-immigrant stance. The centrality of the immigration issue for these parties is widely acknowledged by the literature (Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2008). Extreme right parties are well known for their negative framing of the issue and for their depiction of immigrants as a problem. This happens in four different ways: immigrants appear, first, "as a threat to ethno-national identity; second, as a major cause of criminality and other kinds of social insecurity; third, as a cause of unemployment; and fourth, as abusers of the generosity of the welfare states of Western democracies" (Rydgren 2008: 746). Rydgren sees the first two frames as expressions of an 'ethno-pluralist doctrine' according to which the mixing of different ethnicities poses a threat to national culture, so that ethnicities have to be kept separate in order to prevent cultural extinction. The last two frames refer to a 'welfare chauvinist doctrine' according to which immigrants and natives compete for the same, limited resources; the immigrants' needs and interests are considered illegitimate and as an interference with the

natives' entitlement to keep the entire cake for themselves.

Unfortunately, the welfare chauvinist doctrine is too specific to be captured by any of the CMP issue categories. There are, however, three categories that refer to the ethno-pluralist doctrine: 'multiculturalism: negative', 'national way of life: positive' and 'law and order'. 'Multiculturalism: negative' is defined as "enforcement or encouragement of cultural integration" (Volkens 2001: 35) or otherwise as negative mentions of its twin category, 'multiculturalism: positive'. 'National way of life: positive' is defined as "appeals to patriotism and/or nationalism; suspension of some freedoms in order to protect the state against subversion; support for established national ideas" (Volkens 2001: 34). Finally, 'law and order' is defined as "enforcement of all laws; actions against crime; support and resources for police; tougher attitudes in court" (Volkens 2001: 35). This category may reflect a negative attitude towards immigration, as it includes manifesto sentences that refer to illegal immigration. The problem is that this category also includes mentions of issues that have little or nothing to do with immigration, such as the fight against the terrorist organizations IRA and ETA in the UK and Spain respectively, or problems related to the organization and funding of the police forces. Thus, including 'law and order' in the construction of our saliency variable would inflate the relevance of the immigration issue for the parties in an artificial, disproportionate way. For this reason, we have decided to exclude this issue from the analysis.

There are two CMP categories that correspond to a positive framing of immigration: 'multiculturalism: positive' and 'underprivileged minority groups'. 'Multiculturalism: positive' is defined as "favorable mentions of cultural diversity, communalism, cultural plurality and pillarization; preservation of autonomy of religious, linguistic heritages within the country including special educational provisions" (Volkens 2001: 35). 'Underprivileged minority groups' is defined as "favorable references to underprivileged minorities who are defined neither in economic nor in demographic

³ According to Goffman (1986), frames are the basic elements that organize people's experience and govern their definition of particular situations.

terms, e.g. the handicapped, homosexuals, immigrants, etc.” (Volkens 2001: 35). The two most mentioned groups within this category are the handicapped and particularly immigrants; the rest scarcely appear, if at all.⁴

We calculate the saliency of the immigration issue as the percentage of sentences that the parties’ electoral manifestos dedicate to the four categories that address the issue. In theory, this variable ranges from 0 to 100 percent. However, it is almost impossible to find a party manifesto that is dedicated exclusively to one issue or set of issues in particular. Even so-called ‘single-issue parties’ (regionalist, green and extreme right parties) present diversified manifestos in which they address a number of issues other than those that constitute their *raison d’être* as parties. The empirical range of the variable in our sample of manifestos goes from 0 to 40 percent. This means that the maximum saliency that any West European party has ever dedicated to the immigration issue since 1945 is 40 percent of the sentences in one of its manifestos. The mean saliency score is a much lower 3.19 percent, with a standard deviation of 3.8.

In order to create a scale of the immigration issue dimension along which we can place the parties’ preferences (as reflected in their electoral manifestos), we have to derive an indicator of position from the saliency variable that we just introduced. There are two different ways of doing this. The first one follows Laver and Budge’s (1992) measurement of left-right positions and subtracts the percentage of negative sentences from the percentage of positive ones (or vice versa):

$$\text{Immigration Position} = (\text{Pro Immigration} - \text{Anti Immigration})$$

This variable theoretically ranges from -100 percent for a manifesto exclusively dedicated to anti-immigrant categories to 100 percent for a manifesto totally devoted to a positive view of immigration. The middle of the scale, indicated by a score of

0, represents a position of equilibrium between the two extremes or, rather, of relative indifference. It should be noted that, calculated in this way, the position score does not simply reflect the relative weight of pro-immigrant issue categories with respect to anti-immigrant ones but is also influenced by the total content of the manifesto, i.e. its size). In other words, two manifestos may share the same number of pro-immigrant versus anti-immigrant sentences and still obtain different position scores if one of the manifestos is much longer in its total number of sentences than the other one. This makes the percentage of sentences that refer to immigration in the larger manifesto different from that in the smaller one, thus influencing the final score.

Let us illustrate this with an example. Suppose that a manifesto A of 400 sentences dedicates 200 sentences to pro-immigration categories (50 percent) and 120 sentences to anti-immigration categories (30 percent). The position score of manifesto A would be $50 - 30 = 20$. Now suppose that manifesto B also dedicates 200 sentences to pro-immigration categories and 120 sentences to anti-immigration categories. However, manifesto B is 1000 sentences long, which means that the saliency score of pro- and anti-immigrant categories is 20 and 12 percent respectively. The position score of manifesto B would thus be $20 - 12 = 8$. Clearly, on the basis of their position scores, manifesto A seems more pro-immigration than manifesto B. Let us further suppose that both manifestos were put forward by the same party at two different elections. By making the second manifesto longer than the first one, the party has more space to discuss issues that before were either left out or not dwelled upon in detail. This may be the result of a strategy to dilute its pro-immigration profile. On the other hand, it may well be an attempt to diversify the issue profile of the party without necessarily changing its position with regard to the immigration issue.

There is another way to calculate a position variable that makes the resulting score more independent from the size of the manifesto. Laver and Garry defined it as “relative balance of pro and con text units,

⁴ This has been confirmed by looking into real coded manifestos and through a conversation with Andrea Volkens.

taken as a proportion of all text units conveying information on this matter” (2000: 628). It is an attempt to separate position from saliency and create a ‘pure position’ score:

$$\text{Immigration Position} = (\text{Pro Immigration} - \text{Anti Immigration}) / (\text{Pro Immigration} + \text{Anti Immigration})$$

Calculated in this way, the position variable ranges from a value of -1 for single-issue, anti-immigration manifestos to a value of 1 for single-issue, pro-immigration manifestos. If we apply this formula to the manifestos A and B above, we obtain a position score 0.25 for both.

The first formula (combination of position and saliency) is the most congruent with the saliency theory of issue competition, since the parties are assumed to be absolutely conscious about the emphasis they give to a particular issue or issue dimension in the totality of their manifesto. If we chose to give credit to other factors that may influence party behavior, the second formula (pure position) could be more appropriate. We calculate our results according to both.

THE IMMIGRATION ISSUE IN PARTY COMPETITION

In this section, we discuss the saliency and position of the immigration issue in the parties’ electoral manifestos. We use a CMP sub-dataset of 18 West European countries⁵ that covers the period from 1945 to 2005⁶ and includes 1771 manifestos. We compare the following party families across time: Greens (4 percent of all parties in our CMP sub-dataset), Communist parties (13 percent), Socialists and Social Democrats (22 percent), Liberals (16 percent), Christian Democrats (15 percent), Conservatives (11 percent), Agrarians (5 percent) and extreme right parties (4 percent). The remaining 6 percent of the

parties in the CMP dataset are ethnic parties. We have excluded them from the analysis, since their minority nationalist ideology overlaps with some of the categories we use to define the immigration issue (‘multiculturalism’ and ‘national way of life’); this would likely produce misleading results.

We are interested in whether, over time, immigration finds increasing mention in party manifestos and whether the issue has recently been framed more negatively than in previous decades. In other words, we are looking for rising saliency and falling position scores. According to our theoretical expectation, the mainstream right in a given party system (either a Conservative or a Christian Democratic party) and the mainstream left (usually a Socialist or Social Democratic party) will converge towards anti-immigrant positions as a strategic move to avoid the loss of voters to an electorally relevant extreme right party. In the absence of such a competitor, we expect the negative framing of the immigration issue to be taken up by the mainstream right, though in a less polarized way.

Saliency and Position

Since we are interested in what the saliency score means in terms of the degree of attention that party manifestos give to the immigration issue, we need to define what we consider to be a high and a low saliency score. As a yardstick, we have calculated the mean saliency score of the 56 categories in our CMP sub-dataset. Its value is 1.62, with 1.47 standard deviation. Therefore, we regard the saliency score of 1.6 as the – inevitably arbitrary – threshold that separates an indifferent attitude towards the immigration issue, i.e. a ‘dismissive strategy’ (Meguid 2008), from a salient pro- or anti-immigration position.⁷

Table 1 summarizes our data, showing the mean saliency and position scores of the immigration issue for the party families that compete in our chosen sample of 18 West European countries since 1945. In line with

⁵ These countries are: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Great Britain, Ireland, France, Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

⁶ Spain is the only country in the sample for which the data goes until 2008.

⁷ Our calculation of the pure position score does not include party manifestos in which the saliency of the immigration issue dimension is below 1.6.

the existing literature, the immigration issue has its strongest appearance in the manifestos of extreme right parties, with a saliency score that is twice as high than in the manifestos of Christian Democratic parties and more than twice as high than in the manifestos of Conservative and Agrarian parties. On the left, parties dedicate less attention to the immigration issue. Its mean saliency score in Communist manifestos is a mere 1.92,

barely above the yardstick of a dismissive attitude. Socialist parties, with a saliency score of 2.15, are not far from the Communists in this respect. By contrast, in Christian Democratic manifestos, the saliency scores of the immigration issue are twice as high than in leftist manifestos. Immigration clearly is an issue of the right and, in particular, of Christian Democratic and extreme right parties.

TABLE 1. Mean Saliency and Position of the Immigration Issue in West European Party Manifestos, 1945-2005, by Party Family (Standard Deviation in Brackets)

	Saliency	Position (including saliency)	Pure position
Greens	3.37 (2.7)	3.44 (3.1)	0.72 (0.5)
Communists	1.92 (2.2)	2.26 (2.6)	0.53 (0.7)
Socialists	2.15 (2.7)	1.03 (3.7)	0.37 (0.7)
Liberals	2.76 (3.0)	0.95 (3.6)	0.29 (0.7)
Christian Democrats	4.11 (3.8)	0.99 (5.3)	0.27 (0.8)
Conservatives	2.88 (3.2)	-1.07 (4.1)	-0.08 (0.8)
Agrarians	2.92 (2.9)	0.38 (4.1)	0.04 (0.8)
Extreme Right	7.90 (7.8)	-6.28 (9.5)	-0.35 (0.7)

Regarding the position of the party families along the immigration scale, we find the Greens on its positive and the extreme right parties on its negative end. The Conservatives, too, place themselves at the anti-immigrant side of the scale but in a more moderate position than the extreme right parties. The remaining party families have a net positive attitude towards the immigration issue. It is interesting to note that the more rightwing the parties are, the weaker their pro-immigrant stand is (or the stronger their anti-immigrant stand, for that matter). Indeed, there is a correlation between the parties' position on the left-right scale and their position on the immigration scale, with a Pearson

coefficient of -0.42 that is statistically significant.⁸

Socialist parties show the least congruence between their position on the left-right and on the immigration scale. On the left-right scale, they are closer to the other leftist parties (Greens and Communists)⁹, but they are closer to the right (particularly to the Christian Democrats) on the immigration scale. Ideology thus is not the best indicator of a Socialist party's position on the issue of immigration. This stands in a clear

⁸ The left-right scale goes from -1 (extreme left) to 1 (extreme right).

⁹ The mean positions of the parties on the left-right scale are: Communists (-0.57); Greens (-0.37); Socialists (-0.37); Christian Democrats (0.09); Conservatives (0.28).

contradiction to Van der Brug and Van Spanje's (2009) finding that parties are either left or right on the socioeconomic *and* the socio-cultural dimension.

The generally high standard deviations in Table 1 suggest a high degree of heterogeneity within party families, i.e. large differences between parties of the same family across countries and time. Green parties seem to be the most homogeneous group in their attitude towards immigration, followed by the Communists. The parties of the right (Agrarians, Conservatives and Christian Democrats) show the greatest variation.

Evolution across Time

In the 1950s and 1960s, West European parties showed a much more indifferent attitude towards the immigration issue than in recent decades. The number of parties that, according to our 1.6 yardstick score, choose to ignore the issue has moved from a large 48 percent of all parties between 1945 and 1960 to a much smaller 23 percent between 1990 and 2005. As it seems, a dismissive strategy regarding immigration is a thing of the past.

Table 2 shows the saliency and the position scores that the immigration issue obtains in the electoral manifestos West European parties. The data is presented by party family and in 15-year intervals. The following discussion will focus on the last two 15-year intervals (1975 to 1990 and 1990 to 2005), when the major socioeconomic and socio-demographic changes with respect to the arrival of immigrants to West European societies took place.

Table 2 shows that the saliency of the immigration issue has grown with particular intensity since 1990. At the same time, the decreasing standard deviations indicate that, within party families, the variation in the relevance given to the immigration issue by single manifestos has become smaller. In comparative terms, Communist parties have increased the space dedicated to the immigration issue in their electoral manifestos the most of all parties, from a mere 1.6 saliency in the period between 1975 and 1990 to 3.08 afterwards. The extreme right parties, too, have nearly

doubled the saliency score of the immigration issue in their manifestos, from 5.7 to 9.7. At the other end, curiously, the Conservatives feature the smallest increased in the degree of attention paid to the immigration issue in their manifestos (from 2.6 to 3.3 saliency).

In general, the parties have moved towards more anti-immigrant (or less pro-immigrant) issue positions during the last 15 years.¹⁰ There are two exceptions: the Communists within the left and the Conservatives within the right. Against our expectations, the latter have moved from a clear anti-immigrant position to a moderately pro-immigrant one. The high standard deviation of their position score makes it difficult to extract any conclusions about this development. In this case, a closer look at country- and party-specific dynamics would be necessary. The Socialists have become less pro-immigrant since 1990, after 45 years of increasingly pro-immigrant positions. Moreover, their position score now has a considerably smaller standard deviation than in previous decades. This indicates that Socialist parties across Western Europe are becoming more similar in their less pro-immigrant attitudes.

The Role of Extreme Right Parties

We now proceed to comparing the saliency and position of the immigration issue in the parties' electoral manifestos when a relevant extreme right party is present in the national political arena and when it is not. A *relevant* extreme right party is here defined as one that poses an electoral threat to the mainstream parties. Only those extreme right parties that have an average vote share of 3 percent or more of the total national vote will be considered as relevant in this sense.

¹⁰ At this point, there is a discrepancy between the two position indicators that we are using. According to the CMP position indicator (which indirectly includes saliency), the Greens have grown more pro-immigrant since 1990. By contrast, according to the pure position indicator, they have become less pro-immigrant.

TABLE 2. Evolution of the Immigration Issue's Saliency and Position Scores in West European Party Manifestos, 1945-2005, by Party Family in 15-Year Intervals (Standard Deviation in Brackets)

		Saliency	Position (including saliency)	Pure position
Greens	1945-60	---	---	---
	1960-75	---	---	---
	1975-90	2.74 (1.9)	2.68 (1.7)	0.77 (0.4)
	1990-05	3.70 (3.0)	3.87 (3.5)	0.69 (0.5)
Communists	1945-60	1.31 (1.5)	-0.36 (3.0)	-0.16 (0.9)
	1960-75	1.21 (2.1)	1.81 (2.7)	0.32 (0.7)
	1975-90	1.64 (2.0)	2.10 (2.3)	0.48 (0.7)
	1990-05	3.08 (2.2)	3.17 (2.1)	0.79 (0.4)
Socialists	1945-60	2.30 (4.0)	-1.91 (5.0)	-0.11 (0.8)
	1960-75	1.57 (2.2)	1.47 (3.5)	0.41 (0.8)
	1975-90	1.93 (2.1)	1.64 (3.3)	0.53 (0.6)
	1990-05	2.91 (2.1)	1.54 (2.8)	0.41 (0.6)
Liberals	1945-60	2.57 (3.2)	0.71 (3.4)	0.13 (0.8)
	1960-75	2.23 (2.9)	0.90 (2.9)	0.22 (0.8)
	1975-90	2.51 (2.4)	1.45 (3.7)	0.48 (0.7)
	1990-05	3.99 (3.2)	0.58 (4.1)	0.27 (0.7)
Christian Democrats	1945-60	5.59 (4.6)	1.58 (6.7)	0.22 (0.8)
	1960-75	3.57 (3.3)	1.86 (4.4)	0.40 (0.8)
	1975-90	3.04 (3.0)	1.04 (5.2)	0.35 (0.8)
	1990-05	4.59 (4.0)	-0.09 (4.7)	0.14 (0.7)
Conservatives	1945-60	2.49 (2.6)	-2.43 (2.6)	-0.53 (0.6)
	1960-75	3.13 (4.3)	-1.96 (6.1)	-0.09 (0.8)
	1975-90	2.64 (2.6)	-0.38 (3.2)	0.03 (0.7)
	1990-05	3.33 (2.9)	0.10 (3.6)	0.23 (0.7)
Extreme Right	1945-60	6.08 (6.0)	-5.34 (3.0)	-0.51 (0.4)
	1960-75	8.89 (8.0)	-8.20 (8.8)	-0.39 (0.8)
	1975-90	5.74 (6.8)	-5.31 (8.5)	-0.30 (0.8)
	1990-05	9.75 (8.9)	-6.43 (11.4)	-0.33 (0.7)
Agrarian	1945-60	2.54 (2.8)	1.61 (4.8)	-0.00 (0.8)
	1960-75	2.40 (2.8)	0.79 (3.2)	-0.00 (0.9)
	1975-90	2.69 (2.3)	2.72 (2.2)	0.59 (0.6)
	1990-05	4.15 (3.3)	-2.85 (3.8)	-0.33 (0.6)
All parties	1945-60	3.17 (4.1)	0.00 (5.5)	-0.02 (0.8)
	1960-75	2.70 (3.7)	0.86 (5.2)	0.24 (0.8)
	1975-90	2.61 (3.1)	1.33 (4.7)	0.42 (0.7)
	1990-05	4.18 (4.0)	0.95 (5.7)	0.34 (0.7)

Tables 3 and 4 display the mean saliency and position scores of the immigration issue between 1975 and 2005, in West European party systems with and without relevant extreme right parties at the national level. As Table 3 shows, in the presence of extreme right parties the party system as a whole leans towards more anti-immigrant (or less pro-immigrant) positions and the immigrant issue features a higher saliency. Table 4, however, indicates that the evolution towards a more negative and salient framing of the immigration issue over the last 15 years has happened

irrespective of the presence of extreme right parties on the national political arena. This means that, in the absence of these parties as issue owners of immigration, other parties raise the anti-immigrant banner. Among other reasons, this may happen because these parties want to avoid the emergence of an extreme right competitor able to capitalize on the untouched niche and become the credible owner of the issue. Maddens and Libbrecht (2009) have termed this an ‘anticipatory accommodative strategy’.

TABLE 3. Comparison of Mean Saliency and Position Scores of the Immigration Issue in the Manifestos of West European Parties in the Presence and Absence of Extreme Right Parties, 1975-2005 (Standard Deviation in Brackets)

	Saliency	Position (including saliency)	Pure position
Extreme right <i>present</i>	3.20 (3.9) ¹¹	0.27 (5.3)	0.20 (0.8)
Extreme right <i>absent</i>	3.18 (3.6)	2.09 (5.1)	0.45 (0.7)

TABLE 4. Evolution of Mean Saliency and Position Scores of the Immigration Issue in the Manifestos of West European Parties in the Presence and Absence of Extreme Right Parties, 1975-2005, in 15-Year Intervals (Standard Deviation in Brackets)

		Saliency	Position (including saliency)	Pure position
Extreme right <i>present</i>	1975-90	2.48 (2.9)	0.86 (4.5)	0.31 (0.8)
	1990-05	4.40 (4.3)	0.47 (5.9)	0.31 (0.7)
Extreme right <i>absent</i>	1975-90	2.89 (3.5)	2.16 (5.1)	0.61 (0.6)
	1990-05	3.76 (3.5)	1.96 (5.1)	0.41 (0.7)

¹¹ If we exclude the extreme right parties from the calculation of the scores, the mean saliency score in party systems with a presence of extreme right parties is 2.86, lower than the saliency score in party systems without extreme right parties. This is an indication that in the absence of extreme right parties, other parties fill in the gap. In their presence, by contrast, the rest of parties give less attention to this issue, which is owned by the extreme right parties.

It is worth noting that between 1975 and 1990 the saliency of the immigration issue was higher in party systems without extreme right competitors, whereas after 1990 the relevance of the immigration becomes higher in their presence. Moreover, the gap between the party systems with and without extreme right competitors has been widening.

Figure 1 shows the pure position of the party families on the immigration scale and its evolution across time, in a comparison of the systems with and without extreme right competitors. At this point, we can identify the party family that owns the immigration issue. Between 1975 and 1990, in party systems with extreme right competitors, these parties attribute a saliency of 5.7 to the immigration issue, followed from a distance by the Conservatives with a mean score of 3. Issue owners are not expected to move their position on the scale across time, unless electorally threatened by another party. This holds true in the case of extreme right parties, which are able to remain in the same position during both 15-year intervals, as they are not the threatened but the threat themselves. Expectedly, the Christian Democrats and the Socialists, i.e. the threatened, move towards less favorable positions. At the same time, we see the Communists bringing themselves close to the pro-immigrant pole. This makes sense not only because it increases their distance from the extreme right, something that is probably rewarded by its voters, but also because it may push leftist, pro-immigrant voters to abandon the Socialists in their favor.

In party systems without extreme right competitors, between 1975 and 1990, the owners of the immigration issue seem to be the Christian Democrats with a mean saliency score of 5.2, followed from a distance by the Liberals with a 2.6 value. The Christian Democrats, however, show an initially positive attitude towards the immigration issue and, over time, move to a only slightly less pro-immigrant position on the scale (from 0.09 to 0). This could be connected with the jump of the Conservatives to occupy the anti-immigration niche that is not being exploited by any other party (from 0.55 to -

0.04). Against our expectations, the reaction of the Socialist parties has been to move towards the pro-immigrant pole (from 0.40 to 0.50).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

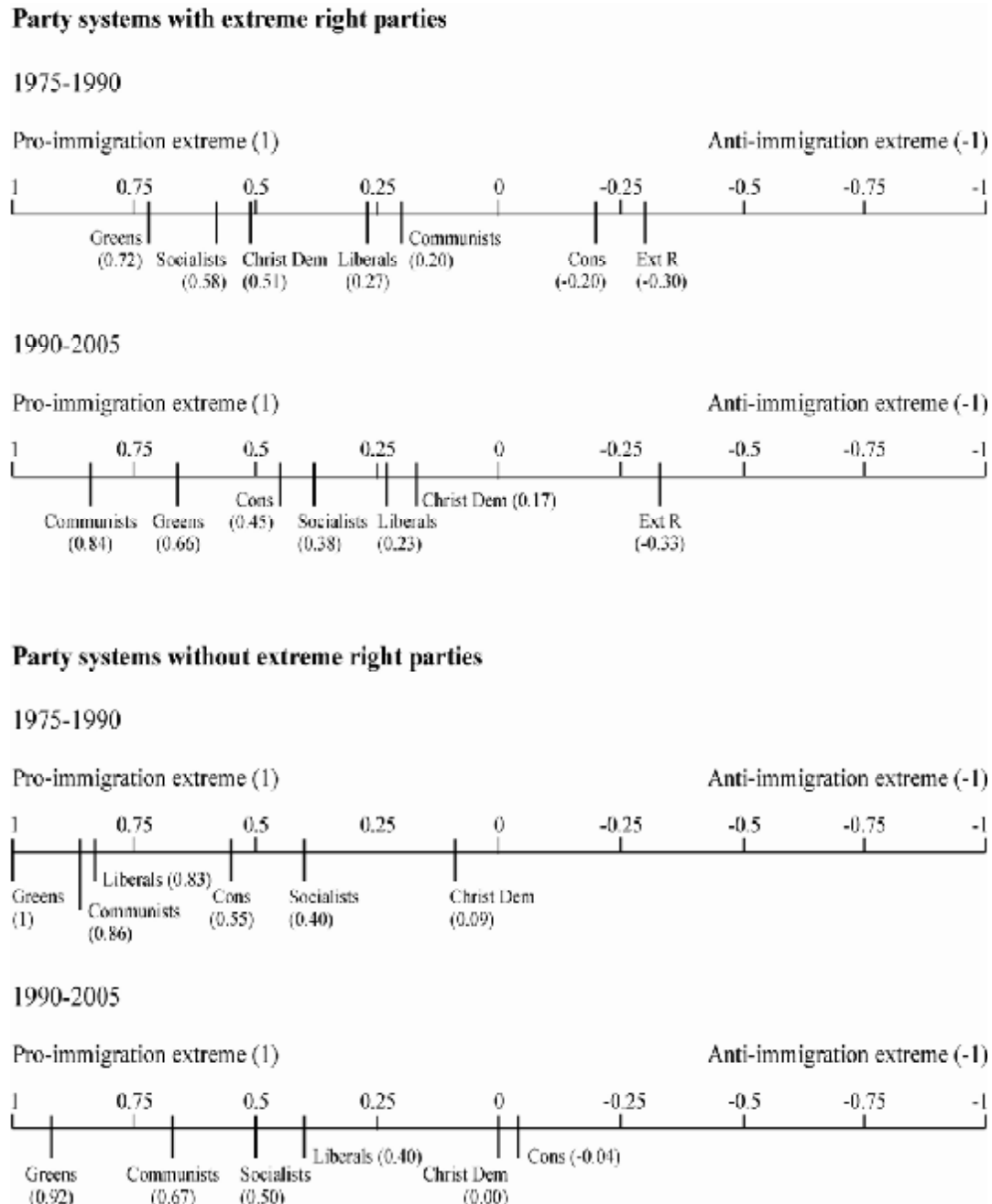
The aim of this paper was twofold: one the one hand, to explore the electoral relevance of immigration-related issues for West European parties since 1945; on the other hand, to analyze the issue behavior of the mainstream parties in the face of extreme right competition.

We have been able to verify our first hypothesis, which expected an increasing saliency of the immigration issue in the parties' policy agendas throughout the postwar period. What is more, we have shown that this has happened irrespective of the extreme right. In the absence of an electoral threat from these parties, the mainstream right and, in particular, the Christian Democrats have taken up the issue of immigration. This is not to say that extreme right does not make a difference. On the contrary: in party systems with at least one relevant extreme right party, the issue saliency of immigration tends to be higher than in party systems with no relevant actors on that side of the political spectrum.

Our second hypothesis, namely that the mainstream left and right converge towards anti-immigration positions in the face of extreme right competition has also been confirmed. Where extreme right parties as the owners and net beneficiaries of anti-immigrant positions, the mainstream parties have become less favorable towards immigration. In this sense, we find convergence in issue saliency and position between Socialists, Christian Democrats and Conservatives. In absence of relevant extreme right actors, however, the dynamics of party competition change, with Christian Democrats and Conservatives as issue owners of immigration. Against our expectations, the mainstream left does not move closer to the right parties in the immigration scale but further away from it. This result is surprising and needs further exploration.

Another puzzling finding is the issue behavior of the Conservative party family

FIGURE 1: The Mean Position of Party Families along the Immigration Scale between 1975 and 2005. A Comparison of Party Systems with a without Extreme Right Parties



with regard to extreme right competitors. Conservative parties have made a dramatic turn to pro-immigrant positions since 1990 in party systems with at least one relevant extreme right party. In the absence of the extreme right, by contrast, they have turned to anti-immigrant positions. It could well be that these results are a consequence of the methodology used to create the issue dimension of immigration. Let us remember that we have chosen to exclude the 'law and order' issue category, which is typically owned by the Conservatives. In these parties' electoral manifestos, 'law and order' has a mean saliency score of 2.8; with a value of 3.2, this issue category is only slightly more relevant for the extreme right. Over time, the saliency of 'law and order' has increased dramatically for Conservative parties, from 0.59 between 1945 and 1960 to 6.2 between 1990 and 2005. By not considering 'law and order' in the construction of the immigration issue dimension, we may be losing precious information about the Conservative framing of immigration. In the post-9/11 period, it may in fact be expressed more in terms of security concerns and less in ethno-pluralist terms.¹² However, including the issue category of 'law and order' would make our measurements more unreliable for the sample as a whole.

¹² If we include 'law and order' in the immigration issue dimension, Conservative parties become strongly anti-immigrant, both in the absence (-0.52) and in the presence (-0.59) of extreme right parties.

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